

**Performing Ecstasies**  
**Music, Dance, and Ritual in the**  
**Mediterranean**



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**Performing Ecstasies**  
**Music, Dance, and Ritual in the**  
**Mediterranean**

*edited by*

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## *Foreword*

Interdisciplinary studies have been fashionable for some time, but the subtle connections that bring together the papers within this volume are, in many cases, the result of years of interaction between topics, personalities, and disciplinary points of view. In my own case, my involvement in the project that eventually resulted in a very productive conference, as well as this present volume, was based on years of dialogue on the subject of trance, as well as music's place within the process of trance, particularly with the late ethnomusicologist Professor Catherine J. Ellis as well as with Professor Judith Becker. Our interaction began when the three of us together planned a session on the subject of trance and music's place within it for the 1990 annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, held in Oakland, California. In this session, the three of us explored the possibility that trance could interrupt verbalization that typically takes place almost continuously within ordinary everyday consciousness, and ways in which music could, and actually did, enhance this interruption. This collaboration, between an ethnomusicologist whose work had centered on the music and culture of the Australian Aboriginals (Catherine Ellis), an ethnomusicologist of Southeast Asia (Judith Becker), and myself, a scholar of the European Middle Ages—unlikely collaborators to say the least—was followed by a session on trance organized for the International Congress of Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, 1993, in which Judith Becker gave a seminal paper exploring some neurological dimensions of the trance experience; a conference, "Trance: Times and Cultures. A Comparison of Analysis and the Revelatory Experience," held at Claremont Graduate University, November 1996; and finally, a session that brought together myself, Judith Becker, and Steven M. Friedson, an Africanist, on the topic of "Trance Experience or 'Rousing the Animal Spirits,'" at the annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, held at Indiana University, Bloomington, Fall, 1998. Judith Becker's interaction of many years with the topic of trance, of great importance for a discussion of ecstatic experience, has recently become available in the publication of her book, *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing* (Bloomington, Ind., 2004). And so, in like manner, many of the contributions to this volume resulted from ongoing interdisciplinary, cross-cultural interactions between those who took part in the conference. These conversations have continued as this volume reached publication.

Gratitude should be expressed to those who made this publication possible, especially Bryan R. Gillingham, The Institute of Mediaeval Music, and Nancy Bowen for the production and copyediting of this volume.

NANCY VAN DEUSEN  
Claremont Graduate University





## *Preface*

When I learned of the content and the spirit of the conference, “Performing Ecstasies: Music, Dance, and Ritual in the Mediterranean,” I was very pleased to grant it the auspices of the Consulate General of Italy—for two reasons. First, the knowledge and promotion of other cultures is always a necessary prerequisite for appreciating them and is the best tool for bridging cultural gaps, misunderstandings, and ignorance, and for dispelling the fear of what looks remote, unusual, and alien. This is the very first step towards a general culture of tolerance, friendship, and peace. This is rather obvious. The second reason is that, at a time when communication technology, economic internationalization, and ease of travel have made the global village a reality, we are also beginning to experience the effects of cultural globalization. This can be a positive phenomenon, especially as it regards education—although this is yet to be defined, for its features are uncertain. But, as is often the case, it also has its “dark side.” This is primarily represented by the danger of transforming the world’s cultural landscape into a near alien “flatland”—a tendency that is already beginning to rear its head in our daily lives as myriad local creative impulses risk being crushed by global patterns and global standards.

At this juncture, therefore, it is even more important to become aware of the relevance and contributions of micro-cultures—traditional, localized, and lore-based—at risk of being drowned by the noisier and more imposing prevailing cultures. Such an awareness forms the basis of active preservation because it is in the depth of these micro-cultures that our roots are found and our identities formed. Only by protecting, developing, and nurturing them can we protect and enhance our heritage, our spirituality, and—in the final analysis—our very freedom of thought.

Italy has for centuries, and throughout the world, been a synonym for culture, intended on a grand scale, that is, the culture that, cradled in Greece, survived, flourished, and spread with the Romans, and changed the Western world through the Renaissance. I often find myself repeating that our country is “not just Culture, Art, Fashion, and Design,” but also high technology and manufacturing. (The fact that Italy’s top export to the U.S. is aircraft components, and not pasta or olive oil, still sounds amazing to some.) But what I wish to emphasize is this: regional and local cultures continue, more than ever, to be at the core of Italy’s unique heritage, and they have heavily influenced our historical growth as a Nation—a Nation which became unified a mere 130 years ago. Not only is this influence *not* fading away, it is actually growing stronger, as Italy is actively engaged with other European partners in the creation of a supra-national entity, the European Union. Therefore, paradoxically, localized, regional frameworks (from production to culture) become ever more relevant, granting, in a sense, more legitimacy to local identities, starting with the economic, and moving through every aspect of life. It is a trend that our American friends, who so treasure democracy at a local and community level, may well appreciate.

These are some of the reasons which led us to support the conference. “Performing Ecstasies: Music, Dance, and Ritual in the Mediterranean” took a fascinating look at so many diverse aspects of local micro-cultures which developed in Italy, within the frame of that incredibly rich cultural and humanitarian context: the Mediterranean. I wish to congratulate the Italian Oral History Institute and the Istituto Italiano di Cultura for this initiative, and to express my warmest thanks to all the UCLA Departments and Centers, and the various institutions, which helped organize and support this project.

MASSIMO ROSCIGNO  
Consul General of Italy  
Los Angeles, October 20, 2000

## *Introduction and Acknowledgements*

The conference and festival “Performing Ecstasies: Music, Dance and Ritual in the Mediterranean” brought to Los Angeles in October of 2000 scholars, musicians, photographers, dance therapists, and enthusiasts of dance, music, and ritual of the cultures of the Mediterranean. The idea for this conference preceded it by approximately five years, for it was in 1995 that I first heard the Salentine *pizzica*—that musical form which once helped cure women of the mythic spider’s bite throughout southern Italy. I was deeply moved by this powerful, infectious music. I soon learned that it was at the center of a major revival movement in the Salento, southern Puglia, and was beginning to find its way to other Italian, European, and world destinations. The process of bringing this music to the attention of audiences in California began the following year, as did my own research into the folk music revival movement and the culture of *tarantismo* in the Salento. At the same time, I was invited to collaborate with Luigi Chiriatti and Roberto Raheli, of Aramirè: Compagnia di Musica Salentina, in making several field recordings from the Chiriatti archive more accessible to English-speaking audiences through writing and translation.<sup>1</sup> And simultaneously, with Alberto Pranzo in Los Angeles, we began to produce festivals and symposia on this musical culture, the first of which was: “Essential Salento: Festival of Salentine Culture” in 1998, followed by “Performing Ecstasies: Music, Dance, and Ritual in the Mediterranean” two years later. It has been gratifying to learn that this conference sparked a wider diffusion of this music to other U.S. cities, largely on the East Coast.

It was not surprising that “Essential Salento” took root and grew beyond the musical culture of the Salento per se. Indeed, “Performing Ecstasies,” as an international and interdisciplinary conference, explored the various forms of ritualized music and dance in historic and contemporary contexts, both as expressions of traditional cultures and as vehicles of revival movements throughout the Mediterranean. While it grew out of an interest in *tarantismo*, it sought to situate and compare this specific musical culture within wider cultural contexts, and hence embraced Southern European, North African, Middle Eastern, and even Diaspora African and European cultures. Furthermore, we were not content to restrict these cultural programs to an academic audience, but believed in promoting workshops, films, exhibits, and a broader presentation of these cultures to demonstrate the visual, gustatory, dance and, of course, acoustic aspects in order to provide the widest public

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Luisa Del Giudice, introduction to *Canto d'amore: canti, suoni, voci nella Grecia salentina* (Love song: songs, sounds, and voices from the Griko-speaking area of the Salento), trans. Luisa Del Giudice, with Edizioni Aramirè compact disk (Lecce, 2000), a joint project of Aramirè and UCLA’s Ethnomusicology Dept., presented by Roberto Raheli during the conference; and idem, preface to *Bonasera a quista casa: Antonio Aloisi, Antonio Bandello “Gli Ucci”: Pizziche, stornelli, canti salentini*, by Luigi Chiriatti, trans. Luisa Del Giudice, Edizioni Aramirè compact disk (Lecce, 1999).

possible with the opportunity to experience these cultures in a more variegated and complete manner.

The concerts, the centerpiece of the two-week-long festival, indeed spanned the Mediterranean ritual map: from drumming rhythms associated with Salentine *tarantismo* (Aramirè, “*Tarantismo* and Traditional Salentine Music”), to devotional *tammurriate*, *tarantelle* danced in honor of the Madonna throughout Southern Italy, as well as *pizziche* (Alessandra Belloni and I Giullari di Piazza, “Tarantata: Dance of the Ancient Spider”), to ritual songs of Sephardic Iberian women (Judith Cohen and daughter Tamar Ilana, “Iberian Jewish Women’s Songs: Ritual, Dance, Meditation”) and mystical Islamic Sufi traditions (Ali Jihad Racy Ensemble, “Voices of Mystical Devotions: Sufi Music from the Arab World”), in addition to traditional as well as new musical fusions of the Mediterranean crossroads (Musicantica, “Mediterranean Music of the Crossroads”). Further, the music festival presented early Christian ecstatic music (Martha Gowan and UCLA Sounds ensemble, “Sacred or Secular? Ecstasy in Early Music”), and even Rossinian opera (“Stabat Mater,” performed by the St. Alban’s Episcopal Church choir & orchestra, with Jim Vail conducting). It was vital that the music itself “speak” directly to the body, the ear, the mind, and the eye, hence the concerts, dance, and music workshops with master musicians, as well as documentary and feature films on religious festivals and musicians throughout the Mediterranean.

The exhibitions associated with these events brought unique visual documentation to the public as well. “Performing Ecstasies” proved to be the catalyst for *The Lomax Collection: Photographic Essay* (curated by Anna Lomax Chairetakis and Goffredo Plastino), the first exhibition of the stunning photographs taken by Alan Lomax during his field-collecting campaigns in Spain and Italy in the 1950s. Further, photographic documentation of the public *tarantismo* rituals associated with Galatina, the traditional pilgrimage site for those afflicted from spider’s bite, was presented in *Il luogo del culto: Galatina: immagini del tarantismo 1970–1992* (The cult’s site: Galatina: images of *tarantismo* 1970–1992), curated by Luigi Chiriatti. The world of neo- or revival *tarantismo* was featured in photographer Fernando Bevilacqua’s exhibition, *Una smodata voglia di ballo* (A crazy urge to dance). Finally, Roberto Catalano’s exhibition, *Musical Instruments of Trance and Ecstasy*, presented the musical instrument used in the traditional rituals of trance and related phenomena in the Mediterranean. We invite you to peruse the range of conference and festival offerings by referring to the program and related photographs appended to this volume.

The present volume brings together most of the papers read during the three-day conference held October 20–22, 2000. While many touched on the phenomenon of *tarantismo* or its music—the center around which the conference pivoted (e.g., contributions by Karanika, Lüdtké, Staro, Catalano, Chiriatti, Raheli, Del Giudice)—others went beyond the Salento to focus on other regional Italian ritual phenomena (Ferraiuolo on the Campanian

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*tammurriata*, Scaldaferrri and Marano on festivals of Basilicata involving the dancing tower, as well as fire rituals). Various European musical traditions, from flamenco and *duende* (Assumma) to Portuguese women's drumming (Cohen) and ancient Greek therapeutic dance practices (Karanika), were balanced by a substantial number of contributions examining African and Islamic traditions (Algerian pilgrimage by Moussaoui; the music of the Moroccan Gnawa by Baldassarre) and new (New World) syncretic forms, for example, African-derived musical phenomenon in the "fina" (a case study of a Salentine-African lamellaphone by Catalano), as well as a look at the use of Italian *commedia dell'arte* figures in the manifestation of divinities in Haitian vodou ceremonies by Donald Cosentino (not included in this volume). This collection of essays encompasses ancient as well as modern cultures, considers healing therapies and their evolution, mystical unions with the divine, and practices of devotion and pilgrimage, as well as New World and contemporary cultural practices which actively seek experiences of ecstasies and altered states. Let us be more specific about the volume's contents.

In "The Protean Performer: Mimesis and Identity in Late Antique Discussions of the Theater," Ruth Webb states that dance in the ancient world was an extremely diverse and versatile phenomenon found in religious ceremonies, banquets, military exercises, and marches, and especially in the theater. Dance of the ecstatic variety was especially associated with the *thiasos* of the Greek god Dionysus (the Roman Bacchus) and its orgiastic manifestations. The evidence of ceramic ware, in addition to representations found in ancient paintings and sculptural reliefs in this regard, is abundant and significant. In this contribution, Webb shows how, by the second to sixth centuries C.E., Christian writers criticized theatrical performance on many grounds. One of the most interesting aspects of this polemic was the treatment of mimesis itself. Performers (mostly "pantomimes" who interpreted mythological narratives through gesture alone) were accused of becoming, or wishing to become, what they enacted, and of being "against nature" in their ability to transform themselves. A more serious concern was the effect that this spectacle may have worked on audiences, who themselves may have been at risk of being assimilated by what they saw enacted on stage. The actor's bodily mimesis emerged from these accounts as a powerful and potentially dangerous activity whose effects were comparable to those of magic, and the theater became a zone in which everyday experience was interrupted and transformed. The essay analyzes these discussions of theatrical mimesis in the Roman period, showing how they reflected the experience of the theater. Webb also suggests that such perceptions of the actor as surpassing normal human experience through his (or, occasionally, her) art did not come into being with Christianity, but can be seen in discussions of the theater from earlier periods and non-Christian milieux, and that the contribution of Christian writers in this domain was to highlight a longstanding sense of the otherness and power of the actor.

In “Describing Ecstasy on the North African Rim in Late Antiquity,” Nancy van Deusen focuses on the African component of Augustine’s *oeuvre* and thought. Augustine, writing his treatise on music in the closing years of the fourth century, was a North African, and it is tempting to relate this fact to the priority of the treatise that was to form a conceptual basis for the writing projects of his long, extremely productive, life. The priority of *De musica* (Concerning music) is rhythmic accent, or pulse, which Augustine considers to be a self-contained body, full of soulful substance, responsible for music’s power. *Pulsus* contains the power of life, and this, when repeated, is the material reality that empowers musical time-lapse to attract, addict, and to possibly generate, ultimately, a state of ecstasy. One senses, not only in his treatise on music but in other of his writings, that Augustine throughout his life regarded both music and the power within it with concerned, very cautious, respect. This essay’s focus is, therefore, Augustine’s view of the trance-inducing power of music, and his discussions of just where that power resides. It considers the questions of how exactly, according to Augustine, did music exert this mysterious power? How did music “embody,” or contain within limited space, emotional substance? Music, as actual material, could be considered in terms of quantifiable substance which it shared with the mind, commonly known today as “brain matter.” By measured patterns, music generated states of being, and by its deliciousness could potentially induce addiction. This extensive background on material substance, soulful substance, and its musical analogy and product provided by Augustine can also be validated in terms of individual cultural musical experience. This essay explores the framework provided by Augustine with which to consider, on a very basic level, music’s power, attraction, and addictive, even ecstatic, potency that is transcultural, both temporally and geographically, and utterly basic to a consideration of the trance experience itself.

The ancient Greek world provides early examples of the therapeutic function of certain forms of ritualized music. In “*Ecstasis* in Healing: Practices in Southern Italy and Greece from Antiquity to the Present,” Andromache Karanika links the phenomenon of *tarantismo* in the Salento directly to this ancient world. It considers questions relating to the ritual’s nature, its real causes, and its social significance by examining how the historic, religious, medical, and sociological factors shaping the morphology of *tarantismo* in this geographic region were intertwined. The essay examines the issue of ritual healing and the power of ecstatic dance in examples such as the mythic story of Melampus, who assisted in the cure of the madness of the Argive women, and other ancient Greek instances (ritual maenadism, the Delphic oracle), and explores comparisons between these ancient Greek and southern Italian healing practices performed in an ecstatic atmosphere (e.g., the ancient practices of incubation).

In “Dancing towards Well-Being: Reflections on the *Pizzica* in Contemporary Salento, Italy,” Karen Lüdtké continues the discourse of healing and introduces the Salentine folk revival milieu. The *pizzica* evokes

sensations that are “not very terrestrial,” that “bring you to feel the air” and “to see everything from above.” Others speak of “magic,” of “orgasmic” and “out-of-body experiences,” of “trance” or “ecstasy” when asked to define the states they have lived while performing—all problematic concepts. These are the responses of some Salentine musicians and dancers when questioned about their experiences of performing the music and dance which are so inextricably linked to the past tradition of *tarantismo*. These experiences are, moreover, directly linked to feelings of well-being. Lüdtké examines the experiences of “altered states of consciousness” specifically associated with the music and dance of the tarantula in the Salento, as well as the relation between the tradition of *tarantismo* and its recent revival, with a specific focus on the therapeutic aspects which motivated past healing rituals. To what extent can these aspects be identified in contemporary performances? Is ecstasy still harnessed today to promote well-being? Or have modern developments, including political, academic, and commercial interests, made it completely redundant as a means of improving health?<sup>2</sup>

In “Reconstructing the Sense of Presence: Tarantula, *Arlia*, and Dance,” Placida Staro contends that many aspects of *tarantismo* are widely diffused throughout Italy. Based on many years of fieldwork, she concludes that its diffusion is evidenced as an important organizing device in the psychological structuring of a “world-view” most especially governing the relationship between humans, fauna, flora, sentient and nonsentient beings. The common features of *tarantismo* are located at different levels of human perception and directly influence the perceptual structuring of reality. In particular, notions of *tarantismo* are implicated in the following ways: common knowledge regarding the emotion of fear and socially sanctioned responses involving movement, sound, and altered states of consciousness; the collective view of the universality of the experience of “presence” in life which is understood as soul; and the implicit understanding that this sense of presence or “soul” is a governing factor in the relationship between humans, animals and all living things. A collective belief states that every living being has the possibility and responsibility of balancing the fragile and dynamic relationship between unconscious answers to the presence of life and their potentially disruptive biological responses. There is also a widespread recognition of the power of sentient and/or nonsentient beings or objects to “open the gate” of uncontrolled emotion, and the need for the intervention of a traditional healer to carefully reconduct the afflicted individual back to a balanced state of being in the controlled (real) world. Only another member of the community, an “elder,” or a recognized specialist in expressive culture, is capable of reconstructing the emotional memory of the afflicted individual. This complex ritual of healing attempts to realign the emotional energy of the individual with the historical memory of the entire community.

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<sup>2</sup> See Del Giudice, “The Folk Music Revival and the Culture of *Tarantismo* in the Salento,” this volume, as well as this introduction, below.

The techniques employed in this fragile rebalancing of the soul, the mind, and the body include the use of vocal sounds, singing, music, and movement, as well as the use of shape, color, and touch. They balance the flow of energy symbolized by water, serpents, spiders, etc. These findings are based upon Staro's personal fieldwork experiences, namely a case study of a patient who was ill and exhibiting classic symptoms of *tarantismo*. This contribution looks at the role of a traditional healer in facilitating recovery, including the use of dance to achieve harmony between two individuals, as well as dance and music to re-create and rebalance the equilibrium of an entire community.

In "The Sounds of Religion: A *Mawlid* of Kenadsa," Abderrahmane Moussaoui looks at a town deep in the southwest of the Central Maghreb (present-day Algeria) at a time when long-distance trade caravans from the province of Oran went through the Tafilaleet on their way to the western Sudan, and where a seventeenth-century Muslim saint, Sidi M'hammad bin Bûziyân, chose his place of spiritual retreat and established a Sufi lodge (*zâwiya*). That lodge has made the walled-in town of Kenadsa famous. Each year, up to the present day, the memory of the founding saint is celebrated on the occasion of the *mawlid* (the birthday celebration of the prophet Muhammad). Although the celebration is a procession in which the visual aspect predominates, nonetheless the vocal and audible aspects also play an important role. Verbal sounds are an active part of the elaboration of meaning. Verse poems, *qacâ'id*, ending in the syllable *â*, and recitations of the Koran provide the atmosphere in which the entire celebration breathes. The principle discourse and its motifs are structured by what is sonorous and operate within the context of the exclusively vocal. It is the human voice which underlies and completes the structural production of the meaning of the celebration. The visual aspect is brought into play in order to open the door to the unknown world: the world of the mind's eye. What is sonorous (vocal and audible) allows the imagination to bring these images out of their silence. What are visible and audible come together to make what are symbolic and imagined coincide. The voice becomes the means of that union. The act of verbalization (*l'acte phonatoire*) recurs throughout the celebration, making the celebration a continuous polyphonic immersion, an "itinerant word," or a "sonorous procession." Sounds alternating with silences and mixed with the power of the human voice and the spells of collective chanting constitute a sacred music. By examining this ceremony, Moussaoui shows the impact of the voice in such music. Beyond the linguistic message, he is interested in "the secret of sounds."

In "The Music of the Gnawa of Morocco: A Journey with the Other in the Elsewhere," Antonio Baldassarre examines the *lila-derdeba*, the nighttime ritual of the Gnawa of Morocco—a performance of music and dance which has been classified by scholars as a ritualized cult of possession bearing similarity to cults in which practitioners reach states of ecstasy (such as in ancient Greece and in the practice of *tarantismo* in southern Italy). The Gnawa are descendants of populations of Black Africa transported to North



Africa. In Morocco, their ritual was influenced by Sufism, the more eclectic and esoteric side of Islam, which synthesizes various traditions and creates a rite which is both a religious cult and a therapeutic practice. Islamic orthodoxy has always demonstrated an attitude of distrust toward the ritual practices of the Gnawa, practices considered to be the legacy of ancient superstitions. It has also expressed disapproval toward the ritual practices of the popular Sufi brotherhoods which have closer ties to African roots. The ethnocentric approach of academics did not help clarify the complex relationship between early African religious forms and Islam as a universal religion. Instead, Moroccan intellectuals favored a lack of understanding and outright rejection of this fundamental aspect of their culture. The more open approach of contemporary research and the interest of Western artists in the musical practices and philosophy of life of the Gnawa have given rise to a reverse tendency, resulting in various positive outcomes.

“Development and Hypnotic Performance of an African Lamellaphone in the Salentine Area: The Fina Case Study,” by Roberto Catalano, addresses a singular case of the migration of a musical instrument from East Africa to the Mediterranean area. In this essay, Catalano illustrates the instrument’s casual discovery by a native of the Salentine peninsula of southeastern Italy and studies its subsequent development as a newly conceived instrument. Enzo Fina, a Salentine musician and artist, first discovered the *mbira* (a lamellaphone commonly known in the West as the “thumb piano”) by accident, and later developed it into a type of his own, calling it simply, the “fina.” Catalano presents Fina’s musical activity from the seventies to the present: a) Fina’s early discovery of an original version of the *mbira*, placing the encounter within the historical continuum of cultural and material circulation of goods and ideas within the Mediterranean area; b) the issue of appropriation, intended not as expropriation but as the process of transforming what is alien into one’s own (cf. Ricoeur and Gadamer’s notions of phenomenological hermeneutics); c) a description of the music played by Fina on the fina (e.g., the breaking of the rhythmic patterns into small rhythm cells; the importance of repetition and hence the cycle in hypnotic and trance music); and d) the acoustic peculiarity of the fina, known as “the third sound.” Fina’s cultural awareness of his background as a native of the Salento is a crucial element expressed in his music and is closely connected—both philosophically and in spirit—to the hypnotic and repetitive rhythm of the Salentine *pizzica tarantata*. Moreover, in accordance with his native musical tradition, Fina ascribes to his instrument symbolic and healing powers, and relates it to past therapeutic music practices such as *tarantismo*.

“‘My Soul’s There Already and My Heart’s on Its Way’: Portuguese Women’s Pilgrimage Drum-Songs,” by Judith Cohen, looks at the mountain villages of Portugal’s Beira Baixa region where women square drum players still sing and play for a series of pilgrimages which take place shortly after Easter Sunday. This essay examines the interplay between religious and secular, solemn and humorous, in the musical aspects of the events and the

women's song lyrics, as well as the ambivalent role of the church toward their presence. Recent changes in gender roles for square drum playing are also discussed.

Violinist Luigi Stifani was a major historic figure on the Salentine musical scene, since for decades he was a widely recognized musician who played for those women afflicted by the spider's bite (*le tarantate*). He was the violin player who played during the ritual documented in the most important documentary film made on the subject (*La taranta*, 1961), produced with the collaboration of Ernesto de Martino, scholar of religion and author of the seminal work *La terra del rimorso*, and ethnomusicologist Diego Carpitella. Stifani had become by the nineties a myth himself, a living memorial to that lost world. He passed away on June 28, 2000, the feast day of St. Paul, patron saint of *tarantismo*. In "For Luigi Stifani," Luigi Chiriatti, himself a central figure in the revival movement (to whom Stifani had entrusted his violin and his barber's chair, as well as his personal papers), pays tribute to the man and the musician. Roberto Raheli, adopted heir to this violin tradition, a musical autodidact and musician in the revival ensemble Aramirè (and earlier Il Canzoniere di Terra d'Otranto), explores in "*Pizzica Tarantata: Reflections of a Musician*" the two sides of the same phenomenon: *pizzica* (the music) and *tarantismo* (the healing ritual), and concludes that neither would likely exist without the other. While today *tarantismo* no longer exists in its classic form, the *pizzica*, the ritual's healing music, however, does survive, and has survived because, according to Raheli, it evolved a specific musical form over the centuries which sustained and structured the therapeutic function of *tarantismo*. If the music did not restore to health the men and women "bitten" by the spider, the music was not functional and hence was changed. If, on the other hand, the specific music was able to cure people, it was played again and again. The final result of this "natural selection" process is that today we have a music constructed to capture the mind and which makes it possible for us to be taken by the *pizzica* without requiring the ritual side of the *tarantismo* phenomenon. Or, it could also be that the *pizzica* is still capable of entering our minds, of functioning therapeutically, and of helping us cope with our own problems. Of course, our times, and the circumstances of our problems, may differ from those of the past, but the human mind remains what it was. We all have—some more, some less—our own phantoms haunting us. He considers the *pizzica*, therefore, something of a "ghostbuster."

Various ritual contexts of southern Italy are considered within the discourse of collective acts of devotion and religious celebrations calling upon music and dance, and bringing to the fore the "time outside time" of ecstasies. In "Dance of the Earth," Augusto Ferraiuolo shows how the *tammurriata* is, first and foremost, a musical, dance, and symbolic form found in many parts of Campania (southern Italy), and deeply connected to the Catholic cults of the Madonna. It is clear, from this preliminary and general definition, that the character of this cultural phenomenon is complex. The

*tammurriata* represents a crossroads of languages continuously intersecting in a sort of inevitable dance of meanings. In this essay, Ferraiuolo analyzes not single parts of the phenomenon, achieved through a systematic deconstructionist approach, but rather (and more respectfully) the complexity of meanings this phenomenon has for the acting subject. Surely it is possible to observe its *religious* frame if one examines actors, scenes and actions. From this point of view, the *tammurriata*, danced *on* the earth and dance *of* the earth (in its literal sense), is full of ecstatic features for two reasons. On the one hand, it is encapsulated within one special time (the time of the feast, the religious feast, and therefore outside daily time), and on the other, it is connected to, and perhaps directly determined by, a rhythm—ancestral and terrestrial—which puts the actors on a metahistorical plane (outside the world and history). He believes this to be the core ritual aspect of the *tammurriata*—that is, that it is inside and outside time simultaneously. It is a ritual for which its structural and psychological implications (the central hypothesis of this essay) seems to represent, through its various forms and meanings, an ecstatic prayer to the goddess.

“Venturing Identity: Performing Ecstasy in the Rite of the Guglia (Basilicata, Italy),” by Francesco Marano, and “Devotion, Music, and Rite in Southern Italy: The Madonna del Pollino Festival,” by Nicola Scaldaferrri, present two festive contexts and their religious and musical rituals in the Basilicata region of southern Italy. The first examines the “Uglia ritual” (the rite of the Guglia), performed in villages during the night of a religious festivity. Here, people (almost always drunk) carry on their shoulder a religious simulacrum and dance with it in the streets, while a little fanfare plays the accompanying music, and bonfires are lit and traversed by dancers. The second essay examines rituals which take place during the festivity of the Madonna del Pollino where pilgrims sing, dance, and play long and noisy *tarantelle* on all kinds of instruments (*zampogne*, bagpipes, *tamburelli*, frame drums, *organetti*, button accordions, and bottles struck with a key), and transport the statue of the Madonna across the mountains during a one-day-long procession. Devotees spend the night in the church, transforming it into a dormitory. These rituals are characterized by noisy music, and normally require alcohol, as well as a physical trial: traversing fire, playing and dancing for long periods of time, and carrying the statue in procession. They are an opportunity for participants to display their abilities and physical endurance (thereby gaining in social status) and to put into play their individual, as well as group, identity.

In “Imagining the *Strega*: Folklore Reclamation and the Construction of Italian American Witchcraft,” Sabina Magliocco focuses on the creation of *Strega*, an Italian American variant of revival Witchcraft,<sup>3</sup> by Raven Grimassi, Leo Martello, and other popular Italian American occultists. Revival

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<sup>3</sup> Magliocco uses “Witchcraft” to indicate the revived religion, and “witchcraft” to refer to the historical and anthropological meaning of the term.

Witchcraft, an ecstatic mystery religion based on the writings of Gerald B. Gardner, celebrates the immanent divine in nature and recognizes the presence of both a goddess and a god. Contemporary Witches see themselves as the spiritual or actual descendants of witches burned during the European witch hunts whom they believe were practicing the remnants of a pre-Christian nature religion. Often portrayed as “Celtic” in origin, the religion began to reach new heights of popularity during the final decades of the twentieth century. As its popularity grew, new “ethnic” variants of Witchcraft began to emerge in popular literature, generally portrayed as ancient family traditions which had survived into the present day. Foremost among these is Raven Grimassi’s “*Strega*,” or Italian Witchcraft. While loosely based in Italian folk practices, *Strega* paradoxically bears little resemblance to the rich Italian tradition of folk magical systems, such as *tarantismo*, evil eye belief, and folk cures. Instead, Grimassi has combined ethnographic materials gleaned from the works of Charles G. Leland, Alessandro Falassi, Carlo Ginsburg, and other English-language authors with the form and structure of Gardnerian Craft, reinterpreting many folk customs as evidence of an ancient Italian brand of “Witchcraft.” Magliocco argues that the popularity of this concoction is due to current popular notions of ethnicity and identity, and is a form of symbolic ethnicity constructed to revalue, in the eyes of third- and fourth-generation practitioners, magical world-views which are present in many Italian American families.

In “García Lorca and the *Duende*,” Maria Cristina Assumma states that García Lorca, as is known, was a zealous *aficionado* of Andalusian-Gypsy musical folklore, which he celebrated poetically (*Poem of the Deep Song*), theoretically (the conferences “Historical and Artistic Importance of the Andalusian Popular Song Called *Cante Jondo*” and “The Play and Theory of the *Duende*”), and by means of extraliterary initiatives, such as the organization (with the composer Manuel de Falla) of the Concurso del cante hondo (Granada, 1922). Particularly in the conference “The Play and Theory of the *Duende*,” he tried his hand at a theorization of the *duende*, starting with the use which popular aesthetics—especially flamenco—makes of it, for which the *duende* (literally “a sprite”) is a profane trance, a manifestation of musical emotion which goes beyond a religious context. García Lorca stressed the mysterious nature of the *duende* as a dark and demonic force which “acts on” the artist when his creative force peaks, in contrast with the luminous and regulating grace symbolized by the *ángel* (angel) and the normative intelligence symbolised by the *musa* (muse). This essay examines the nature of *duende*, its manifestations (e.g., via the direct testimony of a *juerga*, with its famous protagonist, La Niña de los Peines), its inseparability from the flamenco context (and its sociopolitical milieu), the modalities for inducing *duende*, and its relationship with death. Finally, and going beyond the Lorchian framework which worked exclusively within the parameters of voice, Assumma looks at the scheme of trance within the context of flamenco as dance.

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“The Folk Music Revival and the Culture of *Tarantismo* in the Salento,” by Luisa Del Giudice, examines the historic and contemporary contexts of *tarantismo* (together with its emblematic music, the *pizzica*) and explores its meanings to contemporary Salentines, particularly to musicians and dancers involved in the folk revival movement. How do the various parameters and symbols of “classic” *tarantismo* (described by de Martino in *La terra del rimorso*), so long a part of traditional Salentine culture, persist in neo-*tarantismo*? That is, how does *tarantismo* continue to “mark” the Salento and the participants in the neo-*tarantismo* movement? Does the spider continue to bite? How does the music affect the dancer or musician? How has a culture of suffering been transformed into one of celebration? This essay treats the symbolic culture of revival *tarantismo*, the range of its current musical practices and political attitudes, and the female perspective within the culture of neo-*tarantismo*. Finally, it examines how *tarantismo* is currently interpreted: for example, as “a crazy urge to dance”; an existential or altered state of consciousness; a Salentine sociopolitical response; or a communal reaffirmation of Salentine cultural identity.

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LUISA DEL GIUDICE, DIRECTOR  
Italian Oral History Institute  
Los Angeles, September 9, 2002

## Chapter One

### Performed Ecstasies and Trance in Antiquity





## The Protean Performer: Mimesis and Identity in Late Antique Discussions of the Theater

by Ruth Webb

In the late second or early third century C.E., the North African Christian Tertullian told the story of a woman who went inside a theater building and was possessed by a demon. During the exorcism, when the demon was asked why it had dared to attack a Christian, it replied indignantly that it had been perfectly within its rights since it had found the woman on its territory.<sup>1</sup> Tertullian's treatise *On the Spectacles* is part of his attempt to make his fellow Christians aware of their need to keep themselves separate from the culture surrounding them. Theater and other types of spectacle were an inseparable part of this culture, and *On the Spectacles* is a valuable source of information on the theater in the Mediterranean at the beginning of the first millennium, preserving a great deal of information about the cultic origin of Roman theater, among other things. Other Christians in the following centuries, both in the Greek East and the Latin West, took up the same theme: people like John Chrysostom in Constantinople at the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries, and Saint Augustine, also in North Africa. Their writings have tended to be plundered by theater historians for nuggets of information about the theater and its origins.<sup>2</sup> But otherwise, with the exception of Augustine's highly philosophical discussion of the effect of drama, these texts have not received the attention they deserve as responses to the contemporary experience of the theater.<sup>3</sup>

I would like to suggest that anecdotes like Tertullian's, and other writings about the theater, do indeed express something about this experience. Tertullian's theater-demon is a powerful narrative expression of the idea that the theater is a domain outside normal experience where the spectator is caught up in something Other, at a certain risk of alteration to him- or herself. For Christians, this otherness of the theater had partly to do with its close link to pagan cult, as Tertullian and his fellow Christian critics frequently point out. Throughout antiquity, theatrical performances were put on by cities or wealthy individuals as part of festivals honoring the gods, and Tertullian stresses the link between both theater and other spectacles, and cult. But one can also detect in the various critiques of the theater an acute awareness of the potentially transformative power of the art.

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<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, *On the Spectacles* 26.2, ed. and trans. T. R. Glover (Cambridge, Mass., 1931).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Ottorino Pasquato, *Gli spettacoli in S. Giovanni Crisostomo: paganesimo e cristianesimo ad Antiochia e Costantinopoli nel IV secolo* (Rome, 1976); and Georgios Theoharidis, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Profantheaters im IV und V Jahrhundert: hauptsächlich auf Grund der Predigten des Johannes Chrysostomus Patriarchen von Konstantinopel* (Thessaloniki, 1940).

<sup>3</sup> Werner Weismann, *Kirche und Schauspiele: Die Schauspiele im Urteil der lateinischen Kirchenväter unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Augustin* (Würzburg, 1972).

This reading of the sources, which reveals the late antique theater to be a live and powerful art form, runs counter to some strong tendencies in the study of the subject. The spectacles of the Roman period are often characterized as mere diversions, perhaps with a political function.<sup>4</sup> And the abiding influence of a general narrative of decline in the later Roman Empire cannot be ignored. Within this narrative, the theatrical forms which flourished in late antiquity, namely mime and pantomime, are the final stages in a long decadence. The eloquent theatrical traditions of the classical period had been replaced by mere sensationalism and spectacle, slapstick and striptease. Once one accepts this evaluation, Christian opposition appears as an inevitable, even welcome, relief, bringing about the unregretted demise of a moribund tradition.<sup>5</sup> The problem with this view is that it derives largely from the critics of the theater themselves, who had good reason to present such a picture of the entertainments of their day. It also ignores the circumstances in which many of the anti-theatrical polemics were composed: the need for such polemics was urgent precisely because so many people continued to flock to the theater, even after they had converted to Christianity. So the polemics are a testament to the flourishing state of the arts they criticize. In fact, the theater survived the polemics, as well as the repeated temporary bans, and was still flourishing in the urban centers of the eastern Mediterranean in the sixth century C.E. If instead we read the polemics alongside other sources on the theater, bearing in mind the context in which they were pronounced, and remembering that the loud voices which have survived to be read today were not the only ones to be heard in their day, we can reach an appreciation of the power that the theatrical arts were still felt to wield.

#### THEATRICAL TRADITIONS IN LATE ANTIQUITY

The richest Greek source for the nature of theatrical performance in Late Antiquity is to be found in the writings of John Chrysostom, who rails against the theater and his audience's taste for it in many places in his sermons and devotes one entire sermon to the subject. The literary defenses of the theater by Lucian (second century), Libanios (fourth century) and Chorikios (sixth century) also contain much practical information, as well as being equally precious sources of attitudes about the theater.<sup>6</sup> Classical tragedies and comedies were still staged,

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the remarks of Paul Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque: sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique* (Paris, 1976), p. 365.

<sup>5</sup> This view is reflected by Jonas Barish, "Roman Ruins," in *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981), p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> Lucian, *On the Dance*, in *Works*, ed. and trans. A. M. Harmon, 8 vols., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1936–67), 5:209–89; Libanios, *Apology on Behalf of the Dancers*, in *Opera*, ed. R. Foerster, 12 vols. in 13 (Leipzig, 1908), 4:420–98; translated by Margaret E. Molloy in *Libanius and the Dancers* (Hildesheim, 1996); and Chorikios of Gaza, "Apology on Behalf of the Mimes," in *Choricii Gazaei Opera*, ed. R. Foerster and E. Richtsteig (Leipzig, 1929). Chorikios (whose text is the only one not to have been translated) is generally thought to have been a Christian, but see the arguments to the contrary of Timothy D. Barnes, "Christians and the Theater," in *Roman Theater and Society*, ed. William J. Slater (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1996), pp. 161–80.

though tragedy seems to have taken the form of excerpts sung by an individual performer. He was still masked and wore high platform shoes and apparently some body padding to make up for this artificial height.<sup>7</sup> Another popular form of theater was the mime, in which semi-scripted, semi-improvised scenarios from everyday life were performed by mixed companies of men and women, using song and gesture as well as speech.<sup>8</sup> A frequent theme of mime (though not the only one) was adultery, with the wife hiding her lover when her husband returns unexpectedly. As this suggests, there were standard character types: the clever young woman, her young lover, and the bald, slow-witted husband (played by the actor whose Latin name was “stupidus”). There are clear parallels between mime and the later *Commedia dell’Arte* (although mime actors and actresses seem to have performed without masks) but it is difficult to establish any direct link.<sup>9</sup>

The art form which prompts the most discussion of the actor’s identity is the pantomime.<sup>10</sup> Here a solo performer wearing sumptuous clothes and a naturalistic mask with a closed mouth acted out mythological narratives in silence through gesture alone. He was accompanied by a singer who sang a text (none survive) and a chorus, musicians, and the insistent beat of a metal clapper. There was sometimes a secondary actor who played other roles, but the pantomime was essentially a solo performer and, although the sung text told the story, his gestures alone should have been enough to communicate it to his audience.

Our best source on this art form is the dialogue by Lucian, a Greek-speaking Syrian. He tells the story of how a star performer silenced his accompanists and performed the adultery of Ares and Aphrodite, the sun spotting them and telling Aphrodite’s husband Hephaistos, and Hephaistos taking revenge, all so clearly that it was understood by the audience.<sup>11</sup> It is clear from this account that these performers, also simply known as “dancers” (*orchestai*), took on several roles during a short period, and impersonated female characters. Lucian claims the dancer’s repertoire included the whole of the mythological tradition from the creation of the universe to the Trojan War and later. He also refers to the existence of different masks for different characters, though it is unclear how these would have been changed in performance.<sup>12</sup> However, the change in character must have been signaled by more than a mask. The pantomime’s

<sup>7</sup> Lucian, *On the Dance* 27.

<sup>8</sup> On the Roman mime in general, see Richard Beacham, *The Roman Theater and Its Audience* (London, 1991), pp. 132–9; for the surviving papyrological evidence for Greek mime, see Helmut Wiemken, *Der griechische Mimos: Dokumente zur Geschichte des antiken Volkstheaters* (Bremen, 1972).

<sup>9</sup> Elaine Fantham, “Mime: The Missing Link in Roman Literary History,” *Classical World* 82 (1989), 153–63, discusses the evidence.

<sup>10</sup> Beacham, *Roman Theater*, pp. 140–50; and E. John Jory, “The Drama of the Dance: Prolegomena to an Iconography of Imperial Pantomime,” in *Roman Theater and Society*, ed. William J. Slater (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1996), pp. 1–27.

<sup>11</sup> Lucian, *On the Dance* 63.

<sup>12</sup> An ivory plaque from Trier shows a pantomime holding a mask with three faces, or three separate masks. See Margarete Bieber, *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater* (Princeton, 1961), fig. 783. Bieber interprets the figure as female, but its indeterminate gender portrays an important aspect of the way pantomimes were perceived.

gesture, posture, and gait would have been enough to signal the difference between the warlike Ares, Aphrodite the goddess of love, and the lame craftsman god, Hephaistos. It is not surprising therefore that Lucian and others liken the dancer to the mythical Proteus, who was able to change shape at will (a compliment that could be double-edged).<sup>13</sup>

We have a few indications of the movement involved in this gestural and bodily mimesis. Both Lucian and Libanios mention the gymnastic abilities of these dancers, their suppleness as they assume various postures, their back bends and dramatic leaps, twists and turns.<sup>14</sup> From Libanios' account it seems that turns, leading into a fixed pose, were a speciality of the pantomimes in his day.<sup>15</sup> The hands were particularly important in communicating the story, with the result that dancers were said to "speak with their hands."<sup>16</sup> Libanios mentions a particular nodding of the head, which seems to have been used to portray female characters. The neck, wrists and ankles seem to have been particularly crucial to the pantomime's art, since those are the parts of the body targeted by a curse, found in Syria, which one dancer tried to inflict upon another.<sup>17</sup> The curse also wishes for his rival's chorus to be unable to accompany him, and for the audience to be unable to applaud, emphasizing the role of the spectators and their response in the success of performance. This curse, and its counterpart—an amulet requesting grace, beauty, and victory for a dancer named Sphuridas (he of the ankles)—are also a reminder of the competitive nature of the art.<sup>18</sup> Artists competed for employment, of course, but also, from the second century A.D., pantomimes were admitted into the formal competitions (*agones*) which marked Greek-style festivals. There they would compete alongside orators, poets, musicians and athletes, though the status of this dance in the social hierarchy was well below those arts, which had been dignified by competition far longer.<sup>19</sup>

Curse tablets, occasional epitaphs listing victories, and fragments of contracts to perform as a paid act at a festival give us rare glimpses into the performers' experience, which otherwise remains a closed world for us. For the vast majority of our sources are elaborate texts written by members of the elite who were at the opposite end of the social scale. What is more, these texts are for the most part agonistic themselves, arguing for or against performance. Lucian, Libanios and Chorikios wrote in defense, while Christian authors, like Tertullian and the Eastern Church fathers, usually (but not always) wrote against, continuing a long

<sup>13</sup> Lucian, *On the Dance* 19.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 71.

<sup>15</sup> Libanios, *Apology* 118.

<sup>16</sup> Lucian, *On the Dance* 63.

<sup>17</sup> André Maricq, "Notes Philologiques 2: Tablettes de défexion de Fiq," *Byzantion* 22 (1952), 360–68. English translation in *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, ed. John Gager (New York, 1992), pp. 51–3.

<sup>18</sup> Louis Robert, "Amulettes Grecques IV: Sphyridas et le cynocéphale," *Journal des Savants* (1981), 35–44. I am grateful to John Ma for this reference.

<sup>19</sup> See Antony Spawforth, "Agonistic Festivals in Roman Greece," in *The Greek Renaissance in the Roman Empire*, ed. Susan Walker and Averil Cameron (London, 1989), pp. 193–97, on the festivals in general, and Louis Robert, "Pantomimen in griechischen Orient," *Hermes* 65 (1930), 106–22, on the participation of mimes and pantomimes. Lucian, *On the Dance* 32, refers to pantomimes' participation in one festival as a recent innovation.

tradition of attacks on the theater which goes back to Plato. Christians and non-Christians alike objected to the supposed immorality of the subjects, particularly the adultery mime and the mythological adultery stories, and to the impersonation of female characters by male artists.<sup>20</sup> Christian critics attacked the pagan nature of the stories, although at least one non-Christian, Aelius Aristides, claimed that representing the gods on stage dishonored them.<sup>21</sup>

The assumptions underlying the criticisms of switching gender roles and the representation of pagan subject matter are worth exploring, as they reveal the source of some of the fears about the theater. In both cases, critics assume a degree of identity between what the actor is and what he represents. So, for the Greek father Gregory Nazianzen, writing a poem of advice to a young man, such performers are to be shunned. Interpreting their act as a manifestation of their interior desires, he claims that in taking on female roles these men “evilily wish” to be what they are not “by nature” (i.e. men); they may not fully become women, but they transform themselves to such an extent that they do not remain men.<sup>22</sup> Gregory’s words betray a combination of essentialism and constructionism found elsewhere in ancient discourse on masculinity.<sup>23</sup> In the context of theatrical performance he is able to contrast the “natural” state of the man with the partial transformation he brings about on stage, which is read as betraying his wilful rebellion against nature. The Syriac author Jacob of Serugh, writing in the late fifth or early sixth century, assumes a more straightforward identity between actor and act when he claims that by acting out scenes involving the pagan gods the pantomime is the instrument of those gods, the “flute of Satan.”<sup>24</sup> Again, the act is said to betray the true contents of the actor’s mind: if he depicts the gods, he must believe in them. What is more, he passes on this belief through his act to his audience.

Arguments like those of Gregory and Jacob assume a partial obliteration of the distinction between act and actor. There is a commonsense response to such complaints, which was made by defenders of the theater like Libanios and Chorikios. The act is simply an act, and the actor does not become what he imitates.<sup>25</sup> Nor does he affect the audience (or, Libanios adds jokingly, if he does make the spectators temporarily effeminate by playing a woman, he goes on to make them brave by playing a hero).<sup>26</sup> Lucian does not discuss this question of imitation and becoming directly, but it does play throughout his treatise. At one point he likens the dancer to Proteus, implying that he has the power to transform

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Lucian, *On the Dance* 1–2. Jacob of Serugh, *Homilies on the Spectacles of the Theatre*, trans. C. Moss, *Le Muséon* 48 (1935), 87–112, dwells on the mythological tales of rape and adultery which were represented.

<sup>21</sup> Aristides, cited by Libanios, *Apology* 33.

<sup>22</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Carmina* 2, 2.8, 2.94–7, PG 37:1583.

<sup>23</sup> Maud Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, 1995), p. 73.

<sup>24</sup> Jacob of Serugh, *Homilies on the Spectacles of the Theatre*, trans. C. Moss, *Le Muséon* 48 (1935), 106.

<sup>25</sup> Chorikios, *Apology* 26, 75.

<sup>26</sup> Libanios, *Apology* 70.

himself.<sup>27</sup> He also gives the negative example of a pantomime who took his identification with the character of Ajax too far. This unfortunate actor was so possessed by the role of the mythological madman that he almost killed the supporting actor playing Ajax's enemy, Odysseus. He then compounded his artistic transgression with a spatial one, bursting out of the performance space to sit among the dignitaries in the front row of the theater. Lucian presents this temporary loss of identity as an aberration which left the performer mortified, like Ajax himself after his murderous trance was over, and he draws an aesthetic moral, urging restraint in imitation.<sup>28</sup> Whether or not this anecdote reflects an actual event, it illustrates the tension between imitating and becoming, between being imbued with a character and its attributes and becoming possessed by it. Above all, it shows an awareness of the potential dangers of improvisation.

Lucian's cautionary tale gives us an unusual glimpse into the performer's experience, underlining the ambiguity of simultaneously being and not-being the character portrayed which lies at the heart of bodily mimesis.<sup>29</sup> The way in which he oscillates between saying that the actor becomes the character and that he should not do so reflects this ambiguity. This means that critics who wish to identify the actor with his act are not so much misunderstanding the point of the art as privileging one aspect—the "being" the god or woman—over the simultaneous other state—the "not-being" the character, remaining the actor. Such an emphasis is understandable in a culture in which gesture and gait were constantly being observed, moderated and interpreted as signs of the true nature of the elite individual who, in his own way, was constantly on the stage of public life.<sup>30</sup> The interaction between gesture and soul was clearly two way: if gesture revealed the soul, the true nature of the man, it could also influence it.

However, the real concern of those critics of the theater who chose to ignore the distinction between actor and role was not with the experience of the actor, but with these same elite individuals in their role as viewers of such acts. Their concern was for the moral welfare of the audience member, like Tertullian's woman possessed by the obstinate demon. We find constant references to the idea that the spectator was in danger of being made like the performer he watched by a sort of quasi-magical attraction.<sup>31</sup> The actor, in imitating a female character, risked making the spectators as effeminate as he was: this is the motivation behind Gregory's advice to his young charge to stay away from actors. Libanios ridicules this idea by saying that if people are made effeminate by seeing an imitation of women nodding their heads on stage, surely, since any mimesis is inferior to its original, they will be harmed even more by seeing the real women of their household nodding in real life.<sup>32</sup> (This is an unusual glimpse of a detail of stage practice and into the women's quarters of the late antique

<sup>27</sup> Lucian, *On the Dance* 19.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 83–4.

<sup>29</sup> John Emigh, *Masked Performance: The Play of Self and Other in Ritual and Theater* (Philadelphia, 1996), pp. 29–30.

<sup>30</sup> See Gleason, *Making Men*.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Libanios, *Apology* 70.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 62–3.

house). But this eminently commonsense argument overlooks the power of mimesis itself. Or rather, it temporarily effaces the type of mimesis active in theatrical performance, and replaces it with the sense of mimesis as an inferior and less potent copy.

By contrast, the sense of mimesis operative in these theatrical settings is the active, performative one: mimesis as a form of education in which the child learns to become an adult by copying adults. Elite males in antiquity were well aware that they learned to be men by copying, and that their masculinity could be undone by copying the wrong models. (I wonder whether the sight of a pantomime mimicking the gestures of women was so troubling because it revealed how conventional traditional markers of gender could be, how easily the lower-class body of the performer could adapt itself.) Jack Goody has suggested that this educative function of mimesis lies behind the anti-theatrical tradition in many cultures. Mimesis is associated with childhood and is disturbing when performed by an adult: “When adults copy adults, it threatens their identity, their individuality, their status.”<sup>33</sup> This suggestion, which emphasizes the connection between mimesis and education, may illuminate the fears and assumptions lying behind the claims that the pantomime “teaches” the stories and the divinities he impersonates. He can indeed be said to teach if the spectators are tempted in some sense to assimilate themselves to what he has become, the pagan gods and heroes. This idea of the influence which the actor can exert over his audience is part of a widespread conception of the viewer as passive receiver which is constantly reiterated in ancient discussions of the theater, a notion which is very much at odds with our conception of the gaze, which invests the power in the viewer.<sup>34</sup> Tertullian’s woman possessed is simply a dramatic illustration of this passivity, which affects men equally. John Chrysostom gives a psychological twist to the idea of demonic possession when he claims that the spectator goes home from the theater carrying within him an indelible image of the actress who will go on to wreak havoc with his marriage.<sup>35</sup>

But the unease about the power of mimesis goes still further. It seems that, by association and contagion, the very act of mimicking is thought to be conducive to change in those who perceive it: they are affected not just by the subject, but by the very act of imitation itself. The performer is a protean figure who can induce others in turn to change, disrupting any stable identity which they might have had. By merely stepping into the theater, the domain of change and illusion, the woman possessed loses her identity as a Christian and the protection it should have afforded her (as the demon points out). It is therefore useless to argue that the dancer is “merely imitating,” or that watching him imitate a woman cannot be

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<sup>33</sup> Jack Goody, *Representations and Contradictions: Ambivalence towards Images, Theatre, Fiction, Relics and Sexuality* (Oxford, 1997), p. 135.

<sup>34</sup> See Ruth Webb, “Salome’s Sisters: The Rhetoric and Realities of Dance in Late Antiquity and Byzantium,” in *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (London, 1997), pp. 119–48.

<sup>35</sup> John Chrysostom, *Against the Games and the Theatres*, PG 56:267, in *John Chrysostom*, ed. and trans. Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen (London, 2000).

more harmful than seeing a woman. The power of the performance lies in the act of mimesis itself, the act which is so dangerously ambiguous.

These are what one might call psychological aspects of performance and viewing. But Tertullian's anecdote also suggests a further dimension: the association of the theater with the demonic, which he dramatizes. His message is clear: Christians should keep away from the space of the theater, and therefore any performance, since it is a space occupied by alien forces. In this he is joined by others, who characterize the theater as the place of the devil, of sinister magic.<sup>36</sup> It is possible to dismiss these claims as overheated Christian fabulation, to assume that these authors are treating as superstition what had been a secular part of civic life for their own ends. But one can also read such claims as an attempt to rephrase in Christian terms a long-standing perception of these performances as powerful moments when normal experience was briefly interrupted. It is not only Christians who were alive to the uncanniness of the actor's ability to transform himself at will. Lucian recounts the words of a barbarian on seeing a pantomime with five masks, one for each of the characters he was about to play: "I did not realize that having one body you had so many souls."<sup>37</sup> A third-century text tells of the impact of a tragic actor on Iberian villagers: they thought he was a demon and ran away in terror.<sup>38</sup> In both of these anecdotes the perception of the pantomime or actor as more than human may be distanced by being attributed to barbarians, but it is nonetheless clearly articulated. Neither of these is a Christian text, yet both show clearly the idea of the actor or dancer as demonic, as a repository of power which derives from beyond the range of normal human experience.

This sense of the uncanny or the supernatural is fed too by the subject matter—gods and heroes, who were translated into demons in Christian thought—and by the occasions. To add to the potential sense of numinousness with which they were surrounded, theater performances took place as part of larger festivals, in a time when normal activity was temporarily suspended, and in a particular place, the theater. The idea that people are vulnerable when sitting together in a theater is clearly expressed in one non-Christian source. The first-century architect Vitruvius stresses the need to choose a healthy site for theaters, since people are vulnerable to illness there.<sup>39</sup> It is a practical thought, expressing the idea of contagion in medical terms. But his exact terms are particularly interesting: when people are sitting immobilized with the pleasure of the performance, their veins are open and they are vulnerable to disease. Vitruvius reveals not just the fear of the disease carried by a crowd, but a sense that what happens in the theater, and the audience's response, make them particularly vulnerable. It is a short step from this medical expression of the idea of penetrability and possession by an unseen other to Tertullian's expression of the same idea in the figure of the demon.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 267–8.

<sup>37</sup> Lucian, *On the Dance* 66.

<sup>38</sup> Philostratos, *Life of Apollonios of Tyana* 5.9.

<sup>39</sup> Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 5.3.1.



The ambiguity of the actor, his more-than-human ability to change his appearance, lies at the heart of the fears about the theater we see in Christian and non-Christian texts alike. Christian writers express these characteristics as demonic, but they are not inventing the characteristics themselves. Rather, I would prefer to see the seismic shift of Christianity as revealing attitudes and problems which already existed but were more rarely articulated. We do see these attitudes though, in the fear of the actor, attributed to barbarian observers, and in Vitruvius's fear of theatrical contagion. The nature of the art of acting, with its fundamental ambiguity about the identity of the figure on stage who is simultaneously himself and not-himself, and the tension of live, improvised performance where imitation can tip over into possession, lie at the center of these fears. But there are other factors which contribute to the uncanniness of the theater: its place in festivals, its complex relation to cult, and the heightened tensions of the agonistic settings for performance, which were associated in practice with appeal to non-human powers. So Christian critiques, rather than being the last nail in the coffin of a moribund tradition, or a hysterical over-reaction to a banal art form, can reveal a lively and powerful performance tradition in which the artist and audience both ran the risk of the temporary loss of self—which is ecstasy.

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## Describing Ecstasy on the North African Rim in Late Antiquity

by Nancy van Deusen

Augustine, writing on music around the end of the fourth century, was a North African, and one is tempted to connect this fact to what seems to be a preoccupation of his, one way or the other, throughout his long and productive life. This was a topic of importance to Augustine, since, I believe, he thought that it described the secret to music's extraordinary power to transform, hold in its grasp, mesmerize, and even addict its listeners—and especially performers. Ultimately Augustine was concerned with the place of music within *trance*, and this topic continues to be of great interest to us today.

How exactly did music exert this mysterious power? How did music “embody,” or contain within perceptible space, emotional substance, serving as a vessel for pure emotion? In this, Augustine was very much in concord with, if not directly influenced by, Aristotle, who had a good deal to say about what he called “soulish substance.” We have preserved this nomenclature today in what we call “brain matter.” We are also, I think, in agreement today with Aristotle in thinking that finding anything at all about the soul is extremely difficult, but that this soulish substance has a motion within space of its own, a motion that is conducted mechanically to the body, making it possible, as well, for our bodies to move. Hence, possessing and generating motion, the soul is composed of soulish material that is not unique to the soul. The soul perceives substance external to itself because the soul is composed of the same physical elements. In other words, soul and much more external to the soul share a common substance.<sup>1</sup>

But Aristotle was not only interested in soulish substance as a quality and quantity to be imagined, but also in the actualization of a potentially living organism in what we call *life*. Soul, then, is the vital principle, defining by its very presence the relationship between life and body, distinguishing between organic and inorganic material. All matter is found in nature, having definite potentiality. Some matter is capable of being vitalized; and this amazing, only partially explicable, vitality is soul. One can speak then, as Aristotle does, of “ensouled bodies.” These bodies display, as data, what Aristotle names common sensibles, that is evidence that can be perceived by the sense organs

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<sup>1</sup> A short summary of some chief points of the initial chapters of Aristotle's *De anima*: in book 1, Aristotle treats of the background to his work, as well as the scope of the work. In book 2, he writes concerning the nature of the soul, as well as qualities of the soul, that is, nutrition, sensation, types of sense-object, sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, perception of the “whole” where perception is located, and what is perceived. In book 3, intellection in terms of sense perception, imagination, and motivation are discussed. Key, significant terms are often mistranslated in currently-used modern editions, such as that of Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London, 1987).

of sight and hearing as stimuli, including shape, size, number, movement and time. It is interesting, and odd, to think of time as, so to speak, “stuff,” but Aristotle apparently did.<sup>2</sup>

All of this Aristotle sets down methodically, and it is worth noting that his writing on the soul was of much influence, was quoted, learned by memory, and, apparently, came to mind whenever anyone had anything to say on the subject for an exceedingly long period of time.<sup>3</sup> Even Hegel, who was much more interested in what he considered to be his own ideas than in quoting Aristotle, thought that the Latin translation, *De anima*, made a great deal of sense and should definitely be taken seriously. Hegel, as well as many other writers throughout a period of around two thousand years, were especially interested in Aristotle’s thesis that the soul at the same time comprehended cognition, perception, and belief-states on the one hand, as well as appetite, wishing, and desire-states on the other. It is desire that is a source of locomotion for animals; in other words, desire arouses and motivates *spirit*, which all living beings possess.<sup>4</sup>

It is well known that Augustine complained of his inadequate knowledge of Greek, a confession that indicated his background as a North African, rather than a Roman, who, during the fourth century, would have received a bilingual education in both Latin and Greek.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, Augustine shows quite clearly in his treatise on music that he shared many of the same preoccupations as Aristotle, and he expresses them in ways that indicate that he was acquainted, either directly or indirectly, with Aristotle’s writings on the soul. One indication of this common intellectual arena is the matter to be discussed below. Another is the universality of the subjects brought up by both Aristotle and Augustine, and their importance at all times and everywhere—subjects such as learning, cognition, and desire.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> An extended discussion of time as material can be found in Nancy van Deusen, “‘Time out of Time’: Musical Exemplifications of Eternity and Measured Time,” in *The Echo of Music: Essays in Honor of Marie Louise Göllner*, ed. Blair Sullivan (Warren, Mich., 2004), pp. 113–24.

<sup>3</sup> The number of references to Aristotle’s *De anima* in the index to *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny and Jan Pinborg, with Eleonore Stump (Cambridge, Eng., 1982), p. 1002, shows the extent of the influence of this treatise from ca. 1100–1600 C.E. See also Bernard G. Dod’s chapter in the same volume, “Aristoteles latinus,” especially p. 76, for a very useful table indicating both the early translations and dissemination of *De anima*.

<sup>4</sup> This is, of course, a topic for an extended study, beyond the scope of this one. An interpretation and summarization of Hegel’s conceptualization of *Geist* can be accessed in the Suhrkamp edition of Hegel’s *Collected Works, 2: Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), pp. 561–68.

<sup>5</sup> Quintilian discusses this aspect of the well-educated Roman child, who began with Greek before he later learned Latin in school. Early education, particularly with respect to language, was a priority with this writer; see Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 1.1.12ff, in *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian, with an English Translation*, ed. and trans. H. E. Butler, 4 vols., Loeb Classical Library (1920; repr. Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 1:25ff.

<sup>6</sup> Augustine explores the large topic of desire more fully in his treatise, *De libero arbitrio* (Concerning free will), in volume 32 of *Patrologiae cursus completus . . . series latina* (PL),

The observation that Augustine shared both preoccupations as well as a conceptual vocabulary with Aristotle is substantiated by the fact that early on in his career, Augustine wrote two treatises on the soul, and it is most significant that Augustine wrote his treatise on music in between, and, no doubt, concurrently with, these two treatises, on the enduring *substance* of the soul, and its *quantities*. Although both soul—and music, too—would occupy Augustine throughout his long and productive life, these works were both from his youth.<sup>7</sup> In writing these three treatises, on the soul and on music, he was following Aristotle's way of proceeding, since Aristotle placed, as a working method, a musical example together with, or in close proximity to, a consideration one would certainly label as “highly abstract”—such as the nature of the soul.<sup>8</sup> In this case, immediately after his discussion of the kind of material of which the soul is comprised, Augustine takes up, surprisingly, in his treatise on music, *accent*.<sup>9</sup>

Accent, *pulsus*, for Augustine is “ensouled body”—a delimited, contained, “piece” of life that, amazingly, both comprised and motivated desire.<sup>10</sup> With methodical, systematic thoroughness, he discusses *pulsus*, *pulsus* in pattern and repetition, simple pulses, long and short pulses, and pulses containing two, three, and four divisions, within the perception of an extended, enlivened

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ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1857–66), edited more recently by William McAllen Green in volume 74 of the series *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* (CSEL) (Vienna, 1956).

<sup>7</sup> All four treatises, that is, two treatises concerning the soul, concerning music, and concerning the order that exists among the disciplines—a treatise of much importance for the disciplinary place of music as an analogical discipline—can be found together in vol. 32 of the series *Patrologiae latina* (PL). None of these important works has received recent edition. See also Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), for a discussion of the early works within the entire scope of Augustine's writings.

<sup>8</sup> Almost without an exception, whenever Aristotle states that a principle of importance is about to be discussed, and, accordingly, one should take heed, the construct under discussion is followed by a musical example. For a collection of these examples, influential upon the study of music as a university discipline, see Nancy van Deusen, *Theology and Music at the Early University: The Case of Robert Grosseteste and Anonymous IV* (Leiden and London, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> That Augustine carefully works over accentual patterns in his treatise on music is no doubt the reason why very few have dealt with this treatise. A treatise on melody, for example, would hold much more interest for reading audiences of today.

<sup>10</sup> Augustine reinforces Aristotle, and renewed interest in, as well as the influence of, Augustine's works in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries encouraged the translational activity that resulted in multiple translations, directly from the Greek into Latin, of Aristotle's works. This connection between Augustine and Aristotle is crucial, particularly with respect to the question of “soulish substance” and “ensouled body,” but how, and through which authors, and in what language did Augustine have contact with the Philosopher? I am surely not the only one who has been interested in this question, namely, of Augustine's sources of points of view (see, for example, Peter Brown, *Augustine*, p. 84, and H. Dorrie, “Porphyrius als Mittler zwischen Plotin und Augustin,” in *Antike und Orient im Mittelalter*, ed. Paul Wilpert and Willehad Paul Eckert, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 1 [Berlin, 1962], pp. 26–47). On the other hand, it was not necessary that Augustine actually read Aristotle, that is, both, to a certain extent, independently could have had the same perception. What is important is that each can be better understood through the works of the other, and bringing this coalition of works together, I believe, is an essential facet of the late twelfth- and thirteenth-century university, as well as Augustinian, intellectual culture.

entity or body. Augustine writes of a space that could be occupied by a long stroke, in other words, a sounding length (I suppose as a tone is sustained on the organ), but is divided into two strokes or feet, and that one makes sense of both long and the subdivision into two shorts, referring to the notion of equality. In other words, a double stroke could be collated to a simple pulse, and two, that is, simple strokes could be collected, two by two together. The human mind ordered this information first into a long stroke, reinforced by a concurrent syllable, followed by two shorter strokes, and so it went as one ordered the recurrence of longer and shorter strokes into three syllables with strokes, and four syllables/strokes. The next step, then, was to order the repetitions of all of these pulses into the contained, living, body—again this concept of body—of the verse.<sup>11</sup>

These observations are not so breathtaking. One is disappointed, since Augustine has been dealing with the heady subject of the soul, has explained that he is now most desirous of coming in contact with soulish substance and spiritual realities, and then appears to drone on about long and short syllables. Many, through the years, have expressed their resentment at this. But one is led to the decision, for reasons mentioned above of Augustine's influence and authority, that if Augustine thought this feature was most important, in fact, crucial to music's essence, it was. Augustine invests this information with the key to the power of music itself. *Pulse*, or stroke, becomes, for Augustine, ensouled *body*, full of vitality, the component that gave music dynamism. The *pulsus* as a contained, delimited body was a vessel, so to speak, for life.

Further, in contrast to Plato, who expresses the view in his *Timaeus* that *sight*, of all the senses, is most important, Augustine vests spirit first in what is *heard*.<sup>12</sup> Finally, in reading *De musica* (Concerning music), one has the sense

<sup>11</sup> I have summarized chapters 4–7 of book 2, *De musica: quare illud nunc quaere, utrum sonus versuum alignando te aliqua per aures voluptate commoveret* (an inquiry into whether and how the *sound* contained within and *aligned with* a verse [as delimited, self-contained entity] moves by means of the *seduction* of the ears): “in motu est enim etiam omno quod sonat . . . spatium idem quod longa occupat, recte duo tempora nominari” [whatever sounds is always in motion . . . and within the space that is occupied by a long stroke, in fact two can occur], on to (chap. 4) *pedes disyllabi*, a discussion of *aequales* (an equivalence made in which two—or three, or four—strokes are related by the memory and ear to “the space” of one long stroke, fashioning a collation of strokes). The entity of a verse is perceived because of consistency of quantity (chap. 7). From this, Augustine goes on eventually to write, in book 6, of unseen, unheard realities. Perception of all of the matters discussed leads one to true understanding of what is occurring within unseen, yet very real, substance.

<sup>12</sup> The translator of the Greek *Timaeus* into Latin, Chalcidius, however, gives a good deal of attention in his commentary to the importance of the unseen substance of sound. See Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Chalcidius, with commentary (*a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus*), ed. J. H. Waszink, Plato latinus 4 (London, 1975), c. 297 (p. 272), a passage that deals with the utility of music as analogy to spirit or *anima*. For the implications, not only of this emphasis but the importance of the Latin *Timaeus* as well, see Nancy van Deusen, “In and Out of the Medieval Forest: The *Timaeus Latinus*, the Concept of *Silva*, and Music,” forthcoming in a volume of essays on Plato's *Timaeus* and translational theory, as well as the article by Nancy van Deusen, “Music, Rhythm,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald, O.S.A. (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1999).

that the writer feels that he is dealing with “the real stuff”—verities that come as close as one possibly can to truth. Augustine’s pulse patterns are

short short short short  
 long long long long  
 long short long short  
 long short short  
 long long short short short

There are many more of these patterns of longs and shorts set forth by Augustine. They are, as I realized, the most common relationships of long to short pulses in jazz, as well as rap and rock; in fact, once alerted to Augustine’s pulses, one begins to notice them everywhere, such as in the case of the final pattern, which is also the cha-cha-cha.

One question that comes to mind is, what exactly do “feet” or patterns of longs and shorts do, and why was Augustine so interested in them?<sup>13</sup> Why did he take up what one today considers to be outmoded, so-called, “poetic” considerations, that is, groups formed by accent and repetition, as the priorities of the *musical* art—the secret to music’s transformative power? Where *is* music, and where is power? asks Augustine.

It is remarkable that this real stuff, to Augustine’s mind, was throbbing pulse, *not* clearly-sounding tone. And it was in repetition, not in variation, that the verity of this stuff became evident on an utterly basic level. Further, Augustine’s treatise on music could not have been predicted given his own educational and cultural milieu; and, frankly, it is not of much interest to us today either, even for people professionally active in the periods of late antiquity or the Middle Ages.<sup>14</sup> For example, in spite of the fact that Augustine quotes Virgil thousands of times, and often slightly misquotes him in a way that indicates that he was no doubt incorporating pieces of the *Aeneid* by memory into his own work, his work on accent as the essential feature of music departs radically both from what would have been his own education in the communicational arts, including accentual schemes, as well as from Virgil’s complex and diversified accentual practice. Further, Augustine’s pulse as “enlivened body” differs, as well, from another current view of the body as a passive “instrument” of the soul (expressed by his predecessor Ambrose in his work on the creation of the world).<sup>15</sup> And, as has been mentioned, few show much interest in *De musica* today.<sup>16</sup> Augustine,

<sup>13</sup> See *De musica*, PL 32:1081 in which Augustine asks this very question. “Modus, qui pes est . . . Quot temporum est,” in which he discusses, as he states, a characteristic way (of moving)—that is, mode or “foot” . . . consisting of time (as material).

<sup>14</sup> Compare any research library’s database catalogue to notice the disparity between the volume of literature that other works of Augustine has attracted, for example, *The City of God*, *The Confessions*, *Concerning Christian Doctrine*, *Concerning the Trinity*, with Augustine’s treatise on music.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 1.8.31, *PL* 14:140.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Brown, in his widely-read and acclaimed *Augustine of Hippo*, complained (p. 126) that *De musica* was not “about music” but meter; further, the only complete Latin edition is that

therefore, was conforming neither to his own contemporary educational milieu, nor writing, it would seem, for posterity, but rather, responding to his own genuine insight into soulish, substantial, spiritual realities, and how they could be accessed.

For Augustine, the soul of music—its life and source of power, as well as its immense attraction—resided in the embodied soul, and within the soulish substance of *pulsus*, or accent, an attraction that became utterly irresistible in repetition. And Augustine was right. It is the “ensouled body” of the simple pulse, the long stroke, and divisions of perceived contained units, repeated, that are not only engaging and attractive, but can become addictive.<sup>17</sup> “What we have here is the steady motion of repeated pulse combined with musical tones that move straight through to intimacy—a kind of ‘hilarious wisdom,’ for, and of itself, provided by a loving providence,” wrote Augustine.<sup>18</sup> In this statement, Augustine expresses a “way of being” that is both, simultaneously, moving and “in place,” a fusion of movement toward, and away from, with everything needful at that moment provided.

But, having devoted nearly his entire work on music to the subject of *pulsus* and its most powerful combinations, Augustine returned to the subject in his final chapter, one dealing with unseen realities, that is, theology. In this final, sixth, so-called “book,” Augustine writes this time that *ictus* is a “*place* for fashioning repetition over and over,” but that *ictus* also was “never other than what was intended within the soul.”<sup>19</sup> This, of course, distances *ictus* from what one would describe as “mindless repetition,” since each stroke or *ictus* was bonded to the soul in a precise, particular, highly individualized manner, that is, at that particular *instant* of intention. The repeated stroke, then, was not only for Augustine the essence of music, but it also coalesced invisible material (of the soul/mind) with sense enactment and perception. It seems to me that this repeated stroke is also the essence of trance; that repetition, or pulse in one place over and over, is a description of what actually happens in an ecstatic state.

Augustine’s concept of ensouled substance was influential. The topic, understandably, emerged again with new vigor nearly seven hundred years later, as university teachers and students tried anew to understand just the same problem Aristotle had pronounced as difficult, namely, the substance of the

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of the nineteenth-century *Patrologiae latinae*, cited above, and there is no recent complete translation in English. A critical edition, however, of book 6, with selected commentary, has recently appeared, edited by Martin Jacobsson (*Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis* 47 [Stockholm, 2002]). Interestingly, W. F. Jackson Knight, who wrote on Virgil’s accentual schemes, is also one of the very few who has also written on Augustine’s *De musica*.

<sup>17</sup> This is another topic: substances produce alterations within the matter of the brain; pulse, as enlivened material, produces alteration, therefore can be addictive in the same way as physical substances. This reinforces Augustine’s concept of emotional/spiritual material as evidencing all of the qualities of material.

<sup>18</sup> Augustine, *Epistles* 101, PL 35:1081.

<sup>19</sup> Augustine, *De musica*, PL 32:1088f: *ictus* is repeated over and over in a place and “is not other than what is intended by the soul-mind” [. . . locum feriendo repetere, et non alio quam de quo intendit animus ictum perducere].



soul. The topic is just as much of a problem today, and shared, of course, by all of the world's mental cultures. The topic of soul, soulish substance, and attraction, can be viewed as the central topic of importance in the *Summa de bono* of Philip, chancellor at the episcopal see of Notre-Dame in Paris, and liaison between that cathedral and the theology faculty of the newly-constituted university of Paris during the first two decades of the thirteenth century. To Philip the Chancellor are attributed a varying number of so-called *conductus*, a genre that also deals squarely with the topic of soul and choice, and can be regarded as a commentary on Aristotle's principles, contained within the *Physics*, of motion and attraction.<sup>20</sup> What is on his mind as a background for his composition of *conductus*, and a summarization as well of what had been regarded as important concerning the topic of free will, is contained, in some measure, in a large work, Philip the Chancellor's encyclopedic *Summa de bono* (All that can be said about desire and goods). Within his discussion of "ensouled body," soulish substance, desire and will, Philip writes of "the place and times of soul/mind," as well as "spiritual substances [composed of] time." In this regard, time, as unseen substance, can be fashioned and shaped, as well as divided into pieces of living substance.<sup>21</sup>

Spiritual material—where it resides, what it is, what can be done with it, and what its characteristics were—became an obsession with Philip, enough so that his writing on the subject fills two very solid books in a recent edition today. He linked the notion of spiritual substance to motion, using new mental tools for describing how one could measure motion from his reading and thinking about Aristotle's *Physics*, newly translated and available; and related all of this—material, movement, and time—to desire and attraction. This was, essentially, what Augustine had done, of which Philip was certainly aware. Accordingly, Philip presents a trilogy of cognition-knowledge, will-desire, and a middle, supra-cognition, volitional component that fuses both reason and desire into a third mediating factor. This third component is separate from both will and reason. It is knowledge, coupled with the experience of doing—a particular knowing contained within, and validated by, doing. This specific kind of knowing is also the very seat of trance since trance is, as well, a fusion of instantaneous perception with experience.

<sup>20</sup> See Nancy van Deusen, "Figura, Ductus, Conductus: Thirteenth-Century Discussions of Rhythm in Context," in *The Harp and the Soul: Essays in Medieval Music* (Lewiston, N.Y., 1989), pp. 307–28; and the chapter, "Ductus, Tractus, Conductus: The Intellectual Context of a Musical Genre," in *Theology and Music*, by van Deusen, pp. 37–53; as well as Nancy van Deusen, "On the Usefulness of Music: Motion, Music, and Thirteenth-Century Reception of Aristotle's *Physics*," *Viator* 29 (1998), 167–87.

<sup>21</sup> Philip the Chancellor, *Philippi Cancellarii Parisiensis Summa de bono*, ed. Nicolaus Wicki, 2 vols., *Opera philosophia Mediae Aetatis selecta* 2 (Berne, Switz., 1985), 1:295: "... substantie vero spirituales per tempora, non per loca, sicut dicit Augustinus in libro VIII Super Genesim ad litteram. Oportet autem dicere quod non est pertransitus per locum quomodo est corporis per corpus, ut pars parti se commetiatur, cum substantia spiritualis partem non habeat commetientem se corporali parti. Et ideo dicitur non moveri per locum dicitur autem moveri per tempus, quia cum sit nunc in hoc loco et iam in alio, variationem recipit temporalem." The Chancellor then goes on to discuss *ictus*, as well as space of time.

What, exactly, do we have here? What is the common area of reality that is being described by all of the authors I've mentioned? First, as mentioned above, unseen substance, or soulish substance, is real, and can be worked with in the same ways that seen material can be molded, shaped, and perceived. Secondly, unseen vessels for unseen substance have potency. Thirdly, the question that occupies all three, Aristotle, Augustine, and thirteenth-century Philip the Chancellor in Paris, is, what is the actual *material* nature of time? Is this time-material soulish substance? Surely both Augustine and Philip were preoccupied apparently their entire lives with this particular question. They came to the conclusion that material is not bounded by its own exemplification, and what is invisible, weighs nothing, and cannot be heard—a material such as time—nevertheless can manifest the properties all substance has in common, namely, movement, a capacity for measurement, and the potential for change and transformation.

Further, perhaps most importantly, Augustine thought it paradoxical that in the most numerical, strict, and tightly organized of relationships, such as patterns of long and short syllables that were equidistant and consistent, a “breaking out” could suddenly take place—what we might call a “trance state.” How does music use time as material, crafting, then, finally, “time out of time,” a place where time seems to stand still—a way of being without conscious forward time-movement. How paradoxical that in the measurement of long and short pulses, and in the division of pulse marked out by syllables, which enhanced the perception of the movement of time, the very *opposite* of time-measurement could be achieved. In pattern and repetition of pulse, one eventually obliterates pattern and repetition.

This consideration brings up the matter of attraction. Augustine mentions that there is, on the one hand, such a thing as “actual sound,” but that “whatever is voluptuous and seductive influences our perception of what we actually hear.” Attraction and attention rivet us upon “what is happening,” another way of presenting being in time. Again, is it not ironic that the very feature that both exemplifies and enhances movement in time—that is, recurrent, highly absorbing patterns—eventually brings about an equally strong perception of cessation, of still, absolute connection, and of stance? *Trance*, of course, is related to *stance* in sound and substance.

In Steven Friedson's recent work on African music, pattern is connected to varied and diverse spirits.<sup>22</sup> If I were to select the one subject that Augustine emphasized, beginning, of course, with his treatise on music, it would be this very topic, that is, pattern, and varied and diverse figures. The topic of pattern combined, necessarily, with motion, both as characteristic and imparting character, is an important point of reference and observation for Augustine, Aristotle, and Philip the Chancellor as well. “Spirits,” or Augustine's *figurae*, are identified by means of their *modes* of movement, and this, also from Friedson's work, brings an important dimension, I think, to an understanding

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<sup>22</sup> See Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets: Musical Experience in Tumbuka Healing* (Chicago, 1996).

of what Augustine is expressing in *De musica*. The conjunction of sound as material with rhythmic pattern, generating and showing forth movement, achieving an effect as the most basic, potentially most powerful, element of music, is the main point both of Augustine's treatise on music and Friedson's observations of African healers. This is a stunning concurrence. Although Augustine is writing in the late fourth century, I think it is not by chance that he was, after all, a North African, not an Italian, Roman, or Greek.

There is here a common conceptual language, indicating common themes and preoccupations, as well as a common vocabulary for explaining the same utterly important realities. Aristotle, Augustine, and Philip are dealing with the same topics, with what seems to me to be almost uncanny similarities in treatment. Material, material substance, reality of music as material, musical, sonorous material as satisfaction of attraction and desire in the same way that one's hunger can be satisfied with food, one's thirst with drink, the association of distinctive spirit with, and contained within, one specific rhythm—this is the concept of rhythmic “modes” one finds in Aristotle, Augustine, and in thirteenth-century writing on music—and body as a self-contained and delimited instrument, including the “body” of the single, simple, rhythmic pulse, recur in all of the works I've mentioned. Furthermore, one needs them all in their slightly differing nuances of emphasis and meaning to gain a full appreciation of these concepts, to build up an adequate understanding of the basic principles involved in each description and observation. For each is also at the same time unique. By using the showcase of identical priorities, one is able to see how personal the treatments are, that no one is “more right” than the other, but, rather, the same important ideas are being viewed through another window of another personality, experience, and choice.

As substance, pattern, motion, and desire were worked over by quite different writers, during a time frame of two-and-a-half millennia, one is able to come to an appreciation of the essential contribution of each—and all. Rather than the work of one writer overtaking that of the other, of Aristotle and Augustine, for example, having become outmoded, replaced, it would seem, by “post-modernism”—or perhaps something else, namely, disinterest and the smell of antiquarian irrelevance—one notices that both, and Philip the Chancellor as well, brought absolutely essential, as well as personal, insights into the problem of spiritual substance. All can enrich an appreciation of the problem, and all contribute in essential ways to an understanding of material properties of *invisible*, even *inaudible*, but nevertheless *accessible* reality.

Why is music essential to a trance state, no matter where or under what conditions this state may occur? We approach Augustine, on the North African rim, for an answer. And this he gives in the sixth book of *De musica*, concerning music, but spent the rest of his life attempting to understand what he thought and what he had written in that succinct treatise. Music, understood, experienced and performed, is the bridge to whatever it is that is divine, and whatever one is capable of perceiving as the divine. Music, with its

patterns and repetitions, and using the common stuff of life itself, motion, as well as time, draws us out of time and even out of ourselves.

CLAREMONT GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

Chapter Two  
Trance and Healing



## ***Ecstasis in Healing: Practices in Southern Italy and Greece from Antiquity to the Present***

*by* Andromache Karanika

In the area of Apulia (or Puglia) and particularly in the Salento, the phenomenon of the ecstatic dance of the *tarantatite*, hence referred to as tarantism, has puzzled many scholars. Many questions arise as to its nature, its real causes, and its significance within society. It is heavily intertwined with various issues concerning this specific region, particularly historical, religious, medical, and sociological factors that shape the morphology of tarantism. It has been observed and interpreted from a variety of perspectives throughout the ages, although the earliest descriptions come from the Middle Ages. A comparative synchronic and diachronic perspective will help us understand the various expressions of tarantism and how they fit into Salentine society, and especially the mystery surrounding the fatal spider's bite.

Tarantism, often seen as a "culturally-bound disorder" is believed to be caused by the bite of spiders, particularly the "tarantula" spider, which also accounts for the etymology of the word.<sup>1</sup> Often, however, in various narrations of *tarantati* (those who have been bitten), the notion of being bitten predominates, whether by spider, snake or insect. The symptoms usually consist of weakness, a certain aloofness from any social activity, often perceived as light madness or, most often, as a deep melancholy. Healing comes via music and dance, often as a solo performance of ecstatic dance to the accompaniment of *tamburo* (trance drum) or other musical instruments, such as guitar, or even violin.<sup>2</sup> The entire procedure is framed as a religious ritual within the feast of St. Paul, held in the town of Galatina in the Salento. St. Paul becomes the patron of the *tarantati*, and women, who form the vast majority of *tarantati*, call themselves *spose di San Paolo* (brides of St. Paul). Therefore, the phenomenon of tarantism becomes complex in its social dimension, since it embraced the old debate between paganism and Christianity, and the survival of many "foreign" elements in the saint's cult, as the Catholic Church called them. A variety of documents survive which condemn tarantism both from the religious and from the medical point of view. An episode recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*, for instance, is called to service in the process of the Christianization of tarantism. The performers of tarantism often describe the episode in which St. Paul shook a snake off his hand unharmed to

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<sup>1</sup> David Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch: The System of the Sacred in Early Modern Terra d'Otranto* (Manchester and New York, 1995), p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> There are two kinds of dance known with the name *tarantella*: the *tarantella terapeutica*, also known as *pizzica pizzica*, performed by only one person, and the *tarantella di corteggiamento*, the famous Neapolitan "pas de deux." Antonio Cornoldi argues, with scanty evidence, however, that the first kind of tarantella is born from ancient dances and rhythms. He notes that it was often performed as an *epithalamion*, which is a description that fits well with the psychological nexus involved around the performance of the dance, as I am going to argue. See Antonio Cornoldi, "La tarantella e le danze della Magna Grecia," *Quadrivium* 12 (1971), 2.

account for the insertion of this ecstatic dance in St. Paul's feast.<sup>3</sup> It was also believed that, as St. Paul was traveling in the West, he stopped at Galatina and received the hospitality of certain people, to whom, in exchange, he gave the power to heal animal bites. The same belief is found in other areas of the Salento as well, such as the town of San Foca, which, in popular belief, is protected against poisonous bites by St. Paul.

Ritual healing is known to many cultures. Here however, the healing role often played by priest or wise man/woman has been transferred to the musicians. They provide the *tarantati* with music that is an initial means of *ecstasis*, which leads to healing.<sup>4</sup> Gaudenzio Merulo wrote in *Memorabilia*: "demorsi Appuli curantur sono, saltu, cantu, coloribus."<sup>5</sup> The musician would ask the *tarantato/a* what the color and the size of the spider that gave the bite was in order to adapt the music accordingly.<sup>6</sup> Often, there occurred a choral dialogue between musicians and *tarantati*, and with the other witnesses of the healing process as well. The musician would ask where the bite was in order again to adjust his/her cathartic words. Important evidence as to the nature of the music performed is found in the writings of Epifanio Ferdinando, a physician who wrote in the seventeenth century. He reports that some preferred a lamenting tone and sad songs, "funestos et lugubres amant cantus et naenias," while others opted for vivid rhythmic music which could be accompanied like the performance of frenzied dance.<sup>7</sup> Schellinkx, writing in the seventeenth-century *Viaggio al Sud*, remarks that the *tarantati* danced without stopping, and that the only cure was to have the music of the tarantella continue without interruption. As the music continued loudly, the power of the spider's poison diminished.<sup>8</sup>

One of the most important research projects to have been carried out in our century concerning tarantism was due to Ernesto de Martino, whose *Terra del rimorso* still constitutes a vital point of reference for any study of the phenomenon. He conducted fieldwork in the Salento in the summer of 1959, accompanied by a team of specialists in other relevant fields—medicine, economics, sociology, and religion. His unique contribution was to have attempted to see tarantism through different angles of a prism, avoiding any monolithic explanation and ungrounded aetiology. As a scholar of comparative

<sup>3</sup> Acts 28.3–5.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. "He (the musician) was regarded as that extraordinary and powerful person able to 'hear' and interpret the hidden voice of the tarantula, and re-establish the relationship with the patient through the choice of the correct musical motif." Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch*, p. 152.

<sup>5</sup> The reference is in Ernesto de Martino, *La terre du remords* (*La terra del rimorso*), trans. Claude Poncet (Paris, 1966), p. 142.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>8</sup> Text reprinted in Giorgio Di Lecce, *La danza della piccola taranta: Cronache da Galatina, 1908–1993: A memoria d'uomo* (Rome, 1994), p. 34: "Una banda di musicisti doveva suonare senza pause la tarantella, e non lasciar mai riposare il paziente, perchè sudi in abbondanza e tutto il veleno esca dal suo corpo e diminuisca . . . in questo modo molti danzano attraverso le vie della città al seguito dei musicisti, spesso tenendo una o due spade sfoderate e decorate con nodi multicolori di nastri bellissimi di seta . . ."



religion, he presented a comparative methodology and attempted to assess ancient cults that flourished in the area and which helped shape the current phenomenon.

Georges Lapassade, who studied tarantism in *Il ragno del dio che danza*, summarizes his findings in this sentence: “Il tarantismo è insieme esorcismo e adorcismo” [tarantism is at the same time exorcism and adorcismo].<sup>9</sup> Playing beautifully with these words, he asserts the reality involved with tarantism, that of the *esorcismo* and the attempt to “heal” by taking it away, and the inverse procedure of receiving it again (*adorcismo*). The latter signifies the recurrence of the symptoms of a pseudo-illness that needs healing, yet it is not always accompanied by the desire for healing. The very use of the word *esorcismo* reveals that tarantism was often seen as a form of witchcraft which required appropriate “ritual spells.” He firmly believes that tarantism is a means of communication with otherness. Rather than associate tarantism with the ecstatic madness of Dionysian cults, Lapassade instead associates it with ancient Corybantism. The difference lies in the fact that the first seeks union with a divinity in a way where one supposedly incarnates the divine, whereas the latter preserves the personality of the mortal within the union with the divine.

After the medieval view of tarantism, which considered it a form of magic, the advance of medicine in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries instead medicalized it, and saw tarantism as a form of illness which required a cure. Researchers made an attempt to identify the toxic effect caused by a certain substance transmitted by the insect’s bite (*latrodectus tredecim guttatus*). Until very recently, this toxicological explanation was dominant among researchers who believed that the initial “bite” was somehow to blame for the behavior of the “patients.” However, the mystery concerning the existence of poisonous spiders in the area was long ago put to rest, and hence the matter was returned to its proper terms, and placed within its cultural and psychological parameters. Two kinds of tarantula spiders can be found in the area and only one can produce toxic symptoms, but certainly not of the kind described in tarantism. In fact, of the two tarantula spiders found, the one exciting the local imagination is not even the one which causes toxic effects but rather the non-toxic one that is simply larger in size. The poisonous spider is only the myth that nourishes tarantism. To this day the most important question is to determine the kind of “spider” (this term can refer to any kind of insect or snake) that gave the fatal bite, in order to assess which kind of healing should follow. This attitude is by no means different than the one that prevailed in the past. The spider can be of a certain size, color and have an inclination for various colors as well. It has specific psychological characteristics and is attracted to corresponding people. For example, according to popular belief, a lascivious spider is attracted to, and will, more likely, attack lascivious people. Likewise, there are more or less aggressive, more or less lively, and more or less sad spiders. In this way, a dual relationship is established. The spider that partakes of a certain nature will give the fatal bite to people who

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<sup>9</sup> Georges Lapassade, *Intervista sul tarantismo* (Melpignano, 1994).

share this nature. On the other hand, in order to be “healed” within this musical and dancing setting, the music played and the songs performed must be of equivalent nature. Therefore, a sad spider bites a person inclined to melancholy, and should receive funeral songs. The specific moment of the affliction too plays an important role, since the “bite” often leaves the person in the psychological situation of that very moment in which he/she was bitten. As Leonardo da Vinci put it long ago: “Il morso della taranta mantiene l’uomo nel suo proponimento, cioè quel che pensava quando fu morso” [the bite of the *taranta* keeps one in that same disposition, namely what he/she was thinking when he/she was bitten].<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, there is a two-way relationship between the spider and the *tarantato/a*. The musicians who carry out the *esorcismo* must seek out the true identity of the spider, both the permanent and the one of the specific moment of the “bite,” in order to adapt it to their musical endeavors. The rhythm and the melody must correspond to the psychological factors involved in order to be more therapeutically successful.

The repetition of symptoms (reported to recur during successive summers) is not without explanation, according to the framing myth of the poisonous spider. Either the specific spider which gave the “bite” is not yet dead, or in dying it has left its successors (sisters, daughters, nieces or other relatives). This brings us to the critical point of this essay, that is, social aspects of the phenomenon. The spider (*taranta*, initially a grammatically feminine noun in Latin and early Italian), is believed to be female and always has feminine names. Likewise, as all researchers remark, the victims are also predominantly, although not exclusively, women. Going beyond that observation, it is important to note that most of the female victims are young teenagers, widows, or married women whose marriage is thought to be an extremely unhappy one. In all of the above categories, men do not have a significant presence in their lives, but rather form a conspicuous absence. Though this observation might hastily lead us to a psychoanalytic interpretation, the matter is rather more complex. Issues of both sexual suppression and liberation are not to be ignored in any interpretation of tarantism. That women are the predominant “victims” of the tarantula has led I. M. Lewis to speak of a “feminist sub-culture.”<sup>11</sup> The peculiarity of women’s social and sexual status also seemed to be the case in ancient instances of cultic madness, particularly of the Dionysian variety. In most of the mythological examples we know, we have women who are either concerned about future marriage, therefore

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<sup>10</sup> Di Lecce, *La danza della piccola taranta*, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> For Lewis, “what men reluctantly accept at face value as illness and cure, the weaker sex enjoys as a religious drama. What is for both initially an illness, thus becomes for women a traumatic induction into a cult group.” He interestingly states that on the part of men “[this] tolerance of these cults, as well as the ritual license and blessing also accorded to women more generally, may reflect a shadowy recognition of the injustice of this contradiction between the official status of women and their actual importance to society.” I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession*, 2nd ed. (London and New York, 1989), pp. 80–81.

in their teenage years, or are older, and thus their active role is slowly fading away.<sup>12</sup>

The songs with which the woman invokes the saint:

Santu Paulu miu de le tarante  
Pizzichi le caruse a mmienu all' anche  
Santu Paulu miu de li scursuni  
Pizzichi li carusi a li cujuni

(My St. Paul of the *tarantate*  
who pricks the girls in their genitals,  
my St. Paul of the serpents  
who pricks the boys in their testicles)

The character is intensely erotic. It is, then, only legitimate to see that earlier cults, pagan in origin, have been accommodated within the local Christian cults. The erotic frame is clearly noted in all the songs used by the *tarantati/e*. In some songs it tends to be more graphic while in others the intense religious voice is equated with the passion of the devoted to the saint, as is the case in the following song performed by a woman:

Santu Paulu veni mo'  
Santu Paulu veni qua  
Tene ferme le mie catene  
Ma nu abbandunare.

(Saint Paul come to me,  
come here,  
hold tightly my chains,  
do not leave me.)

The same song continues with the woman's desire for exclusivity with the god:

Santu Paulu resta qua  
Nella mia casetta insieme imu restar . . .  
Santu Paulu veni qua  
Cu la manu benedetta mi devi de sanar  
Santu Paulu veni qua

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<sup>12</sup> For more details on this matter, see Ross S. Kraemer, "Ecstasy and Possession: The Attraction of Women to the Cult of Dionysus," *Harvard Theological Review* 72 (1979), 78–79. When discussing the mythology of the daughters of Minyas who refuse to worship Dionysus, he notes that "they are roughly at the age of puberty and anticipating a major socio-biological change from girlhood to womanhood." By considering the example of Agave and her sisters who are older, he writes that "it seems possible to suggest that women whose socio-biological status is in a situation of flux of uncertainty are more vulnerable to peripheral possession and more in need of its therapeutic advantage than are women whose social status is relatively assured."

E damme la mia vita ca ieu te deu lu cor!  
Santu Paulu veni qua cerca la Caterina e nu me abbandunar!

(St. Paul stay here,  
in my little house stay with me . . .  
St. Paul give me the cure with your healing hand.  
St. Paul come here  
and give me my life as I give you my heart.  
St Paul come here, look for Caterina and never leave me.)

These simple songs form an intense prayer. The women seek appropriation of the saint to whom the desired cure is directed. The content of their songs justifies the name given by the locals to these women, which is precisely how they see themselves, as *spose di San Paolo* (brides of St. Paul). The dance performance reveals a latent sexual content as it follows the progress of a wedding ceremony. Intense preparation is followed by a moment of absolute self-giving to the god, and finally exhaustion after the demanding performance. The climax of the performance is not the musical part, nor the dance performance per se, it is the moment of complete giving up of one's senses, after the task of "purification" and healing has been completed. The real climax is the moment of self-rendering with a complete trust to the divine. When the *tarantato/a* lies down, he/she resembles patients in Antiquity waiting for the cure in incubation. The main difference is that the recurrence of tarantism and the social and psychological sides interwoven therein makes us wonder to what extent one really wants a cure. It seems from most accounts that the real goal is to remain in complete union with the divine.

The account of a *tarantata* called Maria is very revealing in this regard, and most accounts consider hers to be a representative example.<sup>13</sup> She was a tormented teenager who fell in love with someone who did not return her love. One day she felt she was "bitten" by a spider and wanted helplessly to dance. The story becomes more complicated as another woman attempted to have Maria married off to her son. The proposal was not very appealing to Maria, and in her endeavor to gain time she collected money to pay for the musicians' cure. The would-be mother-in-law, together with her son, abducted Maria. After some time she claims to have seen both St. Peter and St. Paul, as she was walking, who asked her to follow them. She started wandering around the fields and danced incessantly.

Such an incident is typical of the sorts of relationships and the psychology involved in tarantism. The conception of unity with the saint alludes to the Dionysian past and the role of the maenads in religion and in everyday life. It also alludes to the relationship between mortals and gods in antiquity as it was expressed in the gods' cult. The state of maenadism did not consist of a permanent situation but rather was a periodic and recurrent phenomenon that did not demand any further participation in the Dionysian cult. Evidence from the

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<sup>13</sup> Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, p. 82; and de Martino, *La terre du remords*, p. 75.

Bacchic revels, involving both men and women, that caused a scandal in 186 B.C. in Rome has not only helped us understand some of the aspects of the cult, but has also been greatly misleading.<sup>14</sup> The maenads of Magna Graecia survive in artistic representations on vases from southern Italy. One of the most significant sources, however, is a fragment of Aristoxenus of Tarentum from the mid-fourth century B.C. who gives information about the performance of women from Rhegium and Locri Epizephyrii.<sup>15</sup> He describes how women suddenly are overcome by *ecstasis*, while in the midst of dining or some other activity. The symptoms seemed to be of the same periodic, non-permanent type proper to tarantism today. They are not strictly related to a Dionysian cult or ritual maenadism as we know it from other extant sources, but a maenadic ambiance might be assumed. What is more interesting is the origin of the cure that was prescribed by the Delphic oracle. As Henrichs remarks,

The cure prescribed by the Delphic oracle consisted in the singing of paeans during spring-time. The mysterious voice which unbalanced the women, and their sudden and agitated escape from their normal way of life, highlighted by the “Bacchic verb” “jump,” have close parallels in Euripides’ *Bacchant Women*, 1078–1094. The delphic cure is similar to the homeopathic treatment which the Proetids received from the prophet Melampus.<sup>16</sup>

Dodds, in his influential study of the “irrational” in ancient Greece, distinguishes among four different types of madness: prophetic madness associated with Apollo; teletic or ritual madness associated with Dionysus; poetic madness inspired by the Muses, and erotic madness induced by Aphrodite and Dionysus.<sup>17</sup> In a sense, the kind of ecstatic dance performance that has been attested to in southern Italy could be seen as an example of ritual madness, enhanced with erotic and certainly poetic overtones, as the song is the cure.

In a rapprochement of tarantism and ancient maenadism, it becomes clear that as far as the worshippers are concerned, union with the god, in one form or another, is primary. This union serves as the external form and *raison d’être* of the ritual itself. These phenomena serve to transcend the social reality in which one is trapped. This union with the divine is achieved through music and dance, a performance that demands exiting oneself and entering a new state of consciousness. In practical reality, this could simply mean abstinence from all

<sup>14</sup> For evidence concerning maenadism in Rome and particularly in Magna Graecia, see Albert Henrichs, “Greek Maenadism from Olympias to Messalina,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 82 (1978), 121–60, esp. 134–136.

<sup>15</sup> Aristoxenus, fr. 36 Mueller = fr. 117 Wehrli ap. Apollon. *Hist. Mirab.* 40. The reference is taken from Henrichs, “Greek Maenadism,” p. 134.

<sup>16</sup> See Henrichs, “Greek Maenadism,” pp. 134–135 with further references. He makes the point that Rome recognized non-maenadic forms of the Dionysiac cult which had many followers in the Greek-speaking regions of southern Italy, already from the time of the Bacchanalia in the second century B.C.

<sup>17</sup> E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964).

mundane things, that is everyday life, and transcendence beyond the problems of daily life. In order to better understand this phenomenon, we need to take into account both the psychological as well as the social contexts which shape ecstatic performances. The combination of the worshipper's dance and mediator's music illustrates the combined means that will lead to liberation after the experience of transcendence. By the means of music and dance, mortals transcend themselves and partake of the divine, even if briefly.<sup>18</sup>

A key point in our consideration of tarantism and maenadism as parallel phenomena is the religious or mythic frames which reshape the ecstatic dance performance. Lawler argues that the majority of the vases depicting maenadic dancers performing ecstatic dances in the classical period represent *human* dances, and not figures taken from mythology.<sup>19</sup> Archaeological evidence, as well as many philological sources and important epigraphical material, can help us reconstruct the events contemporary to maenadism, and confirm the perception of maenadism as a reenactment of mythic events.<sup>20</sup> The text by Diodorus (4.3.2–3) is one of the most significant sources concerning later maenadism in early Hellenistic times, and helps us understand ancient views.

The issue of ritual healing is also involved in the parallel dance performances here being examined. Apollodorus (2.2.2) gives an example of the healing power of ecstatic dance in the mythic story of Melampus, who assisted in the cure of the madness of the Argive women. The Corybantic rites provided catharsis through dance accompaniment and music of the Phrygian flute. According to a reference in Plato's *Ion*, the Corybantes performed ecstatic dances (553E) and had a peculiar sensitivity to music which is associated with the divine (536C). According to a fragment by Aristoxenus, Pythagoreans used to practice musical catharsis.<sup>21</sup> In this regard the connection of the Pythagorean school with the region of southern Italy is very intriguing.

I would like to compare the ecstatic dance of the *tarantati* with the well-known ecstatic ritual of *Anastenaria* in northern Greece, mainly in the regions of Thrace and eastern Macedonia. This ritual shares with tarantism its appropriation into Christian ritual. The *Anastenaria* is an annual celebration in honor of Sts. Constantine and Helen, on May 21 of each year. What is unique in this case, however, is the performance of *Anastenaria* ecstatic dance and firewalking. The fact that one dances on fire and nonetheless remains intact has received much attention from a medical point of view. Another common feature with southern Italian practice is the use of a *tamburo*, the frame drum that provokes dance and

<sup>18</sup> Dodds, quoting Aldous Huxley, writes that "ritual dances provide a religious experience that seems more satisfying and convincing than any other . . . It is with their muscles that they most easily obtain knowledge of the divine." Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, p. 271.

<sup>19</sup> L. B. Lawler, "The Maenads: A Contribution to the Study of the Dance in Ancient Greece," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 6 (1927), 79.

<sup>20</sup> The influential article by Albert Henrichs provides abundant information and cites further sources on cultic maenadism.

<sup>21</sup> Aristoxenus, fr. 26 Wehrli. Dodds gives further references in Theophrastus although as he states there are philological problems concerning the textual transmission; see Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, pp. 79 and 99.

accompanies it. The element of homeopathic magic is present in this ritual in the form of a common prayer, uttered by the dancers: "Let it become ash, let it become ash." By conquering the power of fire with their naked feet, they believe that they have conquered the power of evil, and this conquest will safeguard them from illness and bad luck in general. The performers act in a group and form a community. A special ritual which forms part of the *Anastenaria* is called *kalogeros*, or "monk." After praying to the patron saints Constantine and Helen, the leader of the performers becomes pale, trembles and breaks into a sweat, characteristics one also finds in the performance of *tarantati*. A dramatic enactment takes place, much as in ancient Greece.<sup>22</sup> Thus, one plays the role of the king, another the bride, while another the physician, and so forth. Magical words of a sensuous character and features of fertility rites are reflected in such a performance.

In a different ritual the children wear costumes and go from house to house uttering magic spells that are supposed to bring rain: "St. Constantine, give us rain, give rain to our grain."<sup>23</sup> Eusebius in the fourth century notes that there were pagan dances performed to honor St. Constantine, right after the victory of Christianity was established.<sup>24</sup> The fact that these conflicting customs coexist alongside official Christianity has led many scholars to believe that the ecstatic performances are a reflection of a popular religion that has continued to exist and has never been completely conquered. The appropriation of a saint's feast day, in effect, transfers pre-Christian customs and rituals (labeled "pagan") to the new religion, yet maintains old traditional ritual at its core.<sup>25</sup>

Nilsson has remarked that religious ecstasy is an end in itself, bringing with it the reward of union with the divine.<sup>26</sup> Ecstasy is often perceived in philosophical or ideological terms, and is thought to be a surpassing of oneself, an encounter with higher forms of life, whether perceived as divine or not. Yet, in the frame of the rituals that we examine, it is healing which is the ultimate goal, whether for release from a bodily disease or a mental state. In the case of the Greek *Anastenaria*, the very existence of fire and the attempt to conquer it reflect purification rites, which will lead to healing. Fire was perceived to burn all diseases. The ancient belief that if one went through fire and came out alive, then one would be stronger, is encountered in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, where Demeter, in her epiphany to mankind, disguised as an old woman, takes the son of the king of Eleusis, Demophoon, and puts him in fire, in order to make him immortal.<sup>27</sup> In that story, the mother intervenes, unable to participate in the

<sup>22</sup> Cf. theories of the origins of tragedy and comedy.

<sup>23</sup> Katerina Kakoure, *Dionysiaka: Ek tes semerines laikis latreias ton Thraakon* (1965; repr. Athens, 1999), p. 64.

<sup>24</sup> Eusebius, PG 20:173–84.

<sup>25</sup> See Kakoure, *Dionysiaka*, pp. 65–70, for extensive evidence on the matter.

<sup>26</sup> Martin Nilsson, *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion, 1: Bis zur griechischen Weltherrschaft* (Munich, 1941), p. 545.

<sup>27</sup> Compare the standard epithets for the god of medicine Asclepius, *zoophoros* and *pyrophoros* (life-giving or fire-giving). Fire is equated with the notion of light, and fighting light in darkness.

ecstatic nature of the ritual, and therefore deprives her son of the immortality that the goddess of fertility would have given him.

What links the *Anastenaria* even more convincingly to the phenomenon of tarantism is the central position of the figure of St. Constantine, who in Greek Orthodox tradition is considered to be the founder of the Byzantine Empire and the savior of Christian religion.<sup>28</sup> In southern Italy, St. Paul holds the central position, since he is believed to be the founder of the Christian religion. The sect of the Paulicians in the Eastern Byzantine Empire firmly links the figures of St. Paul and St. Constantine, since they zealously perform similar ecstatic rituals.<sup>29</sup>

The other important feature common to both rituals is the participation of women. Women tend to represent the majority of performers in both cases. One might, therefore, proceed to a sociological interpretation of the phenomenon that reveals much about the role of women in their respective societies. For female performers of *Anastenaria*, St. Constantine is a symbolic representation of a husband, just as St. Paul is to the *spose di San Paolo*. Through the performance of the ecstatic dance, the female performer symbolically marries St. Constantine. As Danforth remarks, “the conceptualization of the relationship between possessing spirit and possessed worshiper, as one of marriage, is quite common and is found in rituals involving trance and possession throughout the world.”<sup>30</sup> Just as in a marriage where tokens are exchanged as symbols and pledges that validate the wedding, female performers offer red kerchiefs to the saint, the local token at wedding rituals in northern Greece. Thus, the relationship between the female performer of *Anastenaria* and her patron saint constitutes a metaphorical marriage in which the saint plays the role of a husband or betrothed. Such ecstatic performances suggest a sexual nature of the trance dances, as well as joy and release which are orgasmic in nature. And the more so, when one considers the struggle, in some cases, to achieve *ecstasis*, which seems very similar to orgasm. According to Danforth,

When an *Anastenarissa* is experiencing a difficult trance, other *Anastenarides* try to ease her suffering by helping her achieve a transition to a more satisfying experience. Gradually she begins to dance more comfortably, standing upright and moving her feet in regular dance steps. The crucial point in this transformation occurs when the dancing *Anastenarissa* is given an icon or *simadi* of Sts. Constantine and Helen, which she holds for the remainder of the dance. It is at this point that the *Anastenarissa*, most dramatically receives the supernatural power of St. Constantine, which is responsible for the transformation of a dance of anxiety and suffering into a dance of power and joy.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Loring Danforth, *Firewalking and Religious Healing: The Anastenaria of Greece and the American Firewalking Movement* (Princeton, 1989), p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Kakoure, *Dionysiaka*, pp. 74–79.

<sup>30</sup> Danforth, *Firewalking*, p. 88.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.



Once again, from a sociological point of view, ritual therapy seeks to heal symptoms of an illness that metaphorically stands as the corporal symbol articulating social and psychological problems encountered in life.<sup>32</sup> Both the *tarantate* and the *Anastenarisses* are women whose social role is marginalized, and whose psychological problems find a bodily expression in the symptoms they experience and wish to heal through their ecstatic dance. It is through this dance that they become protagonists in a public ritual, and therefore turn their position of marginality to center stage in their local societies. At the same time, the dance serves to articulate their everyday experience of life in a socially acceptable manner.<sup>33</sup> That is why unmarried women or women who experience difficulties in their married life (with husbands or mothers-in-law, as is commonly the case) are prone to such forms of transcendence of their psychological or social problems. *Ecstasis* therefore may be a parallel of orgasmic climax, and ultimately perceived in sexual terms. It has the power to heal in the context of a public ritual, finally reestablishing a disordered individual and social condition.

Healing as ultimate goal of *ecstasis* is the primary element in the ancient practice of incubation. The patient sleeps in a sacred place, and the dream seen leads to ultimate healing. The ancient priests of the oracle or even those of the Christian church served as interpreters of the incubant's dream that promoted healing. I choose this example as a comparison with a form of healing practice which uses a more "static" *ecstasis*. Through sleep one goes out of body to a world of dreams, bringing that dream back to real life in order to heal. As Meier remarks, "If, as we put it today, the unconscious is to speak, the conscious must be silent."<sup>34</sup> In the case of incubation, we have a complete absence of music and dance which leads to an ecstatic condition. Instead, sleep and the encounter with the dream fill the gap.

Asclepius is presented in Homer as the great physician.<sup>35</sup> In later sources he appears as the god of healing, having received this ability from his father Apollo. This is a deity of chthonic nature. The snake, as a symbol of healing, is very prominent. Asclepius, as the healer, is connected with light. Pausanias compares the course of the sun with the human body's health.<sup>36</sup> Eusebius and Joannes Lydus also connect him to light.<sup>37</sup>

When the patient came to the sanctuary in order to be healed he/she would first participate in purification rites.<sup>38</sup> Unlike the forms of *ecstasis* that we have here examined, all was to happen in a mystic, silent environment, quite unlike the

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 5 and 58–63.

<sup>33</sup> As Levi-Strauss argues, ritual systems of healing offer to the patients a symbolic language, through which they can express otherwise unutterable psychological or social conditions.

<sup>34</sup> C. A. Meier, *Ancient Incubation and Modern Psychotherapy*, trans. Monica Curtis (Evanston, Ill., 1967), p. xiv.

<sup>35</sup> *Iliad* 4.192–3.

<sup>36</sup> Pausanias 7.23.8.

<sup>37</sup> Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 3.13.19; and Joannes Lydus, *De mensibus* 4.45.

<sup>38</sup> Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2.19.

public milieu filled with vibrant music in the case of tarantism and *Anastenaria*. If Asclepius himself appeared in the dream, then healing was guaranteed.<sup>39</sup>

Women played an important role as incubants in ancient Greece and later Christian practices. It was quite common that the problems they sought to solve were, in fact, fertility problems. They turned to the god for assistance. Incubation, then, was the means by which a solution was sought not only to a personal problem but also to a social condition. The union with the god provided the solution. In the worshiped god, the women found the ideal husband who could impregnate them and solve all their problems. Generally speaking, and with regard to extant inscriptions, particularly the miracle inscriptions found in the sanctuary of Epidaurus, it seems that through sleep in a sacred place, healing is achieved at the unconscious level. Here is some epigraphic evidence: “A woman from Keos. This woman, sleeping here concerning children, *saw a dream*. It seems to her that in her sleep a snake *lay down* upon her stomach. *And from this* five children were born to her.”<sup>40</sup> The snake is the symbol of Asclepius with a phallic role in many different rituals. It is this specific sexual connotation that is reflected here. The snake, as the representation of the god, has the power to give five children to the woman. Another inscription from the same collection offers similar evidence: “Nikaboula of Messene, concerning children. *Sleeping here* she saw a dream. It seemed to her the god *came* bringing a snake *creeping beside him* and she had sex with it. *And from this* children were born to her within a year, twin boys.”<sup>41</sup> The union with the god in both cases is so strong that the solution to the fertility problems resulted in multiple pregnancies. Once again, the chthonic role of the snake, with its strong phallic connotations, makes it evident that at the unconscious level, it is a sexual union with the god which is sought as the solution to a fundamental problem.

In conclusion, after examining three cases of “going beyond oneself,” that is, of *ecstasis*—1) the trance dances of southern Italy and 2) of northern Greece; and 3) the practice of incubation in antiquity—one notes many common features. Religious healing is sought by means of *ecstasis*, to solve not only one’s symptoms but rather as a holistic healing of psychological and social conditions which lie at the heart of these ritual practices. In the healing practice, sexuality plays a key role as the ultimate means of establishing personal and social order in a union with the divine, conventionally conceived in terms of a marriage.

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<sup>39</sup> *Inscriptiones Graecae* 4, fasc. 2 pt. 1, no. 127.

<sup>40</sup> From *Stele B* of the corpus of inscriptions in Epidaurus. See Lynn R. LiDonnici, *The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Atlanta, Ga., 1995), pp. 112–113 (italics mine).

<sup>41</sup> LiDonnici, *Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions*, p. 115 (italics mine).

# Dancing towards Well-Being: Reflections on the *Pizzica* in the Contemporary Salento, Italy

by Karen Lüdtkke

## INTRODUCTION

“When you let go of your hand, the tambourine starts playing, when you let go of your voice, the song starts singing; and when you let go of your body the *pizzica* starts dancing.”<sup>1</sup> With these words, the director of a Salentine music group encouraged a group of young students to participate in a course aimed at transmitting the sounds and steps of the *pizzica* during the summer of 1998. This music and dance, generally unquestionably linked to the past tradition of tarantism, the ritual cure for those who were, or were said to be, bitten by the “tarantula spider,” has experienced an enormous boom in the 1990s Salento. It has been revived in what has become known as the world of “neo-tarantism,” in the contexts of concerts, festivals and discotheques.<sup>2</sup>

For centuries, the *pizzica* and other popular music were used in this southernmost part of Italy’s heel to cure those who were afflicted by the tarantula. In this way, popular belief explains, the spider’s poison was driven out and a sense of well-being reestablished. It was necessary, however, to find *il filo della taranta*, the thread of the tarantula: that stimulus, be it a rhythm, melody, color, image, scent or object, which would instigate the bitten woman or man,

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I would like to thank everyone who has helped me with my research both in the Salento and the U.K. I am also extremely grateful to my supervisor David Parkin for guiding me through my doctoral studies, which have led to this paper; and to the Economic and Social Research Council and the Marie Curie Fellowship of the European Commission for their financial support.

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, informants quoted on the basis of personal communications from my doctoral research (Karen Lüdtkke, “Theatre and Therapy: The Tarantula’s Dance in Salento, Italy” [Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 2000]) are referred to by pseudonyms or with respect to their professional and artistic activities. Unless specified otherwise, translations of citations from oral and written sources are mine. And, although I adopt the tendency widespread in the Salento to use the term *pizzica* as a synonym for Salentine popular music and dance at large, it is important to note that “the *pizzica*” has many different, constantly readapted, variants and is but one genre in a much larger musical and choreographic repertoire characterizing this territory. Moreover, it is generally divided into three types: the *pizzica de core*, a dance of courtship and entertainment; the *pizzica scherma*, a dance duel originally performed with knives and only by men; and the *pizzica tarantata*, the ritual dance of the *tarantate*. See Giorgio Di Lecce, *La danza della piccola taranta: Cronache da Galatina, 1908–1993: A memoria d’uomo* (Rome, 1994), p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> The origins of the term “neo-tarantism” remain, to my knowledge, unclear. I first came across this term in conversations with informants on my arrival in the Salento in April 1997. Some recent inquiries, which demand confirmation, have revealed that the introduction of this notion is variously attributed to the French academic George Lapassade who undertook research in the Salento during the 1980s. [Editor’s note: see Luisa Del Giudice, “The Folk Music Revival and the Culture of *Tarantismo* in the Salento,” n. 12, in this volume.]

*tarantata* or *tarantato*, to react, and most importantly, to dance.<sup>3</sup> Above all, the role of music was crucial. What kind of stimulus was “right” depended, according to popular opinion, on the characteristics of the spider that had injected its poison. Only the tune preferred by this particular tarantula was able to bring about a cure. It stimulated a process of letting go of hands, voice and body to let that music or dance, the tambourine, song or *pizzica*, which elicited a reaction, take over. This surrender to the tarantula, to something seen as above and beyond the afflicted individual was fundamental to the recovery of well-being. It was the mythic spider which was seen to lead the dance.<sup>4</sup>

In this paper, I want to explore what insights contemporary reappropriations of the tarantula’s music and dance in the context of “neo-tarantism” might provide. This highly disputed, academic rather than locally widespread notion is adopted here to refer to the dynamic complex of social activities, relations and discourses associated today with the *pizzica* and with Salentine popular music and dance in general. It is about having fun, musical fashions, questions of identity, politics and commerce as well as therapeutic and spiritual needs. In the Salento region, the knowledge and experience of healing through music and dance still marks the memories of many, particularly of elderly generations. Moreover, the interest of academics, journalists and musicians has contributed to a widespread awareness of tarantism and its performance practices. How and to what extent do these facts influence contemporary attitudes and actions? Are they at all perceived to promote well-being? Is the tarantula still seen to take over?

Five steps are taken to investigate these issues. First, a look at studies on tarantism and particularly Ernesto de Martino’s work on this topic<sup>5</sup> provides a historical backdrop for this discussion. Two, the notion of healing is considered from the perspective of an interpretative medical anthropology to specify the theoretical approach taken. Three, understandings of the world of “neo-tarantism” are explored in order to contextualize performances of the *pizzica* in the Salento today. Four, considerations of the cultural and political dynamics embodied in the concert of the Night of the Tarantula demonstrate how public discourses on the performance practices of “neo-tarantism” rarely touch on the notion of healing. Five, a focus on the personal experiences of performers in the context of “neo-tarantism” and the life story of a Salentine woman who describes herself as a modern *tarantata* reveal a direct link between these contemporary practices and perceptions of well-being. In conclusion, a comparative look at past and present performances of the *pizzica* suggests that, despite major differences, the Salentine world of “neo-tarantism,” like that of tarantism, provides a creative platform to forge experiences and identities, including those of affliction and

<sup>3</sup> I refer here to a conversation between Luigi di Acaya and Maurizio Nocera printed in Di Lecce, *La danza della piccola taranta*, pp. 187–96) and entitled “Se non trovi il filo giusto, la taranta non balla” (“If the right thread isn’t found, the tarantula doesn’t dance”).

<sup>4</sup> Zoological classifications of this mythic spider vary. The *Lycosa tarantula* and the *Latrodectus tredecim guttatus* (the European black widow) are most commonly identified with the phenomenon of tarantism, although other poisonous animals such as snakes or scorpions equally featured in this tradition; see I. M. Lewis, “The Spider and the Pangolin,” *Man* 26, no. 3 (1991), 513–25.

<sup>5</sup> Ernesto de Martino, *La terra del rimorso: contributo a una storia religiosa del Sud* (Milan, 1961).

well-being. The degree to which this is acknowledged and experienced varies between public and personal discourses and is influenced by different “ways of performing.” Often this potential is exploited and manipulated to promote rivalry, competition and exclusion. At the same time, it is self-consciously engaged in to promote a greater sense of well-being, belonging and vitality.

#### THE SPIDER’S WEB AS A SAFETY NET: THE HISTORIC RITUAL OF TARANTISM

The healing tradition of tarantism has puzzled and challenged researchers for centuries. Their views are recorded in the vast quantity of historic literature on this topic.<sup>6</sup> Over time interpretations of tarantism have oscillated between the medical and musical, the scientific and magical, the psychological and socioreligious. Today, Ernesto de Martino’s study, *La terra del rimorso*,<sup>7</sup> is a standard point of reference. It is often cited and discussed, in both academic and everyday discourses, as if it embodied and epitomized the tradition of tarantism itself. Inevitable limitations and incongruencies of textual representations with respect to the complexities and contradictions of ritual practices are often neglected, as is the vast historic literature on which de Martino’s rich contribution builds. Similarly, the large and constantly increasing number of publications criticizing and elaborating on de Martino’s book requires recognition.<sup>8</sup> These reservations do not, however, undermine the importance of

<sup>6</sup> The earliest written reference to the musical treatment of the tarantula’s bite in Puglia is generally seen to date back to the 1426 publication of the Venetian doctor Sante Ardoini in the *Sertum Papale de Venesis*; see J. Hecker, *Die grossen Volkskrankheiten des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1865), p. 165; W. Katner, “Das Rätsel des Tarantismus: eine Ätiologie der italienischen Tanzkrankheit,” *Nova acta leopoldina* 18, no. 124 (1956), 12; and Luigi Chiriatti, *Morso d’amore: Viaggio nel tarantismo salentino* (Lecce, 1995), p. 32. George Mora, “An Historical and Sociopsychiatric Appraisal of Tarantism and Its Importance in the Tradition of Psychotherapy of Mental Disorders,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 37 (1963), 419, provides an exception. He argues that a 1362 copy of the *De Venesis* publications constitutes “the oldest document dealing with the musical exorcism of people supposedly bitten by the tarantula. . . . The concept is expressed in it—somewhat obscurely—that the melodic bite of the arachnoid makes possible the re-evocation of the bite in musical terms.” See Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 3: *Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (New York, 1934), pp. 526–34.

<sup>7</sup> See n. 5 above.

<sup>8</sup> To give various random examples of two extensive lists, studies preceding de Martino’s work include Giorgio Baglivi, “De anatome morsu et effectibus tarantulæ,” in *Opera omnia medico-practica et anatomica*, Dissertatio 6, 6th ed. (Paris, 1704); Francesco De Raho, *Il tarantolismo nella superstizione e nella scienza* (1908; Rome, 1994); E. Ferdinando, *Centum historiae seu observationes et casus medici* (Venice, 1621); Hecker, *Die grossen Volkskrankheiten*; W. Katner, “Das Rätsel des Tarantismus: eine Ätiologie der italienischen Tanzkrankheit,” *Nova acta leopoldina* 18, no. 124 (1956), 1–115; Athanasius Kircher, *Magnes sive de arte magnetica* (Rome, 1654), pp. 587–603; M. Schneider, *La danza de espadas y la tarantela* (Barcelona, 1948); and F. Serao, *Della tarantola o sia falangio di Pulia* (Naples, 1742). Studies following de Martino involve R. Bartholomew, “Tarantism, Dancing Mania and Demonopathy: The Anthro-Political Aspects of ‘Mass Psychogenic Illness,’” *Psychological Medicine* 24 (1994), 281–306; M. Castiglione and L.

Ernesto de Martino's socioreligious interpretation of tarantism as a form of musical, choreographic and chromatic exorcism, based on fieldwork undertaken in the summer of 1959.

His study is invaluable in advancing an awareness of the power relations within which tarantism existed in the mid-twentieth century. Afflictions of tarantism are seen to be symptomatic of wider social and political conflicts. Most *tarantate* belonged to what de Martino identifies, in Gramscian terms, as the "subaltern" class.<sup>9</sup> Most of them were, moreover, women, despite well-known exceptions to both cases. These afflictions are shown to be inseparable from a struggle against the "larger hegemonic order" and directly linked to inequalities of gender and extreme poverty. In this sense, the magico-religious perspective of tarantism is examined not as an evolutionary relic of primitive thinking, or as proof of psychological instability, but as a culturally specific response to harsh living conditions and traumatic life experiences. The tarantula's ritual is identified as a means of reliving and healing individual and social crises, which threaten to erupt without control. It serves as a historically tested and socially accepted channel of communicating and resolving distress.

The symbol of the tarantula gives form to the formless, rhythm and melody to menacing silence, color to the colorless . . . it offers a means for imagining, listening to and looking at that for which one is without pictures, blind and deaf, but which, at the same time, desperately needs to be imagined, listened to and seen.<sup>10</sup>

De Martino argues that tarantism cannot simply be reduced to a form of spider poisoning, but must be considered as an ideological or mythical complex specific to southern Italy in its symbolism. Many *tarantate* showed no evidence of an actual bite. All, however, revealed signs of a "crisis of presence" at the outset of their affliction.<sup>11</sup> This concept refers to an individual's loss of referents in the surrounding world, an experience of the self as unreal and unrelated to present

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Stocchi, "Il tarantismo oggi: proposte per una verifica," *La critica sociologica* 44 (1977), 43–69; Pierpaolo De Giorgi, *Tarantismo e rinascita: i riti musicali e coreutici della pizzica-pizzica e della tarantella* (Lecce, 1999); Gino Leonard Di Mitri, ed., *Quarant'anni dopo de Martino: il tarantismo*, 2 vols. (Nardò, 2000); V. Lanternari, "Tarantismo: dal medico neopositivista all'antropologo, alla etnopsichiatria di oggi," *Storia, antropologia e scienze del linguaggio* 3 (1995), 67–92; Georges Lapassade, *Intervista sul tarantismo* (Maglie, 1994); I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession*, 2nd ed. (London and New York, 1989); R. Lorenzetti, "Ernesto de Martino e le tarantate del Salento," *Sallentum* 1 (1982), 9–34; Annabella Rossi, *Lettere da una tarantata* (Bari, 1970); Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession*, trans. Gilbert Rouget and Brunhilde Biebuyck (Chicago, 1985), originally published as *La musique et la transe: esquisse d'une théorie générale des relations de la musique et de la possession* (Paris, 1980); and A. Turchini, *Morso, morbo, morte: la tarantola fra cultura medica e terapia popolare* (Milan, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> I choose to use the feminine plural form, *tarantate*, as most of the tarantula's victims were women.

<sup>10</sup> De Martino, *La terra del rimorso*, p. 63.

<sup>11</sup> Ernesto de Martino, "Crisi della presenza e reintegrazione religiosa," *Aut Aut*, 31 (1956), 17–38; Ernesto de Martino, *Sud e magia* (Milan, 1960); and Ernesto de Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale: dal lamento funebre antico al pianto di Maria* (Turin, 1975).

circumstances, and is seen to result, above all, from traumas caused by socioeconomic and natural adversity. It is here that the tarantula was seen to step in. Through the injection of its poison, popular belief suggests, the mystic spider conveyed its characteristics to its victim. On average, three or four days of dancing provided the only way out. In this context, the rhythmic sounds of the *pizzica*, accompanied by song, dance and colours, presented an “acknowledged safety net to confide in during times of existential crisis.”<sup>12</sup>

However, symptoms generally returned, often on the anniversary of the initial “bite,” as underlying causes persisted. In this sense, the tarantula’s music and dance provided a safety net not only to endure severe life circumstances, but also a safety net to guarantee that the status quo of these causes was secured. Tarantism provided a form of temporary relief, whilst at the same time distracting attention from the underlying social and political reasons promoting these afflictions.<sup>13</sup> The words of a music therapist working in the Salento today support this fact, whilst at the same time revealing the risk of dismissing all aspects of this curative tradition: “Tarantism constituted a therapeutic cage, if you will. . . . Although as a technique it is valid, it is a reductive, simple modality. If problems are not resolved both at a psychophysical and social level, they remain.”

#### THE TARANTULA’S THREAD AS A TRANSFORMATIVE TOOL: THE PROCESS OF RECOVERY

*Il filo della taranta*, the thread of the tarantula, had to be found in order to drive out the spider’s poison. *I tempi giusti*, the “right” tempo or times, had to be established to provoke an irresistible urge to dance: a key criteria identifying the tarantula’s victims and a prerequisite for accessing the “dimension of the tarantula,” that realm of experience, of suffering and the transcendence of suffering, associated with the spider’s bite in the Salento. I adopt this notion from Edoardo Winspeare, who writes,

Speaking with researchers and then with musicians and the *tarantate* themselves, I realised that all of these people were like “initiates,” and, as such, very careful about transmitting something that had to do with “suffering” and with a dimension that the elderly knew, but which we, the modern generations, have forgotten or dismissed: the dimension of the tarantula.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> De Martino, *La terra del rimorso*, p. 135.

<sup>13</sup> Castiglione and Stocchi, “Il tarantismo oggi”; and Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*.

<sup>14</sup> Edoardo Winspeare, “Alla ricerca della taranta perduta,” in *La danza della piccola taranta: Cronache da Galatina, 1908–1993: A memoria d’uomo*, ed. Giorgio Di Lecce (Rome, 1994), p. 112.

Subsequent to de Martino's work, anthropological studies of tarantism have focused on notions of altered states of consciousness such as trance, ecstasy or possession<sup>15</sup> as central to engaging with this "dimension of the tarantula." All of these are problematic concepts variously defined and distinguished by scholars in order to speak about those states of being which are highly significant to the successful outcome of healing practices such as tarantism. These concepts bring up the numerous critiques associated with the use of terms referring to subjective experiences and notions of consciousness and the wide range of definitions applied. They raise questions of what exactly is seen to induce states described as trance or ecstasy, and difficulties of establishing criteria of authenticity and genuineness.<sup>16</sup> In the light of these reservations, Damian Walter suggests that

In preference to terms such as trance, ecstasy and altered or alternate states of consciousness . . . the notion of an *altered state of awareness* . . . gives support to the idea that in a culturally-recognized "trance" state, however defined, the subject learns to identify and give precedence to different visual, aural, somatic, and mental criteria, without necessarily implying that he or she becomes dissociated from his or her immediate surroundings and without prioritizing etic categories concerned with the truth or falsity of what is believed to be taking place.<sup>17</sup>

Such an approach relies heavily on a recognition of the human being as both objectively and subjectively, and therefore also socially and politically, founded. Increasingly, anthropological studies on the body and embodiment have criticized biomedical understandings of the human being as a rational and disembodied agent.<sup>18</sup> Falling ill goes hand in hand with the transformation of an individual's sense of self. Moreover, the way we relate to ourselves influences the way we relate to others and the social and natural world at large. Anthropologically viewed, well-being refers not only to the psychophysiological domain but also to an individual's relations with her or his socionatural environment and the inherent power play that constitutes these relations. Through diagnosis and treatment the human organism is physically, morally, socially and politically engaged. Any analysis of healing practices must consequently include a consideration of the negotiative process that exists between these various

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<sup>15</sup> Georges Lapassade, *Stati modificati e transe* (Rome, 1996); Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*; and Rouget, *Music and Trance*.

<sup>16</sup> R. Hamayon, "Are Trance, Ecstasy and Similar Concepts Appropriate in the Study of Shamanism?" in *Shamanism in Performing Arts*, ed. Tae-gon Kim and Mihály Hoppál (Budapest, 1995), pp. 17–34.

<sup>17</sup> Damian Walter, "The Medium of the Message: Shamanism as Localised Practice in the Nepal Himalayas," in *The Archaeology of Shamanism*, ed. Neil S. Price (London, 2001), pp. 112–13 (italics in the original).

<sup>18</sup> Margaret Lock and Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1987), 6–32; and idem, "A Critical-Interpretive Approach in Medical Anthropology: Rituals and Routines of Discipline and Dissent," in *Handbook of Medical Anthropology: Contemporary Theory and Method*, ed. Carolyn F. Sargent and Thomas M. Johnson, rev. ed. (Westport, Conn., 1996), pp. 41–70.



dimensions as expressed in an interpretative approach to medical anthropology, which defines “medicine . . . as a cultural system . . . sickness as a meaningful human experience . . . [and] healing as an interpretative process that involves ‘the construction of culturally specific illness realities’ as well as ‘therapeutic efforts to transform those realities.’”<sup>19</sup>

The construction of an illness reality, which is culturally specific in the sense that individual experiences are expressed and communicated in a way that is socially acknowledged, is illustrated by the case of tarantism. The reality of spider poisoning in the Salento and the existence of the tarantula spider in this area provided a way of making sense of subjective crises for both the *tarantate* and for others. Ritually contextualized music and movement were ways of expressing these realities by linking personal experiences to the larger socio-natural environment. Within the complex of tarantism, the therapeutic process of interpretation and transformation is epitomized by purifying oneself from the tarantula’s poison. These explanations not only refer to transformations on the phenomenological level, recovery being based on the *tarantate*’s personal experience of feeling better, but also constitute a means of social resistance and political action. But how do these points relate to modern performances associated with the *pizzica*?

#### TARANTISM AS AN AD OR ANTIDOTE: THE CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE CONTEXT

“Tarantism is not . . . an essence that is in some way configurable and identifiable, but all that which can be said about it. . . . When the link between tarantism and its symbolic whole is cut, it becomes an individual resource for all purposes . . .”<sup>20</sup> Tarantism is a free-floating discourse, an image, spot or slogan, as aptly identified by Paolo Apolito,<sup>21</sup> that can be put to manifold uses. Paradoxically, it is precisely this free-floating attribute of tarantism as perceived today which lends itself to the marketing of this phenomenon as anchored in time immemorial.

If in the fifties and sixties touristic invitations to the Salento tended to ignore, even hide, the last “relics” of tarantism, today the same invitations express pride with reference to tarantism: come to the land of tarantism . . . come to know the Salento, it has tarantism in its blood, which has antique, Dionysian and perhaps even pre-Greek roots . . .<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Loring Danforth, *Firewalking and Religious Healing: The Anastenaria of Greece and the American Firewalking Movement* (Princeton, 1989), p. 52.

<sup>20</sup> Paolo Apolito, “Tarantismo, identità locale, postmodernità,” in *Quarant’anni dopo de Martino*, ed. Di Mitri, 1:141.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

These points are important. Tarantism has become touristic. To many it is no more than a myth of the past framed in glossy tourist brochures. According to widespread views, the recovery of well-being is of no issue in this context, in which academic, political and commercial motives are seen to predominate. In the past, Gino Santoro writes, “the ritual context circumscribed taboos and articulated indemnities to the totem of the tarantula. Today, the totem of money has eliminated all taboos.”<sup>23</sup>

However, reasons for participating in the world of “neo-tarantism” vary. Some have come to view the *pizzica* as a life philosophy, as an antidote to a lack of meaning in everyday life, as a source of well-being and as a vital form of communication. Such diverse views and motivations make up the manifold threads that overlap and challenge each other in the context of “neo-tarantism.” Although all are woven together under the common denominator of the *pizzica*, they cannot be reduced to a simple or straightforward category. This complexity echoes studies of ethnomusicologists and dance ethnologists, which reveal the life arts of music and dance as “part of the very construction and interpretation of social and conceptual relationships and processes,”<sup>24</sup> as “fields of symbolic activity”<sup>25</sup> able to generate, control and negotiate meanings and experiences, and, as intrinsically political and paradoxical.<sup>26</sup> Cultural performance, David Parkin writes, “is real in its effects but, because imagined, gives its creators and their audiences a freedom of invention and interpretation that does not exist with regard to structured or positive reality.”<sup>27</sup> It provides a means of contesting and manipulating conceptions of reality, including those of well-being and affliction.

Performances—whether ritual or dramatic—create and present realities vivid enough to beguile, amuse or terrify. They alter moods, attitudes, social states and states of mind . . . They are ephemeral; they create their effects and then are gone, leaving their reverberations (fresh insights, reconstituted selves, new statuses, altered realities) behind them.<sup>28</sup>

This creative and transformative essence of the performance arts is confirmed by a look at the practices and experiences of performers in the Salento today. It also reveals how discourses and “ways of performing” in the context of “neo-tarantism” both conflict and complement each other.

<sup>23</sup> Gino Santoro, “E se la taranta si vendicasse?” *Quotidiano di Lecce*, no. 217 (August 8, 2001), 1–6.

<sup>24</sup> A. Seeger, *Why Suja Sing: The Anthropology of an Amazonian People* (Cambridge, Eng., 1987), p. xiv.

<sup>25</sup> M. Stokes, ed., *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place* (Oxford, 1994), p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> Abner Cohen, *Masquerade Politics: Explorations in the Structure of Urban Cultural Movements* (Oxford, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> David Parkin, “The Power of the Bizarre,” in *The Politics of Cultural Performance*, ed. David J. Parkin, Lionel Caplan and Humphrey J. Fischer (Providence, R.I., 1996), p. xxi.

<sup>28</sup> Edward L. Schieffelin, “On Failure and Performance: Throwing the Medium Out of the Seance,” in *The Performance of Healing*, ed. C. Laderman and M. Roseman (London, 1996), pp. 59–60.

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 THE NIGHT OF THE TARANTULA: PUBLIC DISCOURSES ON THE *PIZZICA*

In the early evening of the night of 24 August 1998, eleven Salentine music groups perform their musical repertoires onstage in nine different villages of the *Grecia Salentina*, a region south of the Salentine capital of Lecce, in which Greek dialects are still spoken by a small minority. Later in the evening, musicians and spectators converge on the centrally located town of Melpignano, where a final concert including all of the various groups is staged at 11:30 P.M. This concluding spectacle was rehearsed for three days preceding this event, under the direction of the Neapolitan musician, Daniele Sepe. Crowds of hundreds tightly pack the main town square, where a large stage is floodlit in bright colors. Performers of all ages sing, dance and play in an as yet unprecedented collaborative initiative. The crowd participates frenetically. Circles of tambourine players and dancers form, break up and reform below the stage amidst the flash of cameras and enthusiastic applause. After several hours, the concert is officially concluded by one of the academic organizers, with an invitation to the same event in the coming year: "See you at the Night of the Tarantula '99!" His words signal the *pizzica's* step into the limelight of what is envisaged to be a major annual festival within the "world music" scene.

Animated media coverage and discussions followed this initial event. Promoted by the Istituto Diego Carpitella (recently inaugurated in the Salento to document and encourage research on local traditions), its aim was described as threefold:

to contribute to reflections on traditional music and dance; to further the confrontation between the various Salentine musicians engaged in the recovery and artistic elaboration of folkloric material; [and] to evaluate the wide ranging demand for information and performances regarding the *pizzica* and tarantism which has emerged in the Salentine peninsula in recent years.<sup>29</sup>

For many, this night, bringing together so many of Salento's *pizzica* enthusiasts, was a great success. For others, the pleasure evoked did not outweigh underlying dilemmas. A heated debate about the link between tradition and modernity in Salentine music emerged in the local papers in subsequent weeks.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> C. Petrachi, "Il Salento, come un'isola sonante: 'la notte della taranta,' progetto che pone il confronto tra tradizione e modernità," *Leccesera* 21–22 (August, 1998), 13.

<sup>30</sup> The following articles are of specific relevance: R. Durante, "Se vive la musica popolare resta accesa la memoria del passato," *Quotidiano di Lecce*, no. 173 (1998), 10; P. Fumarola, "Produzione e riscatto con la musica popolare," *Quotidiano di Lecce*, no. 174 (1998), 4; Roberto Raheli, "E così ritornammo a parlare di notti e di tarante," *Quotidiano di Lecce*, no. 168 (1998), 16; and G. Seclì, "Le tarante pizzicano e ballano nel vuoto di cultura popolare," *Quotidiano di Lecce*, no. 174 (1998), 14. These ideas also emerge clearly from interviews printed in the first edition of the review *Melissi* published by the organizers of the Night of the Tarantula; see Gianfranco Salvatore, *Isole sonanti: scenari archetipici della musica del mediterraneo* (Rome, 1989). Similar issues are

Opinions appeared to be divided into two main camps. On the one hand, there were those who spoke of the need for an active confrontation of Salento's musicians with other types of music, in order to elaborate the existing repertoire of Salento's popular music through "hybridization" or "contamination" with other styles (ethnic, techno, New Age, etc.), thereby fostering innovation and diversity in a context within which "the same songs are continually fried and refried."<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, there were those who argued that any kind of popular music is inherently subject to a process of "natural" change, but nevertheless staunchly underlined that it was crucial not to force this process. Whereas it was seen as inevitable that certain groups were, for instance, influenced by Balkan music, considering the strong influx of people from these regions to Southern Italy in recent years, intellectually imposed projects "conceived at a table"<sup>32</sup> were strongly disputed.

La Notte della Taranta is one occasion in which the *pizzica* is fixed and framed within a concert program. At the same time, offstage, it leaves scope for the enactment of circles or rounds, known as *ronde*, made up of musicians and spectators with (traditionally no more than two) dancers taking turns to perform in the center. In the Salentine musical traditions, such rounds, Daniele Durante writes, "were attributed with a magical valence, which assured a cure from any kind of illness to all active participants."<sup>33</sup> This perception of performances of popular music in the past, although disputable in its absoluteness, suggests that the therapeutic potential of music and dance was acknowledged and experienced not only in ritual contexts explicitly aimed at healing but also on occasions of communal gatherings and festivities. Today, many middle-aged and elderly lament that such "magic rounds," those performance situations in which the "dimension of the tarantula" is allowed to take over, rarely surface, since performance contexts and techniques are seldom appropriate. This applies particularly to performances onstage directed towards an audience, which clearly differ from circular performance setups, in which all attention is concentrated and directed towards an imaginary center and within which anyone can perform, if accepted into the circle, depending on dancing skills and relations to those present. In this sense, the Night of the Tarantula, like many concerts of popular Salentine music, is characterized by different "ways of performing" enacted simultaneously and not always harmoniously. Although there is a danger of dichotomizing onstage and offstage performances, when in practice much interaction occurs between these physically distinct performance spaces, concert

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developed in a series of articles published on the *pizzica* in various editions of the *Quotidiano di Lecce (QL)* in August 2001: Sergio Blasi, pp. "I miracoli della taranta," *QL* no. 230, pp. 1–8; Giorgio Di Lecce, "Cuore e ritmo: la comunicazione del duemila," *QL* no. 219, pp. 1–7; G. Di Mitri, "Un patrimonio da salvare," *QL* no. 226, pp. 1–6; E. Imbriani, "Se la taranta non ha paura di rinnovarsi," *QL* no. 218, pp. 1–9; A. Nacci, "Basta rimorsi, la pizzica è anche contaminazione," *QL* no. 229, pp. 1–7; G. Santoro, "E se la taranta si vendicasse?" *QL* no. 217, pp. 1–6; and V. Santoro, "La pizzica piace così: perchè contaminarla?" *QL* no. 220, pp. 1–7.

<sup>31</sup> V. Santoro, "La pizzica piace così," pp. 1–7.

<sup>32</sup> Raheli, "E così ritornammo," p. 16.

<sup>33</sup> D. Durante, "Pizzica e techno-pizzica," in *Musica, droga e transe: materiali di ricerca*, ed. V. Ampolo and G. Zappatore (Rome, 1999), p. 168.

settings tend to spotlight the contradictions of performing popular music onstage. This was starkly evident in August 1999, when La Notte della Taranta saw its second season, and, on several occasions, the organizers asked offstage participants to stop playing, as the rhythms they were keeping in the circles formed on the village square below the stage, were not the ones scheduled on the concert program, which had been arduously rehearsed the days before. The concert framework was jeopardized as the tarantula took over offstage.

In 2000, the musician Joe Zawinul of the group Weather Report participated as artistic director in this initiative. In August 2001, the orchestra Tito Schipa of Lecce, under the direction of Piero Milesi, inaugurated a first performance of what some have defined as “sinfopizzica.”<sup>34</sup> As in its first year onstage, this event continues to attract enormous crowds (estimates range to twenty and even thirty thousand people<sup>35</sup>) as well as immense criticism, revealing the highly politicized dynamics that are embodied and manipulated within this performance, which is both unique and exempletive of others in the context of “neo-tarantism.” “The syndrome of the tarantula,” Gigi Di Mitri writes, “is transversal, invasive as an enticing pest: it pleases the antiglobal supporters of a homemade ‘buena vista social forum’ just as much as right wing municipalities engaged in (why not?) the popularistic road to tarantism.”<sup>36</sup> This statement is supported by the fact that performances of popular music and the *pizzica* have accompanied the electoral campaigns of both right and left wing political candidates over the past few years.

Generally speaking, however, initial inputs leading to the reappropriation of tarantism and “its” music are intrinsically related to a left wing political ideology (still considered the most politically correct in the *pizzica* milieu) focused on promoting and defending popular culture and local traditions. In this light, was it a mere coincidence that the musical director of the 1998 Night of the Tarantula was Daniele Sepe, known as a left-wing musician in Italy? A further example, which deserves more in-depth consideration than can be given at this point, regards the engagement of academics with a strong Marxist ideology in the promotion of research on tarantism and its music. In this context, George Lapassade’s diagnosis of tarantism’s contemporary manifestations in the world of “neo-tarantism” as providing symbols of group identity and a key to Salentine culture is significant.<sup>37</sup> This view brings into play all of the complex issues regarding perceptions of Southern Italy and its frontier position as a “crossroads” of Europe and the Mediterranean. Moreover, whereas criticisms are still voiced about the vast discrepancies in local government expenditure for cultural programmes focused on “cultivated” rather than “popular” music, the *pizzica* too is becoming a market label. Problems that are shaking up the organization of La

<sup>34</sup> G. Indennitate, “Taranta, febbre che divora,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* 20 (August, 2001), 11.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Di Mitri, “Un patrimonio da salvare,” pp. 1–6.

<sup>37</sup> Lapassade, *Intervista sul tarantismo*.

Notte della Taranta and the very foundations of the Istituto Carpitella are linked not only to divergent opinions amongst the scientific and artistic committee, but also to the interests of politicians engaged in this event. As one Salentine researcher states: “What’s the target? Visibility on the media, popularity amongst the *pizzica aficionados*, publicity and votes!”

On the level of intellectual and political discourse, illustrated here through the example of the Night of the Tarantula, the notion of healing is largely dismissed as irrelevant, if not misleading, as the words of a Salentine intellectual reveal: “Research on the curative aspect of tarantism and its music is of little interest. In fact, it’s banal, since it has been amply and exhaustively studied and can only ever imply a search for the remnants and traces of the past. This raises a great danger of inventions and folklorisms.” Such criticisms need to be taken seriously. At the same time, it is necessary to question to what extent such overarching statements rule out any reflection on definitions of healing, which take into account the wider social and political contexts of individual afflictions. In what way, for example, does the search for a self-affirming identity promote or impede a greater sense of well-being? To what extent does the case of the Night of the Tarantula, more specifically, aggravate or release tensions by bringing to the fore relations of conflict or support that mark the world of “neo-tarantism” and Salentine society as such?

#### THE STORY OF A MODERN *TARANTATA*: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE *PIZZICA*

A consideration of how participants in the world of “neo-tarantism” experience the “dimension of the tarantula” today points to the existence of a parallel but much less verbalized or publicized line of discourse. This is based predominantly on the direct experience of the *pizzica*, rather than on intellectual intentions or reflections, although such a distinction remains one of emphasis rather than exclusion. Some of the questions that I frequently asked Salentine performers were: “What happens when you perform the *pizzica*? What experiences do playing or dancing evoke? What sensations do you associate with these occasions?” Responses varied. For many, performing the *pizzica* is simply about having fun. For others, experiences are less easily put into words. Here are some accounts.

You get into a state which is not very terrestrial. Terrestrial things, that is those things that have to do with the physical, are almost all explicable . . . but those which have to do with the soul are not very explicable. . . . Even I find myself asking myself at times how I managed to reach a certain rhythm, how I managed to hit the tambourine so strongly without my hand feeling anything . . . Why is it that a hand which bleeds doesn’t feel anything?

The dimension of experience, trance for instance, is an individual thing, which is then transmitted. We exchange experiences. We talk about them afterwards. Trance takes you to higher levels, it puts you into contact with another world, with another universe. It’s a magical fact

and therefore a bit difficult to explain scientifically, technically. But, for us who have lived these things it's a quasi-natural fact.

Others have written about their experiences particularly with reference to playing in circles or rounds:

The experience of participating in these rounds becomes something mystical and fascinating: the circle creates a harmony of sounds, bodies, emotions . . . everybody gives and takes energy in a quasi-symbiotic exchange with the other and with the music. For those who dance, this pursuit also becomes spatial, and the arms, legs, head, every tiniest part of the body, amplifies its receptivity.<sup>38</sup>

In the rounds, emotions are expressed through corporeal modalities . . . the gestures, voice, tambourine and dance used create a "rhythmic bath"; a space-time which consolidates the primary link to the flow of life. The subject lives her own existence within a condition of "a-temporality."<sup>39</sup>

The life story of Anna, a Salentine woman who describes herself as a modern *tarantata*, provides a more in-depth insight into how such experiences may relate to everyday life:

I started to dance in my early twenties on the occasions when the *pizzica* was played. My father was against it. It was not seen as a very respectable thing to do. But I felt the need to dance on every occasion that presented itself. Just like the *tarantate* in the past. Looking back, I now see how this process of learning to dance changed me. My childhood led me to rationalize everything. My emotions and my body were practically nonexistent for me. However, when I began to dance, everything around me disappeared and I instinctively began to communicate with my body. At festivals and concerts others began to acknowledge me as someone who dances well. I was invited to work with a performance group. Onstage, I had to learn to open myself to the audience. Before, I had always felt embarrassed about my body. I wanted to be taller and slimmer. Then the birth of my first child left me completely disintegrated. I did psychoanalysis for a while and stopped again. But I continued to dance. I'd forget about everything around. It was a way of presenting myself as I was. It helped me gain security about my body and to express my feelings. With the *pizzica de core*, you can live out all of your sensuality. It is you who directs the dance, subtly, even though it is the man who circles around you. Learning the *pizzica scherma* was a final step for me. It is about defining and

<sup>38</sup> M. Negro and C. Sergio, *La musica popolare nella reinterpretazione della nuova generazione* (Lecce, 2000), p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Durante, "Pizzica e techno-pizzica," pp. 180–181.

defending your territory. It forced me to bring out the aggressivity, which I'd always hidden before. Through dancing, I not only regained access to my emotions, but also to an energy which we have inside, and which is part of something larger, something global. I don't think that such a force—brought alive when you dance—can be accidental. There must be an underlying layer that nourishes it. Although for a long time I avoided the Church, I now believe in a universal spirituality which doesn't classify faiths.

The words of Anna and other Salentines suggest that many participants in the world of “neo-tarantism” have found themselves exposed to certain experiences which were perhaps not intentionally sought out, but retrospectively identified as enjoyable and beneficial and henceforth deliberately pursued. These performers may or may not relate their experiences to the “dimension of the tarantula” underlining a link to the enhancement of well-being. Moreover, it is difficult to say to what extent such experiences fall into any unifying category and whether they are highly diffused or applicable only to a small minority of the many individuals that have been enthusiastically swept up by the wave of the *pizzica* that has washed across the Salento since the mid-1990s. Although no detailed citations are provided here, it is important to note that such “out-of-the-ordinary” experiences are not acknowledged by everyone. Many recall no experiences which they would describe as such. Moreover, some criticize those who claim they do.

#### DISCUSSION

Dancing transformed Anna's life. Although the changes she recounts are likely to be attributed to manifold factors, it is significant that Anna herself identifies her own experiences of dancing as specifically important in catalyzing these changes. On a personal level, Anna speaks of how her experience of herself was transformed from one of disregard for her body and her emotions to one of acknowledging and appreciating these aspects of herself. Her relations to others changed, moreover, as she found admiration and appreciation from fellow participants in the context of *pizzica* performances, where previously she had been condemned by her father and others for following her urge to dance. On yet another level, experiences of performing transformed Anna's initial resistance towards the religious dimension as embodied by the Catholic Church into an openness towards the sacred which she now perceives as inherent in natural reality at large.

Clearly this account is one snapshot of an intricate biography which needs to be considered in relation to the lives of others who see themselves as modern *tarantati* in order to examine to what extent general patterns can be identified.<sup>40</sup> These issues can only be touched on in this concluding discussion. Anna's case can be considered as exemplary of others, although it remains to be seen on what

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<sup>40</sup> I maintain the masculine plural form *tarantati* here as both men and women define themselves in these terms today.



scale this applies. Her experiences relate to those of a young female student who revealed that when she feels unwell she plays recordings of the *pizzica* and dances on her bedroom floor. They compare to those of a woman artist who speaks of having been bitten by the tarantula whilst painting to the sounds of the *pizzica*, and who sees her subsequent engagement in the creation of art with others as therapeutic in the sense that it provided an alternative way of socializing to that of everyday life. Anna's story is linked to that of a young Salentine man, who associates learning to dance the *pizzica* with the discovery of creative energies and the ability to channel these into his work as an artist in a way that he had not been aware or capable of before. Anna's example relates, moreover, to the experiences of the musicians of the popular music group *Alla Bua*, who explicitly speak of engaging with the *pizzica* to communicate its therapeutic potential. Examples such as these abound and demand a careful investigation of how these individual experiences are inserted within specific life stories and relate to larger social and political patterns and discourses, in order to explore similarities and differences to historic cases of tarantism.

A first step can be taken by comparing Anna's case to those of past *tarantate*. Whereas individuals afflicted by the tarantula in the past were assigned their role as *tarantate* by others and through the process of undergoing rituals of tarantism, Anna's view of herself as a modern *tarantata* is self-assigned, even if in relation to the revalorization of the *pizzica* in the Salento and elsewhere. Moreover, the *tarantate* music was deliberately applied for healing within the context of an acknowledged belief system and considered to be the only way out. Meanwhile, Anna retrospectively views her involvement in the music and dance of the *pizzica* as curative, in the light of her own acquaintance with therapeutic alternatives such as psychoanalysis. Likewise, past performances were determined by the ritual context focused on the symbolic complex of the tarantula spider. Anna has reenacted this ritual on many occasions for theatrical purposes or television cameras, and her motivations for doing so may be questioned. Many *tarantate* in the past, too, were accused of putting on a show. Such persisting questions of authenticity may become secondary, however, if we keep in mind two points made earlier: one, the impacts of cultural performances, even if staged, are real in their effects on the level of experience, and two, the healing power of the *pizzica* was acknowledged in the past, not only in ritual performances but equally in "magic rounds" performed on manifold occasions. This suggests that the "way of performing" is fundamental. The intent behind a performance is significant. The impact of a performance driven by individual motivations to shine on a spotlight stage varies from that of a performance enacted with the aim of letting the rhythm, the *pizzica* or the tarantula take over, although these two motivations need not exclude each other.

We may also ask to what extent the types of afflictions experienced by Anna are comparable to those bitten by the tarantula in bygone decades. Do the conditions that were seen to characterize the crises of the *tarantate* relate to those of some neo-*tarantati* today? Does the extinction of tarantism rituals imply that

the crises associated with the tarantula's bite have also been eradicated? To what extent do the social and political causes of affliction identified by de Martino,<sup>41</sup> such as extreme poverty, harsh living conditions, excessive demands of labor, sexual repression, or exclusion from public life particularly of women, apply to the neo-*tarantati* today? And, to what degree do the impacts of socioeconomic development and the introduction of psychiatric care, identified as two key elements which have helped to bring about the end of tarantism, safeguard against new problems that have emerged in the modern context of the Salento: official unemployment figures above twenty percent; large-scale emigration rupturing cultural and family ties; generational differences marking close-knit communities, etc.?

Anna's account refers to her conflicts as a young Salentine woman not only with what her father and other elderly generations considered to be right and proper for her to do, but also with regard to the Catholic Church whose political role remains significant in the Salento today. Dancing provided a way for her to experience a sense of unity and belonging with others and her surroundings opposed to that of rupture and conflict, both with regard to what she distinguishes as the rational and emotional sides of herself and with respect to everyday relations towards others and her environment. The *pizzica* provided a way of confronting and resolving these ruptures, always however within a social context in which this music and dance became increasingly recognized and popular. This point raises questions that link the phenomenological, social and political dimensions of affliction and cure. Just as the efficacy of tarantism rituals cannot be reduced to the impact of music and dance alone, without reference to the larger historical, cultural and spiritual context within which this tradition was embedded, the effect of "neo-tarantism" performances cannot be reduced to the notes and steps of the *pizzica*. Would Anna have experienced the impact of the *pizzica* as powerfully as she relates, if it had not been paralleled with the boom that this genre of music and dance has experienced in the Salento today?

Today Anna finds herself transmitting her own expertise of Salentine popular music and dance through workshops in the Salento and throughout Italy. She tells how her experiences of teaching the steps and moves of the *pizzica* at times extend to giving advice and counseling. In the past, course participants have confronted her with problematic issues in their own lives, sensing the experience she herself has gained from her own life crises. She talks freely and openly about these difficulties, with the deliberate intention of stimulating transformative processes in others. Her story, both unique and exemplary of others in the Salento, illustrates that certain experiences, associated with the "dimension of the tarantula" and accessed through specific "ways of performing" in the context of "neo-tarantism" today, whether deliberately or not, are related to a process of recovery. Anna's personal story, as those of others, both contrast and complement public discourses on the *pizzica* largely motivated by social and political questions with regard to which notions of suffering are seen to play no, or only a very marginal, role.

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<sup>41</sup> De Martino, *La terra del rimorso*.

To conclude, I have attempted to uncover how far the *pizzica* and other popular music in the Salento are seen to promote well-being within the context of “neo-tarantism” performances at large. The aim has been to contextualize contemporary performance practices by giving voice to various points of views. These considerations reveal both the risks and values of engaging with the transformative tools of music and dance. Enactments of the *pizzica* and other popular music and dance in the Salento today are both about defining divisions and accentuating individual afflictions and social conflicts as much as they are a means of promoting well-being and the reintegration of individuals in the larger web of everyday community life. The *pizzica* is not only a representative tool which reflects identities and experiences, but also a creative tool which allows for the (re)creation and transformation of identities and experiences, including those of suffering and affliction. It provides a potential platform for accessing new experiences. It has the power to both exclude and include. It may enhance situations and sensations of expulsion just as much as those of belonging. It highlights the need for recognizing the sociopolitical aspects of well-being and the potentially curative value of music and dance that is embedded within, rather than imported into, the socio-natural context of performers’ everyday lives. Moreover, the specific example of the *pizzica* stresses the risk of seeing music and dance in and of themselves as unequivocally beneficial. It is the “way of performing” and its underlying intent that is fundamental for the recovery of wellbeing. Beyond an individual’s technical virtuosity, it is the notion of surrender within an appropriate context that influences the potential of performance practices to promote health and vitality. As with the case of tarantism, the *pizzica* today is both a trap and a tool.



## Reconstructing the Sense of Presence: Tarantula, *Arlia*, and Dance

by Placida Staro

I wish here to consider the problem of illness and healing with traditional instruments in an evolving social context, and to begin with personal experience in the village where I live, Monghidoro (Bologna, Italy). Allow me to outline some movement patterns common to the ritual practice of “restoring the [existential] presence” of an afflicted person, at the individual and at the community level.

### ARLÌA AND THE PRESENCE OF SOUL: SOCIAL AND SYMBOLIC FRAMES

I live in a mountain village between Bologna and Florence with a population of approximately 3,000 inhabitants. Traditionally, there has been a self-sufficient economy in which a clear-cut division of roles and status between males and females has always been the norm: women were in charge of the land, the home and crafts, while men tended to the woods, trade, and real estate. Husbandry was practiced until the 1960s by boys and girls up to their fourteenth year of age. At that age girls tended to housekeeping, and after one or two years, were considered “good for marriage.” In the last fifty years, the *mercante di paglia* (straw merchant) has turned the traditional activities of female crafts into a cottage industry. In addition to these agricultural and commercial activities, the female population has gradually become involved in managing retirement and nursing homes, whose staffs still consist almost entirely of women.

At the beginning of my research, in 1977, I had to redefine myself according to two different *personae*: the researcher observing and the woman living. The ethnomusicologist often looks for facts, data, “real” documents; my neighbors, on the other hand, ascribe the quality of reality not to the “object” *per se*, but to the presence of thought demonstrated by its shape, and named “soul.” In this culture, both functional realities and mental acts partake of the sensible world on equal grounds. Presence in the world is defined by the repetitive endurance of a given event through the temporal length of a person’s life. This presence is shared by both humans and every

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This essay is a variant of a paper entitled “*Taranta* and *Arlia*: Thinking about Memory,” read at a meeting of the ICTM study group for Musical Anthropology in the Mediterranean in Venice in 1995. The English text of the present paper was edited by Gloria Clyde. Accompanying photographs are by Giorgio Polmoni, Placida Staro and Massimo Zacchi. This paper as read during the “Performing Ecstasies: Music, Dance, and Ritual in the Mediterranean” conference was accompanied by the author’s video documentation which supplied the relative data pertaining to choreutic culture. Clips from archival documentaries by Carpitella and Mingozzi, filmed during the research expedition led by Ernesto de Martino (see Ernesto de Martino, *La terra del rimorso: contributo a una storia religiosa del Sud* (Milan, 1961), demonstrated the gestural motifs used during the melotherapy of *tarantismo*.

other element—natural or built—on the *territoire*. Humans have to forge a good path for living together in a balanced way, with the purpose of pointing out the good quality of their presence in the community. The responsibility for this balancing of personalities, energy, and the organization of life in the small or extended family is the total responsibility of women from their earliest age. Men have the responsibility of “representing” the community outside the home or village and to effect settlements and contacts with other groups.

This female role of governing and controlling the human territory is symbolized by marking domestic space with female symbols of protection. Everywhere in our *borgo* (burg) there is a female spirit which assumes different identities like the *lares* (domestic spirits) in single homes. At a symbolic level, this shared presence of a female soul reflects the idea of unity which links the female members of the small community. My home and the entire village is protected by several images of the Virgin Mary: as an infant, as a young Virgin, as a mother *inside* the house, and as a queen *outside*. The same Virgin is on fountains, in little underground grottos near bridges, and on trees by the crossing of the old road toward the local church (see fig. 1). The sacred images of the Virgin Mary protect females and children living in the village against the non-resident and hidden spirits, as well as from the bad occurrences of everyday life. In the past, this female cult protected women who were responsible for the good state of the community against the known and unknown dangers relating to their role: that is, physical and spiritual disorder. At the iconic level, this is recognized by the presence of snakes often depicted near the Virgin. The Virgin has the power of fascinating or charming snakes; that is why, very often, it is told that while coming back from the fields, many snakes were found entwined around the sacred icons of the Virgin Mary. Other male saints protect fields, domestic animals and men. We must admit that, still today, everyone participates in this dual cult, whether Catholic or agnostic. In any case, the danger of a lack of order and the eruption of chaos is very frequent, and these occurrences have precise symptoms, therapies, and . . . saints.

At the end of the nineteenth century, our local church was officially rededicated to St. Peter (it had been dedicated to St. Donato), but the people continued to refer to it as Santa Liberata (as they always had), a nun who lived in the fifteenth century and protects boys and girls from the *arlia*. The word “*arlia*” is still used in the local language to indicate an affection which is the result of a fascination or charm. This “fascination” can have two origins. It can be an *incantamento*, that is, a direct possession by an animal spirit. A serpent in a field or by the river can catch you with a direct look, while spiders in the forest can catch you with their tail or bite. On the other hand, it can be the possession by a bad spirit through touch or a look from a human or a



Fig. 1. The signs of protection and devotion on the landscape: the Virgin, Santa Liberata and San Michele (photographs by M. Zacchi, P. Staro, 1994)

domestic animal, known as *malocchio* (evil eye) or *fattura* (spell). The result of this *incantamento* is a mental suffering called *arlia* in the first case, while in the second, *arlia* is reserved for children and mothers. In the rest of the human and animal community, the *malocchio* causes mostly physical diseases. In the case of the serpent's eye and the spells, the *arlia* can even cause death. We cannot explore here in depth the various healing and diagnostic processes related to the varying degrees of *arlia*. For our limited purposes instead—that is, to account for the shared knowledge under the symbolic constellation of *tarantismo* in Italy—it is sufficient to state that the *arlia* syndrome is connected to a spider, snake, or evil eye coming from an animal or a human. For this reason, I will consider here only the most “typical” (although today rare) occurrences, and not the most common cases of children and old people still quite frequent.

#### SYMPTOMS AND CURES

Basically, the most characteristic symptom of *arlia* is the inability to make choices. It can appear in childhood, in pre-pubescence, in adolescence, in post-partum recovery, and in extremely painful situations. Today, this syndrome is also recognized in the case of divorce, retirement from work, and hospitalization in protected residences, and is affecting both men and women.

The term *arlia* is applied to symptoms such as abulic states, development syndromes, eating disorders, unmotivated aggressive behavior, and refusal to dress properly. *Arlia* can also evoke an existential status and is used ironically to refer to an interlocutor who is not reacting normally, or when his/her behavior is obsessive and aggressive. It is the adoption of a confrontational attitude toward the world, nature or human society. It is a fracture which appears as a “refusal to grow,” to take care of oneself, or even a refusal towards one's being (i.e., presence) in the world. It is therefore possible to include this syndrome within the frame of reference that has already been defined by Di Nola<sup>1</sup> and other scholars in their study of the “disease of the moon” and melancholy. It is important to remember, however, that conditions such as melancholy, epilepsy, or moodiness are identified within this local culture as something different from the set of psycho-physical symptoms caused by *arlia*, and today they are cured by official medicine. The diagnosis of *arlia* could be “objective,” when the crisis occurs while working in the field, under everybody's eyes. This happened to a girl one day as she was resting while others worked. Two snakes were looking at her while she rested, and from this moment on, she was enchanted. She did not answer when asked a question, and had to be carried home while in the process of losing her sense of presence. For a long period or time, she only sang or whispered. There is another sort of *arlia* which is instead totally mute. The

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<sup>1</sup> Alfonso Di Nola, “Introduzione metodologica,” in *Mal di luna*, by Guglielmo Lützenkirchen and Alfonso Di Nola (Rome, 1981), pp. 18–24.



patient is not able to speak even where there are no visible physical problems. The third kind of *arlia* is obsessive: the patient continuously moves her hands as if she were knitting or weaving. This kind of *arlia* has physical symptoms as well, such as red marks on the neck, and is attributed to a spider living in the forest. While the ability to diagnose the *malocchio* or *arlia* does not require any particular skill, its therapy is entrusted only to those who are able to cure it.

The mother of the girl enchanted by the snakes confirmed the diagnosis by looking into water. She first tried a home therapy with spells and prayers and jumping with her daughter across a spring. In the case of a spider *arlia* and its physical diseases, this might possibly have sufficed (see fig. 2). But in this case it was not so, and therefore she took the afflicted to Santa Liberata. The recovery of speech or of vital energy usually occurs during the pilgrimage to a certain spring of water, or as in this case, near the tree with a votive shrine at the bottom of the slope leading to the church. Every September, it was necessary for the girl to return to the saint, asking for renewed protection, because the protective power of the saint against the syndrome (in spite of the



Fig. 2. A home therapy: reciting a spell  
(photograph by M. Massa, age 11, Monghidoro July 27, 1999)

enhanced protection afforded by scapular, ribbons, and other devotional objects) could fail. In this case, additional help had to be provided by St. Rita and by the Virgin Mary. It is important to note that at this phase in the process, the *arlia* is not cured, but simply “abandoned” to the saint like all other diseases. This also implies that it can return in times of particular weakness, and therefore that it is necessary to reiterate the therapy. Children, male or female, young girls, women, old women (and men too) lose their identity and return to an animal state. To be reintegrated back into a human context they need supernatural protection and a human intermediary—the healer.

There are two sorts of healers in this area of Italy, the magician and the *donna antica* (sage woman). The last magician I knew was a miller. The therapy against the hidden spirit was conducted in three different stages. First, he gave the patient a braid made of an uncut measure of red ribbon and little bags with salt and herbs. After consultation, to discover whether the symptoms were the same, the magician invited the victim of the *arlia* to the mill. The victim laid on the ground, tied with crossed ropes to the trees near the water (fig. 3). The healer prayed and wet the patient with a mixture of water, oil and



Fig. 3. The dance of Barabéin, executed during Carnival, can be interpreted as a parody of the ritual of *arlia* (photograph by G. Polmoni, Monghidoro, Easter Monday, 2000)

herbs. Then he put the mixture in the water of the river and, if the water became purple, the patient had recovered; otherwise he needed to repeat the process twice more. At the end of the rite the patient had to wear the scapular with the herbs and the red ribbons till the day of the pilgrimage to the saint or to the Virgin Mary. At this point the “ancient woman” had the task of guiding the feeble presence of the soul back to the human body, step by step. An ancient woman is someone who remembers and is used to singing and telling stories, naming things and facts, as a sort of “occupational therapy.” Her singing is requested for the cure of persons with personality disorders or for assistance during particularly painful experiences. She sings in order to reconstitute memory and therefore self “consciousness” (fig. 4).

I have effectively adopted this practice in my own work as a therapist in a hospital and in a retirement home. It consists of three phases:

1) The search for “a connection to the world” by means of an indiscriminate singing of a wide repertory of songs, from lullabies and ballads to other songs. This investigation includes the use of *liolele*, i.e., textless melodic fragments which the patient sometimes reconstructs for his/her own elaboration, either through words, or through movement. If the patient utilizes a textual fragment, the textual connection will be used in the following stages; if, on the other hand, the cognitive response involves mostly motion, the second path is taken.

2) The strategies for the reconstruction of memory aim, in the first case, to restore conceptual ability, and in the second, to reconstruct proper behaviors. Once the singing which stimulates an assertive response in the patient has been identified, it is repeated indefinitely, each time with the addition of more fragments or



Fig. 4. Maria and Placida in the kitchen: learning the process (photograph by M. Zacchi, Monghidoro, 1993)

stanzas. At this second stage, the first connections emerge between the patient and past experiences which are somehow linked to the remembered song.

3) In the third stage, the repertory is gradually expanded, and a number of “surprises” are introduced in the sequence of songs, which by this time have become familiar. The second path, on the other hand, leads to a restructuring of physical motion and to the restoration of the sense of space by means of either dancing or, in the most serious cases, very simple and limited movements.

An ancient woman operates within the patient’s family and, in fact, becomes indispensable. The conditions of my performance are instead, a priori, less favorable. Since I operate only a few times a week within a structure which accomodates more than one hundred patients, I frequently experience ups and downs. An ancient woman in the traditional context operates to reconstruct memory in order to reestablish a contact with the world in which the patient will be operative. Her therapeutic action is carried out as a sacred mission. As for my personal experience, on the other hand: I instead must act only in order to make the patient acceptable to the ordered and unproductive life of an institution. That is why I was successful in aiding the recovery of speech, self-perception, or ability to socialize, but failed when directly asked: why do you want me to come back? I realized I was insufficient to their need of motivation, since they were living in a desert of the soul. The “presence” was absent, and in this new social context, it was more comfortable for them to return to their visions.

THE PROTEST OF A *TARANTATA* “ON THE MOVE”:  
A CASE OF *TARANTISMO* IN A HOSPITAL

I met a *tarantata* by chance during my work as an occupational therapist in a hospital, and I visited her from 1991 to 1999. The patient had been hospitalized in psychiatric hospitals since 1971, when she was 46. She had a creative personality. Daughter of a town band conductor, she had a clear consciousness of her position in society. She had problems in general with figures of authority. This became evident in her difficult relationship with her father, later with her superiors in her workplace, and even more so with the priest of her town of origin which was Nardò,<sup>2</sup> in the province of Lecce!

She wore colorful clothing, three cotton scarves of different colors on her head—in spite of the very hot temperature in the room—and, on her left arm, wore another carefully folded scarf whose colors matched those of the flowers of her dress. On her right arm was another colored scarf, and in her hand she

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<sup>2</sup> Nardò is an important town in the province of Lecce where *tarantismo* was traditionally practiced until recently. Maria di Nardò, often cited in the literature on the phenomenon, and object of Ernesto de Martino’s well-known study in *La terra del rimorso*, indeed was from this town.

held a white one. We first met in February of 1991, and after one month of singing together she started to interact with others—after eleven years of self-seclusion. On Holy Wednesday, however, she refused to sing, arguing that during such days one is not supposed to do so, and that one must stay alert against the snake. I agreed with her that it was not good to dance during Holy Week, but at the same time, I suggested that the act of singing had the effect of improving the mood of the many people who could not even move. She replied that the snake had followed her to that very place from her home, and she identified the snake in the priest of her town. On the following day, Holy Thursday, while we were singing with other patients, she appeared holding in her hand five or six colored scarves, approached me, and told me that I was right, that the snake was everywhere and that consequently there was no point in remaining secluded. After another clash with the hospital staff, I managed to enter her room, which was reportedly besieged by snakes, by simply claiming that the snakes were not present at that moment. I found interesting that her “escape from presence” occurred each time her roles were in conflict. Her room was adorned with ropes running from wall to wall, from which colored dresses and scarves hung. She kept going from one scarf to the other, moving them, lifting them, hiding others, while apologizing for not having joined us for the singing session. I asked her the reason she hadn’t. Among the various scarves she used to wear were always a blue, a yellow and a white one. Her answer was that those were the colors she felt, even though occasionally she felt more like other ones than these. I started to consider the close relationship between the colored scarves, the suspended ropes, and the music and singing that “makes you feel good.” She did not recognize in herself the symptoms of a *taranta*, but felt instead the effect of snakes and scorpions. The *taranta*, she insisted, was something different, which affected peasant women in her town. The *taranta* was a spider which bit women while in the tobacco fields, when it is very hot, just as the song says:



Fig. 5. “Chi ti l’ha dittu”

The *taranta* is a disease that may come back throughout one's life, although the *taranta* bites less frequently these days because the harvesting process has changed and more men are involved (whereas in the past it was a female job). She witnessed several exorcisms of the *taranta* in her life: her father himself used to play during these rites. She described in detail therapies, songs, and the various phases of the dance. She pointed out that any kind of music might work, and that her father had even met a *taranta* who wanted exclusively opera arias. Realizing the obsessive presence of her father, who wanted her secluded because of her extraordinary beauty, I tried to investigate her female world. She no longer withdrew from me and admitted that in fact she had had two cousins and one aunt bitten by a *taranta*, and that they had really been cured by music, because music "looks into the soul and calms the *taranta*."

#### IN THE DRAMATIC VISION OF THE *TARANTA*

Here follows her own description of the creature which substituted for the mythic *taranta* in her visions during the crisis:

. . . a metal dwarf whose legs end with webbed feet, a thoracic cavity and an abdomen formed by interlocking scales and the shapeless body stretched in the back; a monstrous head, a frightening mouth, and eyes which were red lamps, like the headlights of a car. A skeleton was sitting on his right shoulder-blade and on its back, with legs twisted around a machine with huge knobs, with the hand of the right arm, similar to a man's, was pressing its stomach, a snake twisted around the backbone. The open left hand resting on the grey matter of the brain of the dwarf, the head turned upwards, anomalous, ghastly, frightening, the horrendous mouth, the eyes two small lamps producing a red light.  
[see fig. 6]

#### THE MANUSCRIPT OF THE "*TARANTA ON THE MOVE*"

The oniric metaphor of her novel is that of a critical transition. In giving it to me she wanted to inform me of an immediate danger: the world was facing a catastrophe because there had been a break between man and earth. The sense of terror here is connected with the eruption in the world of uncontrolled violence, which is not compatible with civilization. Such an eruption was personally feared and occurred through the loss of the state of consciousness, which is really experienced as a crisis of presence, of the memory, of the self. In her novel, the symbology of seasonal change and historical transition are combined with the perception of a break in cyclical time. This break occasionally permits one to search for a different kind of

Ci siamo mossi lentamente dopo un  
 bel tratto ho incontrato una grande  
 piattaforma rocciosa con sopra qualche  
 di spettatore. A circa due metri ho  
 distinto un ammasso di robot  
 sgaugherati che mi hanno fatto passo.  
 Ho raffigurato dapprima un uomo in  
 metallo le cui teste terminavano in due  
 valvole, il torace e l'addome un insieme  
 di tendi agganciati e il corpo deformato  
 allungato posteriormente; la testa  
 mortuosa, la bocca  
 spettorosa, gli occhi erano sfere rosse  
 come i fari di un'automobile.  
 Sulla sua scapola destra e il  
 dorso vi era seduto uno scheletro,  
 le gambe intrecciate ad un  
 calceus con manopole giganti,  
 con la mano del braccio destro,  
 simile a quella dell'uomo si  
 premeva lo stomaco, intorno alla  
 colonna vertebrale era  
 attorcigliato un serpente  
 la sinistra aperta  
 posata sull'encefalo del nano,  
 la testa era rivolta in su,  
 anomala, arvida, ~~macabra~~  
 raccapricciante, la bocca  
 arripulente, gli occhi due fari  
 piccoli dalla luce rossa.

Fig. 6: "Lucia" describes the monster in her dream vision, and writes about the encounter and their dialogue in her diary



contact with reality through visions and ecstatic states. On this occasion the protagonist experienced herself as a metaphor of the feminine, which is at odds with an authoritarianism perceived as a masculine power that forces a break in the natural cyclical state of life. In the traditional context the protagonist can choose the monster of the vision, a different *taranta*, or a different animal, according to her need. She lives the life of the animal, fighting against it, coming back in contact with the animal soul of the world, an animal which is considered by the external masculine society, particularly represented by priests, as an intrusive presence, and which is therefore isolated and rejected, but one that in a female society corresponds to an existential state that privileges the "soul," the only thing able to give life over "reason."

During a crisis, the link with the common spirit of the world is saved, while the link with historical humanity is broken. A hierarchically organized society solves the conflict by authorizing a gesture that gradually restores order. The therapist can use movement and sound, starting from the element which is common to humans and animals, in his work of rebuilding individual self-perception. The final result is a transition from one state, that of pre-crisis, to the next, in a cyclical pattern. Only rarely is the conflict recomposed through emargination.

In the new aseptic and non-historical reality, the monster erupts as a result of the coming onto the scene of a persecutory and constant presence which is identified in masculine and malevolent beings. The patient in the hospital does not see the monster as "bad"; on the contrary, she makes it say that the bad ones are men, not nature, or the machine. In particular, she finds hypocritical, false, and deceitful the part acted by men, and by priests in particular, who stand up as the defenders of order, but who in fact "govern the snake" and are the first responsible agents of disorder in the world, through violence.

Through music and singing we have come to recognize the dignity of the other in our own relationship. In a few months, the "memory cure," a test for the *arlia*, was applied to this stranger, the *taranta*, and led to her reemergence into reality, together with her past experiences, bringing her back to the recontextualized present. Such a procedure may reveal a new, interesting perspective on the existential role of memory and on the dynamic meaning of past and present. Traditional cultures relate to memory as a function of the present, and believe that the processes of memory are the only ones that define and shape experience. The reorganization of memory brings the soul back to life, and the restoration of the sonorous and choreutic ability turns out to be crucial for the perception of one's existence in the world. Sound and movement are not only symptoms but also interpretative structures of reality: experimentation with basic rhythmic patterns which permits the removal of fear (fig. 7).

The dominant patterns of movement implied in the cure of *tarantismo* can be identified in children's behavior. Usually those patterns are understood in



the basic movement models which identify the social dances in the same area. No one in the traditional culture identifies the *pizzica tarantata* as a “human dance”—it is, instead, a therapy. The shouting, hitting, running, jumping, and lying are simply the way of making contact with the world, of feeling the presence of others and expelling the fear of silence. When a “human model” appears in the dance of the *taranta*, the patient begins to recover his/her spirit from the influence of the animal.<sup>3</sup>



Fig. 7. Maria G. (the “ancient woman”) teaches a game, the purpose of which is to create tension and then resolve it through movement. The same principle will be recalled in therapy (photograph by D. Gnudi, Monghidoro, 2000)

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<sup>3</sup> For a further analysis of the relation between childhood, movement, sound patterns and dance, see Placida Staro, *Con garbo e sentimento: Il canto delle donne antiche* (Lucca, 2000), pp. 220–230.

The emotion of fear has a precise purpose which partially corresponds to that identified by de Martino. I agree with his approach to the problem but I would suggest that the eruption of people on the scene of history<sup>4</sup> cannot solve the problem and cannot remove all *tarante, arlie, arge*. History demonstrates that mythical ritual crises were not transformed, that this is the tragedy resulting from a lack of social consciousness and progress. In the loss of the entire ritual context which was able to “name” the problem and thereby confine the conflict, society found a “new way” to deny the conflict.

On the one hand, visionaries are totally confined to psychiatric hospitals and are now ill for their entire lives. On the other hand, the sensation of fear linked to isolation is generalized, and in the “*taranta* revival,” as in other phenomena such as large-scale musical or religious gatherings, the symptoms themselves become the very point of the exercise. The strategy which had been historically enacted for reconstructing the feeling of being part of the human community is now instead taken as symbol of opposition to the existing social order. Thus are those involved in the revival now using a strategy traditionally enacted to bring individuals back in line with social order—to an opposite end.<sup>5</sup> By the same token, a therapeutic strategy which had the aim of returning the victim, through an ecstatic state, to society is now used with the purpose of achieving an altered state of consciousness. This is a feature common to other sorts of social rites in which communities look, through collective trance, to achieving deeper social control over the individual—in order to obtain optimal performance in war, hard labor, and so forth. Through their performed ecstasies they are constructing a monument to socially-constituted order, while convinced of protesting against this very order. The complex ritual of traditional healing attempts to realign the emotional energy of the individual with the historical memory of the entire community. Those involved in the new “*taranta* wave” try to pick up some formal aspects that are the most comforting to such “new messages.” The ritual was originally directed by the community to each individual, and now is performed as a collective symbol of identity so that the process of the ritual is completely lost. In this way *taranta* performances do not enact the restructuring of individual historic memory, but substitute it by such historically-uniform “new messages.” As our “*taranta* on the move,” they are confined to this structure, and instead of breaking the structure in order to escape it, they built up very strong walls, while looking for false monsters. As our patient says, the real monster is the man who governs the machine and transforms it into a snake.

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<sup>4</sup> Ernesto de Martino, *Sud e Magia* (Milan, 1959), p. 139.

<sup>5</sup> See Luigi Chiriatti, *Morso d'amore: Viaggio nel tarantismo salentino* (Lecce, 1995), pp. 28–30.

CONCLUSION: *ARLÌA* AND *TARANTISMO*

I suggest that the diffusion of *tarantismo* throughout Italy is evidence of an important organizing device in the psychological structuring of a world-view, most especially governing the relationship between humans, fauna, flora, sentient and non-sentient beings.

The common features of the reconstruction of individual and community identity are located at varying levels of ritual practices of music and dance, with the purpose of facilitating the integration of individuals into the community and of the group as a whole into the world. The common features of *tarantismo* are located at varying levels of human perception and directly influence the perceptual structuring of reality. In particular, notions of *tarantismo* are implicated in the following ways:

1) common knowledge regarding the emotion of fear and the responses sanctioned by society involving movement, sound, and altered states of consciousness;

2) the collective view of the universality of the experience of presence in life which is understood as “soul”;

3) the implicit understanding that this sense of presence or “soul” is a governing factor in the relationship between humans, animals, and all living things.

4) There is a widespread recognition of the power of sentient and/or nonsentient beings or objects to “open the gate” to uncontrolled emotion. This demonstrates the presence of life in the individual and/or community which is, at that moment, unable to control and express it.

5) It is widely understood that all these symptoms require a traditional healer to delicately reconduct the afflicted individual back to a balanced state of being in the controlled (real) world.

6) There is a collective belief that every living being has the possibility and responsibility of balancing the fragile and dynamic relationship between unconscious answers to the presence of life and potentially disruptive biological responses. A tentative balance is achieved through the manipulation and control of expressive culture—especially movement, sound, shape, and color.

In the conceptual frame of *arlìa* and *taranta* I observed the same oppositions: spider and snakes vs. humans; fields and forest vs. houses; singing and whispering vs. talking; ropes<sup>6</sup> and the red or colored ribbons vs. loose white clothes.

Finally, the connection between the female saint, the healer, and the therapeutic process characterized by the element of water in all phases—from the diagnosis to the miraculous or magical healing—belongs to the same

<sup>6</sup> Cf. literary documents from Puglia; see Francesco de Raho, *Il tarantolismo nella superstizione e nella scienza* (Rome, 1994).

symbolic frame of reference. The fall into water where a female spirit lives and causes death is also present in many tales and legends. The process of purification obtained by the fall into water is the frame of a most beloved fairytale, The Big Mommycat (*il gatto mammone*), who takes all the necessary steps in order that a little girl might turn into a woman ready for marriage. Let us return, through this discourse on symbols, to the beginning: the preparation of a young girl for marriage, and the terrible weight of responsibility which she takes on at the moment of marriage. In this context though, the loss of presence is related more to the burden of responsibility due to her changed status than to physical weakness typically a result of working in the fields.

Another common point is the use of human “professional” healers who operate through singing. The same process of looking for the right melody, observing the reaction of the patient, and the iteration of the chosen tunes till the patient enacts a communicative answer is common to the two rites of the *taranta* and of *arlia* and is the same kind of process which is enacted in other ritual calendrical events of the traditional community. In those ritual events, through dancing, singing, drinking, and eating for several days and nights, the community breaks with historical time, claiming the night of nature against the day of history. In this way, when morning comes, it is ready to return to work because its mental energy is exhausted and fear is gone.

Today, such phenomena occur every Saturday night the world over; that is, not a dance for a little *taranta* or a poor little snake, but a time for an eternally recurrent and guided revival.

CENTRO DI RICERCA E DOCUMENTAZIONE  
DELLA CULTURA MONTANARA DI MONGHIDORO

Chapter Three  
Africa and African Musical Crossroads



## The Sounds of Religion: A *Mawlid* of Kenadsa

by Abderrahmane Moussaoui

There at the beginning of *rue des palmiers*, nestled at the foot of the Barga dune, on the right bank of the Guir, lays the fortified town of Kenadsa and the *ksar* famous for its *zâwiya*.<sup>1</sup> Located southwest of central Maghreb on the caravan route linking the province of Oran to the Sudan via the Tafilalet, it is here that Saint Sîdî M'hammad b. Bûziyân founded his *zâwiya* in the seventeenth century.

The memory of the saint founder is annually revived during the feast of the *mawlid*. The town dwellers and *zâwiya* affiliates from all corners of the country and beyond come to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet. The celebration becomes an occasion to honor the saint founder, Sîdî M'hammad b. Bûziyân. It is rather intriguing that even today, thousands of men and women are willing to travel hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of kilometers to return every year at the *rabi` al-awwal*, a *ksar* which is today a quasi-ruin. Why do they do so? In an attempt to answer this question, we will explore the ceremonial of this feast.

### A FEAST, A JOURNEY

The celebration starts on the afternoon of the eleventh *rabi` al-awwal*. The Sîd al Hâj (the *masjid al-âtîq*), which is also the oldest mosque of the *ksar*, attracts a large crowd of believers. The burial place of the saint founder, Sîdî M'hammad b. Bûziyân and his family, located at the opposite end, is the scene of similar fervor.

The rhythmical reading of the long *qacâ'id*, like an endless plaint, rises to the darkening sky. The *burda* and the *hamziyya* that al-Bucayrî dedicated to the Prophet are recited with contrition. At the same moment, the *dwîrîya*,<sup>2</sup> symbolic seat of the *zawîya*, knows similar animation where the devotees are already seated in the main courtyard of the palace. The buzz of activity in the cooking area indicates that the women are preparing the staple couscous; as one would guess by the hum heard from time to time, women occupy the other wing of the house as well. Here, as in other areas of the *ksar*, men and women are fervently praying. It is a quest for salvation in which the beauty of the word combines with the melody of the voice to speak of the frailty of the soul and continues until the time for the prayer of *al-`ishâ`*.

At the beginning of the second phase, the devotees leave the mosques and the *Khalwa* (the *Shaykh*'s retreat) for the *dwîrîya* where the Koran is recited. During

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[Editor's note: This article was translated from French by Joyce Fortune, UCLA.]

<sup>1</sup> Isabelle Eberhardt, *Dans l'ombre chaude de l'Islam* (Paris, 1914), p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Literally it means "small house," but here it is intended as a "lordly estate." Formerly the *sayyid* lived there, but it is today the symbolic seat of the *zâwiya*, becoming animated during the different festivals. The *khalwa* of the *Shaykh*, retreat of the saint, knows the same liveliness at those occasions. For the evening gatherings the same religious texts and odes are chanted.

three hours, more than four hundred voices unanimously recite a poem dedicated to the Prophet, and there in the courtyard, all dressed in white, ignoring differences of race and birth, they pray in unison for “the most perfect of all creatures” (“*khayri al-khalqi kullihimi*”).

At midnight a *tâlab* starts reading a *qaçîda* from the *al-mawlûdiya* texts. The *qaçîda*, also called *al-barzanjiya* (derived from the author’s name *al-Barzanji*), is the bio-hagiography of the Prophet, and during a full hour the *tâlab* solemnly recites this panegyric. The audience maintains a respectful silence which is often broken for a song entreating God to “perfume the tomb of the Prophet” (“*attir allahumma qabrahu ašh-sharîf*”). Arriving at the passage relating the Prophet’s birth, the reader, followed by the assembly, solemnly rises from his seat, a soft murmur beckoning respect for that auspicious moment. After a mystical chorus sings to expiate curses, the *sayyid* speaks the closing prayer. Couscous is served and the audience finally leaves the *dwîriya* wishing each other well.

Early the next morning the devotees go to the two mosques for the second part of the ceremony. The procession goes from the Sîd al-Hâj mosque, situated at the extreme southwest area of the *ksar*, to end at the Sîdî M’hammad b. Bûziyân on the northeast side. The procession leaves the mosque for the *qubba* of Sîdî M’hammad b. Bûziyân b. Ahmad b. `Abd ar-Rahmân who is also the eponymous ancestor of Saint Sîdî M’hammad b. Bûziyân. The chanting procession flows into the maze of the *ksar*, and women, youngsters, and the elderly generously spray perfume. The cortege takes more than an hour to go through the five hundred meters of corridors, moving slowly, frequently stopping in significant places of historical importance on the way to the mosque-mausoleum where Saint Sîdî M’hammad rests. The *sayyid* closes the ceremony<sup>3</sup> with a universal invocation. After the collective prayer recitation everyone wishes each other a happy festival (*‘id mabrûk*: blessed commemoration).

#### THE VOICE OF THE DIVINE

The feast of Kenadsa is a journey where the visual is an important element, but to say that the feast is in essence only Visual excludes the Word and Audition.<sup>4</sup> The Word is significant in the elaboration of meaning *Qaçâ’id, du`â`* and is at the heart of this feast. It is coupled with the recitation of the Koran which we will continue to regard as a discourse, but although meaning is structured through sound, it is nevertheless an exclusively vocal expression. It is the human voice that supports and completes the entire structure of this festival. The visual is helpful in reaching out to the world of the unknown: the Imaginary. Sound (Word and hearing) enables the mind to convey meaning to these images.

<sup>3</sup> During research we learned that Sîdî Boubakar, the young nephew of the *sayyid* Sîdî `Abd ar-Rahmân b. la`radj, said the prayer. The devotees saw it as a sign. If we saw it as some of the pilgrims did, we would have witnessed the proceedings of a succession. The *sayyid* passed away during the year and was replaced by his son, which provoked much comment among the adepts.

<sup>4</sup> Since sound covers both aspects simultaneously.



The Visual and Sound help align the symbolic and the imaginary factors, while the Word catalyses the process.

The act of producing sound is a recurrent feature of this feast. Recitation of the *qaçâ'id*, the panegyrics to the Prophet, and prayers of all kinds transform this feast into a continuous polyphonic flow. The Word forms a second important structural paradigm because the journey is considered the first. One might put it this way: the feast is a journey through the Word and a procession of Sound. Sometimes one can hear verses of the Koran, an ode being declaimed or a *dikr* chanted here, while elsewhere someone is proclaiming his gratitude (*al-hamd wa ash-shukr*) and invoking God. The verbal flow unfolds in a solemn procession interspersed with pauses.

While the morning procession makes several stops in places of symbolic importance, the evening wakes consist only of a seated chorus. The same prayers said in different places and for different audiences convey different meanings each time. The cleric, the location, and the contribution of the participants<sup>5</sup> are all very important components. Before focusing on the Word/speech as “linguistic message” and on the impact of the voice, let us begin by examining the power of the voice.

#### THE SECRET OF SOUNDS

The conversant will surely notice that the poems sung during the *mawlid* at Kenadsa do not conform to the rigorous stylistic rules that contribute to the beauty of Arabic poetry. However, the prosodic and melodic structures make up for the lack of creativity, and the Word transformed into music penetrates the soul. The rhythm and melody of the voice create a magical connection. These prayers reach the emotions not the intellect, for Utterance is first and foremost *felt*. Both Hearing and the entire body are engaged as transmitter and receiver. The Word should resonate rather than make sense. The chants tend to sound indecipherable but they are not, at any time, misunderstood.

The declaimers establish a relationship with the text exclusively based on the auditory. Sense is not found in the words of the text itself but in what it enables one to see. Most people do not know the text, some may not even be able to read, but the Word uttered in chorus, repeated over and over again, makes it familiar and produces the desired effect. The alternating pattern of noise/sound and silences, coupled with the booming voice of the soloist and the magic of the collective droning, becomes a support to the text—a text which would otherwise remain “inanimate” or dead letters. It is the combination of all these elements that constitutes the text (the link between the text and textile has already been

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<sup>5</sup> The age, place, and worth of those present are influential in the quality of the prayer. It is considered for instance that prayer uttered by an elderly one (closer to death) or a child (closer to the unknown world, the spiritual) is more authentic and consequently has more value. It has more worth if it is performed in a mausoleum and in the presence of persons like the *sayyid*, whose piety is true and recognized by all.

established elsewhere). It is indeed a weaving where voice, noise/sound, and silence are active contributors to the creation of meaning. The transition from the universe of paroxysmal sounds to a phase of complete silence is enthralling. “The cry is the door which opens to silence” (“le cri est la porte qui ouvre sur le silence”) said Lacan, and on the grand scale of meaning, silence thus achieved belongs to a higher plane.

Silence does not translate into an absence of messages but a moment when the Word is uttered from within. Is this not the prime meaning of the word “incantation,” from *in-cantare*, to sing from within? The voice progressively becomes a murmur, then silence, but still it resonates from within. It is perhaps in this spirit that M. Eliade prefers to speak about *intecstasy*, rather than *ecstasy*. The soloist reading the *barzanjiya* starts in a low voice until he reaches an unintelligible high pitch, and the meaning is readily perceived. The complaint becomes a cry, an anxiety that changes into suffering. The silences that periodically cut this litany are as important as the chant itself, behaving more like Word than punctuation marks. The written word melts into a pool of emotional force. The text is no longer a historical alibi, linking past to present, but an indispensable emotion for the perception of meaning. The Word as a linguistic message wanes when faced with the rigors of vocal expression, which unfolds and unfurls on an ocean of sounds.

Utterance, and especially hearing, is the ultimate route to the Absolute. It is not surprising that Hearing is such an ancient imperative in Islam. Since the twelfth century, this phenomenon has occupied an important place in the religious life of Muslims. The famous al-Ghazâlî, in his acclaimed work *ihyâ` ulûm ad-dîn*, devoted an entire volume (among the approximately thirty volumes constituting the series) to this question. He called it *kitâb adâb as-samâ` wa al-wajd*, “book for the good use of hearing/listening and trance.”<sup>6</sup> This work highlights and justifies the importance of music to attain ecstasy (*wajd*) in the *taçawwuf*; it also proves to us the importance of hearing in the quest for the Absolute.

There is no equivalent for the term *samâ`*, roughly translating as “listening,” and there is a large body of literature on the translations, interpretations, and origins of this term. However we will not go into this ongoing discussion.<sup>7</sup> Among the many interpretations one needs to retain, its etymological meaning is “to listen” or “to hear well.” This particular interpretation of *samâ`* pertains to hearing music, poetry and prayers, or *dîkr*, etc. According to this line of thought, the human voice reciting and chanting the Word can produce the same effect as music that is *wajd* or trance. *Wajd* comes from the root word *yawjad*, meaning “to find oneself”; it is only through this type of analysis that one can fully grasp

<sup>6</sup> We have used the translation of Duncan B. Macdonald (1901–1903), as cited by Gilbert Rouget, *La musique et la transe* (Paris, 1980), p. 348 n. 6.

<sup>7</sup> L. Massignon translates *samâ`* as “spiritual concert” (“concert spirituel”) or “oratorio”; H. Corbin translates it as “musical audition” (“audition musicale”). Rouget rightly notes that there is no French equivalent for *samâ`* just as there is not for the word “Islam.”

the nature of this state. In other words, hearing creates a bridge between the interior and the exterior. When the soloists hear their own voices they are able to realize their needs and “find themselves.” Religious instrumental music and the secular form *tarab* are also another means of attaining the *wajd*—though they are not the only ways. Utterance is considered one of the best ways because it is both music and song. The voice produces simultaneously two melodious structures, harmoniously articulated, which have such an incredible strength that they can provoke tears, loss of consciousness, and even death. And for these reasons al-Ghazâlî strongly advises not to give in to these urges but instead to curb them. How far are the rules edited by the illustrious *faqîh* followed? The brotherhood *ziyyâniya* rigorously abides by his rules and warnings. Crying, complaints, or any type of agitation are strictly prohibited, and even the tambourine (*duff*), which the great theologian permitted (as well as the flute), are not used.<sup>8</sup> The voice alone is allowed to resound in bodies and hearts.

#### THE PHONATORY ACT

As stated at the beginning of this paper, the feast is far from merrymaking. It nevertheless procures a joy that is revealed through the voice<sup>9</sup> and produced by several organs of the body. An entire physiological process has to take place in order to enable the emission of the vocal sound. Roman Jakobson calls it a motor, as opposed to acoustic, phenomenon.<sup>10</sup> The voice is the result of many processes, such as respiration, breath, articulation, and intensity/sound pitch. It is only at the end of this physiological process that the acoustic is materialized in sound. The body is required to perform two functions: first as the sound transmitter through the voice, and second as a sound receiver (the speaker is at the same time listener to his own voice and to the other orators), where it participates actively in the auditory act. Perception of meaning belongs to the psychological level, and Mario Mercier poetically explains: “Every word uttered is like a seed that enters the womb of the ears and rolls into the depth of the brain and heart, the fields of our energies.”<sup>11</sup> According to A. Soulairac, the expression “schéma corporel vocal”<sup>12</sup> is a fusion of internal physiological sensations that give birth to the voice. Hence, sound/voice and body are in perfect harmony.

When reading the *al-mawludiyya*, the *tâlab*'s voice swings from a low to high pitch, he softens his voice, gives it a nasal intonation, amplifies or tempers it in some specific passages, and a set of physiological actions is needed in order to

<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, other brotherhoods of the Maghreb make extensive use of these instruments. The *duff* and the *mizmâr* are used in the Timimoun region, situated in southwest Algeria, during the *alhallîl*, the *hadra*, and even during the *mawlid*.

<sup>9</sup> Psychoanalysts illustrate this through an analogy to the cry of the baby. A baby expresses his desires/needs through his cries, thus affirming his narcissistic self. Isn't joy rendered better through the narcissistic expression of a desire/need?

<sup>10</sup> Roman Jakobson, *Six leçons sur le son et le sens* (Paris, 1976).

<sup>11</sup> Mario Mercier, *Les fêtes cosmiques* (St. Jean de Braye [Orléans], 1985), p. 44.

<sup>12</sup> See André Soulairac, “Voix,” in *Encyclopaedia Universalis* (Paris, n.d.), pp. 913–15.

convey meaning. Similarly, the audience shows physiological responses. There is movement in the crowd and some people become inert, suddenly relaxed, or even shudder. Bernard This was right when he said, “Proud of our sophisticated hearing, we have forgotten that our skin is sensitive to sound vibrations; a voice ‘makes contact,’ ‘touches’ ‘caresses,’ and ‘surrounds;’ . . . we perceive these vibrations through the entire body.”<sup>13</sup>

When contact is made with the body, sound generates meaning while incurring at the same time the risk of becoming a prisoner of the acoustic world. Meaning combines with the melodic element to produce a signifier. This close articulation between utterance and semantics seems to be consubstantial to Arabic poetry. Those well versed in Arabic poetry (such as Brockelman, S. Guyard, Landberg, and others) might recognize the close connection between prosody and musical principles. In other words, music is more than the aesthetic of the senses; it is a constituent of the aesthetic of reception (Jauss) among Arabs. As in Arabic culture, sound cannot be conceived as separate from melody. *Lahn* simultaneously means: voice, sound, and melody.

#### THE POWER OF SPEECH

It is here important to clarify any misunderstanding: the meaning of all words is not necessarily found in the way they sound. Formulated words have qualities other than the acoustic; they are linguistic messages as well. However, meaning is not conveyed only through these words and their syntactic arrangement. There are other, more important, criteria at play. It happens that sometimes the linguistic sign gives way to the semiotic symbol. The simplicity of the words used, as well as the prosodic structure, fosters comprehension because they suggest, through their familiarity, schematic images.

Let’s picture the chorus composed of very diverse people; young and old, singing these verses in a cemetery, mosque, or mausoleum, in a soft plaintive voice:

Yâ ḥabîb al-qulûb mâ lâ siwâka  
Irḥam al-yawma muḏḥniban qad atâka

(O friend of the heart, I have no one but you.  
Be merciful today towards the sinner praising you.)

Yâ rasûl al-ilâhi innî nazîlun  
Wa nazîl al-kirâmi laysa yuḏḥâm

<sup>13</sup> See Bernard This, “La voix in utero,” in *La voix: actes du colloque d’Ivry du janvier 1988*, ed. René Lew and François Sauvagnat (Paris, 1989), pp 39–61, at p. 48.

(O Prophet of God, I am your host  
and the host of the generous is never abandoned.)

The list of supplications is long but all of them have recourse to the same strategies to attain the desired goal. The verses addressed to the Prophet highlight human frailty. Their structures are virtually the same, simple verses, but meaning is rendered through the strongly suggested paradigm. *Habîb, qulûb, Irham*, the words already conjure up a specific paradigm, to which one is guided once they are uttered.

Gestures sometimes accompany rhythm, words and syntax to convey meaning. For instance, the grandeur of the Prophet can be better conveyed through the gesture of rising from one's seat during the reading of a lexically complex text like *barzinjiya*,<sup>14</sup> which is more expressive than usual words. In the full array of gestures which one can call the "kinetic semiotics" of Islam (prostration, positions of hands to invoke God, standing, eyes lowered or half-closed, etc.), there are two principal postures: rising up and bowing down. If the latter (prostrating) is reserved exclusively for the adoration of God, the Unique, the Supreme, the former (rising) exemplifies the respect for the one man who was capable of rising above his humanity. Here the gesture is reserved for the best among us all, the Prophet Muhammad. However, the gesture alone is not sufficient and cannot replace Words, which are here central. They are the guiding light; "The word as well as Light symbolically represent the might of God."<sup>15</sup> It is an unchanging anthropological universal feature. The Bible teaches us that the world was created when the cosmic egg broke at the sound of God's voice. Other faiths, like the Vedas, say that Sound is at the origin of creation. There would be, according to certain beliefs, a sort of acoustic universe, a cosmos of sound. The world therefore would be first made of sounds that burst into the sound of a cry or a word. Thus, all systems of belief give the Word a great symbolical value, as it is "the cry that allowed the world to spring from the nothingness of the cave."<sup>16</sup> Islam is not an exception. Speech is important and precedes most acts.<sup>17</sup> With a single word God created the world (*kun fa yakûn*).<sup>18</sup>

Here too, the Word is energy. There is no diva; everyone participates in the foundation and restoration of the acoustic universe, the production of an enchantment necessary in the completion of a code that allows the voice of the chanters to reach the "acoustic universe." It is the intermediary that allows the

<sup>14</sup> This ode is entirely written in the classical language (*c'est une ode écrite complètement en langue classique*).

<sup>15</sup> Gilbert Durand, *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire: introduction à l'archétypologie générale*, 10th ed. (Paris, 1985), p. 173.

<sup>16</sup> Soulairac, "Voix," pp. 913–15.

<sup>17</sup> The *'ibâdât* as well as the *mu'âmalât* are always preceded by a speech. Ablutions are started by the *bismillâh* and the prayers are followed by the *takbirat al-ihrâm*. Sacrifices can only take place after a *takbî*, and marriages become valid only after the *fâtiḥ* is said.

<sup>18</sup> *Le Coran* (al-Qor'ân), trans. Régis Blachère (Paris, 1980), 19.35–36: "Quand il décide quelque chose, Il dit seulement: 'sois! Et elle est.'"

original referent (the Prophet or the saint) to be present. Hence the voice unifies the symbolic structure and the real world.

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## The Music of the Gnawa of Morocco: A Journey with the Other into the Elsewhere

by Antonio Baldassarre

The all-night ritual of the Gnawa of Morocco, the *derdeba*—or *lila*, as it is more commonly known—is a performance of music and dance which takes place over a period of one or more nights. The word *derdeba* may derive from the verb *derdeb*, which refers to the action of “throwing” or “falling”—which, in this case, refers to another plane of reality. *Lila* is the feminine form of the word *lil*, which means “night” in Arabic and takes the masculine form. This change in gender highlights the otherness of the Gnawa ritual practices and their openness towards another side of reality.

Several analogies can be found between the ritual practices of the Gnawa and those widespread in ancient Mediterranean societies, such as those related to Orphic and Dionysiac cults, as well as the various rites of ecstasy which Plato attributed to teletic madness or ritual mania. It is also possible to draw comparisons between the Gnawa ritual and that of tarantism, still practiced in southern Italy as late as the 1960s, which Ernesto de Martino maintained was a survival of folk belief and practice derived from ecstatic cults of the ancient Mediterranean world.<sup>1</sup>

The *lila-derdeba* of the Gnawa is the concrete expression of a complex *weltanschauung*. It is influenced by early African religions and the ritual practices widespread throughout the ancient Mediterranean world, mediated by Sufism, the more eclectic and esoteric aspect of Islam. The *lila-derdeba* is both a cult and a therapeutic practice. From a religious point of view, this ritual repeats the cosmogonic act and allows one to enter into communion with the spiritual energies springing from this primordial act. If considered as a therapeutic practice, the ritual is comparable to a sort of “communal psychodrama” where dance and musical techniques are used in conjunction with chromotherapy and aromatherapy. The aim is to establish or restore a more effective individual harmony through the interplay of internal elements—such as breathing, circulation, stream of consciousness—and external ones—such as music and rhythmic movement.

Polyrhythmic patterns guide the emotional flow and movements of the dancers. The melody, based on a pentatonic scale, allows the energies at play to be identified. The dance, a metaphor of life and of cosmic movement, offers a physical basis for the spiritual bodies and allows their incarnation for the benefit of the entire community. In addition to the musical and choreographic elements (which involve acoustic and proprioceptive sensations), veils covering the face of the dancers provide visual stimuli. Seven different colors are used for each of the seven spiritual bodies evoked. The *sensorium* of the rite is completed by seven

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<sup>1</sup> Ernesto de Martino, *La terra del rimorso: contributo a una storia religiosa del Sud* (Milan, 1961).

brands of incense smells and by the flavours of food and drink consumed during the ritual.

In the chants of the *lila-derdeba* we find explicit reference to the ancestors of the Gnawa of Morocco, who descended from populations of the regions surrounding the northern arc of the Niger river.<sup>2</sup> These peoples migrated across the Sahara desert, which Fernand Braudel describes as a “sea of sand” separated from the waters of the Mediterranean sea by the rim of North Africa.<sup>3</sup> The populations of the Mediterranean area and of sub-Saharan Africa were in constant contact over the centuries as a result of their “navigating” this “sea of sand.” According to the thesis of Martin Bernal, the reciprocal influences between these two cultural areas—the African and the Mediterranean—are extremely ancient and can be traced back to the roots of Mediterranean civilization.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout more recent history, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, we find that massive fluxes of people from Senegal and Mauritania arrived in Morocco following the rise of the Almoravides Dynasty, which originated from these regions. Another substantial wave of migration came at the end of the sixteenth century, after the conquest of the last empire of West Africa by Ahmed El Mansour, Saadian Sultan of Marrakech.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the ancestors of the Gnawa did not travel to Morocco to fight a Holy War, nor to trade with the Arabs and the Berbers, nor out of mere curiosity to see the world. They were taken by force and used as servants by the ruling classes of North Africa. The trauma of this uprooting is expressed in the following Gnawa chant:

They took us away, Oh Lord, they took us away  
 They took us away from the land of the Blacks  
 Oh my Lord forgive them  
 The Arabs took us away, Oh Lord  
 They took us away trapped in sacks  
 In the knapsacks on the camel's back  
 And they sold us at the wool market  
 My Lord forgive them  
 The children of the prophet bought us  
 They covered us in trinkets  
 They covered us with the scent of orange blossom and jasmine  
 Alas Sidi Rahal, they took us away from our land  
 They separated us from our parents  
 They took us to the wool market

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<sup>2</sup> Bambara from Mali, Haoussa from Niger, Fulani nomads of Sahel.

<sup>3</sup> F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le Monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris, 1949), p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (London, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> Henri de Castries, “La conquête du Soudan par El-Mansour,” *Hespéris* 3 (1923), 433–88.



They sold us like little lost children  
Oh God of Princes, forgive them.<sup>6</sup>

With regard to the subsequent expansion of Islam in North Africa, historical and literary accounts testify to the clash between Islamic and local African cultures, with Islam asserting itself as dominant. One of the recurrent themes concerns the objection to African ritual practices, considered to be substantially alien to Islamic orthodoxy. At the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Arab-Andalusian scholar as-Saqundi, who was concerned with demonstrating the superiority of Hispanic and Middle Eastern culture above that of the local African populations, wrote a panegyric letter where he explicitly described the “*Derdeba* of the Blacks” as a primitive kind of music and dance, involving excessive manifestations of enthusiasm which were seen to rouse the interest of simpler, or less refined, souls.<sup>7</sup>

Similar accounts of the conflict between the protectors of the supposed Islamic orthodoxy and the rituals of African origin provide the basis for a sociological analysis of a long and complex process of acculturation. The cultural controversy championed by as-Saqundi illustrates the negative reaction of the Arab intelligentsia, which was held in high esteem by the court of the Almohades and Merinides. This view stands in stark contrast to the openness towards African culture experienced in Moroccan society under the Almoravides dynasty.

In the seventeenth century the hold of Arab culture over the culture of Black Africans was relaxed. This was due, first, to repeated dynastical crises and, second, to a considerable rise in the size of the deported African population. Deportation increased with the Alawite Sultan Moulay Ismail, who established the Black Guards, supported by select troops from Black Africa directly under his control.<sup>8</sup> In the period lasting from the fall of the Saadian Dynasty until the complete consolidation of the Alawite Dynasty (from approximately the seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century), the influence of ecstatic rites of African origin extended to many brotherhoods of popular Sufism. This is considered to be the time of rebirth of Moroccan Sufism, whose Golden Age extended throughout the reign of the Almoravides in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>9</sup> Islamic orthodoxy was favored again during the nineteenth century, with the expansion of the Wahabite movement from Saudi Arabia and the

<sup>6</sup> From J. Guardi, *La medicina sufi* (Milan, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Alphonse Luya, “La Risala d’as-Saqundi,” *Hespéris* 22 (Paris, 1936). Besides the chauvinistic dispute raised in order to confute the ritual practices of a subordinate culture of Black African origin, it should be noted that the ethnomusicological research has highlighted the fundamental contribution of the African musical tradition in the constitution and development of the Moroccan *Nuba*, the most typical musical form of the golden age of the Moorish civilization. Cf. Antonio Baldassarre, “Musique et danse gnawa: la *lila-derdeba* comme hypertexte,” in *Univers Gnawa (L’Univers des Gnaoua)*, ed. Abdelhafid Chlyeh (Casablanca and Grenoble, 1999), pp. 87–103.

<sup>8</sup> Maurice Delafosse, “Les débuts des troupes noires au Maroc,” *Hespéris* 3, no. 4 (Paris, 1923), 1–12.

<sup>9</sup> Yusif ibn Yahyá al-Zayyât al-Tâdilî, *Regard sur le temps des Soufis: vie des saints du sud Marocain des Ve, VIe, VIIe, siècles de l’hégire*, trans. Maurice de Fenoyl (Paris, 1995).

establishment of the Tijaniya brotherhood, whose aim was to fight against the heterodoxy of the popular brotherhoods.

The effects of the clash between these two cultures, relating to religious orthodoxy in the first place, reverberates also in the ethno-anthropological literature. Many studies point to the difference between the ritual practices of the Gnawa and those of popular Sufi brotherhoods with closer ties to African roots, in comparison to the ritual practices of more orthodox Islamic brotherhoods. The orthodox rites are usually classified as cults which practice ecstatic trance, while scholars prefer to use the concept of trance resulting from possession for the ritual practices of the Gnawa.<sup>10</sup>

The parameters used to distinguish the phenomenon of ecstasy from that of possession have been well defined. In religious cults aiming to achieve states of ecstasy, the various performative elements such as music, dance, and rhythmic breathing come together and culminate in what can be defined as a self-induced altered state of consciousness.<sup>11</sup> With respect to the phenomenon of possession, more importance is placed on the sudden breaking out of these modified states of consciousness and the dissociation that occurs between the ordinary state of consciousness and that of the ritual state.<sup>12</sup>

Ecstasy and possession, of course, are concepts weighed down by Christian-Catholic influence, and so their meaning is almost exclusively ethnocentric. It may be interesting to note, however, that Moroccans talk about “embodying” or “being inhabited” by spiritual bodies (or, to be more precise, by the fluids emanating from spiritual bodies). As with Western scholars, Moroccan experts too make a distinction between the ritual practice of the brotherhoods closer to Islamic orthodoxy and the ritual practice of the popular brotherhoods closer to the Gnawa. In an attempt to clarify this difference, the best comparison one great Gnawa master was able to offer was the following: “It is the same difference as that which exists between masturbation and copulation.”<sup>13</sup>

This crude comparison, though seemingly just a *boutade*, can serve as a starting point for some observations. First of all, the fact is that our psychological approach is not yet sufficiently ethno-psychological. It is essentially addressed to the inner self and does not stray from these confines. From the Freudian unconscious to Julian Jaynes’ bicameral mind, spiritual entities in Western thinking are considered to be nothing but projections of the psyche.

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<sup>10</sup> This distinction, which reiterates the now classic distinction made by Mircea Eliade between shamanism and possession, is used by the majority of authors. For a more general overview of the subject, see the collected papers edited by Abdelhafid Chlyeh in *La transe* (Rabat, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> See Gilbert Rouget, *La musique et la transe: esquisse d'une théorie générale des relations de la musique et de la possession* (Paris, 1980).

<sup>12</sup> See Georges Lapassade, *Les Rites de Possession* (Paris, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> V. Pâques, “Transe et possession,” in *La transe*, ed. Chlyeh.

Vincent Crapanzano, who has carried out a study of the Moroccan Hamadcha brotherhood,<sup>14</sup> whose ritual practices closely resemble those of the Gnawa, reveals a cultural impasse which he expresses in the following manner:

I have discovered that we Europeans and Americans place the psyche within the individual, which is, without doubt, a reference to our hyper-individualistic ideology. The Hamadcha, and those around them, place it elsewhere in a space which is difficult for us to describe: somewhere between man and the spirits.<sup>15</sup>

The introduction of the concept of performance is undoubtedly an important contribution to a more open approach to these issues. It involves an attempt to enter the time-space relationship of the ritual frame, taking it beyond simple psychological descriptions or interpretations. However, a full understanding of the complexity of the elements at play remains, at least for me, still beyond reach.

Techniques for self-induced ecstasy, utilized to pull oneself up by the shoe laces (like Baron Munchausen), can generate a kind of ASC (Altered State of Consciousness). And perhaps, in the course of a normal day, all of us experience changes in our state of consciousness. But what are the steps that can take us to the point of ecstasy? What kind of discipline or state of grace is necessary? With regard to “copulation” or the “incarnation” of the spiritual body, who is possessed by whom? And a final question might focus on the problem of consciousness: is a somnambulist possessed? The Gnawa are aware of the existence of somnambulism—probably a transcultural phenomenon— but they categorically deny any connection between these mysterious symptoms and the state of a human being in contact with spiritual energies.

I would like to conclude with a brief observation of the implications and the perspectives raised by the involvement of the Gnawa in the World Music movement, which allows the “other” and the “elsewhere,” which the Gnawa represent, to travel across the global village and into new virtual realities.

The risk incurred by a policy of openness is evident for such an esoteric tradition: previously, Gnawa rituals were jealously guarded and handed down through the centuries by a few exponents of African ethnic groups who were uprooted and deported, and who remained a minority in their new society. What was, and still is, a veritable ritual, runs the risk of being reduced to “folklorismus” or entertainment. Apart from compromising the tradition itself, another risk regards the enslavement of the bearers of this ritual tradition to the demands of an alien world.

Despite possibly appearing overly optimistic, I would like to point out how, in this initial phase of openness towards the outside world, the considerable benefits for the Gnawa have outweighed the dangers posed to them. In recent years the

<sup>14</sup> Vincent Crapanzano, *The Hamadsha: A Study in Moroccan Ethnopsychiatry* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1973).

<sup>15</sup> Vincent Crapanzano, “L’espace-entre: possession et représentation,” in *La transe*, ed. Chlyeh.

recognition and the status of the Gnawa have increased, not only in Europe and America, but also in their own country. Undoubtedly, this is positive. In fact, thanks to the interest shown by scholars, jazz and World Music musicians, and others, the Moroccan intelligentsia seems to have finally discovered and accepted the existence of the Gnawa.

Some academics may fear that the authenticity of this tradition is threatened, but they must be reminded that it is not the mere display of a ritual to profane eyes and ears that causes deterioration. Instead, it is the lack of expertise on the part of the officiates which could reduce the expression of supreme principles of existence, such as the Gnawa's rite, to a mere entertainment. However, it seems to me that this is not, as yet, a danger for the *lila-derdeba* ritual.

My optimism is based on two facts. First, the Gnawa conceal the more conspicuous part of their knowledge behind performance and buffoonery. The public display of their religious practice has always been the device used by the Gnawa to preserve their diversity, making it visible and therefore acceptable. A part of the dance and musical repertoire of the *lila-derdeba* is aimed at uniting and entertaining the audience with a lively, amusing interplay of musicians and dancers. It is exactly this part of the repertoire, and not the more specifically ritual part, that is used in World Music performance.

The second reason for optimism, and the more important in my opinion, comes from an assessment of the economic effects that World Music has had in the daily lives of the Gnawa. When I began to spend time with this community more than twenty years ago, living conditions were harsh as a result of the transformations taking place in traditional Morocco vis-à-vis the modern economy. The figure of the *'abid* (the black slave) had practically disappeared from the houses of the powerful elite, and the Gnawa found themselves struggling to survive in a society that was subject to rapid and drastic change. The marketing of their knowledge has catalyzed a process of transformation of their ritual into a much valued and paid-for therapeutic practice.

In recent years, I have observed the first signs of what seems to be a reverse tendency. The revenue raised from overseas tours has contributed to solving the more pressing problems of basic survival. A direct result of achieving basic economic stability has been that the Gnawa are now largely free from the frantic search for a paying clientele and have returned instead to celebrating their rites for the prime purpose of consolidating community ties, through the vigor and inspiration gained from contact with the spiritual energies of the *lila-derdeba*.

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## Development and Hypnotic Performance of an African Lamellaphone in the Salentine Area: The Fina Case Study

by Roberto Catalano

Musical instruments often accompany the vicissitudes of their makers and owners in all aspects of life. As products of the human genius, and because of their acoustic properties, characteristics of craftsmanship, and cultural marks distinguishing each one as a unique artifact, instruments have the power to inspire, affect, and even change musicians' lives. By presenting a single example of interaction between an instrument and its surroundings—especially when these surroundings are culturally alien to it—this article underlines the remarkable adaptability of musical instruments to the art and imagination of the musician—independently from situational, cultural, and geographic contexts.

The specific case presented here describes, analyzes, and comments on the process undertaken by Enzo Fina, a southern Italian artist, in order to develop a personal, practical and theoretical system that would enable him to perform on a lamellaphone<sup>1</sup> he fashioned after the African instrument known as '*mbira*.<sup>2</sup> The effort of making and mastering the instrument that Fina experienced presents striking similarities to the learning process which African '*mbira* players undergo. Despite these similarities, Fina's experience, however, remains completely discrete and separate from African musical process in its personal and cultural aesthetics.

The music Fina performs on his instrument is inspired by his own life experience as a native of Salento.<sup>3</sup> He draws much inspiration from his love for the homeland and its peasant culture, his fascination with its ancient history and mysteries and, most notably, the centuries-old culture of *tarantismo*,<sup>4</sup> which Fina respects immensely. Fina's music is, moreover, affected by a deeply personal

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<sup>1</sup> Lamellaphones are instruments vibrating by means of plucked keys (lamellae) arranged at different lengths over a resonator.

<sup>2</sup> In its simplest form the '*mbira* is a plucked idiophone made of a soundboard upon which a row of metal keys (lamellae) are mounted. Often a resonating body, such as a gourd or a turtle carapace, is adapted to it. Small objects like chains or soda bottle caps are fixed to the soundboard and function as rattlers, jingles, and buzzers, enhancing and personalizing the sound. The term '*mbira* refers to the instrument played by the Shona of Zimbabwe and it is used in this paper as a generalization. The same type of instrument is known by several different names according to the geographic location in which it is created. Most likely the instrument encountered by Enzo Fina was not a '*mbira* from Zimbabwe but an analogous one, possibly from Kenya or Uganda.

<sup>3</sup> The Salentine peninsula is the "heel" of the Italian boot; it stretches towards the Mediterranean facing Albania and Greece. It is one of the European doors to the Near East and an ancient land.

<sup>4</sup> *Tarantismo* is a psychological state of deep prostration and depression common in the Salentine peninsula but also known in other Italian southern regions. It used to affect mostly women who were believed to have been bitten by the tarantula spider. The antidote against the bite was recognized by the natives only in the healing power of music and dance. The "victim" would dance the *pizzica pizzica* at a private home ritual for long periods spanning from a few hours to several weeks. The musicians were usually a quartet featuring a frame drum, a violin, a guitar, and a diatonic accordian.

concept of art as an all-encompassing human experience involving aural, visual and touch sensitivity at once. The combination of these elements yields a type of music that aims to affect, soothe and heal, involving the listeners in what can be deemed a deeper kind of musical experience. Fina claims, in fact, that in determined situations he is able to reach a modified state of mind while performing and, by natural extension, his audience may be able to live the same kind of experience.

The story of the relationship between Enzo Fina and his instrument begins in 1980 in the city of Lecce, Apulia, when a friend who knew of Fina's ability with woodwork handed him an original African '*mbira* to be repaired. Both the morphology of the instrument made out of turtle shell and its startling sound made a lasting impression on Fina. During the week it took to repair the damage, Fina had the time to appreciate and to understand the ingenious simplicity of the acoustics of the instrument and, above all, to marvel at the density of the sound it produced, a sound that, in his words, "carried him away." Totally fascinated, Fina sought to buy another '*mbira* for himself but, unable to find one, decided to make one instead, not as a clone, but rather as an independent, newly conceived musical object fashioned in accordance with his musical taste, concepts, artistic vision, and cultural aesthetics.

Fina began experimenting with several types of resonators and scrap materials for the metal keys. After a time of trial and error, he was able to fashion his first instrument selecting the goblet-shaped, terracotta resonator of a Moroccan drum. Substituting the skin of the drum with a wooden soundboard, he mounted three rows of flat metal keys for each hand. The metal keys were taken off a rake used for collecting olives once the fruit is shaken off the tree. Fina interprets the clever choice to be the first symbolic relationship between the new instrument, the earth and the harvest of one of its most precious fruits. Fina recalled, "It was beautiful, I was enchanted when I finally found the way to actually make it; it seemed so beautiful." Fina baptized the instrument, naming it after his last name: the *fina*. The name *fina* remains a general term that the artist uses to indicate his instruments. However, since all instruments Fina has made thus far are also conceived as visual art objects, he has assigned a specific name to each one of them in accordance with his original creative idea.

Indeed, the encounter between the man and the instrument was as casual and as engaging as any love at first sight, or rather at first sound. But the discovery of the object is merely a beginning if we consider the complex development in the relationship that followed. The late ethnomusicologist John Blacking once wrote, "If music is a human invention rather than a discovery, it could be an action autonomous with its own independent rules."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, in his human and artistic involvement with his instrument, Fina set out to develop a totally autonomous action establishing his own independent rules.

For a while, he remained unconcerned about the origins of the '*mbira*, assuming it hailed from somewhere in Asia. Even after he learned that the

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<sup>5</sup> John Blacking, "Towards an Anthropology of the Body," in *The Anthropology of the Body*, ed. John Blacking, ASA Monograph 15 (London and New York, 1977), pp. 1–28, at p. 11.



instrument was African in origin he was not interested in any further type of research or inquiry because he was already deeply involved with practicing and exploring its sonorous possibilities. Fina felt the instrument was both symbolically and profoundly his own from the moment he learned that the friend who had first introduced the '*mbira*' to him had died of cancer. Fina remarked, "Since my friend was gone, the possibility of seeing the original instrument again died as well. From that moment on, the *fina* reminded me of my friend; I thought that his spirit was in it, and so, it became something visceral, something strictly personal, *my* instrument." I was surprised by the revelation of the spiritual connection Fina felt he had with his deceased friend through the possession and use of the instrument. In fact, I could not help but noting the first of several parallels between Fina's experience with his *fina* and the African musician's experience with the '*mbira*'. Incidentally, among the Shona of Zimbabwe, '*mbira*' music helps to connect the living with the spirits of their ancestors by means of possession and trance.

As I mentioned previously, Fina conceives his instruments as complete works of both visual and musical art. Of all the *finas* he has built, none looks or sounds alike and the symbolic meaning he has ascribed to each differs considerably. Aesthetically speaking, this personal aspect in instrument-making is analogous to that of the African instrument maker. In her article on the "African *Mbira* As Musical Icon," Cynthia Schmidt writes,

The art of instrument making in Africa is largely an individual endeavor. Each instrument maker must consider how the creative conception of one musical instrument will differ from another in its physical and its acoustical properties. Depending on its material and design, each instrument may produce a different tone quality and may have a different meaning. Therefore, an instrument is most commonly made by the musician who plays it.<sup>6</sup>

The development of the instrument began with Fina's fascination with its sound. Being a painter and an art student, he was (as he continues to be) interested in the relationship between sound and color. He sought to fuse the three fundamental colors with the concept of the triad,<sup>7</sup> thus conceiving three levels of keys. Then he associated the seven colors of the rainbow with the seven notes of the diatonic scale. The relationship between color and sound as explored by Vasilij Kandinskij proved to be useful for Fina. Kandinskij writes,

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<sup>6</sup> Cynthia Schmidt, "African *Mbira* as Musical Icons," in *Sounding Forms*, ed. Marie Thérèse Brincard (New York, 1989), pp. 73–78, at p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> In Western harmony the triad is the basic, most definite chord. It is made of three stacked-up notes, each one a third distant from the other. There are four types of triads: major, minor, augmented, and diminished.

Going towards the essence of these two elements [color and sound], one realizes that there is something that these two have in common, that being what in physics is called velocity. Sound travels at a certain speed and color does the same through light velocity. Sound and light have different velocities, but very similar dynamics, for example those of refraction, reflection, and wave oscillation. These relationships can be fused together by means of psychological perception. Therefore the instrument becomes the point of fusion, the catalyst between the two physics of these two elements, sound and color.<sup>8</sup>

Essentially, here Fina explains his basic concept of texture by conceiving the relationship between sound and color as a natural process. It is because of this relationship that he assigned a particular color to each note by actually painting it on the keys. The idea is to create thick or thin textures in sound while, at the same time, concentrating on the visual-aural character rendered by the relationship between the given note and the color associated with it.

Fina places great importance and value on the quality, intensity and dynamic of the sound produced by his instruments. From the beginning, he concentrated his research on the sound offered by different types of resonating materials as well as in the way sound projects and reflects. He has experimented with sound reflections inside terracotta flower pots of different shapes and sizes in his effort to achieve stronger tones, richer in harmonics, that would yield an optimal resonance or, as Fina puts it referring to his color-tone concept, “an optimal reflection.” Fina has extended his experiments to other materials for resonators such as gourds, wood, fiberglass, and clay.

Both *fina* and *'mbira* can be tuned according to the needs of the players; the two instruments share a common idea in how tuning is conceived. Paul Berliner explains, “[Shona] artists use *chuning* to refer not only to interval configurations but also to qualities of tone, sound projection, pitch level, and overtones.”<sup>9</sup>

Fina approached rhythm by developing a mathematical concept that was inspired by the acoustical cycle of the slight pulse discrepancy between two almost equally pitched frequencies. In essence, Fina bases his rhythm on a cyclical sequence of sixteen superimposed beats in both duple and triple meter. By using this sequence, he creates polyrhythmic patterns. He assigns the three beats of the triple meter to the left hand to coincide with the first three beats of the duple meter in the right hand. Thus he leaves the fourth beat of the duple meter in the right hand to serve as a sort of outsider coinciding alternatively with the first, second, and third beats of the triple meter during the cycle. The right and left hand may function interchangeably and independently.

Right hand (duple meter):      1 2 3 4 / 1 2 3 4 / 1 2 3 4 / 1 2 3 4 //

Left hand (triple meter):      1 2 3 1 / 2 3 1 2 / 3 1 2 3 / 1 2 3 1 //

<sup>8</sup> Vasilij Kandinskij, *Scritti Intorno Alla Musica*, ed. Milo Pucci (Fiesole, 1979).

<sup>9</sup> Paul Berliner, *The Soul of 'Mbira*, rev. ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993), pp. 54–72. “Chuning” is a contraction of the term “tuning.”

Fina's concept includes a melodic component that is as important as inseparable from the rhythm. The outsider melody note—that 1 which reoccurs after 1 2 3 of the left hand/triple meter—contributes to accent the beat but also to define and color the out-of-phase impression of the right hand/duple meter. It is within this basic rhythmic and melodic theory executed in repetitive patterns that Fina is capable of creating the sonorous structure upon which he builds up a hypnotic, modified state of consciousness. Although the audience may or may not go through the same experience at a particular time, what the listener receives in aural terms can be broadly described as a tight sound unit, progressing in a rolling motion of compound rhythms and a series of ever-changing melodies. Such sound units present little or subtle changes, much as a minimalist piece would. However, unlike most minimalist compositions, Fina's work is characterized by a larger number of variations, a great deal of improvisation, a wide range of dynamics, and changing speeds in tempo that contribute to maintaining freshness of and interest in the piece.

In harmony with performance surrounding elements such as context, personal and collective moods of the moment, and type of audience, time is without a doubt the defining factor needed by both the artist and the listener in order to “enter” the music in a hypnotic way. It is a known fact that continuous repetition of a well-established pattern for an extended period of time is instrumental in achieving a trance state among religious practitioners. One ready example that comes to mind, for instance, is the recitation of the *dhikr* (also *zīkr*), the sole repetition of the name of Allah recited by Sufi devotees all over the Muslim world. In his thorough study of the Dervishes of Konya, Turkey, Shems Friedlander points out that “the Whirling Dervishes repeat their *zīkr* as they turn. They empty their hearts of all but the thought of God and whirl in the ecstatic movement of His breath.”<sup>10</sup> In order to reach the vertical connection with God, the importance of the complexity and length of the *sema*, the ritual of the Dervishes, must not be overlooked. It is for this reason that each *fina* piece must last a long time to allow both the repetitive rhythmic patterns as well as the melodic developments to be discerned, understood, and finally embraced by the listener. Listening to this music, therefore, must be conceived in a manner different from the ordinary, as it requires the deepest degree of concentration and participation.

Along with Erika Bourguignon and Gilbert Rouget, the French scholar Georges Lapassade has defined trance as a modified state of consciousness culturally elaborated.<sup>11</sup> According to Lapassade,

<sup>10</sup> Shems Friedlander, *The Whirling Dervishes: Being an Account of the Sufi Order Known As the Mevlevis and Its Founder the Poet and Mystic Mevlana Jalalu'ddin Rumi* (Albany, N.Y., 1992), p. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Erika Bourguignon, *Psychological Anthropology* (New York, 1979); Gilbert Rouget, *La musique et la transe: esquisse d'une théorie générale des relations de la musique et de la possession* (Paris, 1980); and Georges Lapassade, *La Transe* (Paris, 1990).

“Modified states of consciousness” can be grouped under a certain number of experiences during which the subject has the impression of a certain deregulation of the habitual functioning of his or her consciousness to live another relationship with the world, with the self, with the body, and with his or her identity.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, still very much related to the modified state of consciousness, trance is intended as a process of “passage.” A trance-like state implies a twofold dimension, one recognized as psychological and related to those states known as terminal, such as near death experience. The other is recognized as collective, that is, social, and refers to religious beliefs and rituals of a group.<sup>13</sup>

Lapassade mentions also that trance entails the process of the splitting of the self. According to Fina’s description, his experience of trance manifests in what seems to be a splitting of the self described by Lapassade as a way of looking at himself from the outside while he plays. The experiences in which the individual witnesses, seemingly passively but in perfect lucidity, the demise of his or her ordinary state of consciousness, the *cogito de transe* mentioned, are, according to Lapassade, constitutive of any trance.<sup>14</sup> The French scholar further states that

To describe the heart of trance the word *splitting* is to be preferred to *dissociating*, which in the English language corresponds to it—it should not be intended as the simple effect of a division in consequence of which a subject spectator will be the passive witness of his other state. In a trance, the relationship between a passive lived imaginary and a vigil but fascinated observation of the internal spectacle, is reflexive. Such as a lucid dream is a dream of the dream, a dream that dreams itself, by the same token, the awareness of a trance is developed in a trance. This splitting inherent to the trance—to a time constituting it and constituted by it—is the founding dimension of this experience that does not belong to the ordinary awake state, nor to that of sleep.<sup>15</sup>

In his experience of a modified state of consciousness, Fina speaks of maintaining his feet on the ground while, at the same time, allowing the brain to separate his sense of hearing from his motor skills. While the brain sends an active, steady message to the hands, keeping them moving in rhythm, he is, at the same time, capable of “stepping outside” of his body to observe himself, to listen to and contemplate the sonorous product created by his fingers. Basically, Fina assures that he is able to become an audience of himself.

It was while being in this modified state that Fina discovered one of the instrument’s most peculiar characteristics, something verifiable also in African ‘*mbira*’ music making, the so-called “third sound.” He realized that whenever he

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<sup>12</sup> Georges Lapassade, *Stati modificati e transe* (Rome, 1996), p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

was able to let his fingers go, he could concentrate his listening on the enticing acoustic of the “third sound.” This is a rhythmic and melodic product of the independent interaction between his fingers and the keys. Fina states that, by letting his hands go free, he is able to decentralize his brain by focusing his hearing on each individual rhythmic and melodic pattern in a one-on-one fashion. The enchanting sensation he is able to experience has prompted him to rationalize the phenomena. In fact, he likes to make the parallel between the two nearly equal tones yielding an independent sound and the two hands yielding an independent brain. Fina says,

I am the result, the third party. This third part is more abstract and, therefore, I consider it the result of the pleasure between two autonomous movements. The third sound opens a vast world, because it is from there that I begin to think seriously about the world of trance. If I am able to move one hand that is then able to go on its own, and so does the other hand, and they both make something well defined, precise, and totally independent, the result is that my mind can disconnect. I can, therefore, reach a different level of consciousness, so that my mind can find rest in this kind of state.

It is clear, therefore, that Fina’s own explanation for the third sound sees him both as the producer and the product of the phenomenon. However, there are plausible explanations for this kind of musical effect found in the acoustic property of the *mbira* and, for that matter, in any similarly conceived musical instrument because of an array of both melodic and non-melodic elements. First and foremost, the rich overtones produced by the plucked keys resonating through either the trough resonator or the attached gourd resonators in the Shona type allow for the overtones to literally envelope the player in a cloud of sound. Secondly, non-melodic attachments such as jingles, soda caps and other various noise-makers are to be emphasized as the contributing cause for the existence of the third sound. It should be pointed out, however, that the *fina* does not carry any of the above mentioned attachments; its sound quality and third-sound-producing capability depend entirely on the size of the resonator. Only the listener’s trained ear will be able to discern, isolate, and follow this sound. This does not mean that hearing such an effect is the sole province of the player or the initiated listener, as anyone can be taught how and what to listen to, even aside from the ecstatic experience.

In his master’s thesis, Kenneth Sacks speaks of the third sound as an “independent melodic line” which proceeds simultaneously when playing the *mbira*.<sup>16</sup> Paul Berliner, instead, uses Kubic’s term “inherent rhythms” in order to explain this phenomenon. He states that “inherent rhythms are those

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<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Sacks, “The Dialectic of Shona Mbira Dza Vadzimu” (M.A. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1992), p. 46.

melodic/rhythmic patterns not directly being played by the performer but arising from the total complex of the '*mbira* music.'<sup>17</sup> We can agree with this statement since, after all, the '*mbira* performance includes a certain number of different sounds other than those produced by the fingers on the keys or through singing. The several attachments mounted on its body jingle continuously, contributing to a complex sound texture, despite the fact that the one who performs is often only one man with his instrument. However, by what Berliner states, it may be inferred that there may be involuntary sounds. Fina stresses the fact that, ultimately, the musician is the creator of the music and, therefore, still the one responsible for any musical outcome. In his opinion, there is no such thing as involuntary sounds, inherent or built-in rhythms, but he recognizes, perhaps half in jest, that there is something of a magical quality in a phenomenon such as the third sound.

These peculiarities found in the instrument by its players often establish a lifelong affair, a bond that transcends a normal relationship between a player and his or her instrument. The unique relationship between the '*mbira* and its player is, in fact, another commonality shared by Fina and Shona musicians relating directly to the power of trance and ecstasy.<sup>18</sup> Elaborating the concept, Kauffman argues that "by personalizing the instrument, '*mbira* music becomes a relationship between two music-producing sources, and, therefore, we cannot really call this solo music."<sup>19</sup> Since the two music-producing sources are clearly the musician and his instrument, Fina believes that he does not play the *fina*; rather he and his instrument play music together.

As I stated in the beginning of this article, Fina feels a profound affection for his Salentine homeland and the peasant tradition in general. He considers himself to be a culture bearer. Playing his *fina* does not oblige him to strive for cultural compromise when coming to terms with questions addressing the alien origins of his beloved instrument to the Salento, or how to fit the tradition with his music. Fina strongly believes that it is possible to continue tradition and thus culture by creating new works of art apt to espouse meanings and values of the contemporary world.

The idea of continuing the tradition brings to the fore the dialectic between sedimentation and innovation. Such a dialectic should be considered of great importance in the understanding that a musical tradition can indeed continue even if in completely different forms and aesthetics. What I am referring to is the ever-present problem of the understanding of oral tradition and authenticity and the roles this plays in the creation of a music steeped in tradition but existing, de facto, in contemporary times. The late Roberto Leydi recognized that overlooking such reality can be extremely limiting. He states,

To ignore, or neglect, or worse, liquidate as "corrupt" manifestations, extraneous to the interests of the folklorist or the ethnomusicologist the

<sup>17</sup> Berliner, *The Soul of 'Mbira*, p. 88.

<sup>18</sup> Sacks, "Dialectic," p. 56.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Allen Kauffmann, "Multi-Part Relationships in the Shona Music of Rhodesia" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1970), p. 105.

current realities of the “folk” behavior and to reserve our attention to what we believe pertinent to the authenticity of the tradition, or to chase the myth of the archaic or the uncorrupted, is not only a strongly limiting procedure but also a choice that leads inevitably to the distortion of the observation of what is, in effect, a permanence of traditional heritage. The prevailing “oral” nature of the culture we call “folk” renders extremely hard and uncertain, however, not impossible, to back up in time beyond the witnessing of memory. But the awareness of the dynamic character of oral cultures tells us that what appears to us through research as “ancient,” is the result of many consecutive historical processes and, therefore, a proof of a specific moment in the history of the subaltern classes. This does not mean that this [historical] moment that we welcome as “recent” would not carry the signs, often really evident, of remote heritages. But not because of this we must consider it as an expression of a unified and compact past that may lead us to the mythic “beginning of time” to which the oral culture has been relegated by a romantic attitude. The “corruptions” and “mystifications” of the folk that mark, at different levels and with different consequences, part of the contemporary space must enter in the field of observation, not only of the ethnomusicologist but also of the folklorist, as signs of a new and dynamic state of the folk behavior and of the mutating, rapid rapport between the [social] level of the cultured and the level of the folk.<sup>20</sup>

Leydi calls more directly the attention of scholars to these changes and to whatever may come from the folk world. It is clear that at the time of its writing his statement inferred that a current musical activity connected with the oral tradition but different from that past was in the making. Leydi’s premonition was right, in fact. Such activity lives today because of its solid connection with the past, as well as because of its openness to stimuli from the outside world. It is what I have come to define, for example, as “Mediterranean World-Music” after my study of contemporary popular music in Sicily.<sup>21</sup> Fina’s case is but one among a large number of other examples. In Italy I met with musicians who believe that the tradition should be analyzed, studied and reenacted more or less faithfully. The activity of these attentive individuals is important and should always be encouraged. Their music is thus a reproduction of traditional models reconstructed in what comes to be a faithful, yet self-contained, museological endeavor. On the other hand, those who embrace innovation, while acknowledging the past, seek to move on toward broader territories confronting themselves with other musicians and audiences. According to what I could gather

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<sup>20</sup> Roberto Leydi, ed., *Le Tradizioni Popolari in Italia: Canti e Musiche Popolari* (Bergamo, 1990), p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Roberto Catalano, “Mediterranean World-Music: Experiencing Sicilian-Arab Sound” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1999).

in the past decade while conducting fieldwork among contemporary local musicians in Sicily<sup>22</sup> and Sardinia,<sup>23</sup> the musical tradition of the past has already been filtered and transcended in a number of variations and variants as numerous as the performers themselves. No matter how much the music created may be deemed as close or far removed from the past, it keeps the inspiration while maintaining the necessary openness to suggestions and influences offered by contemporary society in the creation of new meanings and new understandings.

In an illuminating article on cross-cultural aesthetics, Angeles Sancho-Velázquez writes,

Keeping a tradition alive does not mean a simple repeating of what has been sedimented in the past, but a bringing to life of that tradition by means of a dialectic between sedimentation and innovation. This dialectic is always operating in a tradition, although the degree of emphasis in one or the other term of the dialectic may vary greatly among cultures. In this sense, works considered as the workings of the productive imagination, and not as reified reproductions of sedimented forms, are always introducing new meanings. There is still another sense in which music and creative work in general, can be thought of as metaphors introducing novel meanings. This is the case when creative works are conceived of as introducing a new meaning which clashes not only with prior works, but with the everyday life of a people. No matter how slowly a musical tradition may change over time, the music being created and performed always adds something to the lives of the people sharing that tradition. The claim being made here is that creative works are more than embellished reproductions of what exists in other spheres of life. Instead of being only a reproduction or reflection of social structures, works *produce new* meanings and new understandings.<sup>24</sup>

In its peculiar characteristics, Enzo Fina's case is a single but also a singular example of the dialectic between sedimentation and innovation. Even if foreign in form and sound to traditional Salentine music, Fina expresses a cultural awareness of his rural background in his *fin*a music. As a culture bearer, he believes that traditional music does continue in time both as repetition of the past and innovation in the present. Fina, a skilled *pizzica pizzica* drummer himself, likes to compare symbolically the hypnotically repetitive, rhythmic clicking generated by plucking the keys of the *fin*a to the jingling of the cymbals mounted on the frame of the *tamburieddhu*, the frame drum accompanying the *pizzica*

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Roberto Catalano, "'Sonu De Canna': The Revitalization of *Sas Enas*, a Sardinian Cane Clarinet" (M.A. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1995).

<sup>24</sup> Angeles Sancho-Velázquez, "Interpreting Metaphors: Cross-Cultural Aesthetics as Hermeneutic Project," in *Musical Aesthetics and Multiculturalism in Los Angeles*, ed. Steven Loza, Selected Reports in Ethnomusicology 10 (Los Angeles, 1994), pp. 37–50, at p. 45; italics in original.



*pizzica* dance during the ritual against the bite of the tarantula.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, he ascribes healing properties to the instrument and firmly believes the music he performs on it capable of soothing the restless, bringing life to the depressed, and easing the troubled mind. Primarily, Fina's belief that his instrument can be used as a relief medium is the consequence of an incident that changed his life. In fact, shortly after he made the very first of his *finas*, he had to survive a near death experience due to a motorcycle accident. Upon awakening after a week-long coma, Fina used his instrument to carry himself out of the trauma. By practicing constantly and mastering the technique needed to involve and exercise his own brain to recovery, he was able to accomplish such a task in a relatively short time. Thanks to an autonomous healing process that did not only involve conventional medication but also a specific kind of music played in a specific way, the result of Fina's physical and psychological rehabilitation was *the* revelation. From that moment onward, Fina has observed, on several occasions, the same kind of positive effect his music has had on certain listeners.<sup>26</sup> Fina does so in accordance with the tradition of his native Salento, thus maintaining a link with the noted *melo-therapies*<sup>27</sup> of the past.

The argument I posit above is reinforced by the fact that musical instruments are entities capable of interacting with their surrounding physical and cultural realities and are not confined within borders of any kind, whether geographic or cultural. Jihad Racy states,

Musical instruments are interactive entities. Being both adaptive and idiosyncratic, they are not mere reflections of their cultural contexts, nor are they fixed organological artifacts that can be studied in isolation from other social and artistic domains. Instead, instruments interact dialectically with surrounding physical and cultural realities, and as such, they perpetually negotiate and renegotiate their roles, physical structures, performance modes, sound ideals, and symbolic meanings.<sup>28</sup>

Fina's case fully espouses Racy's point of view by demonstrating clearly that an instrument foreign to a culture can interact freely with the player, revealing unsuspected adaptability, while maintaining, at the same time, those negotiable and re-negotiable characteristics proper to any instrument.

Undoubtedly, Fina learned to adapt himself to his instrument during the lengthy process of inventing and mastering it. He negotiated and re-negotiated

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<sup>25</sup> The rhythmic role of the cymbals of the frame drum is of basic importance in the *pizzica* as the sixteenth note triplets they produce constitute the driving element of the overall rhythm.

<sup>26</sup> Currently, Enzo Fina works as a music therapist at the Children's Hospital in Los Angeles. Among his regular activities inside the hospital, he continues to play the *fina* for his young patients.

<sup>27</sup> The academic term *melo-therapy* refers to the healing home ritual of the *tarantati*, a therapy using sound or melody.

<sup>28</sup> Jihad A. Racy, "A Dialectical Perspective on Musical Instruments: The East-Mediterranean *Mijwiz*," *Ethnomusicology* 38, no. 1 (1994), 37–57, at p. 38.

his own role as the instrument required understanding. According to Ricoeur and Gadamer's proposition in their phenomenological hermeneutics, understanding requires appropriation. Fina made what was alien his own. He did not appropriate the African 'mbira in an *expropriative* sense; rather, he transformed his own self in the process of understanding it.<sup>29</sup> This was possible precisely because he took the idea of the African 'mbira and made a similar, but unquestionably different, object.

In conclusion, as Fina likes to point out, it is true that ultimately it is the musician who plays the instrument with the ultimate goal of making music. It is, nevertheless, undeniable that musical instruments may give some hint or even warning of how to approach them. In that sense, instruments "speak" to musicians and some do communicate more than others. Their adaptability or idiosyncrasy depends upon the matching of their structure and culture with the structure and culture of the musician. Fina had to accommodate himself to the sound, basic language, and the original African properties of his instrument, although he did it on his own terms. The experience of similar patterns of learning so surprisingly close to those of the African musician may strike us as coincidental, or even incredible. However, these were fundamental steps that the instrument required Fina to undergo and that he was ready to embrace. He needed to delve deeper into the meanings of his music, keeping the traditional concept as the ever-burning flame without which all is meaningless. By combining his concept of musical tradition together with a genuine openness for the sounds of the world, Fina created new works of art that testify to the possibility of artistic expression without entirely sacrificing one's identity. It is hoped that Fina's case may encourage others to acknowledge this experience and consider art as a valid, and thus possible, option to counterpoise to our often culturally obtuse, confused, and confusing world.

LOS ANGELES

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<sup>29</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, Eng., 1981), p. 113.



Fig. 1. *Fina Saturno*

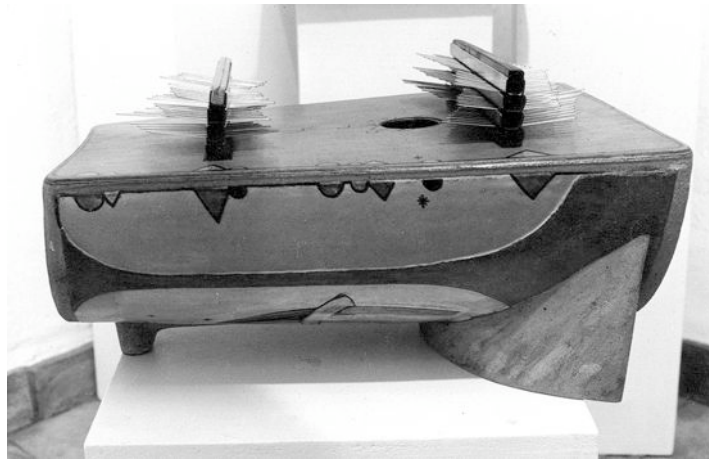


Fig. 2. *Fina Doppia* (double)



Fig. 3: Enzo Fina with his masterpiece, the *Fina CLITINHEAT*

Chapter Four  
On Musicians, Singers and Dancers



## **“My Soul’s There Already and My Heart’s on Its Way”: Portuguese Women’s Pilgrimage Drum Songs**

by Judith Cohen

Ó divina Santa Cruz(i) e para lá vou eu andando,  
minha alma já lá está, o meu coração vai chigando.  
Ó divina Santa Cruz e à vossa porta cheguei,  
quantos anjeos m’acompanhem como di passadas dei.  
Ó divina santa cruz(i) e quem vos varreu o terreiro,  
foram as vossas mardomas, co’ raminho di loureiro.<sup>1</sup>

(O divine holy cross, I’m going up there  
my soul’s there already and my heart’s on its way.  
O divine holy cross, and I’ve arrived at your door,  
as many angels accompany me as my footsteps.  
O divine holy cross, and [the women] who swept the ground for you,  
were your attendants, with a branch of laurel.)

In the rocky mountain village of Monsanto, on the first Sunday in May, the “Cross of May,” almost everyone in the village joins the procession from the church up the steep path to the ruins of the old castle, singing. Many of the women, as they climb the path and sing, play a double-skinned square frame drum.

The square drum is sometimes called simply that, *pandeiro quadrado*, or *pandero cuadrado* in Spanish. In several areas, however, it is called *adufe*, from the Arabic *al-duff*, reflecting the long period of so-called “Moorish” rule in the Iberian Peninsula. Throughout its long history, the frame drum, both square and round, has been associated with women, and with religion and ritual. Its association with fertility is echoed in its use in springtime rituals, and with activities related to courtship and agriculture.<sup>2</sup> As Doubleday and Redmond note, and I have frequently observed in the course of fieldwork, the frame drum played by women has also been closely linked to the sieve,<sup>3</sup> connecting women, fertility,

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<sup>1</sup> Amelia Fonseca and group, recorded by J. Cohen, Monsanto, July 1999, and during the procession at Monsanto, May 1998. At the “Performing Ecstasies” conference, this and other examples were shown in short video clips from my fieldwork. Much of the information comes from conversations, interviews, fieldwork settings, Web pages and e-mail list and personal dialogues, as well as ephemera such as notes written for me by local *adufeiras*, or word sheets and programme notes, besides the books and articles cited below. All translations into English are my own.

<sup>2</sup> Veronica Doubleday, “The Frame Drum in the Middle East: Women, Musical Instruments and Power,” *Ethnomusicology* 43 (1999), 101–34; and Layne Redmond, *When the Drummers Were Women: A Spiritual History of Rhythm* (New York, 1997), pp. 19 and 47.

<sup>3</sup> Recorded by J. Cohen, July 1999. Frame drums are still sometimes made from sieve frames, usually round, sometimes square, in Spain and Portugal. In the village of Fornos, northeastern

agriculture, and the supernatural. Today, the square drum is played mostly in areas along the Spanish-Portuguese border, though in earlier times it seems to have been much more widespread in both countries. Women still sing and play it for local pilgrimages. Many of their song lyrics manage to be both solemn and humorous, and also reflect an interplay between the religious and the secular, echoing the ambivalent role of the church toward this women's tradition. In recent years, professional male musicians have begun to play the square drum, divesting it simultaneously of its feminine exclusivity and of its ritual context.

BACKGROUND: THE SQUARE DRUM,  
WOMEN AND RELIGION IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

The relationship of music, dance, religion and gender roles is problematic in all three monotheistic religions.<sup>4</sup> Islamic prophetic tradition protected the frame drum, requiring women to sing and play for weddings.<sup>5</sup> Sephardic Jewish women also play frame drums to accompany their wedding songs, and in some parts of Spain and Portugal women do so as well. Veronica Doubleday suggests that men have felt threatened by the frame drum's power when it is played by women; she cites medieval accounts of Islamic leaders who deliberately broke girls' frame drums.<sup>6</sup> The frame drum could also be associated with cross-dressing, including eunuchs who were granted the status of a woman to play the sacred frame drum.<sup>7</sup>

From the earliest appearance of the square drum in the Iberian Peninsula, it has been associated with both women and religion: a northern church includes a sculpture of two women holding square drums;<sup>8</sup> and for seventeenth-century Corpus Christi processions, women are described as playing *adufe* and *pandero* to accompany their singing and dancing.<sup>9</sup> During the Middle Ages, Jewish, Muslim and Christian women are all described as playing the *adufe*: a Passover Haggada from fourteenth-century Barcelona depicts Myriam playing it after the crossing of the Red Sea.<sup>10</sup> But in Portugal in the seventeenth century, the *adufe* and other instruments were forbidden inside the church by the priest Manuel Bernardes (1644–1710), who wrote: "It is forbidden to celebrate Yuletide . . . in the churches . . . with panderos, *adufes*, castanets, fireworks, pistol shots and unseemly laughter . . ." He also forbade "Gypsy dances, or those of women of

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Portugal, the women hold the square drum horizontally, and the movement of playing it is strongly reminiscent of winnowing. Redmond notes that old Sumerian words and Egyptian hieroglyphics for "drum" and "sieve" were related; see Redmond, *When the Drummers Were Women*, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> Judith Cohen, "'Ca no soe joglarsa': Women Musicians in Medieval Iberia's Three Cultures," in *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Medieval Women's Song*, ed. Anne Klinck and Anne Rasmussen (Philadelphia, 2001), pp. 66–80.

<sup>5</sup> Doubleday, "Frame Drum in the Middle East," p. 125.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112–13.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., Henry George Farmer, *A History of Arabian Music* (London, 1929), p. 129 n. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Carmen Marentes, "Cosas del baile: el pandero," *El Calecho* 5 (1984), 17–19.

<sup>9</sup> Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, *Instrumentos musicais populares portugueses*, rev. and enl. ed. (1966; Lisbon, 2000), pp. 117–122.

<sup>10</sup> Bezalel Narkess, ed., *The Golden Haggadah* (London, 1997), cover.



low repute.”<sup>11</sup> This priest's condemnation of the *adufe* associates the instrument with women, and with both sacred and secular contexts; it also appears to be a recognition of its power in the hands of women, especially when coupled with their voices—centuries after the early medieval Muslim leaders were destroying women's drums.

Aspects of this ambivalence of formal religion toward women singing and drumming are still evident. The association of the *adufe* with springtime and Easter reinforces its old link with fertility; and in some areas, it is still linked with witchcraft. Even the old connection with the sieve can still be seen: sieve frames are still sometimes used for constructing tambourines, and the movement of playing the *adufe* in some areas is reminiscent of winnowing. In one Spanish village, a section of the square drum dance sequence is called *ajechar*, from the verb “to winnow.”<sup>12</sup> Faint echoes of old cross-gender drumming roles can still be found in Iberian Carnival activities. Most strikingly, the sheer physical force of rural women's hand drumming in Portugal and Spain today provides a vivid framework for men's unarticulated fear, and in fact the breaking of women's drums by men still finds an echo in at least one Spanish village.

#### RELIGIOUS AND RITUAL CONTEXTS

Iste pandeiro que toco não é meu, que é de María  
que mo deu para tocar(e) no día da romaría<sup>13</sup>

(This drum I play is not mine, it's María's  
she gave it to me to play on the day of the procession)

Besides the Portuguese local *romerías*<sup>14</sup> such as the “Holy Cross” of the first song cited above, the square drum is sometimes played outside the church at weddings; in other cases, only vestigial ritual functions may remain. In one village of Extremadura (Spain), a disused square drum formerly played by young girls is kept in a cloistered convent.<sup>15</sup> In Asturias, the square drum was used in various rituals, including the prevention of storms, as well as played outside the church for weddings.<sup>16</sup> The Catalan *alduf*, used until the Spanish Civil War, was played by the young women of the sisterhood of the Virgin of the Rosary.<sup>17</sup> In

<sup>11</sup> Manuel Bernardes, *Nova Floresta, ou Sylva de varios apophthegmas e ditos sentenciosos, espirituales e moraes, com reflexões em que o util da doutrina se allia com o vario da erudição, assim divina como humana*, 2 (Porto, 1909), pp. 23–25: “Emende-se o celebrarmos as noites de Natal nas igrejas . . . com pandeiros, *adufes*, castanhetas, foguetes, tiros de pistola e risadas descompostas . . . dansas de ciganas e de mulheres de ruim fama . . .”

<sup>12</sup> José-Manuel Fraile, “El Pandero Cuadrado” (lecture-demonstration presented at the First Pandero Cuadrado Festival, Peñaparda, August 14, 1999), videocassette; also, fieldwork by the author.

<sup>13</sup> Recorded by J. Cohen and J. R. Aparicio, Moimenta, November 1996, May 1997.

<sup>14</sup> *Romería*: a religious procession to a local holy place, usually taking an entire day, which may include a picnic, dancing, and singing, often well into the night, or even over two days.

<sup>15</sup> Interviews by author; Fraile, “El Pandero Cuadrado.”

<sup>16</sup> Marentes, “Cosas del baile,” pp. 17–19.

<sup>17</sup> Salvador Palomar, *Les Majorales del Roser d'Ulldemolins* (Reus, 1990).

the south of Spain, in Encinasola, the square drum survives in a ritual funeral dance for the death of a child, again played by girls.<sup>18</sup> An interesting sidelight on the *adufe* in religious contexts is the existence of vestigial Crypto-Jewish (“Marrano”) communities in the same areas of Portugal where the square drum is played. The women I interviewed there insisted that they did not play the *adufe*, dismissing it as a “poor person’s” or a “farmer’s” instrument, but in fact some have played it in the past, and they take a critical interest in my own playing; at least one keeps an old *adufe* as a treasured family possession.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps these Crypto-Jewish women distance themselves from the *adufe* more because of its Christian (or pagan) associations than its socioeconomic status.

Pre-Christian origins have been suggested for several aspects of Portuguese *romerías*. One of these is the *marafona* of Monsanto, a curious, oddly unsettling doll: it is totally faceless, and its ample skirts conceal its basic structure: a simple wooden cross. During their steep ascent up the mountain in the Cross of May procession, the women, wearing towering headdresses of flowers, sing continuously; some play *adufe*, while others twirl their *marafonas*. The *marafona* protects against lightning, but has another, fertility-related function: it is placed under the bed of newlyweds for good luck on the first night of the marriage (without eyes, ears or a mouth, it can neither see, hear, nor speak of how the marriage was consummated). The *marafona* is said to be associated with the goddess Maia.<sup>20</sup> Whether or not it has pre-Christian goddess-worship origins, in some areas witches are still associated with the *adufe*: they might play it at night,<sup>21</sup> or it could be used to break up witches’ gatherings.<sup>22</sup>

In other Beira Baixa towns, the *adufe* is also an integral part of *romerías*. The three main ones featuring *adufeiras* (women *adufe* singers/players) occur in the spring, shortly after Easter. As we have seen, the Monsanto *romería* takes place in early May. Nearby, the Nossa Senhora do Almortão *romaria* of Idanha-a-Nova is held on the third Sunday after Easter. The shrine is in an empty field, up in the mountains toward the Spanish border. Merchants sell food, clothing and local crafts, including *adufes*, and people spend more time shopping, socializing and eating than hearing mass or joining the procession. The *adufeiras* sing during mass, but without *adufes*. (In 1998, one of the melodies they used was “Sounds of Silence.”) After mass, they take up their *adufes* to lead the procession, returning to the chapel to drum and sing at the entrance, as it is still forbidden to play the instruments inside it. While the young girls became bored or physically tired within a short time, the older women play and sing energetically for hours,

<sup>18</sup> António José Pérez Castellano, “Una antigua danza funerária: El pandero de Encinasola,” *Nárria*, nos. 81–84 (1998), 90–105; also, fieldwork, April 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Fieldwork, 1997–2000.

<sup>20</sup> Information about the *marafona* was obtained largely from interviews by author, 1997–2000, in Monsanto and Idanha-a-Nova, as well as information sheets distributed by both local town halls, or sold in souvenir shops with the dolls; also see Jaime Lopes Días, *Etnografía da Beira*, 4 (Lisbon, 1937), pp. 191–6.

<sup>21</sup> Oliveira, *Instrumentos musicais*, pp. 275 n. 527.

<sup>22</sup> José Luis Rivas Cruz, interview by author, Santiago de Compostela, May 1999.

recalling a verse collected just across the border from Idanha-a-Nova, in Spain, toward the end of the nineteenth century:

El tocar el pandero no tiene ciencia, sino fuerza en el brazo y permanencia.

(Playing the drum doesn't need skill, so much as strength and endurance.)<sup>23</sup>

Much of the singing at the Almortão *romería* is actually led by a man, of the local clergy. There are innumerable verses sung to the one melody, with varying themes. One is painted on the skin of an *adufe*:

Senhora do Almortão, aqui te venho cantar,  
 porque o meu canto, Senhora, e como seja a rezar.  
*A tua cantadeira oferece este adufe pelas graças recebidas*  
 e para que com ele te cantem como eu o fiz toda a vida.

(Our Lady of Almortão, I come here to sing for you  
 for my song, Lady, is as if I were praying  
 Your singer offers this *adufe* for favours received  
 and to sing with it as I've done all my life.)<sup>24</sup>

Several verses refer to the proximity of the Spanish border and the old rivalry with Spain:

Senhora do Almortão, minha tão linda arraiana  
 vira as costas a Castela, não queiras ser castelhana

(Senhora of Almortão, lovely border lady  
 turn your back to Castile, you don't want to be Castilian)<sup>25</sup>

Others have a combination of devotion and practical details similar to the song for the Holy Cross *romería* quoted at the beginning, in which Mary's devotees sweep the courtyard:

Nossa Senhora da Graça tem agua nos cantarinhos  
 para dar aos passageiros quando vem de caminho.

(Our Lady of Grace, keep water in our buckets,  
 to give the passengers when they come from the road.)<sup>26</sup>

In nearby Póvoa, another practical detail is evoked: means of transport:

<sup>23</sup> Rafaél García-Plata de Osma, "Rafaél García-Plata, su obra," in *Ruta de la Plata*, 2, ed. Rafaél García-Plata Quiróz (Madrid, 1986), p. 433.

<sup>24</sup> José-Alberto Sardinha, ed., *Idanha-a-Nova: Toques e cantares da vila*, EMI 2743 8 3339129, sound recording (1995) p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> Maria da Asensão Gonçalves Carvalho Rodrigues, ed., *Cancioneiro Cova da Beira* (Ferro, 1986), p. 120.

<sup>26</sup> Sardinha, ed., *Idanha-a-Nova*, p. 9.

Nossa Senhora da Póvoa inda la hei-de ir um ano  
ou a pé, ou a cavalo, ou no burro do Tio Albano.

(Our Lady of Póvoa, I must go there one year  
on foot, on a horse, or on Tío Albano's donkey.)<sup>27</sup>

Civil status is also mentioned:

...eu pro ano lá hei-de ir, casadinha ou solteira ou criada de servir.

(...I have to go there in a year, whether married or single or a serving-girl.)<sup>28</sup>

This one refers to an unmarried woman, a *solteira*, but Nossa Senhora da Póvoa can also wear the yellow associated with *solteiros*, unmarried men:

Nossa Senhora da Póvoa, tem o manto amarelo  
dai-me o amor solteirinho que eu, viuvo não o quero.

(Our Lady of Póvoa has a yellow mantle,  
give me a bachelor for my love, for I don't want a widower.)<sup>29</sup>

#### THE OTHER SIDE: THE *ADUFE* AND SEXUALITY

As for widows or bachelors, the drum's connections with ritual and fertility are also reflected in references to sexuality. Cea writes that it is a symbol of virginity, and breaking it indicates the girl's loss of her virginity.<sup>30</sup> The drum skin has a longstanding association with sexuality in Spain and Portugal, evident in many song lyrics; rather than representing "obscenity," these show that separating the ritualistic from daily life, from a delight in sly innuendo, is artificial. In a medieval Judeo-Catalan poem, the bride is counseled to keep her new husband happy by "making him play the drum" (*fets-li tocar o tambor*).<sup>31</sup> A well-known Portuguese stanza cautions girls not to fall in love with soldiers, because a soldier will "play the drum and then leave you":

Menina não se namora do rapaz que é militar,  
toca a caixa, vai-se embora, menina fica a chorar.<sup>32</sup>

A woman "playing the drum" can have similar allusions:

<sup>27</sup> Rodrigues, ed., *Cancioneiro Cova da Beira*, p. 127.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> António Cea, "Instrumentos musicales en la Sierra de Francia (Salamanca)," *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares* 34 (1978), 169–232, at p. 210: "Es símbolo de la virginidad y su ruptura significa la pérdida de doncelléz."

<sup>31</sup> Jaime Riera i Sans, *Cants de Noces dels Jueus Catalans* (Barcelona, 1974), p. 57.

<sup>32</sup> Recorded by J. Cohen on several occasions in Beira Baixa.

Si le doy al pandero mi madre riñe  
 porque dice que rompo muchos mandiles.

(If I play the *pandero* my mother scolds me  
 because she says I'm tearing a lot of [men's] work aprons.)<sup>33</sup>

This graphic description is a fairly common stanza in Spain, in this case from the north of Extremadura just south of Salamanca. Not far north, just inside Salamanca province, toward the Portuguese border, the village of Peñaparda is the only place where the square drum is still played with the unique technique of using the left hand to hit one skin, and striking the top frame and the other skin with a stick held in the right hand. Recalling once more the ninth-century drum-smasher,<sup>34</sup> some lyrics refer to breaking the drum skin, which of course can be interpreted as an unobvious metaphor:

El pandero se ha roto por la esquina, lo componen los mozos con clavellinas

(The drum is broken at the corner, the boys fix it with nails)<sup>35</sup>

Si quieres tocarla te la dejaré, pero con cuidado, no la rompe usted.

(If you want to play it I'll let you, but be careful: don't break it!)<sup>36</sup>

But breaking the drum's skin is not only a poetic euphemism. Girls improvised verses about their young men, and if a young man thought he wasn't flattered enough, or if his girlfriend ignored him during the pause between dance sections, he might take a knife and pierce the skin of her *pandero*. Tía Gregoria, aged 94, reminisced:

*Coño* [expletive], and when they broke the *pandero* . . . if the girl was playing and not paying attention to him, the boy went and broke it, and she'd say, "Ay, they broke my *pandero*," and they'd bring another and they'd go back to dancing . . .<sup>37</sup>

Tía Máxima remembered a girlfriend who had asked to borrow her *pandero* so she could play it instead of dancing, to avoid a boyfriend she no longer wanted to see. "Her boyfriend came after me and held a knife to my chest . . ." she recounted. "But, no, here I am, *me cago en el cristal* ["I shit on crystal," "cristal" is a euphemism for "Cristo," Christ]: he didn't stab me, either with his 'other

<sup>33</sup> Manuel García Matos, *Lírica popular de la Alta Extremadura, 2: Cancionero Popular de la Provincia de Cáceres*, ed. Josep Crivillé i Bargalló (Barcelona, 1982), p. 291.

<sup>34</sup> Doubleday, "Frame Drum in the Middle East," p. 113.

<sup>35</sup> Ángela Capdevielle, *Cancionero de Cáceres y su provincia* (Madrid, 1969), p. 125.

<sup>36</sup> José-Ramon Cid Cebrian, *Cancionero Tradicional del Campo de Ciudad Rodrigo* (Madrid, 2000), p. 36.

<sup>37</sup> Recorded by J. Cohen and M. Lizerazu, Peñaparda, November 1997.

thing' nor with the knife" ("No me picó ni con el otro ni con el cuchillo").<sup>38</sup> Tía Gregoria and Tía Isabela observed—with or without deliberate metaphorical associations—that as the women made the drums, they didn't have to depend on the men to "repair the broken skins."<sup>39</sup>

#### MEN AND THE SQUARE DRUM: INNOVATIONS

Como no tengo tetas como vosotras se me cae el pandero a las pelotas.

(Since I don't have tits like you girls, my *pandero* slides down to my balls.)<sup>40</sup>

Men rarely played the square drum, except during specific occasions such as Carnival, when, in any case, more than gender roles were reversed, and cross-dressing often formed part of the rambunctious festivities.<sup>41</sup> However, in recent years, the *adufe* has appeared in new performance contexts, and in Portugal, increasingly often as a national symbol, often in regions where it is not traditionally played. Since the 1970s, urban revival groups, and protest singer-songwriters, mostly men, have used it, especially the legendary José ("Zeca") Afonso. In modern revival and fusion groups, the square drum is also usually played by men, with or without women singing. Even the new women's voice and percussion group Segue-me á capela has a professional male percussionist. In Spain, the best-known professional performer of the Peñaparda technique is probably Eliseo Parra, but on his CD and in the live performance I saw, the square drum is all but lost in the busy arrangements. Other groups mount *adufes* on stands, where the male percussionist strikes them with two sticks, reducing them to one more unremarkable piece of the battery.

The most unusual, and certainly the most unabashedly market-oriented, project is the ensemble Adufe, created by a Lisbon jazz and fusion musician, José Salgueiro, as a project for Expo'98. Salgueiro constructed four giant *adufes* ("adufão": giant *adufe*) of about 1.5 metres on each side; influenced by the Japanese *taiko*, he has the musicians play them with sticks, with their backs to the audience. The enormous square drums have only one skin, fastened by a complicated system of strong duck nylon straps, all dramatically backlit on the stage. Salgueiro also includes battery, African drums, xylophone, Tibetan horn, electric guitars, djembe, and a dijeridoo. In his public relations material, he goes on at some length about the *adufe*'s old ritual functions,<sup>42</sup> and on stage the musicians, all men, leap and twist about as they play, looking intent, ritualistic and trancelike. But Salgueiro's main strategy to link his innovation to ritual and

<sup>38</sup> Cid Cebrian, *Cancionero Tradicional*, p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> Recorded by J. Cohen and M. Lizerazu, November 1997.

<sup>40</sup> Miguel Manzano, *Cancionero Leonés* (León, 1988), p. 592.

<sup>41</sup> Oliveira, *Instrumentos musicais*, pp. 121 n. 217 and 273 n. 518.

<sup>42</sup> At-Tambur, traditional music association and Web page, available from <http://www.attambur.com/ProjectoAdufe.htm>; and Discantus, "Adufe," *10º Festival Intercéltico do Porto*, Mundo da canção, 26–8 março (Porto, 1999), p. 23.

tradition is to invite the *adufeiras* of Monsanto, led by Amelia Fonseca, to join his ensemble for every performance. He writes, rather piously, that the *adufeiras* “link us umbilically to our rural musical tradition.”<sup>43</sup> But their presence on stage with his ensemble does not appear to be a “link”; they simply appear at predetermined points to sing a song between one frenzied male instrumental and another. At the end of the show, the men join them for the Senhora do Almortão procession song, standing behind them, clapping sticks, beating *adufes* and hopping around in what comes precariously close to being a caricature of the women's effortlessly synchronized and understated movements. For me, Salgueiro uses his inclusion of the *adufeiras* at least partially to rationalize his own departure from tradition, and assumption of the instrument into the male world; however, Amelia Fonseca herself claims to see the situation in a more positive light.

#### WOMEN'S REACTIONS

How do women react to these changes? Do they see them as appropriating the only musical expression which is exclusively theirs, an identity marker? Not surprisingly, I have had different answers to these questions from men and from women. Parra and his colleague, José-Manuel Fraile, insist that the Peñaparda women like the fact that they play the square drum professionally and have brought it to wider audiences, but local folklorist/performers Angel Carril and Eusebio (“Mayalde”) say that the women resent it. For one thing, they say, the women feel it is part of their village and are jealous of outsiders being identified with it; for another, there is an economic factor. Women were *never* paid for playing percussion at dances; in fact a well-known Peñaparda song observes wryly:

El tocar el pandero no da de comer . . .

(Playing the pandero doesn't buy food . . .)

However, men have always been paid for playing the pipe and tabor, bagpipes or other instruments for dancing. And now, revival performers certainly expect to be paid for playing the instruments they learned from women who received and expected nothing for playing them all their lives.

In Peñaparda, in 1997 and 1999, Tía Isabela told me she “didn't mind,” but she is considered particularly open-minded in the village. In 2001, I was invited to give a talk and part of the closing concert for Peñaparda's third annual square drum festival. During my talk, I asked, half seriously, for a show of hands for questions about whether it was acceptable for men to play the square drum, and for outsiders: asking them to “vote” first as a group of women, then men, and asking the women to close their eyes during the men's vote. This occasioned considerable laughter, and some serious responses. At this time and during more

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<sup>43</sup> Discantus, “Adufe,” pp. 25–26.

private conversations over the three days of the festival, several women told me that they thought the Peñaparda style should be played only by people from there, whether men or women, though others did say that if people learned it well, that was acceptable. However, very few young people in the village are learning to play it.<sup>44</sup> Before I left, several women told me they had enjoyed learning from my talk about different styles of playing the square drum in different regions, and that they approved of my performing only in Portuguese style, not Peñaparda style, in the final concert. Some of them had roundly berated a young woman who performed a Peñaparda song in the concert without having mastered the technique. Conversation about her continued into the next day: some even said her performance had “spoiled” the concert, while others blamed the group of (male) musicians who had invited her to join them, mistakenly thinking it would please the women. In Monsanto, Amelia Fonseca has said different things at different times: initially, she told me she thought the *adufe* should remain a women’s instrument, but later she more or less echoed Salgueiro’s comments about how this made the instrument better known, especially to young people (personal communication). But, while Salgueiro’s show certainly makes it better known, it implicitly devalues the women’s tradition, which on stage, especially for young audience members, comes across as outdated, quaint, and less interesting than the dramatic giant instruments.

While women are honoured as “vessels,” it is on the instrument itself that musicians and promoters focus, rather than the unique vocal style and technique which kept it alive. In album and program notes, the discourse veers toward the “noble savage,” and at times it seems that the loftier the discourse, the further removed from tradition is the playing and, especially, removed from the strong women’s singing style, with its penetrating tone and subtle ornaments. Very few women seem to be performing traditional vocal styles (with exceptions in Galicia and the contiguous Portuguese Minho area). But the drum forms a unit with the voice; alone, it is just wood and skin.

As ethnomusicologists, we are trained to treat innovations dispassionately, and to view terms such as “authentic” and “traditional” with mistrust, even disapproval, for we are not as consistent about eschewing value judgments as we like to think we are. As a listener and musician, I find innovations interesting and at times appealing. As a person and a traditional style woman singer, I am disturbed by new developments replacing, rather than adding to, tradition. In the case of the *adufe* revival, as it becomes a national symbol, manipulated by men with the token presence of traditional women singers, I ask: Where are women’s voices? And when they are there, where is their strength? What can the drum do

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<sup>44</sup> Alicia Ramos, daughter of the current *alcadesa* (woman mayor), has been studying the instrument and its repertoire intensively with Isabela García and learning from other women as well; she has also begun a children’s group which so far mostly learns the dances. The Peñaparda technique was also used until the mid-twentieth century in two neighboring villages, and the frying pan is played with the same technique, using a spoon instead of a stick and a thimble instead of an open hand, in a village six kilometres away, but to my knowledge the technique has not been documented outside this small area.



without their rituals, their performed ecstasies—which have accompanied it through the centuries—or who is creating and performing the new ecstasies, and why?

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### **Video Excerpts Shown with Original Presentation**

Monsanto (Beira Baixa), Portugal, 1998, procession of the *Divina Santa Cruz*, May 1998, recorded by Judith Cohen with José-Alberto Sardinha

Procession of *Nossa Senhora do Almortão* (Beira Baixa), Portugal, April 1999, recorded by Judith Cohen and Tamar Cohen Adams

Peñaparda (Salamanca), Spain: “Tía Isabela” with pandero: (a) fieldwork November 1997, recorded by Judith Cohen with María Ascensión Lizerazu; (b) from festival in Peñaparda, August 1999, recorded by Eliseo Parra

Brigada Victor Jara concert, Macedo do Cavaleiros, festival, September 16, 2000, recorded by Judith Cohen

*Adufe*, led by José Salgueiro, with Monsanto *adufeiras*, concert, Oporto, Portugal, September 17, 2000, recorded by Judith Cohen



Fig. 1. Jose Relvas and his *adufes*, Romería of Nossa Senhora do Almortão (Idanha-a-Nova), Portugal, April 1999



Fig. 2. *Adufe* players Leonor Narciso and Prazeres Giraldes, Paúl, Portugal, April 2000



Fig. 3. *Adufe* players, Idanha-a-Nova, Portugal, 1996



Fig. 4. Adriana Dias Azinheiro and her donkey, "Picasso," with *adufe*, Monsanto, Portugal, May 1997



Fig. 5. Two *adufe* workshops: *above*, stand at Nossa Senhora do Almortão romería, April 1999; *below*, José Relvas' workshop, Idanha-a-Nova, July 1999



Fig. 6. Women with square drums in annual church procession, Berzocana, Spain, August 2002



## For Luigi Stifani

by Luigi Chiriatti

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Mediterranean and elsewhere there exist territories strongly marked by their ancient rhythms and dances: they might be identified as “islands of sound” and “islands of dance.” On these islands, the local population evolved ways of living and thinking so distinct as to appear to modern science as “ethnic.” For several thousand years, the Salento has represented one such island, stamped by the specific rhythm of the *taranta* and by its dance in an ancestral ritual. The original symbol, rite and myth of *tarantismo* derived from a fracture in human consciousness, representing that most pivotal moment wherein humanity becomes aware of itself, in a catharsis of suffering and in a catharsis of happiness. The spider’s bite, and its successive bites, in the Salento, is like a key opening the way to life and death for the Salentine people. Dance and rhythm have their preferred interpreters in time and space. The last “high priest” and interpreter of the Salentine spider’s myth and music was maestro Luigi Stifani, the violinist-barber from Nardò and musician to the *tarantate*. To give a critical reading of his work, so soon after his death, would be for me too difficult and confused. I will instead do so only through impressionistic reflections on sensations, sounds, and narratives.<sup>1</sup>

### THE LEGEND OF THE VIOLINIST-BARBER

One day, as I had been doing for a good while, I went to Nardò. This is where Stifani, the violinist-barber, lived. He used to travel around the Salento to play for women who, during the month of June, suffered from a strange malaise and illness which could be cured only by the music of the violin. But when I arrived at the barbershop, otherwise known as the “*tarantismo* studio,” it was closed. Odd; even though old, the barber had always been there, picking at chords, intoning trills, and shaving friends, at times. I directed myself toward his home. As I approached I could hear the pealing of bells. The death knoll. Expiation. Another body that had ceased to live, I thought, as I walked with melancholic eyes. Once I arrived at the barber’s house I discovered what I did not expect: the barber-violinist was dead. Died the day of the feast of St. Paul, protector of all those women the barber-violinist

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[Editor’s note: This article was translated from Italian by Luisa Del Giudice.]

<sup>1</sup> [Editor’s note: This text accompanied the photographic exhibition, curated by Chiriatti, entitled *Il luogo del culto: Galatina, immagini del tarantismo: 1970–1992 (Pilgrimage to Galatina: Images of Tarantismo 1970–1992)*, October 18–28, 2000, at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Los Angeles.]

cured. But how could that be, precisely on the saint's feast day? But why *now*, rather than *before* or *after*? I felt despair.

A band, comprised of his sailor friends, played a slow and mournful tune, and the "Good Luigi"—for this is what they called the violinist—was taken up on their shoulders to his new destination. His last. So I sat beneath a palm tree and began remembering barber Luigi.

Every year he would leave his home on June 28. At 4:15 P.M. He carried his violin under his arm in its old, but dignified, case. He went to Galatina, to meet the brides of St. Paul. He found them on the square in front of the big church and, without delay or hesitation, he wove his thread of notes and slowly guided them into the saint's home. Into the small chapel, where they sought union with their groom; where they could finally satisfy their need for complete abandon and disorder—both physical and mental, in order to later return to the mundane. With his music, Stifani was able to momentarily mend the two sundered, poisoned, consciousnesses. Every year he did the same, and on *that* day always without a fee. This was his act of love toward the Salento's suffering souls.

And this year too, and for the last time, Luigi went out on his journey, at the appointed hour. He went to St. Paul—in death and feast together. "Luigi was lost around May 10," said his daughter. Suddenly, he had entered an intimate state of consciousness and knowledge. It is difficult to understand what he thought and how much he might have suffered during that time. The only thread of knowledge and communication with the daily run of life was through his hands, his fingers. Always moving, always weaving musical tapestries, musical narratives. Luigi beat out the rhythm of his last days with his fingers. Near the end of his ordeal, they had to slip off his wedding band. He drummed his fingers obsessively against the bars of his enclosed bed, without ever stopping. Day and night. Incessantly.

He was there in his little bed with his book, *Io al sento ci credo: diario di un musico delle tarantate* (As for me, I believe in the saint: diary of a musician to the *tarantate*). When he wasn't playing, he would shred its pages into narrow strips. All of equal size. And he asked everyone: who was the man on the cover?<sup>2</sup>

First though, he had read his book. He had liked it and was happy. And how was he happy! He went about town with his book, looking around for approval and recognition.

Perhaps for this reason too, did he anticipate his journey to meet that saint who had caused so many miracles, as well as misdeeds. But in whom he believed.

Perhaps he died for this too. "A powerful emotional attack may have killed him," said the doctor. "It may have triggered a congenital illness, an

<sup>2</sup> [Editor's note: This book (with CD), was first published in 2000 and features Luigi Stifani's portrait on the cover. See Luigi Stifani, *Io al sento ci credo: diario di un musico delle tarantate* (As for me, I believe in the saint: diary of a musician to the *tarantate*), ed. Luigi Chiriatti, Maurizio Nocera, Roberto Raheli, and Sergio Torsello, in collaboration with the Istituto Ernesto de Martino, with Edizioni Aramirè compact disk (Lecce, 2003).]



illness maestro Stifani may have lived with since birth.” A harsh illness, and difficult to bring forth—like the disease of the Salento: *tarantismo*.

Maestro Stifano played—always. Perhaps he cured himself in this manner and, having experienced for himself the healing power of this music, then played it for others. By means of this mysterious Salentine musical system of *tarantismo*, about which he knew every turn, every hidden nuance.

Stifani was an ordinary man but he had been given a gift: a people’s music. In his hands and in his instrument were synthesized millennia of history, ancient, magical rituals which were released only when his fingers touched his violin. That same violin he had bought many years before, on an installment plan, for two and a half liras. He wove a spider’s web that could completely envelop you, dragging you into a place without space or time. Where the images of a people flowed, along with its sufferings, its stones, colors, and smells. Repository of this rhythm and the secrets which it unraveled; and everything was subjected to a ritual whose time and modalities only he knew.

His music was obsessive, lively, rhythmic; it developed a precise theme in which all the parts of life, an entire existence, long or short, could observe one another, hit up against one another, and even overlap. Without pausing, without musical interruption, following secret paths which he alone knew. Without ever permitting any musical passage or hiatus which might lead to folly.

The secret died with him. The magical nucleus and the art of recomposing consciousness died with him. Even in death, Stifani followed arcane and secret paths, difficult to interpret. He died on June 28. The day of the *tarantate*, of the feast of St. Paul, the day of rhythm and externalization of the Salento’s pain.

He died as did the great priests of ancient civilizations, capable of guiding their own death, just as they guided their own life. The old priests decided to die at a specific moment of their existence. And while they completed this voyage, the priestesses—the elect—in sacred places danced and crowned the new repositories of knowledge.

Maestro Stifani has left us simply, just as his music was simple. Simple, natural, anchored to the land where it was played and which produced it. Dancing the rhythm of life and death: giving a rhythm to death in order to exorcise life.

In his music each was free to find his own poison, his own animal, his own earthy mix of elements. Each was free to persuade us and to combat his own malaise, to support or exorcise it. He did not apply any pressure, but simply extended the musical spider’s web, with notes, trills, “disfigurements.” He was capable of touching the *fojazzedda de lu core* (secret place in the heart), to balance joy and ennui, fear and happiness. Stifani didn’t know anything else; he did not know how to do anything else. But when he played his violin (as therapy or as play), he was enveloped in a magical aura—strange,

impalpable, fluid. Just as fluid, airy, and soft—but at the same time hard and tenacious—was his music.

And now, here am I, happy to imagine him in the beyond, with his violin as it seduces, attempting a consensus among the cherubs. It perforates the pink clouds on which they rest and takes them, first in an earthly labyrinth, among strange and mortal paintings, and then up, up, and beyond, to where? We do not know.

It would not be strange one day, be it by light or by night, to hear, or to imagine hearing, his music. The music of the Salento: “l’indiavolata [the demonic], la sorda [the deaf], la minore [the minor], la balcanica [the balcanic].”<sup>3</sup> And to let oneself be transported, guided by that slender, silver thread which leads you into the depths of the earth and into the blue azure of the skies.

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<sup>3</sup> [Editor’s note: These were the names of musical forms that Stifani played during his sessions of music therapy for the *tarantate* (that is, those afflicted by “spider’s bite”).]

## *Pizzica Tarantata: Reflections of a Violin Player*

by Roberto Raheli

I have been playing Salentine music for many years, first on my own at home; then with friends; from 1990 to 1996, in the band *Canzoniere di Terra d'Otranto*; and from 1996 to the present with *Aramirè: Compagnia di Musica Salentina*. I wish to reflect here on the music of the *pizzica tarantata*, but before I do so, I must preface this discussion by saying something about the experience of playing Salentine music. I have had and still have a big problem with it.

I began learning Salentine songs from those performed by the revival's musicians. My generation grew up listening to modern music, the Beatles and Rolling Stones, as well as modern Italian singers. In the sixties and seventies the older Salentines abandoned our traditional music. Our traditional culture fled from itself. Those songs and its music had been completely associated with suffering and poverty; therefore, when—fortunately—there was less poverty, the songs associated with the past were rejected too. There was less poverty but also less poetry. There was less suffering but also fewer songs, less music.

When I began listening to Salentine songs of older Salentine singers I found their way of singing strange—with many grace notes and embellishments, rhythm which was very changeable, and singers who often did not express some notes, but defined the notes by circling around them. First I thought that the singers had made a mistake, but later I understood that their way of singing was different. Actually, many singers made the same mistake in the same part of the song!<sup>1</sup>

Many Salentine songs are work songs. Peasants sang while working in the fields. They had only one musical instrument: their own voice. Bent toward the ground as they were, it was not possible to sing with the chest, but only with the throat. Let us take the example of voice in Salentine singing. To sing Salentine songs you must know that your throat can be seriously damaged (it may seem a joke until it happens). If you sing for a long time, sooner or later, you will likely not be able to sing with a normal voice. Peasants and older people used grace notes to ornament the songs; they sang polyphonic songs; the melody had many microtonal variations and often, but not always, older people used a different musical scale, using the F-sharp instead of the F. The rhythm was very changeable because it had to be adapted to the rhythm of the work itself.

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<sup>1</sup> See “Beddha” and “I Agàpi mu,” in *Canto d'amore: canti, suoni, voci nella Grecia salentina* (Love song: songs, sounds, and voices from the Griko-speaking area of the Salento), trans. Luisa Del Giudice, Edizioni Aramirè compact disk (Lecce, 2000). The publications and sound recordings cited in this article may be ordered directly from the author at [aramire@tin.it](mailto:aramire@tin.it) or by visiting Web site [www.aramire.it](http://www.aramire.it).

Salentine music developed from these work conditions. We will never know if Salentine singing was born before or after the rhythm of the *pizzica taranta*. Surely today we find the same embellishments and the same way of playing and singing both in the long songs (*alla stisa*) and in other kinds of Salentine music. Today, the most important genre of Salentine music is the *pizzica*. We have different kinds of *pizziche* in the Salento. The *pizzica tarantata* is the *pizzica* used for the therapy of *tarantismo*. Women (known as *tarantate*) and sometimes men too (*tarantati*), working in the fields, were “bitten” by a spider, they fell into an apathetic state, and in order to return to a normal life they had to dance the *pizzica tarantata*, sometimes for many years. The *pizzica tarantata* has, more or less, the same rhythm of the *pizzica* we play in more happy situations, for example as danced during celebrations or feasts.<sup>2</sup>

We know the *pizzica tarantata* only through its later musicians. We do not know precisely which instruments were played in ancient times, although some early authors record that pipes, stringed instruments, flutes and many other instruments were used. More recently however, we find the violin, guitar, accordion and mouth harmonica. Both in the past and in the present however, we find the tambourine to be a constant. Luigi Stifani, the last *pizzica tarantata* musician, played violin, along with his band, which included accordion, guitar and tambourine players.

In 1959, Ernesto de Martino studied the *tarantismo* phenomenon in the Salento. The results were published in *La terra del rimorso*, the most important book on the topic of *tarantismo*.<sup>3</sup> We might translate the title literally as “Land of [the] re-bitten,” although in Italian, *rimorso* presents the double meaning of “remorse” and “re-bitten” or “bitten again” (*ri + morso*). *Rimorso* means to be bitten recurrently. The word *rimorso* therefore means both the suffering or the remorse for a guilt paid with the illness of *tarantismo* and with the long dance itself, and, on the other hand, the periodical crisis of *tarantismo*, recurring once a year, for many years, generally during the month of June.

Diego Carpitella, the ethnomusicologist of de Martino’s research *équipe*, studied the music of the *pizzica tarantata* played by Luigi Stifani. Carpitella wrote about “beat” and “off beat” in the music of the *pizzica* and the two different parts in the music of the *pizzica tarantata*: the rhythm section (on beat) and the melodic section (off beat). He asserted that the tambourine, guitar, and accordion are the rhythm section of the *pizzica tarantata*, while the violin represents the melodic section. This last instrument plays off beat—but only a particular way of playing the violin causes it to go off beat, not the melody. Therefore, beat and off beat are not defined and inherent

<sup>2</sup> See “Pizzica degli Ucci,” in Luigi Chiriatti, *Bonasera a quista casa: Antonio Aloisi, Antonio Bandello “Gli Ucci”: Pizziche, stornelli, canti salentini*, trans. Luisa Del Giudice, Edizioni Aramirè compact disk (Lecce, 1999), nn. 6 and 15.

<sup>3</sup> Ernesto de Martino, *La terra del rimorso: contributo a una storia religiosa del Sud* (Milan, 1961).

characteristics of the music of the *pizzica tarantata*, but rather, result from the way of playing and improvising the melody.

I think the most important question is, from where did this necessity come? In my experience, I can say that when we play the *pizzica tarantata* in concert, at times we are captured by the music. But a spider did not bite us and we are not ill due to *tarantismo*. Yet sometimes our minds go to strange places and we forget that we are performing in a concert. At times we are even able to influence the audience. Why is this so?

I believe that the *pizzica tarantata* developed over the centuries a specific musical form which sustained and structured the therapeutic function of the *tarantismo* ritual. If the music did not restore men or women “bitten” by the spider to health, the music was not functional and so it was changed. If, on the other hand, the music was able to cure people, it was played again and again. The final result of this “natural selection” process is that today we have a music constructed to “capture the mind,” and it makes it possible for us to be taken by the *pizzica* without requiring the *tarantismo* ritual side of the phenomenon.

Many *tarantate* spoke of “noia” capturing them. In the *tarantismo* phenomenon *noia* is the apathy or indifference that took over those who had been bitten. Music had to wake people up from this apathetic state and restore them to health. Tambourine and guitar, playing absolutely on beat, had to obsess the *tarantata* in order to capture her in a rhythmic “net.” Violin and accordion instead played off beat, so they were able to surprise the *tarantata* and wake her up. This process continued as long as required by the *tarantata*.

I disagree with Carpitella over the accordion’s role. The accordion does not play the beat, but must help the violin go off beat. The two instruments play a game of passing each other: the accordion permits the violin to go in and out of the rhythm, and the accordion itself goes off beat, so that the violin and the accordion absolutely require the tambourine to maintain the rhythm, which the guitar helps the tambourine to do. Without the tambourine and guitar, the violin and accordion could not return inside the rhythm and they would be completely lost. The music, therefore, has a rhythmical side whose function it is to obsess, to haunt the *tarantata*, and a melodic side which must surprise and wake her up. This music and this changeable way of playing developed for a reason, and *tarantismo* represents a selection process carried out over the centuries, until we arrive at the *pizzica* of Luigi Stifani.<sup>4</sup>

Luigi Stifani was not a violin player but a mandolin player. He recounted how initially he learned to play mandolin by playing his own arm. He plays on the violin the same melodies he invented on mandolin. He likely opted for the violin over the mandolin in order to be better heard, since the mandolin is a “weaker” instrument. He was not a *musician* but a *player*, and he was not a

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<sup>4</sup> See Luigi Stifani, *Io al santo ci credo: diario di un musico delle tarantate* (As for me, I believe in the saint: diary of a musician to the *tarantate*), in collaboration with Istituto Ernesto de Martino, with Edizioni Aramirè compact disk (Lecce, 2000), nn. 2 and 5.

violin player but a *pizzica* player. To play the *pizzica* he did not need to know the music. He did not need to play with the brain but with the heart. I feel the same way myself. I play the flute, harmonica and violin, and also the guitar and tambourine at times, but I am not a musician, I am a *pizzica* player.

To play the *pizzica* we need music and instruments, but we also need a particular mental side. I believe it is possible to learn the music, either the rhythm or melody of the *pizzica*, but it is not possible to learn the mental side of the *pizzica* if you are mentally outside of the Salento. There are subterranean currents in the Salento which we cannot know, but they make it possible for us to enter into *tarantismo* and the *pizzica*. Many of our houses were built several centuries before the *Mayflower* came to America. The unknown side of the Salento changes our minds. Menhirs and ancient stones, the heat of the summer, the prehistoric monuments, and still-not-forgotten traditions give the Salentine people the possibility to learn this psychological side of the *pizzica* and to improvise again and again the correct way of playing it. So it is possible to go off beat, in our minds and then in our music, when it is necessary.

An important Salentine poet, Antonio Verri, said:

Cambia, cambierà di molto il volto della campagna, degli aggregati umani, di interi paesi . . . quel che non cambierà mai sarà l'idea del dialogo con la terra che l'uomo ha stabilito dal tempo dei tempi, il grosso respiro, il "Sibilo lungo" che si può udire solo di mattina, mirando nella vastità dei campi, con accanto sentinelle silenziose gli alberi d'argento . . .

(It changes, it will change much, the face of the land, of gathered humanity, of entire towns . . . what will never change is the idea of dialoguing with the earth, that humanity has established from time immemorial, the long breath, "the deep murmur" which can be heard only in the early morning, while looking out over the vast fields, while standing next to the silver trees, the silent sentinels . . .)<sup>5</sup>

Admittedly, my concept of Salentine music is somewhat sacral. In my opinion, it is essential to operate from within a Salentine *mentalité*. It is this Salentine world-view which *precedes* the music and makes it possible. Technically sophisticated musicians may play a form of this music but, without this deep understanding, will never be capable of playing it properly. I'm sorry to say that without this understanding, all one can play is the music of the *pizzica tarantata*, but never the *Pizzica Tarantata*.

EDIZIONI ARAMIRÈ

<sup>5</sup> [Editor's note: Antonio Verri was a poet, advocate, and inspiration to many contemporary Salentine artists and writers—who recently died an untimely death. "Il sibilo lungo" translates literally as "the long 's' sound," a sibilant. Although "murmur" does not capture this phoneme, it attempts to render the deep, mythic echo and murmur of the land.]

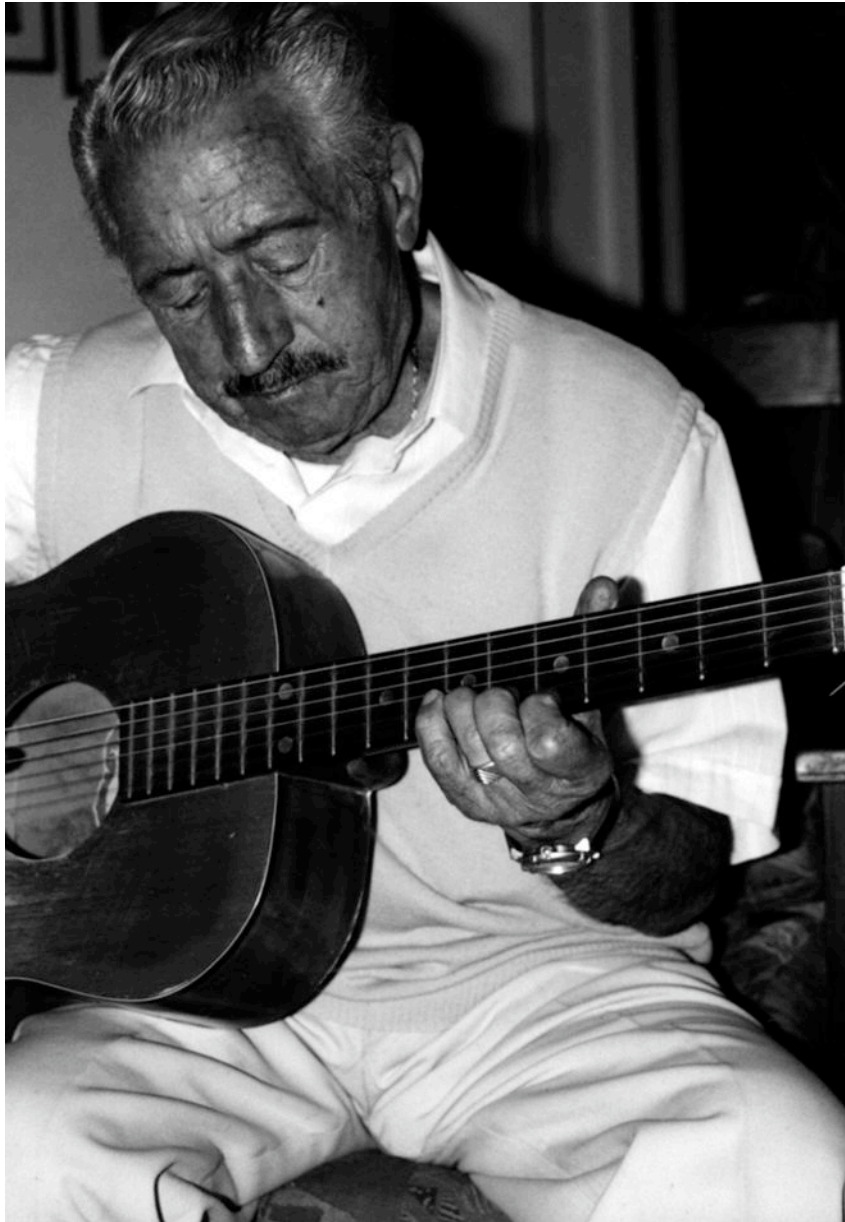


Fig. 1. A 1998 photograph of Luigi Stifani playing guitar (photo by Anna Lopalco)



Fig. 2. Roberto Raheli playing violin in concert (photograph by Raffaele Puce)



## Chapter Five

### Italian Rituals of Healing, Devotion and Magic



## Dance of the Earth

by Augusto Ferraiuolo

It is my intention to treat here the *tammurriata*, a very specific and at the same time extremely complex phenomenon, rich in what Umberto Eco would call “an infinite drift of sense.” While it is not my intention to simplify this complexity, it is obvious that the scope of this contribution will not allow me to explore it fully. Proceeding by degrees, however, we begin with something of a definition. The *tammurriata* as a phenomenon is: a) musical, b) choreographic, and c) symbolic. That is, it is at the same time a song, a dance, and a prayer, a sound, a rhythm, and an ecstasy. These aspects are indissolubly bound to each other and to the ceremonial and ritual context of several feasts within popular Catholicism.

The *tammurriata*, with the great exception of Carnival *tammurriate*, is ascribable to the Catholic devotional practices for the many *Madonne* venerated in Campania, southern Italy. These feasts occur throughout the year, but we can locate the initial moment, without a doubt, in Madonna dell’Arco—perhaps the most important of the popular religious feasts in Campania. It takes place on Easter Monday in Sant’Anastasia, a little village near Naples. Thereafter follow a continuous succession of other festivities: Santa Maria al Monte at Nocera Inferiore (Easter Tuesday), Madonna di Castello at Somma Vesuviana (Saturday after Easter), Madonna di Villa di Briano (Sunday after Easter), Madonna delle Galline at Pagani (the same day), Materdomini at Nocera Inferiore, Madonna dei Bagni at Scafati, Madonna Avvocata at Maiori, and Madonna della Neve at Torre Annunziata.

This is not an exhaustive list. It lacks, for example, the great festivity of Sant’Anna at Lettere, which indirectly belongs to the Marian cycle, since it is dedicated to the mother of Mary. It lacks the two holiday occasions for the Madonna di Montevergine: the first, more collective, on September 8, and the second one, decidedly more selective, on February 2, the Candelora. Its structure and forms of participation are absolutely atypical since it occurs at dawn and belongs to the *femminielli*, or Neapolitan transvestites. This last feast deserves greater scholarly attention than it enjoys at present.

It lacks, above all, the great exception of Carnival, since it is viewed, in my opinion, as all production connected to Carnival, as an ironic presentation of other ritual moments. In other words, following the lesson of Bachtin, if the *tammurriata* is in some way a prayer, for its rituality and its connection to festive institutions, the Carnival *tammurriata* instead represents the blasphemous tone of a curse.<sup>1</sup>

In the devotional moments cited above, it is always possible to find a particular festive institution: the pilgrimage. The term “festive institution” (*istituto festivo*, suggested by Mazzacane<sup>2</sup>) indicates the consolidation of a

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<sup>1</sup> Michail M. Bachtin, *L’opera di Rabelais e la cultura popolare* (Turin, 1979).

<sup>2</sup> Lello Mazzacane, *Struttura di Festa* (Milan, 1987).

festivity in a downright social institution, with symbolic meaning, social functions and motivations for the social group. The pilgrimage has as its fundamental premise the *journey*, a journey towards God in ritual, festive time, followed by a return towards the time of daily life. It is this journey between a profane and a sacred place which frames the structure/feast of the pilgrimage. In my opinion, a song which is sung during the festivity of Montevergine expresses the idea of this ritual journey very well. The pilgrims sing

Simme ghiute and simme venute quant e' razie ch' imm' avuto

(We went and we returned, how many graces we received)

We find here expressed both the topic of the journey, in its round-trip movement, and its deep motivation, that is, the demand for, and the obtaining of, a divine grace.

This journey was sometimes made on foot, because it fulfilled a penitential act connected to the mechanism of the *votum fecit gratia accepit*, the votive offering. At one time, it was frequently carried out on a ritual float, hauled by oxen or horses. Today, instead, it is lead by tractors, adorned with palm fronds and flowers. The dialectal name is *sciaraballo* and comes from the French *char a bal*, which means “dance cart.” It is on the *sciaraballo* that they begin to play the first of the *tammurriate*.

I saw the last *sciaraballo* in September 2000 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, during the feast of Saints Cosmas and Damian. This is an Italian American feast, organized by Italian immigrants, of second or third generation, originating from Gaeta (just north of Naples). On these floats there were pilgrims (it was a kind of symbolic pilgrimage, enclosed in the city space—the neighborhood—that “belongs” to the group) and, on one, there was a singer who played Italian or Italian American songs with an electronic keyboard (see fig. 1). This was the only difference, however, between the festival of origin and this Italian American variant, and further, I did not see *tammorre*, or the Campanian frame drum,<sup>3</sup> but electronic keyboards instead.

Again, those who have seen the float carrying the statue of Saint Gennaro during the procession in New York, Little Italy, are sure to know that this float carries a musical band (fig. 2). And the objects, the ritual float and the ritual music, survive, despite their distance from the town of origin. And what occurs on the float will occur at the sanctuary and will occur again when the group<sup>4</sup> returns. In other words, the ritual behavior of the *tammurriata* will embrace the festive institution completely. And this is quite obvious because the *tammurriata* is not an accessory to the festival but a fundamental component of it.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. below.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. dialect term *paranza*.



Fig. 1. Pilgrims and a singer with an electronic keyboard on a *sciaraballo* (float) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, during the feast of Saints Cosmas and Damian



Fig. 2. A float carrying the statue of Saint Gennaro and a musical band during the procession in Little Italy in New York

Let us reflect on the first two aspects of the *tammurriata*, the musical and choreographic. Etymologically speaking, *tammurriata* comes from *tammorra*, a hand drum which is its main instrument (see fig. 3). Simultaneously, this term indicates the rhythm, the dance and the song sung on the drum. The *tammorra*, as a frame drum, is made from a strip of wood bent in a circle, covered with a goat skin that needs to be stretched very tightly. Indeed, there is a sort of ritual connected to this act, since the only way to stretch the skin is to warm up the drum on a heat source. Allow me to say that people come to the festival with a candle and matches who, I assure you, are not heroin addicts but rather members of the *paranza*.

In the strip they make some holes, between 6 to 10, with one for the grip. This depends on the dimensions of the *tammorra* and on the kind of sonority—more or less deep—which the musician desires. Here they will place the cymbals, made from cuttings of tin cans. Here I relate another anecdote: one of the most famous makers of *tammorre* was a fisherman, Tatonno' o' Baccalaiuolo, also called Tatonno' o' Stocco (we will approximate a translation of his nickname as “Tony the Dried Cod Seller” or “Tony the Stock Fish”).



Fig. 3. The *tammorra*, the hand drum whence the *tammurriata* is derived

Tatonno's *tammorre* were—and still are—recognizable for their great quality and for their colors of red, white and blue, the colors of the Madonna dell'Arco. But they were—and still are—distinctive for another reason: their smell, because Tatonno used the tin from canned fish to make the cymbals.

But every musician changes the disposition, the number and the shape of these cymbals, depending on the sonority they wish to obtain. We can have a silent *tammorra*, very close to the Irish *bodhran*, or *tammorre* loaded with cymbals like the Brazilian *pandeiros* or, closer still, the *bendir* of Arabic culture.

The technique of playing the *tammorra* is, despite appearances, very complex. It is not only necessary to have a rhythmic capability but also remarkable physical stamina because it can be played without interruption for hours. The musician handles the *tammorra* with the left hand and beats the skin with the right. This way of playing is called the *masculine way*, while the grip with the right is called the *feminine way* (see fig. 4). It seems that in the past (and most certainly in the eighteenth century) the use of the *tammorra* was entrusted exclusively to women. We have some iconographic testimony on this, such as the painted *ex votos* at sanctuaries. But in truth we have other iconographic testimony as well (one Pompeian fresco at the Archaeological Museum of Naples and one Pompeian-style fresco at the Royal Palace in Caserta) which illustrate the use of the *tammorra* also between the men.

The hand that grips the *tammorra* has a constant movement of the wrist, while the other hand alternates between beats on the middle of the skin (for a full sound) with beats on the skin near the edge (for a metallic sound). There are also beats with the tips of the fingers and beats with the full palm, or else complete spins of the hand. Everyone has his own style of playing, just as every *tammorra* has its own sound.

The rhythmic figures of the *tammurriata* are exclusively binary, and this fact constitutes the first great difference between it and the more popular *tarantella*, which is faster and has a different scansion (i.e., triplets). Another difference regards choreography: the *tammurriata* is a ritual behavior linked to the Madonna's cult, and its form is the couple dance. The *tarantella* is instead connected nearly exclusively to Carnival and is a solo or processional dance. You can see this in Piazza di Pandola and, above all, in Montemarano.<sup>5</sup> But the great difference is, in my opinion, in the social dimension as well: the *tammurriata* is a product of the subaltern social classes, once peasants, now proletarian and subproletariat. The *tarantella* also has the same remote origins, but it was developed—at least in Campania—in an urban, “cultured” milieu.

The example of the publisher Gatta and Dura is famous. In 1834 they printed a book, *Album, la tarantella*, where the steps of the *tarantella* are illustrated and codified for Neapolitan court use. Once, talking with a friend, I flippantly noted that the only *tarantella* I knew was Gioacchino Rossini's. While it is not true, I

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<sup>5</sup> One example of Montemarano's *tarantella* is included in the Alan Lomax and Diego Carpitella field recording, *Music and Song of Italy*, Tradition Records TLP 1030, sound recording (New York, 1958).



did wish to emphasize this difference which, in my opinion, was and still remains one of social class.



Fig. 4. The musician handles the *tammorra* with the right hand and beats the skin with the left in the *feminine* way of playing

I will now turn my attention to the binary rhythm of the drum and to the place of the song which begins the dance.<sup>6</sup> Someone grips the *castagnette* (castanets), beats out time (see fig. 5), and starts playing with a circular movement of the wrist and the hand, toward the inside, then toward the outside, first down, then up. The *castagnette* are composed of two concave pieces of wood (approximately 3–4 inches long) and inlaid in different ways on the external surface. They are tied together with a string, where one or two fingers are inserted, usually index and/or middle finger, which causes the beat. Often the *castagnette* are adorned with colorful ribbon (fig. 6).

Once this beating rhythm begins, those who want to dance look for a partner (fig. 7). Once they form a couple—the *tammurriata* is always a couple's dance (whether man/woman, man/man, woman/woman, regardless of age)—the dance begins.

<sup>6</sup> On the analysis of the song itself, see below.



Fig. 5. Beating out time with the *castagnette* (castanets)



Fig. 6. A colorful ribbon adorns the *castagnette*



Fig. 7. Looking for a partner for the dance

In the first phase the couple is far apart and makes small movements, almost exclusively with the arms. This distance is reduced with circular movements (fig. 8) when one of the two assumes a more aggressive behavior and begins approaching the other partner. This behavior is at the same time a courting and/or a challenge. The partner can refuse and withdraw or can accept the courtship/duel. This phase culminates in the *votata*, emphasized by very strong beats on the drum.

The two dancers are definitively far apart, then move, coming closer until their bodies are touching, in various configurations: flank to flank (fig. 9), joint knees and shoulders (fig. 10), back to back (fig. 11). This is a moment of temporal suspension. The *tammorra* beats in one, the voice sings an extended note melismatically, or adds short and always rhythmic lyrics, on the beat, following the movement of the dancers. They turn, still attached. They interlace knees (fig. 12), arms, or backs with a head on the other's shoulder. When the *votata* is finished the couple reestablishes distance, and is ready to start again.

I want to specify that there exist many geographic varieties of the *tammorriata*: the *paganese*, more hopping and therefore closer to the *tarantella*; the *avvocata*, played with a great number of *tammorre*; the *scafatese*, the most popular, with soft and fluid movements, very sensual; and, finally, the *giuglianese*, which I think is the most erotic, with clear references to coitus.





Fig. 8. Distance between partners is reduced in the courting/challenge phase



Fig. 9. Dancing flank to flank



Fig. 10. Dancers touching knees and shoulders



Fig. 11. Dancing back to back



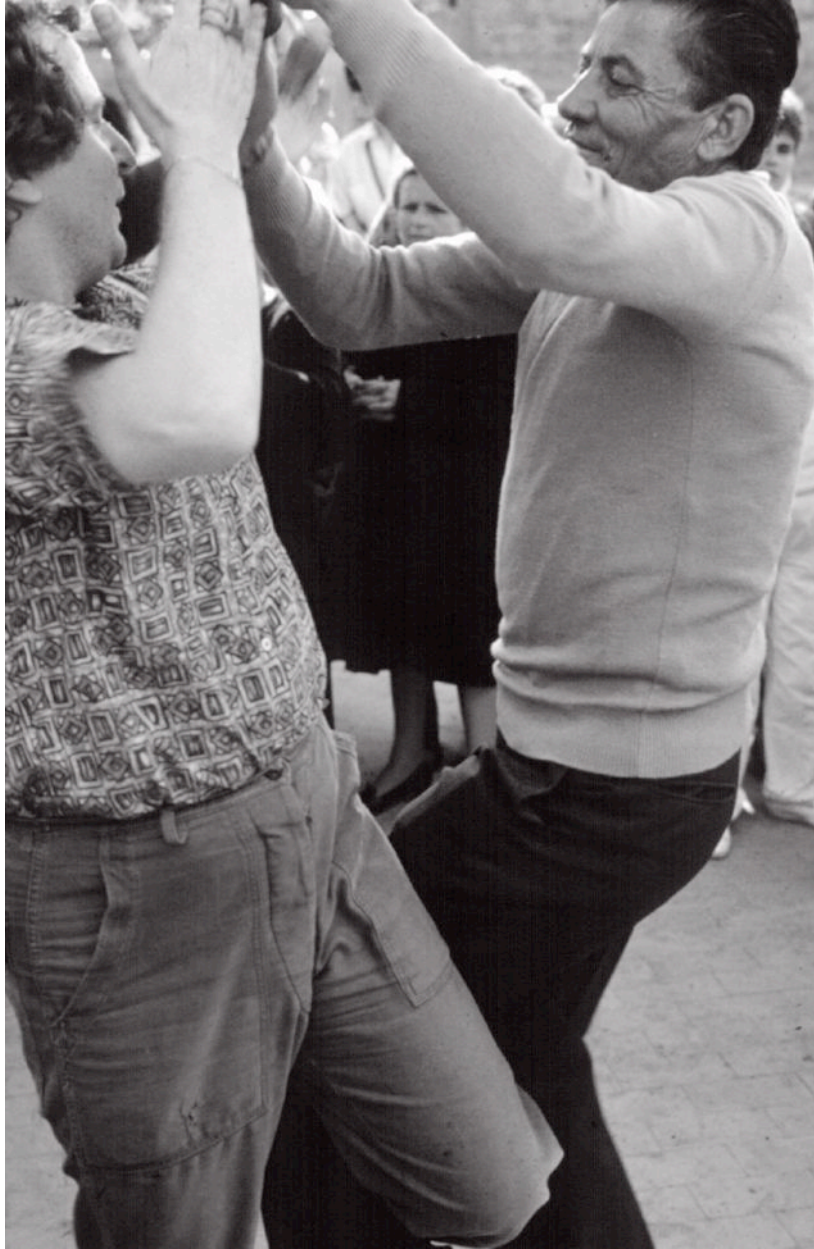


Fig. 12. Dancers interlace knees

The *tammurriata*, distinct from the *tarantella*, always expects a song that belongs to the traditional repertory. They are the same lyrics which some great positivists at the end of the nineteenth century, like Amalfi, Borrelli and the young Benedetto Croce, published in their collections or in the many articles in journals such as *Giambattista Basile*, under the general editorship of Luigi Molinaro del Chiaro, or the *Archivio per le Tradizioni Popolari*, directed by Angelo De Gubernatis, which functioned as very important “centers” of interest in folk culture.

The lyrics are thematically organized in quatrains of hendecasyllables, named *stroppole*. Here is an example:

Ammore mio e me ne vengo a notte  
 Manco la buonasera te pozzo rane  
 I' te la mengo pe' sotto la porta  
 Susete craie matina e pigliatela

(My love I come back late in the evening  
 I can't say to you goodnight  
 So I will send it to you under the door  
 Wake up tomorrow morning and pick it up)

In reality it is sung in a different way. They are sung as distichs, with a musical structure that stops at the end of the second line. Here is an example with the first distich, which can be sung as a) two lines:

Ammore mio e me ne vengo a notte  
 Manco la buonasera te pozzo rane

b) with the repetition of the first line:

Ammore mio e me ne vengo a notte  
*Ammore mio e me ne vengo a notte*

or c) by breaking the line, usually the second, while increasing its short and formulaic phrases:

Ammore mio e me ne vengo a notte  
 Manco la buonasera e vo' veni' and ghiamme ia'  
 Manco la buonasera te pozzo rane

Often the singer executes these stereotyped phrases after the melismatic cadence of the *votata*.

Usually the phrases contain an ironic content and sexual meaning such as *Chella vo' fa' vo' fa' vo' fa'* (She wants to do it, do it, do it), or *O' piglia 'n mano 'o votta 'n terra* (He takes it in hand and throws it to the ground). At other times the singer can use free expressions, like *Ue' Maro', Maro', Maro'* (Oh God, oh God, oh God—but using the feminine, *Maro'* = Madonna), or sounds that imitate animals: the braying of a mule, the barking of a dog, etc.



The *stroppole* demonstrate the distinction between northern and southern Italian song: on the one hand, we have the song genre called *canto epico-lirico* (i.e. the narrative ballad), typical of northern Italy (marked, according to Nigra, by a Celtic substratum). These are long strophic songs which tell the tale of some hero, or, more often, involve a love tragedy, for example, *Donna Lombarda*, the best know of these in Italy, widely diffused in the Celtic area.

On the other hand, a genre typical of southern Italy, where, according to Nigra, we find a predominantly Italic substratum, is the lyrical song, which is short and based on single quatrains, is evocative rather than descriptive in character, and almost exclusively treats the theme of love. An example follows:

Bella figliola che te chiamme Rosa  
 Che bello nome mammete t'ha mise  
 T'a mis''o nome re tutte lli rose  
 'o meglio fiore che sta 'm paravise

(Pretty girl named Rosa  
 What a beautiful name your mother gave you  
 She gave you the name of the roses  
 The best flower of paradise)

Folklorists and ethnomusicologists have debated the singer's expressive freedom and capability of improvisation. I do not believe that in this case improvisation can really exist, while surely the praxis of variation does. I must say that in the circle of *tammurriate* I have witnessed, I have never heard a creation *ex novo* of a text. I have heard singers with the capability of arranging many or few *stroppole* from a common "encyclopedia" of song texts. If he is a good singer he will know many *stroppole*. This is the so-called *modular* organization of the song.

But what do singers say about their knowledge of *stroppole*? Not one singer, not even the best, can sing all the *stroppole*, for the simple fact that he does not know them all. His knowledge is and must be incomplete. Only the devil indeed knows all the *stroppole*, and could sing them, one after another. Perfection is not human. And with this legend I will begin the symbolic discourse around the *tammurriata*.

The *tammurriata* is a ritual behavior founded on a festive institution connected to the Madonna's devotion and, as a gestalt, it is a symbolic forest of trees. I will focus on only one symbolic element, a single tree which may represent the entire forest.

I am speaking about the *circle*, a figure continuously proposed and re-proposed. It is a circle which dancers' hands construct; it is a circle which the steps of the dancers will make on the ground; it is inside a circle made by the spectators in which the ritual space of the song and the dance are delineated. It is only then that the dance and the song can begin.

Like the pilgrimage in its constituent form, the journey involves circularity as well, of going to and returning from, and it is a ritual which occurs year after

year. Note, in fact, a linguistic difference: in Italian the journey is to go and to return, while in English it is not. If I buy a train ticket in Italy, I will buy a ticket to go (*andata*) and return (*ritorno*); if I buy a train ticket in the U.S. it will be, more symbolically, a *round trip*. The English gives a better sense of this circularity. The complexity of the ritual within which all this takes place implies a perpetual return. It is one of its functions, the evocation of immortality for the cyclical scansion of the festivity. What they will write on the space of the dance's circle on the ground, they will accomplish during the time of the ritual's circular journey. It would, in fact, be interesting to better analyze the hypothesis of the circular organization of time, typical of the southern Italian subaltern classes, but this is not the place to do so.

Suffice it to say that it will require the annual return of the festive recurrence to complete the circle and start it again. There is the expectation that *daily time* will contrast with *festive time*, donated by God (in the Christian tradition of the Old Testament) or however connected to it (*vis-à-vis* the whole Graeco-Roman world). If the festive institution occurs inside this particular time, the ritual and exceptional, while at the same time encompassing other specific times, such as the time of the *tammurriata*, it too will present the ritual and exceptional.

With the first beat on the drum there begins an ephemeral temporality, as it would be defined by Jean Francois Lyotard,<sup>7</sup> which will continue until the last sound of the cymbals—a temporality within which its ecstatic component (*depaysement*, the estranging effect, according to Cazeneuve<sup>8</sup>) is possible. It is here, in my opinion, where enculturation and socialization are possible (e.g., you will always see children in the *tammurriate*), where the transmission of competences and values is possible, and where communication with God and the method for approaching him are learned. In the *tammurriata* there does not exist a *hic et nunc*: it is a temporality that happens on a metahistoric plain—unavoidably ecstatic—in its etymological meaning.

Therefore, the dance has the characteristic of prayer, allowing contact with the divine, possible only outside of time and stasis. If I adopt the point of view of the subject that acts out the *tammurriata* I can also assert that the dance itself is a prayer. For example, once in Pagani, everyone was ready to dance, but they waited for the best dancer to start. This man did not want to dance because a few days before there had been a death in the family. Finally, after being pressed by the group, he decided to dance, saying: *Va buo' 'o faccio pecche' aggi' a pria' Madonna* (Ok, I will do it because I need to pray to the Madonna).

I would like to conclude with a warning I think necessary. Often (and I am certain I too make this error), when we speak about folk culture we tend to give the image of something fossilized in the past, or worse yet, fixed in one dimension without time, i.e., “ecstatic” once again. The cultural institution of the *tammurriata*, like many other folkloric forms, does not belong to a mythic or romantic past, but belongs to a very live present with its social dialectic and

<sup>7</sup> Jean Francois Lyotard, *La condizione postmoderna* (Milan, 1980).

<sup>8</sup> J. Cazeneuve, *La sociologia del rito* (Milan, 1974).

social dynamic. It is current, historically determined in the Marxist sense of the term, in at least three senses:

1) The first is the sense of a *reinvented tradition*, as Nestor Canclini and Eric Hobsbawm<sup>9</sup> would say, fully aware of what is being done, for an economic reason. Indeed, in the circles of the *tammurriate* you will now see many tourists, and of course a lot of anthropologists. The tradition, reinvented, is a pull for tourists. This is, in my opinion, one of the keys of interpretation of many folk institutions, such as the festivities dedicated to the saints held in the North End of Boston that I am currently studying.

2) The second is the sense of a *political use of the tradition*. It was inside the circle of the *tammurriate* that in the 1970s musical groups were born, groups such as 'E zezi, gruppo operaio di Pomigliano d'Arco, and Nacchere Rosse. They attempted to fuse the *tammurriata* with the new social theme of industrialization and the proletarianization of the area. In this context, the "Tammurriata dell'Alfa Sud"<sup>10</sup> or the "Flaubert"<sup>11</sup> are important.

3) The third is the sense of *contribution, aesthetic and of content, supplied to the new urban musical tendencies*. This is why Alma Megretta uses the traditional *stroppole* in their *Sanacore*, a remarkable CD. This is why Daniele Sepe<sup>12</sup> quotes, from a postmodern point of view, the *tammurriata* in his free jazz offerings. Obviously, I do not speak about the Campania Felix (formerly Kashmire) and their ethnojazz since I am directly involved in this project. And, finally, this is the reason for 99 Posse's rap lyrics: *Sant'Antonio Sant' Antonio/ 'o remico r' 'o demonio* (Saint Anthony, Saint Anthony, the devil fighter) in *tammurriata* style. But it continues with: *o demonio e' 'a polizial/Sant' Anto' portala via* (the devil is the police/Saint Anthony take it away), thereby dragging the *tammurriata* out of the churchyard and into the proletarian ghettos of Naples.

Why is this so? The reason, in my opinion, is clear: folklore does not belong to cultural archaeology but to history and to the political. Folklore is, according to Antonio Gramsci, a conception of the world and the life of the subaltern classes, in opposition to the conception of the world and the life of a hegemonic class. It can change under the effects of a mass culture, but if there are subaltern social classes, unavoidably it will be a folk culture. There is nothing mythic, nor moribund, nor, above all, romantic in this. There is instead a cultural institution very much alive and in constant transformation, just like the society and the economic structure which—in the last analysis—produces and determines it.

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<sup>9</sup> Nestor Garcia Canclini, *Culture Ibride* (Milan, 1998); and Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, Eng., 1983).

<sup>10</sup> The Alfa Sud was an automobile factory.

<sup>11</sup> One can listen to a new version of this song performed by Marcello Colasurdo, in *Lost Souls* (Aneme perze), by Spaccanapoli, Real World 7243 8 49542 2 2, compact disk (Wiltshire, U.K., 2000).

<sup>12</sup> A remarkable CD is, in my opinion, Daniele Sepe, *Viaggi fuori dai paraggi*, Il Manifesto compact disk (1996).



## Venturing Identity: Performing Ecstasy in the Rite of the Guglia (Basilicata, Italy)

by Francesco Marano

### THE GUGLIA RITES

The Guglia rituals presently known are spread throughout the Vallo di Diano and northern Basilicata, an area known as Lucania in ancient times. These are evening or nightly rites which generally take place on the eve of the patron saint's feast day and are characterized by a simulacrum of the patron saint differing from the one carried on the shoulders during the canonical procession the following day.

This simulacrum is called the *guglia* (spire) being, in the majority of cases, obelisk-shaped, but it can also take the shape of a small size image or a painting depicting the saint. Another feature of this ritual is the lighting of a broom fire—this fuel, made of dried *ginestre* (broom) plants, being particularly abundant during summer, when the Guglia rites are performed. The cases of Anzi e Pignola<sup>1</sup> distinguish themselves among all the others for not having an officiant priest, for the dances performed with an obelisk-shaped simulacrum, and for the abundant consumption of wine and for the presence of fire crossing—all the elements which caused delighted shivers to Frazerian-minded ethnologists watching the première of the video *La Uglia*.<sup>2</sup>

There are strong analogies among these rites and others spread throughout southern Italy, starting with the Gigli of Nola, some ten-meter-high obelisks carried on the shoulders and “danced” to the music of a band actually placed on top of the Giglio. The Guglia rites also have analogies with the Ceri of Gubbio as well as many other processions where the saint's image is danced in procession. These include the processions of Good Friday, where (Ferrandina, Basilicata) the coffin of the dead Christ is moved in a rhythmic wave pattern.

On the historical origins of this type of cultural phenomena, we can only conjecture, due to a general lack of documents testifying to their historic introduction into the ethnographic landscape. In the main, the rites of Guglia, especially those of Anzi and Pignola, show an obvious syncretism resulting from pre-Christian rituals connected to the magic of fire, and liturgical ceremonials brought in during the Middle Age by the monks who evangelized the region. However, the present iconography of the simulacra recalls the scenic theatrical machines used in Neapolitan baroque festivals and

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<sup>1</sup> Anzi and Pignola are mountain towns in the province of Potenza. Their economy was based on agriculture and livestock until the 1980s. Subsequently, with the development caused by the national government assistance for the earthquake of 1980, the economy has changed, increasing in the tertiary sector, even if migration has always been a considerable factor.

<sup>2</sup> *La Uglia*, prod. and dir. Francesco Marano, 29 min., Archivio Demo-Antropologico, Università della Basilicata, Italy, 1993, videocassette.

sometimes imported into Basilicata by feudal lords associated with the royal household.<sup>3</sup>

This makes us think that the rites of Guglia, as they appear today, have been made or remade throughout the seventeenth century when, as Herman Tak, examining changes in the festivals of Calvello (a town close to Pignola and Anzi), writes, “there was another wave of restoration and beautification.”<sup>4</sup>

#### THE UGLIA AT PIGNOLA

The Uglia rite—so it is locally called in Pignola<sup>5</sup>—takes place on the eve of the festival of the Madonna of Pantano, patroness of the town. The image, first carried on the shoulders by the members of the feast committee followed by a group of children with torches, walking *liscio liscio* (quietly, without dancing nor playing music) to the square, is then sold at auction and bestowed on the winners. They go on dancing the simulacrum until the first broom fire obstructs the way. Here, in front of the bonfire set up by the neighborhood, they keep on dancing joyfully—a small band playing—and every now and then the Guglia carriers, now drunk, pretend to assault the fire barrier until a group of bolder carriers are able to actually pass through it. The same ritual pattern is repeated before the next bonfire and so on until the route’s end.

Such excessive behaviors remind us of Frazer’s timeless descriptions considering the rite as a survival of archaic rituals. But the current shape of the rite, according to the informants, was only introduced during the seventies, whereas previously, the fire crossing occurred simply without dances or wine. Of course, we can imagine that through time the attempts at “normalization” and “archaization” have succeeded each other, reflecting social and economic changes which highlighted certain local groups of actors rather than others.

Without building a deterministic relationship between the two facts, it can be observed that the restyling of the rite of the Guglia in Pignola during the seventies is related to some important social changes which also occurred at that time. A wider social distance and the rise of commuting can be noticed from statistical data, according to the national atmosphere of strong social conflicts. The wider social distance derives from an increase of per capita income as well as of unemployment. Such a fact points out that wealth increased for only a small group of people. Commuting, and especially migration, are two important factors in the rite’s change. As observed in other case studies,<sup>6</sup> the migrants returning home during the summer are the more

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the feast of Bruna in Matera.

<sup>4</sup> Herman Tak, *South Italian Festivals: A Local History of Ritual and Change* (Amsterdam, 2000), p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> I use the term Uglia only when I refer to the rite of Pignola.

<sup>6</sup> Gian Luigi Bravo, *Festa contadina e societa’ complessa* (Milan, 1984).

important group of people that revitalize the festivals. According to a functionalist-oriented hypothesis, based on the relationship between socioeconomic and cultural changes, in the seventies the Uglia was mastered by less wealthy people (underemployed and unemployed) who used the rite as an arena in which to represent the conflict (above all in the competitions) and a way to take possession of the rite according to their own cultural codes—which admit drunkenness and ecstasy—in contrast to the economically dominant social groups showing their better side in the canonical procession. However, this separation between the two feasts, the “poor” one and the “wealthy” one, occurred in the patron feast of Cancellara (a town in eastern Basilicata) as well, where peasants and shepherds from the countryside attended the Guglia rite, while the Sunday feast was attended by landowners, artisans, and townspeople.

The meanings ascribed to the rite are not univocal. The fire crossing has its roots in a legend explaining why the Pignolesi light bonfires and cross them. Having found the image of the Virgin Mary in a wood nearby, they went through the fire with the deity on their shoulders to give the skeptics actual proof of her power. The lay explanation provided by other informants points out that the fire crossing symbolized the challenge of overcoming obstacles or life’s difficulties. The interpretation which can be read in a booklet edited by the festival committee and the priest in 1995 is also very interesting. The text is the outcome of a mediation between the meanings imposed on it by the clergy and those attributed to it by the lay participants, who often miss the liturgical celebrations. In this text the torches are explained as expressions of “light” and the dances represent “joy,” which both come from the “celestial protection of the Virgin Mary”; the Uglia is an “enlightening sign,” and fire—mentioned without any reference to the crossing—is defined as “propitiatory” and purifying, while no attention is paid to drunkenness, named in the text by the neutral term “glassfuls.”

Concerning the bonfires: in traditional culture, broom (*ginestra*) fire has the power to send evil spirits away, particularly the witches who fly on broomsticks made with such broom. More generally, the place of the fire rituals in the annual cycle has been explained by Herman Tak<sup>7</sup>—who thoroughly examined the festival cycle of Calvello—relating it to the dialectic between summer and winter, town and countryside, linking it to the solar cycle and to peasants’ and shepherds’ work.

The reason the people taking care of the fire obstruct the passage of the Guglia is that they want to keep the Virgin Mary inside the neighborhood as long as possible. But behind this religious meaning—also shared by the local priest—we can see a set of competing behaviors characterizing the rite and giving a frame within which to “perform ecstasy.” Thus, in the Guglia rite we can observe competition between the people that take care of fire and the simulacrum carriers; between neighborhoods competing over the bonfire’s

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<sup>7</sup> Tak, *South Italian Festivals*.

magnificence and its resistance to the carriers' assaults; and between groups of participants contending for the simulacrum by auction. And finally, there are men who compete to exhibit their manhood and pride, features ascribed to them by people in the neighboring town, expressing them through quarrelsomeness and machismo.

#### THE BOUNDARIES OF THE RITUAL

Even if, since the sixties, scholars have studied the diachronic changes of structure and meaning, the synchronic approach has not exhausted its research goals. Among these is the issue of the ritual's boundaries: when does ritual begin and end? Beginning and ending markers can be located by a "view from afar" privileging morphological and structural features, so that one can grasp the three phases of Van Gennep's pattern (separation, liminality and incorporation) in Pignola and Anzi's ritual as well. But in getting near a group of participants or a single individual, searching for their experience of the ritual, the issue becomes more complex and the boundaries are blurred or moved by the participants.

The Uglia and the procession are two rites in a clear dualistic relationship, as demonstrated in the comparative table below. Because of that, we are led to explain them as two distinct rites. However, if we consider that some of the Uglia carriers go before the church to carry the Virgin Mary image in the canonical procession the next morning after sleeping briefly, then from these actors' point of view, the ritual actually encompasses the entire Uglia procession ritual complex. Sensorial and ideological meanings are conveyed through both ritual stages, contributing to the construction of the participants' personal and social identity. But the distinction between the sensorial pole and the ideological pole, to use Turner's phraseology, has a merely instrumental value for the analysis: even in this case, it is by a "view from afar" that this dichotomous distinction can be set up, since the concrete participant's ritual experience includes feelings and social values in both stages. For instance, fighting to prevent the Uglia carriers from crossing the fire, the people who tend the fire defend their personal and social identity as a kinship group or as a neighborhood. Even when they carry the image of the Virgin Mary quietly and orderly a few hours later, their performance still involves their personal and social identity. Despite this, in not attending the Uglia, the priest marks a separation between the two rites by his absence or presence. On the eve of the Uglia rite, he remains in the town square, just as he would any other day, looking at the event with a diplomatic smile. His absence from the rite, as Tak, writing on Calvello's fire rites, states, "points to the tension between popular belief and the official one . . . On one side the presence of the image at the



broom fires strengthens this purification ritual; on the other hand, the image tames the fire and legitimizes this non-clerical ritual.”<sup>8</sup>

<b>GUGLIA</b>	<b>PROCESSION</b>
Night	Day
Male participation	Male and female participation
Evening	Sunday
Dance	Regular walking
Wine	Wine is avoided and some fast
Dance music	Solemn music
Music emphasizes the culminating points	Music stops in the culminating points
Casual clothes	Elegant clothes
The officiant is absent	The officiant celebrates the rite
The city authorities are absent	The city authorities are present
The police follow on one side	The police are placed side by side with the city authorities
The rite is left out of the festival program	The rite is included in the festival program
The rite emphasizes interpersonal relationships	The rite emphasizes relationship with the saint
Emotion, feelings and sensations are externalized	Emotion, feelings and sensations are internalized

Table 1. The Rite of the Guglia at Anzi

Before analyzing the role of ecstasy in this kind of rite, we will describe the Guglia ritual context at Anzi where the rite is morphologically like that of Pignola. On a wave of popularity that the Guglia rite of Pignola has been recently gaining by the spread of the festivals’ revitalization aimed at local tourism (and perhaps, as a result too of having been unwillingly advertised through a book published by this author in 1997<sup>9</sup>), the term Uglia, although not a term of local speech, was introduced into Anzi and used in the poster announcing the festival.

At Anzi too, the carriers dance with the Guglia,<sup>10</sup> get drunk and cross the fire. These bonfires are bigger and more dangerous to cross, and sometimes the simulacrum ends up being burned (as it did in 1998), a fact perceived as a bad omen. Moreover, there are other features which lead us to consider the rite as a rite of passage.

<sup>8</sup> Herman Tak, “Wood and Broom Fire: Ritual Change in Southern Italy,” *Ethnologia Europaea* 22 (1992), 33–50, at p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Francesco Marano, *La Uglia: Riti di attraversamento del fuoco in Lucania* (Potenza, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> At Anzi, once the great number of bonfires prolonged the rite till dawn. Because of it some years ago a second Guglia following a different route had been introduced.

The bonfires are tended by the youngest (10–17 years old). When they reach the age of eighteen, they are granted from the elders the honor of carrying the simulacrum, evidently calling a head to this coming of age. On this occasion most of the young men get drunk for the first time and test their skill at sustaining the effects of the wine, since in traditional cultures, the male ethos requires such an ability.

At Anzi, there are more evident distinctions among the groups of participants, although the competition is seldom violent. This can be attributed to the quiet disposition of the Anzesi called, according to a *blason populaire*, “*ciuoti*” by the neighboring townspeople to point out their naïveté, not to mention their stupidity. The youngest men tending to the bonfire preparation wear a small hat with a peak and a handkerchief baring just their eyes to protect themselves from the smoke. This distinguishes them from the Guglia carriers and marks them as members of the group which tends the fire. There are harsh competitions between these groups of young men. On the nights preceding the ritual performance, some of the young men sleep hidden under the broom bundles to protect them from the other neighborhood youths who try to steal them. Then, in the course of the rite, the neighborhood groups enter into competition with each other over who can resist the Guglia carriers’ assaults the longest.

#### GENDER AND CONFLICT

The Guglia rites of Anzi and Pignola are traditionally run by males, but in the last decades, as cultural and social transformations have changed women’s self-perception, women have sometimes played a leading role in the ritual performance. At Pignola, where the simulacrum is heavy, I once saw a woman dancing with some men for a few minutes. At Anzi, where the Guglia is light, men, on some occasions, have granted women the privilege of carrying the Guglia.<sup>11</sup> Generally, though, this is perceived with reluctance by the elderly, since it has always been managed by men. Referring to the festivals held in Calvello, where on the eve of some Virgin Mary festivals the broom fires are lit and the Quadro (a painting of the Virgin Mary) is carried in procession, Herman Tak states:

To carry the image gives some honour. It is a men’s affair. Only once did we see a woman carrying it. She was a student who lived in Rome, and did the auction together with her brother and some cousins. Her mother was absolutely against it, and did not even come outside her house when she passed.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. *La Uglia*, videocassette.

<sup>12</sup> Tak, “Wood and Broom Fire,” p. 40.

Changing gender roles in the ritual can be observed in the following examples. At Pignola, in 1981 the women carried in procession the image from Pantano (where the image is kept in winter) to the town. It was raining, so the men wished to carry the image on a truck, but the women opposed this decision and carried the image on their own shoulders on the first part of the route, in order to respect the custom.

In 1992 at Pignola there was a lively dispute between a group of women and the feast committee. The women wished to carry the image without attaining that right by auction. They sustained their decision, claiming that the auction had not been practiced during the Guglia rite the night before.

At Anzi in 1998, the broom for the bonfire in the neighborhood of S. Lucia was gathered by the women because, as they stated, "The men are working or are married." These women gathered a great amount of broom, and the police intervened to stop the fire whose flames were very high. At this moment the Guglia carriers availed themselves of the opportunity to cross the fire so that a great amount of broom remained unburned. According to the Guglia, carriers should continue their route, but the young women, seeing their efforts frustrated, opposed it and engaged in a dispute with the carriers in order to burn all the gathered broom. The men, in an act of pride, would not come back. Finally, the women attained their goal, offering as a justification the value of the tradition and custom prescribing that people should stay around the bonfire for at least one hour.

All these examples, and particularly the last one, show that behind the gender conflict there is a struggle between two different interpretative points of view and different ritual behaviors. As for the men, the rite is an occasion to compete for honor, while the religious context is merely a framework in which both personal and collective meanings can be included and emphasized.

The video made by Antonio Fanelli and Giuliano De Asmundis<sup>13</sup> showing the Guglia rite in Anzi and reported on by the commentator as if it were a sporting event<sup>14</sup> is another example of this male perspective which considers the rite particularly in its features of competition and challenge.

It seems that women convey the traditional values, according to which a feast is a chance to socialize as much as it is a religious event, as in the rule of staying around the fire for one hour at least. In this way the "authenticity" of the tradition becomes a rhetorical resource, among other things, indisputable because of its mythic authority, removed from history and naturalized roots. Appealing to tradition therefore becomes a way of justifying and claiming the individuals and/or groups of the participants' objectives.

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<sup>13</sup> *La Festa di S. Antonio ad Anzi*, prod. and dir. Giuliano De Asmundis and Antonio Fanelli, 30 min., 1991, videocassette. Giuliano De Asmundis and Antonio Fanelli are from Anzi and produced several videos on the local traditional culture.

<sup>14</sup> See Francesco Marano, *Identità mediate: Autoetnografie video e cultura tradizionale*, unpublished manuscript.

## DANCE, MUSIC AND WINE

As opposed to the canonical procession where a band follows the saint's image and stays far from the officiant, in the Guglia rites music is a basic component of the ritual performance, particularly at Pignola, where a little local band called Banda di Mast' Saverio (after the name of its first master of music and founder) marks the phases of the rite with some specific pieces of music. "Primi passi" (First steps), as the title suggests, is played when the simulacrum starts on its route; "Ginestre pagina 9" (Broom page 9) is played when the Guglia, after a welcome ceremony in town, begins to dance along the narrow lanes leading to the first broom fire at the Terra neighborhood; and "Rappolina" is the piece preferred by the Guglia carriers to dance with the simulacrum. These traditional pieces alternate with other famous pieces such as "When the Saints Go Marchin' In." These little local bands with drums, clarinet and piccolo should have been famous even in Potenza, the nearest capital town of the province, since they used to take part in the patron feast of St. Gerard and performed a kind of music defined as "primitive and strange" by a local historian of that time.<sup>15</sup>

The music performed by Mast Saverio's band is not a decorative ingredient of the ritual, but it is essential and strictly integrated into the Guglia rite. Music is the engine of the procession: the Guglia carriers refuse to go on if the band does not play, and in the past they requested that a particular piece be played before crossing the bonfire. Therefore, all important phases of the rite must be underlined by music, whereas in the canonical procession the most significant ritual moments are marked by silence.

Of course, the kind of dance depends on the music performed, and the movements are also determined by the weight of the simulacrum and the space available. Generally, the carriers dance in front of the broom fire, en route when the band plays "Rappolina" or other swing pieces, and when some carriers ask for dancing in their own or a relative's neighborhood. So we can delineate both a sort of sacralization of space and the carriers' wish of showing themselves to a particular audience. We will return to this point, with reference to local identity.

It is important to underline that in the Guglia rite both the relationships between music and dance, and between the players and carriers, are reciprocally affected, as was the case in *tarantismo* and in the rites of possession where the players' performance takes place very close to the ritual action and is influenced by the dancers.<sup>16</sup> The Guglia does not take place

<sup>15</sup> Raffaele Riviello, *Ricordi e note su costumanze, vita e pregiudizi del popolo potentino* (Bologna, 1893), p. 143.

<sup>16</sup> Gilbert Rouget, *Musica e trance: I rapporti tra la musica e i fenomeni di possessione* (Turin, 1986); originally published as *La musique et la trance: esquisse d'une théorie générale des relations de la musique et de la possession* (Paris, 1980).

without music, and the carriers often shout “Music! music!” so that the players must pay attention to the carriers’ requests.

At a closer distance, music affects the participants physically, altering their perception of time and space.<sup>17</sup> Wine, the third basic ritual ingredient, emphasizes this effect. It contributes to creating a condition that we could define as “ecstatic,” although it differs from Lapassade’s definition of “ecstatic trance.”<sup>18</sup> This author moves away from Jean Jacques Rousseau, William James and Roger Bastide’s works, where ecstasy is associated with mysticism and passivity, with its models in Christian and Sufi mysticism. Meanings and shapes of the ecstatic trance differ in relation to culture. According to Blacking, the body movement’s style comes also from an independent energy flow.<sup>19</sup> At Anzi and Pignola, indeed, with some local differences, we observe a condition of ecstatic excitement (the term “trance” should be avoided because of its pre-oriented meanings in the literature) which takes its own specificity from the local cultural ethos.

Wine plays a basic role and provides a peculiar feature to the rite, so that the Guglia rite at Pignola is also named *fešta degli ubriaconi* (drunkards’ feast). It is said that wine makes the festivity; but on the other hand, one informant stated instead: “A feast is held in order to drink wine!” As Apolito writes, wine “consente gradi più o meno avanzati di SAC, importantissimi nella vita tradizionale e quasi sempre fuori dal contesto religioso.”<sup>20</sup>

It is not only the presence of wine that connotes it as largely a rite of manhood, since in the traditional culture of the Basilicata region, as studied by de Martino, “I bambini invece di fare il bagno in acqua calda, venivano introdotti in acqua tiepida e vino o addirittura vino tiepido . . . per temprare il maschio per le vie del mondo, per consolidare la femmina come donna di casa.”<sup>21</sup> There are, particularly in Pignola, some people who would like to return the rite to “order,” and especially to eliminate drunkenness. In 1997 there was an attempt to accomplish this end. The teachers of the local secondary school took part in the feast committee and managed to have the Guglia carried by their young students. Of course wine was substituted with Coke, and these boys were seen moving in an awkward way under the heavy simulacrum. This clumsy show did not go beyond the first broom fire, since

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 164–69.

<sup>18</sup> Georges Lapassade, *La Transe* (Paris, 1990).

<sup>19</sup> John Blacking, “Towards an Anthropology of the Body,” in *The Anthropology of the Body*, ed. John Blacking, ASA Monograph 15 (London and New York, 1977), pp. 1–28, at p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Paolo Apolito, “Trance e identità nella cultura popolare meridionale,” in *Tradizioni popolari: Tipologia e valore delle culture regionali*, ed. F. Noviello (Mandria, 1988), pp. 39–47, at p. 41: “[Wine] leads to more or less intense stages of altered state of consciousness, fundamental in traditional life and they nearly always occur outside the religious context.”

<sup>21</sup> Ernesto de Martino, *Note di campo* (Lecce, 1995), p. 123: “Children, instead of having a bath in warm water, were dipped in warm water and wine or directly in warm wine . . . in order to introduce the males to the ways of the world and the females to housework.”

the men regained command of the rite, bringing it back to the customary excitement.

In the *Statistica Murattiana* (1811) you can read that because of drunkenness, “son frequentissime le risse e frequenti gli omicidi nei giorni festivi.”<sup>22</sup> The Church’s ostracism has a distant origin. St. Benedict claimed: “Non vi è di tanto contrario al cristianesimo quanto l’ebbrezza e l’ubriachezza.”<sup>23</sup> The patron feast day of Pignola instead became famous in the province of Potenza for its excitement and violence. Riviello stated: “Talvolta si eccedeva in impertinenze e scorrettezze di monelli, di giovinastri e di ubbriachi.”<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, music, dance and wine are the means by which the Guglia carriers reach, both at Anzi and Pignola, an ecstatic condition which is expressed in accordance with the modality learned in the cultural context which produces it.

#### LOCAL GENDER-ORIENTED IDENTITY: WHO MAKES THE RITE?

We have defined as “active” the ecstatic condition reached by the Guglia carriers by means of a blend of music, dance and wine, since the excitement produces behaviors which exalt the individual and group identity. The range of competitive acts made available by the Guglia rite is extremely diversified and each participant is involved in a series of interplays through which personal identity is performed. In order to grasp the complexity of these interactions we need to drop the “view from afar” which does allow us to describe well the ritual structure, but does not reveal the meanings which each participant individually constructs during the entire ritual frame, step by step. To arrive at a deeper knowledge, interviews focusing on the informants’ autobiographies are needed, but they are not yet available. Nevertheless, close observation in the field together with the analysis of visual documents (video footage and photographs) allow us to formulate an interpretative hypothesis instrumentally oriented, free from the functionalist’s mechanicalisms and structuralist’s abstractions. This approach is instrumentally oriented in the sense given by Tomas Gerholm who has stated:

There are actually two ways in which rituals may be instrumental. One is to be instrumental in terms of a goal defined by the theory of the ritual: the *purpose* of the ritual. The other is to be instrumental in

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<sup>22</sup> Tommaso Pedio, *La Statistica murattiana del Regno di Napoli: Condizioni economiche: Artigianato e manifatture in Basilicata all’inizio del sec. XIX* (Potenza, 1964), p. 32: “Fights very often occur and murders are also frequent during the feast days.”

<sup>23</sup> “Nothing is so much adverse to Christianity as drunkenness and inebriation.”

<sup>24</sup> Riviello, *Ricordi e note su costumanze*, p. 134: “Sometimes [it degenerated] into the excessive insolences and bad manners of hooligans, little rascals and drunks.”

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terms of a (non-ritual) goal defined by the social context of the ritual: the *uses* of the ritual.<sup>25</sup>

Here I privilege the second sense of “instrumental.” Thus, this approach neglects the features resulting from a ritualistic interpretative perspective, i.e., that the broom fires of the evening could be seen as a ritual way to purify the town whose space will be sacralized the day after by the canonical procession, the core of the feast from the clergy’s point of view.

The starting point is the assumption that each participant creates his/her own rite in relation to his/her biography and culture. This requires a deconstruction of the distinction between active participants and passive spectators. On the wave of Gilbert Lewis’s analysis of the spectator’s active role in the production of the ritual meaning and of the actor becoming spectator of his own behavior, Davies writes: “The audience is part of the spectacle, is itself spectacle, and its ways of participating—audience performances—may reconstruct the nature and meaning of the spectacle itself.”<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, these statements both consider the spectator’s action as a mental, merely interpretative activity, resulting in the construction of (ambiguous and polysemous) meanings attributed to the ritual, and neglect the embodiment of the ritual experience through the sensorial and emotional activity produced by the observation, as well as the intervention in the so-called “active” participants’ behavior and on the whole ritual performance.

I experienced an example of the spectator’s ability to modify the ritual action during a feast at Pignola on May 15, 1993. While going from one bonfire to another, the Guglia carriers followed a narrow alley out of the spectators’ sight, while the audience waited for the carriers near the broom fire. At this moment, the tired carriers, unmotivated to act because of the absence of spectators, placed the Guglia on a car. A small group of people following the carriers soon reported the fact to the feast committee members and offered to carry the simulacrum. The alleged reason was the respect for the traditional rule prohibiting carriers from laying the Guglia down, because it was considered dishonorable for them to show their tiredness and also because “down” is the devil’s place, as, for instance, in the image carried in the canonical procession, which represents the Virgin Mary keeping the snake-devil under foot. The carriers would never dare to lay down the Guglia in front of an audience.

Thus the relationship between “active” (the Guglia carriers) and “passive” participants (the audience) can be interpreted according to

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<sup>25</sup> Tomas Gerholm, “On Ritual: A Postmodern View,” *Ethnos* 53, nos. 3–4 (1988), 190–203, at p. 200.

<sup>26</sup> Charlotte Aull Davies, “‘A oes heddwch?’ Contesting Meanings and Identities in the Welsh National Eisteddfod,” in *Ritual, Performance, Media*, ed. Felicia Hughes-Freeland (London and New York, 1998), pp. 141–59, at p. 142. See also Gerholm, “On Ritual,” who calls “observer participant” the spectator watching the rite.

Bateson's "complementary schismogenesis," that is, a process of character-building (according to individual or gender) which occurs in a relational way, that is, as a complement of an opposite attitude stimulating and producing that particular ethos. Bateson observed, among the Iatmul of New Guinea, that the men's behavior was caused by a complementary women's attitude to admire and appreciate the men's exhibitions.<sup>27</sup>

At Anzi and Pignola too, the men's exhibitions with the Guglia occur before an audience which includes women, to whom the dances offered by the youngest seem to be addressed as an aesthetic performance. Thus, each participant has an audience in mind: the young males like being watched by the young females. When the Guglia carriers are adult men, as in the case of Pignola, their performances near the broom fire show more features of competition both within neighborhoods tending the bonfire and with other groups attempting to carry the simulacrum and cross the fire.

At Pignola this feature of exhibitionism depends more on pride and less on the pleasure of exhibiting oneself and being watched. This corresponds to some features of the Pignolesi, such as how they are perceived by neighboring townspeople, who consider them a proud and quarrelsome people with a strong male ethos. Moreover, the Pignolesi attribute the same quarrelsomeness to the nearby people of Abriola.<sup>28</sup>

The ecstasy caused by wine, dance and music, such as it is displayed in the various behaviors, is useful to the Guglia carriers in order to confirm through their excessive behavior the collective image of the Pignolesi; this image is both self-constructed and attributed to them by others. Thus the rite seems to be a field in which the proud and exhibitionist ethos of Pignolesi can be both learned by and communicated to the participants (insiders and outsiders) in a spectacular way.

Although such a collective image may seem a groundless stereotype, I was able to observe that the Pignolesi present themselves as a hard-tempered but united people, despite the contrasts existing among the locally active cultural associations.

Moreover, the Pignolesi, in conversation, rarely express emotions and feelings. This would have contrasted with this hard image of their individual selves and of their community. As a consequence, one might suggest that the ecstasy of the ritual context allows the participants to break their conventional appearance of unity and instead express emotions and conflicts existing in the

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<sup>27</sup> Gregory Bateson, *Naven: un rituale di travestimento in Nuova Guinea* (Turin, 1988), p. 168; originally published as *Naven: A Survey of the Problems Suggested by a Composite Picture of the Culture of a New Guinea Tribe Drawn from Three Points of View*, 2d ed. (Stanford, Calif., 1958).

<sup>28</sup> The conflicts between Anzi and Pignola are probably caused by the use of the resources of the woods. The boundary between the two towns is vaguely drawn in the woods where the charcoal burners and the woodcutters from Anzi and Pignola meet and sometimes quarrel over boundaries.



community whose culture insists that such things be hidden behind distant interpersonal relationships and the image of a solid community.

Such a perspective also leads us to reconsider the relationship between the concepts of (ritual) text and context. The sociocultural context is not the background in which the rite is included. Rite and context are in a mutual performative relationship: they are co-realized. In other words, the rite's shapes and contents are expressions of culture, and culture makes itself visible through, among others facts, the rituals. Obviously, we do not see the culture in a static sense, but as a process which uses the rite to construct and deconstruct itself through a struggle among various local groups which would objectify the culture for their own purposes.

This struggle, in the case of the Uglia, takes the form of asserting (or claiming) the right to express the identity of a particular group (or several groups)—identity as a way of feeling and acting, using the body and communicating with other people. What occurred in 1997 during the “children's Uglia” is an example of the capacity of these cultural conflicts to construct, change and take possession of the rite and the culture.

#### VENTURING IDENTITY THROUGH ECSTASY

Using the “view from afar” in the analysis of the ritual, we can easily see that the actors feel emotions and sensations through exhibition and competition. Music and ecstasy play a fundamental role in rousing the sensorial part of the ritual behavior. Therefore, emotions and sensations are not neglected by anthropologists studying rituals.<sup>29</sup> Rouget states,

The state of emotional resonance that music—or in any case some kinds of music—gives rise to in each individual is another feature of the excitement which it rouses in the structure of the conscience. Nothing is more rich in emotional associations than music. Nothing is more able to produce some situations involving all the sensitiveness of a person. Music builds an inner state and some relations with the world where affectivity prevails.<sup>30</sup>

Rhythm is the more significant feature in the production of particular psychic states. The more evident cases refer to rites of possession and trance rites, but its general importance has been described by Boas, who states that rhythm is ever present in human activities concerning emotional life.<sup>31</sup> In any case, acting goes ever with feeling, and thus all cultural phenomena have an emotional side.

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Victor W. Turner, *La foresta dei simboli: Aspetti del rituale Ndembu* (Brescia, 1976); originally published as *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1967).

<sup>30</sup> Rouget, *Musica e trance*, p. 236.

<sup>31</sup> Franz Boas, *Arte primitiva* (Turin, 1981), pp. 308–9; originally published as *Primitive Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1927).

Here I would propose paying attention to the participants' emotional behavior and considering the ritual as an individual and/or collective "identity training," interactionally based. But this does not exclude that the rite also has a "social coordination" role, since it cannot be obtained without the feelings embedded in social relationships (among individuals, neighborhoods, groups). In the course of the interaction performed in the rite, the participants test, experience, value and set up some potentialities, abilities, alliances, roles. They experience the boundaries between game and reality, confidence and threat, expertise and danger. They form opinions of themselves and others, experience ways of expressing feelings, and try out the conventions ruling interpersonal relationships. They improve their own body skills and weigh that of others, using emotions for cognitive aim, and at the same time learn their own community ethos and their personal identity.<sup>32</sup> This does not happen only by watching, but by acting with emotions and feelings, both as a passive spectator and an active participant (fire manager or Guglia carrier). Such a process is termed "enaction" by Francisco Varela, who states: "The world is not something that is given to us but something we engage in by moving, touching, breathing, and eating. This is what I call *cognition as enaction*, since enaction connotes this bringing forth by concrete handling."<sup>33</sup> Varela also asserts that the reactions leading one to experience and construct micro-identities are caused by "breakdowns."

From this view, many rituals seem to really consist of a sequence of breakdowns which produce situations of uncertainty where the individuals test their mental and bodily abilities. For instance, the moments where the Guglia carriers cross the fire or continue to dance, although they were tired out, are breakdowns. These are situations in which the ecstasy caused by wine, dance and music increase both uncertainty and self-esteem and make the ritual an unordinary experience.

In using the term "training" I do not mean that the participants represent emotions and sentiments, but that they experience *in fieri* their expressive abilities in the course of the performance: to what extent they can verbally provoke another individual without coming to a dispute or, if it happens, to what extent they can exert physical strength, or try their own verbal creativity to coin some playful epithets or invectives. Moreover the participants learn the community ethos, its ways of expression, mediating it by their own personal identities which are ventured to be confirmed or reconstructed. The state of ecstatic drunkenness permits the playing down of all immoderate and transgressive acts occurring in the rite: anyone can justify his actions by cloaking them under the mantle of drunkenness. It constructs a border zone where the participant's identity is deconstructed and reconstructed through an

<sup>32</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973).

<sup>33</sup> Francisco J. Varela, *Un know-how per l'etica* (Rome, 1992), p. 11; English translation from *Ethical Know-How: Action, Wisdom, and Cognition* (Stanford, Calif., 1999), p. 8.

“enactive” reflection on the boundaries of the self. “Boundaries,” Anthony Cohen states, “are zones for reflections: on who one is; on who others are.”<sup>34</sup>

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Fig. 1. The *uglia* at Pignola (All photographs are by the author)

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<sup>34</sup> Anthony Paul Cohen, *Self-Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity* (London and New York, 1994), p. 128.



Fig. 2. The *uglia* at Pignola



Fig. 3. A participant at the rite of Pignola



Fig. 4. The two *guglie* at Anzi



## Devotion, Music, and Rite in Southern Italy: The Madonna del Pollino Festival

by Nicola Scaldaferri

The festival of the Virgin Mary of Pollino takes place on the slopes of the Pollino mountains in Basilicata, a region of Southern Italy. Although its center is the small town of San Severino Lucano (pop. 2,000), the festival is celebrated throughout the area, attracting a significant number of followers. It also represents an important gathering point for the players of *zampogna* (bagpipe), *organetto* (diatonic button accordion), and *tamburello* (frame drum) of southern Italy.<sup>1</sup>

The Madonna del Pollino belongs to that category of religious festival defined by Annabella Rossi in a well-known book as *feste dei poveri* or “poor people’s festivals.”<sup>2</sup> These festivals often take place in isolated sites with largely local participation involving marginal sectors of the population whose attendance is motivated by requests for grace or to offer thanks for divine favors received (*per grazia ricevuta*). In these festivals there is a direct relationship between the saint and the local population that lives under his/her protection, thus constituting a very different situation from more famous sanctuaries (e.g. Loreto or Lourdes) where a highly developed transnational religious tourism exists.

As is widely known, festivals of the Virgin Mary inevitably have their origins in visions of the Virgin by the humble. The Pollino festival too has as its founding myth the vision of the Virgin by a shepherd who was grazing his sheep on the mountain sometime between 1725 and 1730. Soon after, while begging for mercy for their relative Antonio, two women from San Severino found a wooden statue of the Virgin in a natural cave near the site of the vision. After being miraculously cured, Antonio built a chapel at the vision site, at the altitude of 1,537 meters.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This paper represents the first results of ongoing research on the Pollino festival. The initial study was undertaken in 1998, and will continue until 2002. Participants include Stefano Vaja for photographic material and Simone Ciani for audiovisuals. For the 2000 festival, participants also included Giovanni Demasi, Renato Gagliano, and Francesco Cacchiani. At present, work is being carried out on the production of a documentary in collaboration with Simone Ciani. Special thanks for their support of this research is extended to the members of the confraternity Fraternità Madonna del Pollino, to the Pro-Loco of Pollino di S. Severino Lucano and its president, prof. Lucio Marino, to don Vincenzo Orofino, and above all to don Camillo Perrone, parish priest of S. Severino since 1955. Don Camillo is an authentic living archive of local traditions as well as the author of numerous works on the culture and history of the area, the most significant of which are Camillo Perrone, *S. Severino Lucano: Notizie storiche, geografiche, religiose, folkloristiche e varie* (Salerno, 1966); idem, *S. Severino Lucano: Storia, ambiente, folklore, prospettive* (Novara, 1972); idem, *Viggianello* (Francavilla, 1980); and idem, *S. Severino Lucano tra presente e passato* (La Madonna del Pollino) (Lagonegro, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> Annabella Rossi, *Le feste dei poveri* (Bari, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> This legend was written down for the first time in 1929 by don Prospero Cirigliano, who recorded what the oral tradition had handed down for two centuries on the origin of the cult.

The Pollino festival is relatively recent in relation to other southern Italian festivals in honor of the Virgin;<sup>4</sup> or, rather, the Christian version of the festival is recent, since this is an area which has been regarded as sacred since ancient times. In fact, it is important to note that many Christian cults emerge in areas which have already had religious associations in pre-Christian eras, and often one is merely overlaid by another. Here we will only mention some of those present in Basilicata: the sanctuary of the Madonna di Rossano (Vaglio), which was established near the spring which fed the ancient sanctuary of the Goddess Mephitis; that of S. Maria d'Anglona (Tursi) which arose at the site of the sanctuary of Demeter and Artemis Bendis; and the sanctuary of S. Maria di Banzi, which developed in a sacred area; but the list could go on.<sup>5</sup> The Madonna del Pollino festival likely replaced pre-Christian cults;<sup>6</sup> moreover, the rituals involved in the climb to and descent from the sanctuary in spring and late summer respectively (see below) are almost certainly linked to the grazing patterns of the local shepherds who move their herds to the higher pastures at the first melting of the snow and bring them back down when the weather changes.

The Pollino festival has three phases. The first takes place on the first weekend in June when the statue of the Virgin Mary in S. Severino Lucano is carried to the sanctuary in the mountains, accompanied by an impressive procession lasting an entire day, as it goes through all the villages in the Frido river valley. Meanwhile, there is continuous music-making and dancing, and food and drinks are distributed among the villages. The second phase takes place on the mountain itself on the Friday and Saturday before the first Sunday in July. The sanctuary is swarmed by hundreds of pilgrims, who sleep outside for several nights, marking their time with processions, vigils, songs and dances in which everyone participates in a sort of collective delirium. The third and final phase occurs on the second weekend of September: it begins with a vigil on the Saturday night at the sanctuary, and ends with a long procession, completing the cycle by bringing the Virgin back to S. Severino. The statue remains in the main church of S. Severino until June of the following year when it is taken back to the mountain. The detailed calendar of the three events follows:

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<sup>4</sup> We need only think of the Madonna del Pierno, di Banzi, di Anglona—not to mention those of Basilicata—which are often linked to ancient and prestigious ecclesiastical buildings. For a discussion of the Virgin sanctuaries in Basilicata, see Valeria Verrastro, "Santuari e monasteri in Basilicata dall'età medievale a quella contemporanea," in *Itinerari del Sacro in terra lucana*, Basilicata Regione Notizie 24, no. 2 (92) (1999), 109–24; for a representative list of the cults and sanctuaries of Basilicata, see Angelo L. Larotonda, "Feste religiose in Basilicata," in *Itinerari del Sacro in terra lucana*, Basilicata Regione Notizie 24, no. 2 (92) (1999), 263–78.

<sup>5</sup> These aspects are treated in Verrastro, "Santuari e monasteri in Basilicata."

<sup>6</sup> E.g., as maintained by Lorenzo Quilici; see Perrone, *S. Severino Lucano tra presente e passato*, p. 12.



- 1) June, first weekend:
- Saturday, 5P.M.: mass and farewell to the statue of the Virgin in the village of S. Severino Lucano
- Sunday, 5 A.M.: mass and start of the cross-country procession to the mountain sanctuary; stops to visit all the villages and farms along the way
- 11 A.M.: stop and mass in the village of Mezzana
- 1 P.M.: resumption of the procession
- 5 P.M.: arrival at the mountain sanctuary
- During the procession, people dance, sing, play music and distribute food and drinks.
- 2) Friday and Saturday before the first Sunday of July:
- Friday evening: mass and procession with the Host across the mountains
- Night: wake in the mountains; people sleep, eat and play music inside the church
- Saturday morning: mass and procession with the statue of the Virgin across the mountains
- During the July festival, people set up tents and sleep on the mountain for several nights, spending all the time eating, playing *tarantellas*, dancing and singing.
- 3) September, second weekend:
- Saturday evening: mass
- Night: wake in the mountains; people eat, sing and sleep inside the church
- Sunday, 5A.M.: mass and start of the procession across the country to bring the statue back to S. Severino, stops to visit farms and villages
- 11 A.M.: stop and mass in the village of Mezzana
- 2 P.M.: resumption of the procession toward S. Severino
- 5 P.M.: arrival in S. Severino; procession through the village and final mass
- During the procession, people dance, sing, play music and distribute food and drinks.

The three phases are of quite different orders of significance. The ascending and descending processions in June and September are itinerant celebrations held throughout the Frido valley between San Severino and the sanctuary, at a distance of some 20 km. The passage of the Virgin through the Frido valley is an important rite, a celebration of the identity and unity of its population with every locality, however tiny, welcoming the visit (see figs. 2 and 3).

The June and September processions are managed by a confraternity, the *Fraternità Madonna di Pollino*, whose members can be easily recognized by their

red jackets. The audience is encouraged to take part in the carrying of the statue, in singing and dancing, while the special role of the confraternity is to ensure the carrying of the statue in the most difficult points, or in case of bad weather. The confraternity of S. Severino, unlike other Italian confraternities, has no formal organizational structure whatsoever, let alone a hierarchical one, and is open to all, although its members are exclusively male. Their principal task concerns the transport of the statue during the procession, and they define themselves as “custodians of the Virgin.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover, together with the parish priest, they ensure that everything is performed according to plan.

The key role of the confraternity in the June and September phases is, however, absent in July. This is a static moment taking place entirely within the closed confines of the sanctuary. In June and September, it is the Virgin who visits the faithful, while in July, pilgrims from diverse locations visit the Virgin to ask for grace. San Severino and the Frido valley here assume a secondary role, and often many of their inhabitants do not take part in the mountain phase. The most devoted followers traditionally come from farther afield, particularly Calabria.

In the past it was the auction which constituted the climax of the July festivities: after the Saturday morning mass, all the localities participating in the festival contested the privilege of carrying the statue to the mountain with offers of money—the highest bidder being the winner. This ceremony was always frowned upon by ecclesiastical authorities because of its pagan nature until it was definitively abolished in 2000, following an explicit request by the bishop conducting liturgical celebrations in the Jubilee year.

The July festival is undoubtedly the most spectacular phase and has been studied by diverse scholars. Moreover, the best known documentaries of this festival, such as those filmed by Luigi Di Gianni (with Annabella Rossi) and Mario Carbone, have focused on this phase only, while excluding the other two.

The prevalently Marxist perspective adopted in the majority of the studies, notably that of Annabella Rossi, has created a small controversy. Di Gianni's documentary, made in 1971 with a commentary by Rossi,<sup>8</sup> has been a particular source of polemic leading to a response by the local population and clergy in the form of a booklet including a *Risposta ad Annabella Rossi* (Reply to Annabella

<sup>7</sup> This definition emerged from the interview with members of the confraternity in September, 2000. The activity of the confraternity was strongly encouraged by don Vincenzo Pangaro, parish priest of S. Severino Lucano from 1905 to 1937. A critical period came in the 1980s when the confraternity lost its enthusiasm and for a number of years the June and September transfers were conducted by cars and trucks. Recently however, activity has been renewed and the 40-man-strong confraternity has begun to take the statue on its shoulders once more. Don Camillo Perrone, interview by author, September 13, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> *La Madonna del Pollino*, prod. and dir. Luigi Di Gianni, 23 min., Nexus Film, Italy, 1971. (Other films about Madonna del Pollino include Mario Carbone, *La Madonna del Pollino*, 29', DARC, Italy; Maria Luisa Forenza, *Voci dal Pollino*, 13', Video UMATIC, Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, Rome, Italy; Nicola Scaldaferrì and Simone Ciani, *La devozione sonora: Salita al santuario e discesa della Madonna del Pollino*, 32', Italy, 2000; and Vito Teti, *La Madonna del Pollino*, 28', Rai-Sede Regionale per la Calabria, Italy, 1981.)

Rossi).<sup>9</sup> The main point of contention concerns the construction, by Rossi, of an image of the South as backward and superstitious, an image which did not reflect the reality of San Severino in the 1970s.

A salient point of all three festival phases is the constant presence of sacred and profane elements, such as the singing and dancing of *tarantelle* near the statue of the Virgin during the procession and inside the church, as well as eating and sleeping inside the church (see figs. 8 and 9). The wooden statue of the Virgin is the central element, the focal point around which all events take place, and it is constantly accompanied by songs, sounds, and dances. The calendar of the festival includes some moments in which the clergy is present and some in which it is not. In the latter cases, the same statue becomes the center of nonreligious events. This aspect is different from other religious rites of Basilicata, where a number of simulacra are used during the sacred and profane parts of the ceremony.<sup>10</sup> Here instead, only one is used, and it is the presence or absence of the clergy which is determinant in rendering the ceremony more or less official.

Music is fundamental to the Pollino festival, and there are two types of sound events. The first type is made up of the official sounds of the festival: the band accompanying the processions,<sup>11</sup> and the religious songs chanted by the clergy with the aid of microphones and loudspeakers. The second category takes in traditional forms of pilgrim participation: devotional songs which always accompany appeals to the Virgin and often quite spectacular acts of penitence such as walking barefoot or crawling on hands and knees (the Pollino Virgin is traditionally considered miraculous especially for her healing of bone diseases).<sup>12</sup> There is also the constant presence of a great number of musicians playing the *organetto* (diatonic button accordion), the *zampogna* (bagpipe), and the *tamburello* (frame drum) in never-ending *tarantella* jam sessions, which also utilize improvised instruments such as keys, bottles, cow bells, etc.<sup>13</sup> All the

<sup>9</sup> See Perrone, S. Severino Lucano tra presente e passato, pp. 11–14.

<sup>10</sup> As, for example, occurs in the case of the rites of the Uglia, in Basilicata, where the simulacrum used in the night processions during the fire-crossing ritual is different from that used during the day, even though the carriers are often the same. See Francesco Marano, *La Uglia: Riti di attraversamento del fuoco in Lucania* (Potenza, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> This is the band from Cassano Jonico, a town in Calabria particularly devoted to the Madonna del Pollino. The town of Cassano also provided the fireworks which have recently been banned because of the risk of fires in the national park. Perrone, interview.

<sup>12</sup> The faithful often take small stones from the sacred cave where the wooden statue was found because they are considered to be of thaumaturgic value. In the chapel are conserved numerous *ex votos*, objects of various kinds offered by the faithful (often immigrants, see fig. 7) in exchange for grace. On *ex votos*, see Ferdinando Mirizzi, “Gli ex voto,” in *Itinerari del Sacro in terra lucana*, Basilicata Regione Notizie 24, no. 2 (92) (1999), 279–84.

<sup>13</sup> For an overview and a bibliography of the traditional music of Basilicata, see Nicola Scaldaferri, “Aspetti sonori dell’identità lucana,” in *Cultura nazionale e cultura regionale: il caso della Basilicata* (Venosa, 1999), pp. 239–55. A detailed description of the bagpipes used in Basilicata can be read in Nicola Scaldaferri, “La zampogna in Basilicata,” in *La Zampogna: Gli aerofoni a sacco in Italia*, ed. Mauro Gioielli (forthcoming). For an overview of the Italian folk music, see Timothy Rice, James Porter, and Chris Goertzen, eds., *The Garland Encyclopedia of*

families and groups of pilgrims arriving at Pollino include at least one musician, as the visit must always be accompanied by a sound event. Singing and dancing in front of the statue is the principal form of participation. Indeed, pilgrim involvement is above all a sonorous one. All three of the Pollino events call for active participation, and the pilgrimage is carefully organized. Groups of pilgrims together with their families and friends prepare equipment, food, and musical instruments for the trip.

Musical performances are associated with real tests of physical endurance and great consumption of food and drink (the singing, dancing and playing are always for extended periods of time). These events provide privileged moments to show off, to become the center of attention, by playing, dancing, singing for hours, offering or taking food and drink in great quantity, and carrying the statue for long stretches. All this is officially done as acts of devotion for the Virgin; however, they obviously also become acts of individual performance, with strong personal and social connotations. This is especially true for those belonging to the confraternity of S. Severino Lucano. We also note a severe gender distinction: the most extrovert performances are rigorously male.

During the festivals of 1998 and 2000, I studied the behavior of some participants in detail. I observed three notable examples.

1) During the 2000 June climb, Domenico, a pilgrim from Terranova di Pollino, played the *organetto*, drank and danced uninterruptedly, almost in a trance, in the very tough final section of the procession, repeating the same long performance in the July festival. Officially, this performance showed devotion, but it was also a personal test of endurance, gaining him the admiration of the audience.

2) Leonardo, a well-known bagpiper from Sibari (Calabria), goes to all three festivals with his wife and his friends every year. During the July festival, he builds a bivouac and they sleep on the mountain for a whole week, spending all their time eating, playing tarantellas, dancing and singing. They become a meeting point for many participants, attracted by the continuous sounds in the bivouac.

3) The third example concerns one of the confraternity members, Giovanni. Born in S. Severino, Giovanni works in another region, but during the three festivals he takes his holidays to coincide with the festivities at S. Severino. During all the festival moments, particularly during the two main processions (June and September), he is ever present, playing the *organetto*, singing, or carrying the statue without taking a break. He never sleeps throughout the days of the festivals. During the climb in June the procession took place under a very hot sun, but Giovanni nevertheless uninterruptedly transported the statue or played the *organetto*, from dawn to sunset. During the descent in September, part of the procession took place in pouring rain, which at one point made a van necessary, but Giovanni, after awhile, ordered the other members to carry the statue, even in

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*World Music*, 8: *Europe* (New York, 2000), pp. 604–25, s. v. “Italy”; and Tullia Magrini, “Italy, II. Traditional Music,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. S. Sadie and J. Tyrrell, 2nd ed., 29 vols. (London, 2001), 12:664–77.

the rain. This presence and determination gave him great prestige, so that he is the leader of the confraternity, even though there is an official president, the oldest member. The Pollino festival is an exceptional moment for Giovanni: he can escape everyday routine and acquire a leading role that, to be maintained, requires a repetition of the same extraordinary performance.

The Pollino festival is made up of a network of individual experiences like those of Giovanni, Leonardo and Domenico just described, in which musical performance plays an important role. Tests of musical ability, bodily control and endurance under the effects of alcohol constitute the elements for the recursive construction of micro-identities in relation to peer groups, confirming or not confirming individual prestige and group values.

#### TWO ACCOUNTS OF THE POLLINO FESTIVAL

1) In 1915 the Austrian writer of Scottish origin, Norman Douglas, published his book *Old Calabria*, where he recounts numerous journeys undertaken in southern Italy in the years between 1907 and 1911. Chapter 20, “A Mountain Festival,” is entirely dedicated to the July phase of the Pollino festival, its description concentrating particularly on the festival’s sound dimension.

It is a vast picnic in honour of the Virgin. Two thousand persons are encamped about the chapel, amid a formidable army of donkeys and mules whose braying mingles with the pastoral music of reeds and bagpipes—bagpipes of two kinds, the common Calabrian variety and that of Basilicata, much larger and with a resounding bass key, which will soon cease to exist.

On all sides picturesque groups of dancers indulge in the old peasants’ measure, the *pecorara*, to the droning of bagpipes—a demure kind of tarantella, the male capering about with faun-like attitudes of invitation and snappings of fingers, his partner evading the advances with downcast eyes.

Night brings no respite; on the contrary, the din grows livelier than ever; fires gleam brightly on the meadow and under the trees; the dancers are unwearied, the bagpipers with their brazen lungs show no signs of exhaustion.<sup>14</sup>

2) The first chapter of Annabella Rossi’s book *Le feste dei poveri* is also dedicated to the July session of the Pollino festival. Rossi discusses, among other things, the forms of musical participation of the pilgrims.

On reaching proximity to the sanctuary, the devoted leave their mules and provisions and approach the church—a small anonymous

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<sup>14</sup> Norman Douglas, *Old Calabria* (London, 1926), pp. 151–53.

construction—and walk around it three times, singing the song of the Pollino Virgin. The pilgrims, especially if following someone who has received grace, are accompanied by musicians, bagpipes, players of *tamburello* and *organetto*.

Following the completion of this ritual, the pilgrims cross the church threshold and approach the statue of the Virgin which is positioned on a base outside the baluster. The church is crowded, a lot of women approach it on their knees, beating their breasts and a few licking the ground.

Inside the sanctuary, sheets and blankets are spread on the floor and families arrange themselves with the women at the centre of the nucleus isolated from the “others” and “protected” by their men. Outside, during the night, many groups dance *tarantelle* to the music of bagpipes, *organetti*, *tamburelli* and accordions.

At dawn, mass begins and new pilgrims arrive until 10 A.M. when the principal mass is celebrated. When this is over, towards 11 A.M. the statue is taken out of the church where the privilege of transporting the simulacrum is contested by various local groups.

The procession sets off with groups of musicians playing and pilgrims dancing *tarantelle* in front of the statue. It reaches a determinate point before turning around and going back into the church. It is 1–1:30 P.M. and the festival is over; the tents are abandoned and the pilgrims pack their mules and slowly return home.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Rossi, *Le feste dei poveri*, pp. 19–23.



Fig. 1. The Madonna del Pollino (All photographs were taken by Stefano Vaja in July and September, 2000)



Fig. 2. A moment during the transfer of the statue to San Severino in September



Fig. 3. The Virgin visits a country house during the descent





Fig. 4. Musical instrument salesman during the July festival in the mountains



Fig. 5. Devotional songs



Fig. 6. The Madonna in the chapel



Fig. 7. “This plaque, inscribed in Buenos Aires on the 4th of June 1978, is dedicated to the Virgin Mary for letting me return to this chapel after 29 years in Argentina. I will always ask for infinite grace from afar; the Chiaradia brothers. Today, the first of July, present at this festival. Donato Chiaradia. Thank you Virgin Mary.”



Fig. 8. Devotional *tarantella* played in the chapel with *organetto* (diatonic button accordion), *tamburello* (frame drum), and bottle and spoons



Fig. 9. Carmine Salamone, a player of *surdulina* (small bagpipe) sleeping in the church during the night of the July festival



Fig. 10. A *cinto* (gift made of candles) offered to the Virgin in exchange for grace



Fig. 11. Acts of penitence during the procession





Fig. 12. The Host procession



Fig. 13. Procession across the mountains



Chapter Six  
Cultural Performance and Revival





## Imagining the *Strega*: Folklore Reclamation and the Construction of Italian American Witchcraft

by Sabina Magliocco

The expansion of neopaganism and revival Witchcraft<sup>1</sup> in North America are among the most interesting outgrowths of the contemporary “New Age” movement.<sup>2</sup> Italian folk magic is among those which have received considerable attention, spawning a proliferation of books, Web sites, and small groups of practitioners. Yet these reclaimed magical practices bear only a slight resemblance to the folk magic that existed (and in some cases continues to exist) in Italian American ethnic communities. In this paper, I trace the development of *Stregheria*, or Italian American revival Witchcraft, showing how it has been constructed—by combining traditional Italian folk beliefs and practices with historical and ethnographic materials, New Age concepts and frameworks for religious ecstasy—to create a completely new religion that serves the needs of contemporary Italian American spiritual seekers. I will argue that it codifies and revalues traditional Italian folk beliefs and magical practices, placing them in a form which is friendly to the values of second-, third- and fourth-generation Italian Americans, but which is significantly different from folk magic as practiced in rural Italy and brought to North America by Italian immigrants. I am particularly interested in the ways the creators of Italian American Witchcraft have made use of scholarly literature on Italian history and ethnography in ways that are quite different from what the producers of knowledge may have intended. I will also examine the implications of the emergence of Italian American revival Witchcraft at this particular historical juncture in terms of what it can tell us about the nature of ethnic identity in the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

I base my analysis on the literature which emerged from the postmodern historical critiques of cultural categories previously understood as “natural” or essential.<sup>3</sup> According to this theoretical current, categories such as gender, race, nationality and ethnicity, which at first glance appear inherent, can be regarded as “inventions,” in the sense of “widely shared, though intensely debated, collective fictions that are continually reinvented.”<sup>4</sup> By adopting this stance, I am neither denying the existence of real cultural differences between groups, nor asserting

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the text, I use “Witchcraft” to indicate the revived religion, and “witchcraft” when I refer to the historical and anthropological meaning of the term.

<sup>2</sup> As Wouter Hanegraaf suggests in his monumental study, the term “New Age,” despite its popularity, is inherently vague and problematic. Many Witches and neopagans do not see themselves as part of this trend. For a thorough overview and explanation, see Wouter J. Hanegraaf, *New Age Religion and Western Culture* (Albany, N.Y., 1998).

<sup>3</sup> See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983); and Werner Sollors, ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> Sollors, *Invention of Ethnicity*, p. xi.

that expressions of ethnic identity are not genuine for tradition-bearers. Instead, I posit that ethnic groups, as we conceive of them today, rather than being natural, static, stable entities which possess an essential set of traits that exist relatively unchanged through time, are actually of fairly recent origin, tied to the emergence of the modern nation-state.<sup>5</sup> Our assumptions about ethnic groups carry the legacy of European romanticism and its emphasis on the concept of authenticity.<sup>6</sup> However, as Michael Fischer suggests, “ethnicity is something reinvented and reinterpreted in each generation [and] by each individual,” often in ways that remain fairly obscure and impenetrable even to the artists and re-creators themselves.<sup>7</sup>

Italian American Witchcraft is one among many reinterpretations of Italian American ethnicity emerging in the late twentieth century. While it is based in traditional folk magical practices brought to North America by Italian immigrants, it is essentially a case of “folklore reclamation,” a term I have coined to describe a particular kind of folklore revival which attempts to reclaim, albeit in a new cultural context, aspects of folk tradition previously stigmatized by a dominant discourse. Like other forms of revival and “invented tradition,” folklore reclamation generally signals a break with tradition and the deep-seated need to erase that break from collective memory, or at least make it more palatable. What distinguishes folklore reclamation from similar forms of cultural revival is its focus on forms, elements, even words formerly marginalized, silenced, and discredited by the dominant culture. Through the process of reclamation, these previously repudiated elements are reappropriated, reinterpreted, and given a new and illustrious context in which they function as important symbols of identity and pride. This identity is consciously oppositional to the one portrayed in the dominant culture’s representations.

Folklore reclamation is not unique to Italian Americans; in fact the process seems to emerge as part of identity politics in the larger context of globalization. In the case of Stregheria, folklore reclamation is taking place as the status of Italian Americans in North America is changing. Once reviled as the newest wave of unacculturated immigrants, many have now become part of the middle classes, and find themselves targets of hostility from immigrant groups who see them as white oppressors, blaming them (through Christopher Columbus) for the genocide of Native American peoples and the destruction of their cultures. At the same time, the projection of contemporary nationalisms into the past has allowed other European ethnics to vilify Italian Americans as the descendants of imperial Romans, responsible for the first wave of European colonialism and cultural destruction. I argue that the discourse of Witchcraft allows Italian and other European American ethnics to create identity in part by aligning themselves against the dominant cultural and religious paradigms and with oppressed minorities by reclaiming traditions previously abandoned in shame. My interest lies precisely in how contemporary artisans of the tradition create the impression

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. xiv.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.; Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity* (Madison, 1997), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Michael J. Fischer, “Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory,” in James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture* (Berkeley, 1986), p. 195.

of ethnic authenticity through text and practice, and on the role of scholars, albeit sometimes unwittingly, in helping to construct tradition.

I want to make very clear that my goal is *not* to deauthenticate Italian American Witchcraft. Contemporary folklorists and anthropologists have recognized that authenticity is always a cultural construct: what is considered “authentic” is a result of how we construe our relationship to the past, and how we interpret that past in light of present concerns.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, all traditions are perpetually in flux as their bearers constantly reinterpret and reinvent them with each individual performance. Revival and reclamation are part of the tradition process, even when the result differs from the “original” practice itself. Thus *all* traditions are authentic, and the historicity of a tradition has nothing to do with its efficacy for any given group of people.

By far the largest number of Italians who immigrated to North America were *contadini* (peasants) from the South who brought with them a folk religion that, while nominally Catholic, had little to do with the dogma and doctrine of the Church, but was “a syncretic melding of ancient pagan beliefs, magical practices, and Christian liturgy.”<sup>9</sup> Their universe was animated by angels, demons, and saints, as well as a variety of local spirits who could be invoked to help survival, but who could also be dangerous at times. Much of their religious devotion was focused upon the local saint, especially the patronal feast, whose secular, celebratory aspects also included expressions of religious passion and ecstasy through which worshippers experienced direct contact with the sacred.<sup>10</sup>

The immigrants also brought with them a rich tradition of folk magic, especially a pervasive belief in *malocchio* (the evil eye). All manner of illness and social conditions could be attributed to it, and Italians had an arsenal of amulets and folk cures to protect against it. Most rural communities had folk healers<sup>11</sup> whose craft was learned in the family; these specialists knew both herbal and magical charms to help their fellow villagers, but were often reputed to be able to cause harm as well. Italian peasants also had a plethora of folk legends and beliefs regarding *streghe* (witches), individuals with a supernatural ability to do evil. The witches of legend performed feats that were obviously preternatural: they could transform into any form; fly through the night sky to the walnut tree of Benevento, their secret meeting place; enter homes through the keyhole; steal milk from nursing mothers and livestock; suck the blood of living

<sup>8</sup> Bendix, *Authenticity*; Richard Handler and Joycelyn Linnekin, “Tradition, Genuine or Spurious,” *Journal of American Folklore* 97, no. 385 (1984), 273–90.

<sup>9</sup> Rudolph J. Vecoli, “Cult and Occult in Italian American Culture: The Persistence of a Religious Heritage,” in Randall M. Miller and Thomas D. Marzik, eds., *Immigrants and Religion in Urban America* (Philadelphia, 1977), p. 26.

<sup>10</sup> Vecoli, “Cult and Occult,” p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> Indigenous terms for folk healers varied according to dialect area. Some frequently-used terms include *curatore/curatrice* (healer); *guaritore/guaritrice* (curer); *magol/maga* (sorcerer/sorceress); and *pratico/pratica* (akin to the English “cunning man/woman”). *Strega* is a strictly negative term in Italian, and is never used to refer to folk healers except to insult or condemn them.

beings; and paralyze people in their sleep.<sup>12</sup> At times the popular imagination conflated folkloric witches with folk healers, leading to accusations of witchcraft.

Italian immigrants' folk Catholicism and magical practices encountered tremendous hostility from the dominant American culture. "American Protestants and Catholics agreed that the Italian immigrants were characterized by ignorance of Christian doctrine, image worship, and superstitious emotionalism," and branded the immigrants pagans, heathens and idolaters.<sup>13</sup> Educated Italian Americans, embarrassed by the apparent "vulgarity" of religious displays, echoed this sentiment, and suggested that working-class Italian Americans replace their devotion to saints with the celebration of prominent Italian historical figures such as Christopher Columbus and Giuseppe Garibaldi—something which many Italian American communities evidently took to heart.<sup>14</sup>

While many clergymen and educators simply disparaged Italian American folk religiosity and despaired of ever educating the immigrants, others turned to anthropological and folkloristic theory of the time to explain the strange beliefs and practices. Foremost among these was the theory of "survivals," which postulated that seemingly incomprehensible and irrational beliefs and practices were actually the vestiges of a previous "savage" or "primitive" stage in the unilinear evolution of culture. These survivals, it was thought, would eventually disappear as populations became educated and more rational, scientific practices took hold. The theory of survivals, first developed by anthropologist Edward B. Tylor and applied to Italian folk customs by early ethnographers, was adopted enthusiastically by American clergy, educators, and social workers struggling to understand unfamiliar ideas and practices. For example, Phyllis H. Williams wrote, "The religious practices of the South Italians preserved in modified form many elements . . . associated with ancient Greek, Roman and Mohammedan beliefs." She argued that saints were in fact "folk substitutes for the old Greek and Roman gods and spirits of the woods and rivers. . . . The polytheism of the old departmental deities survived in the veneration of local saints."<sup>15</sup> While survivalism began as an attempt to account for these practices, it ultimately worked to disenfranchise the folk religion of Italian Americans, even as it appeared to romanticize it. The practices remained stigmatized: "These ethnic survivals cause us to be laughed at, even disdained, exposed to sarcasm of the Americans," wrote an Italian American commentator of the time.<sup>16</sup>

Despite this social stigma, many Italian folk magical and religious traditions did not die out. Patronal feasts remained the most lively, vivid expressions of folk religiosity, but folk magical practices continued to be documented well into

<sup>12</sup> Ernesto de Martino, *Sud e magia* (1966; Milan, 1983), p. 71; cf. David Hufford, *The Terror That Comes in the Night* (Philadelphia, 1982).

<sup>13</sup> Vecoli, "Cult and Occult," p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Peasants and Prelates: Italian Immigrants and the Catholic Church," *Journal of Social History* 2 (1969), 234; Luisa Del Giudice, "Introduction," in *Studies in Italian American Folklore*, ed. Luisa Del Giudice (Logan, Utah, 1993), p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Phyllis H. Williams, *South Italian Folkways in Europe and America: A Handbook for Social Workers, Visiting Nurses, School Teachers and Physicians* (1938; repr. New York, 1969), pp. 135 and 136.

<sup>16</sup> Amy Bernardy, 1913, quoted in Vecoli, "Peasants and Prelates," p. 233.

the 1970s, although Malpezzi and Clements argue that by the late 1980s, some had fallen into disuse.<sup>17</sup> Yet many Italian Americans still remember a *nonna* (grandmother) or other relative who knew how to remove the evil eye, cure common ailments with charms and prayers, or purify the house with salt. Often the younger generations adopted the view of the dominant culture, that these were “only a lot of fish stories.”<sup>18</sup> The term *strega* or “witch” was sometimes used disparagingly by family members to refer to the bearers of these “superstitious” practices. “My twenty-seven-year-old son calls us a bunch of witches,” said a second-generation Italian American woman who used amulets to ward off the evil eye.<sup>19</sup>

Even when Italian Americans continued their traditional folk religious practices, it is clear that by the late twentieth century these existed in a context quite different from that of the peasant villages from which most immigrants had come. The changed sociocultural context combined with the stigmatization of folk practices to form a veil of secrecy and mystery around them. For many second-, third- and fourth-generation Italian Americans, the word *strega* and the elements of folk magic became whispers in family legends—decontextualized, marginalized, silenced, but still powerful in the imagination, and ripe for reclamation.

In 1977, Rudolph Vecoli wrote: “With the current revival of interest in witchcraft and demonology, American culture appears to be catching up to the *contadini* of a century ago.”<sup>20</sup> And indeed he was correct. Although the Italian American witchcraft revival was still in its infancy, revival Witchcraft had already exploded onto the American countercultural scene. Revival Witchcraft and neopaganism, the larger movement of which it is part, include a number of ecstatic mystery religions whose aim is to revive, re-create and experiment with pre-Christian forms of polytheistic worship. While encompassing a wide variety of beliefs and practices, these religions generally seek a direct, “authentic” and embodied experience of the sacred, often through altered states of consciousness achieved in ritual. They also seek harmony with the environment and an emphasis on the feminine divine, which they locate in pre-Christian practice and in the religions of indigenous peoples—qualities they do not find in mainstream Christianity. Contemporary Witches may see themselves as the spiritual or actual descendants of witches burned during the European witch hunts, whom they believe were practicing the remnants of a pre-Christian nature religion. While rooted in a Western mystery tradition going back to Neoplatonism and containing a number of traditional folk magical practices, these religions are essentially of recent invention, and constitute an important form of cultural critique.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Frances M. Malpezzi and William M. Clements, *Italian American Folklore* (Little Rock, Ark., 1992), p. 131.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Hartman and Karyl McIntosh, “Evil Eye Beliefs Collected in Utica, New York,” *New York Folklore* 4, nos. 1–4 (1978), 61–69, at p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> Hartman and McIntosh, “Evil Eye Beliefs,” p. 66.

<sup>20</sup> Vecoli, “Cult and Occult,” p. 40.

<sup>21</sup> For a historical account of the development of revival Witchcraft, see Ronald E. Hutton, *The*

While lacking any single scriptural text, revival Witchcraft nevertheless grew out of a literate and literary tradition, and folklorists played no small part in formulating its essential premises.<sup>22</sup> British civil servant and folklorist Gerald B. Gardner is credited with establishing the basic parameters of this religion in *Witchcraft Today*, in which he interpreted the practices of a British occult group as survivals of an ancient pre-Christian fertility religion.<sup>23</sup> Along with one of his initiates, Doreen Valiente, Gardner reworked the group's rituals over a period of time, developing a ritual framework that involves casting a sacred circle, invoking the four cardinal points, calling the names of a goddess and god, and a shared meal of cakes and wine. Direct experience of the deities through ecstatic states was the climax of ritual. Gardner also contributed the eight sabbats or holy days to the Wiccan year cycle. "Gardnerian" Witchcraft, or "Wicca," entered North America in the late 1950s. Buoyed by the 1960s counterculture, it soon diffused, giving rise to numerous variants.<sup>24</sup> Conservative estimates count approximately 200,000 neopagans and Witches in North America today, most of whom are part of the urban middle classes. The number of Italian American Witches is much smaller, but books on the topic tend to sell about 60,000 copies, suggesting that a small but substantial minority of neopagans are either of Italian extraction, or are interested in ethnic variants of revival Witchcraft. The number of initiated, practicing Italian American Witches is probably very limited, around the order of two hundred or less.

One of the earliest texts of the modern Witchcraft revival has also been extremely influential in the development of Italian American Witchcraft. In 1899, amateur folklorist Charles G. Leland published *Aradia, or The Gospel of the Witches*, a series of Italian spells, conjurations and legends collected from a Florentine fortune teller whom Leland called "Maddalena."<sup>25</sup> This text, which Maddalena reportedly gave Leland as a manuscript, presents Italian witches as worshipping Diana, goddess of the moon, queen of the witches and "protectress of the oppressed, the outcast, the ungodly and the god-forsaken,"<sup>26</sup> along with her brother/lover, Lucifer. The two have a daughter named Aradia (derived from Herodias, a legendary figure associated with Diana in early medieval witch trial transcripts) who is sent to earth to enlighten humans and teach them to resist the oppression of wealthy and powerful landowners through sorcery. In accordance with Aradia's teachings, witches gather in the woods during the full moon, where

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*Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford, 1999).

<sup>22</sup> See Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*.

<sup>23</sup> Gerald B. Gardner, *Witchcraft Today* (New York, 1954).

<sup>24</sup> For an overview of the movement in North America, see Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today*, rev. and exp. ed. (Boston, 1986); Loretta Orion, *Never Again the Burning Times: Paganism Revived* (Prospect Heights, Ill., 1995); Helen Berger, *A Community of Witches* (Columbia, S.C., 1999); and Sarah Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Charles G. Leland, *Aradia, or The Gospel of the Witches* (London, 1899).

<sup>26</sup> Robert Mathiesen, "Charles G. Leland and the Witches of Italy: The Origin of Aradia," in Charles G. Leland, *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches*, new trans. by Mario Pazzaglini and Dina Pazzaglini (Blaine, Wash., 1998), p. 36.

they worship naked as a sign that they are free from the bonds of social class. There they hold a witches' supper with cakes of meal, salt and honey shaped like half-moons, and call their religion *la vecchia religione*, "the old religion."

The *Vangelo* or Gospel also contains a number of spells or "conjurations," many intended to avert the evil eye or bring good luck. The tone of these spells emphasizes a clientistic relationship between Diana and her worshippers not unlike that familiar to scholars of folk Catholicism: the deity can be threatened if she does not help fulfill the supplicant's prayers. Leland translated the texts and strung them together with interpretations based on prevailing folklore theories of his time, suggesting that they were survivals of a pagan religion dating back to the days of ancient Rome and Etruria.

From the very beginning, *Aradia* has been surrounded by controversy. Among neopagans and revival Witches, the text has been vilified because of its linking of Diana with Lucifer, the Christian devil, and the presence of manipulative magic which suggests the imposition of one's will on the gods and others—concepts which sharply contradict the "harm none" ethos of revival Witchcraft.<sup>27</sup> Scholars have likewise not taken it seriously. Since there are no analogues to the text as a whole in Italian collections or archives, Leland was suspected of having fabricated it himself out of bits and pieces of folklore, as well as having invented his key informant. Even those who accepted her existence believed that Maddalena, a Florentine fortuneteller of dubious reputation, may have concocted material to satisfy the American folklorist who was paying her for information. A more likely interpretation, proposed by Robert Mathiesen, suggests that we regard *Aradia* as dialogic and intersubjective:

Maddalena to a certain extent invented herself in response to the interests and enthusiasms of . . . Leland . . . adapt[ing] from the vast amounts of lore at her disposal precisely those texts and practices, those legends and spells, which would most fascinate her patron.<sup>28</sup>

Despite these controversies, *Aradia* has become a fundamental text in the twentieth-century Witchcraft revival. Its influence extends from very particular practices of modern Witchcraft (the full moon meetings; the "Charge of the Goddess," later rewritten by Gerald Gardner's High Priestess Doreen Valiente; the goddess' name, which in Gardnerian Craft remained "Aradia" until the early 1960s; and the practice of certain covens of worshipping naked)<sup>29</sup> to the more general notions of witchcraft as a continuation of pre-Christian religion, cultural critique and peasant resistance.

Perhaps the most important idea for Italian American Witchcraft revivalists has been the linkage of folk magic with an ancient religion involving goddess worship, and the location of this religion in Italy. The presence in the text of a number of items with clear analogues in Italian folklore (for example, the

<sup>27</sup> Chas S. Clifton, "The Significance of *Aradia*," in Leland, *Aradia*, trans. Pazzaglini, p. 61.

<sup>28</sup> Mathiesen, "Leland and the Witches," p. 168.

<sup>29</sup> Clifton, "Significance of *Aradia*," pp. 61, 73–86.

“conjunction of lemon and pins,” in which a lemon is stuck with pins to cause harm to an enemy; the children’s rhyme to catch fireflies; the blessing of flour) allowed Italian Americans reading Leland to interpret their family magical practices as vestiges of an ancient pagan religion and forms of peasant resistance.

Among the first to openly identify himself as a practitioner of Italian witchcraft was the late Leo Louis Martello. Born in the 1930s in Massachusetts to Sicilian immigrant parents, he claimed to have been initiated into *la vecchia religione* by a cousin of his father’s in 1951.<sup>30</sup> In his writings, he describes Sicilian tradition as being practiced solely among family members; initiation takes place at puberty; and the goddess and god are not part of the Roman pantheon. He stops short of revealing exact rites and practices transmitted by his family because initiates must take a blood oath never to reveal its secrets to outsiders.<sup>31</sup> While Martello describes his family tradition as essentially domestic, family-based and oath-bound, he also founded the Trinacrian Rose Coven, a more public group which emphasizes the Sicilian deities and practices, but in other ways resembles Gardnerian-based groups.

Though Martello probably never intended to become a popularizer of Italian American Witchcraft, in many ways he laid the groundwork for the development of later variants. In *Weird Ways of Witchcraft*, he is the first to reproduce an engraving of the *mano fica*, calling it the “fig gesture” and attributing it to Italian magic-workers who used it to turn back evil spells.<sup>32</sup> In *Witchcraft, the Old Religion*, he describes Sicily as the home of the goddess Demeter, her daughter Persephone and their mystery cult, deities brought to the island by the ancient Sikels, the original settlers, whom he conflates with the Etruscans and the founders of Rome.<sup>33</sup> He sees Sicilian Catholics’ devotion to the Virgin Mary as a continuation of their earlier devotion to the goddess: in describing the statue of the Madonna and child in the church near the Temple of Demeter at Enna, he characterizes the child as female, and says “The sculptor who made the statue belonged to *‘la vecchia religione.’*”<sup>34</sup> He goes even further, insisting that Catholicism, especially Marian worship, was used by witch families to conceal their continuing veneration of a pagan goddess. He is the first neopagan to cite Carlo Ginzburg’s work on the Benandanti,<sup>35</sup> long before its translation into English, and the first to mention the Neapolitan word for witch, *janara*, and to connect it with those who worshipped Diana.<sup>36</sup> These concepts later become important in Raven Grimassi’s development of Stregheria. Perhaps Martello’s

<sup>30</sup> Leo L. Martello, *Black Magic, Satanism and Voodoo* (Seacaucus, N.J., 1973), p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Martello, *Black Magic*, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Leo L. Martello, *Weird Ways of Witchcraft* (Seacaucus, N.J., 1972), p. 71.

<sup>33</sup> Leo L. Martello, *Witchcraft: The Old Religion* (Seacaucus, N.J., 1975), pp. 150–56.

<sup>34</sup> Martello, *Witchcraft*, p. 148.

<sup>35</sup> The Benandanti were Friulian men who believed themselves to belong to a secret brotherhood who traveled in spirit four times a year, at the solstices and equinoxes, to battle against evil wizards for the fertility of crops. Inquisitors, at first puzzled by this legend, finally interpreted it as a form of witchcraft, and executed the Benandanti. See Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore, Md., 1983).

<sup>36</sup> Martello, *Witchcraft*, pp. 71–72.



most stunning claim is that the old religion was linked with other secret societies of peasant resistance, including the Mafia. He explains the origin of the word “Mafia” as a combination of *mater* and *fidelitas*—faith to the mother (goddess)—or *mater* and *filia*, mother (Demeter) and daughter (Persephone).<sup>37</sup> In fact, many aspects of Martello’s presentation of Sicilian craft remind the reader of this particular pernicious Italian stereotype: the emphasis on family, blood oaths, honor and vendetta. “Sicilian *streghe* live by the concepts of *omertà* and vendetta, and do not believe in ‘turning the other cheek,’” he writes.<sup>38</sup> It is likely that contemporary constructions of Italian Americans as linked with organized crime may have influenced Martello’s interpretation and framing of his traditions in this case. In this classic example of folklore reclamation, Martello successfully reclaims a negative stereotype and infuses it with a new, positive meaning.

Another important contributor to the emergence of Italian American Witchcraft is Lori Bruno. Born in 1940 in New York City, she claims to be a descendent of the Dominican monk Giordano Bruno, burned at the stake in 1600 for heresy, and to a woman executed in Catania for lancing the swellings associated with the bubonic plague.<sup>39</sup> Bruno grew up in a family where many forms of folk magic were practiced: both her mother and grandmother were healers, and her grandmother was also a midwife in the area of Nola (Campania), near Naples. Divination, the removal of the evil eye, the magical cutting away of illness with a special knife, and the use of prayer to heal were all part of Bruno’s everyday childhood experience. This form of folk magic was, like Martello’s, a secret tradition, handed on from one relative to another—“a sacred priesthood,” she calls it, rooted in ethical principles of honor and respect. Bruno’s family also seems to have practiced some form of altered consciousness which was used in healing: “My parents told me, ‘When you need to leave [your body], it will happen. And when they touch us, we feel them with a warmth that touches, that fills your whole body. And we walk with them—we walk with the gods.’”<sup>40</sup> Bruno movingly described her use of this technique to save her granddaughter, who was born with a heart defect and hovered near death for days afterwards. “I called on Aesclepius, Apollo—I walked with them,” she explains. Today the child is healthy.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to her private, family-based practices, Bruno cofounded the Trinacrian Rose coven with Martello. Here, Sicilian traditions are modified and combined with a more standardized magical practice which includes group worship in a circle, the observance of the eight sabbats, and a commitment to political and social action. While the coven does initiate members, Bruno declared: “I cannot make a *strega*. Do you know who makes the *strega*? It is the

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>38</sup> Martello, *Black Magic*, p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> Lori Bruno, interview by author, August 26, 2000.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Similar altered states of consciousness have been documented in Italian folk healers by de Martino, *Sud e magia*, p. 7; and Luisa Selis, “Prime ricerche sulla presenza delle streghe in Sardegna oggi,” in *L’erba delle donne: maghe, streghe, guaritrici* (Rome, 1978), p. 141.

gods and goddesses—the hand that touches you that causes the quickening, that wakes your memories of a different life.”<sup>42</sup> In other words, while techniques and rituals can be learned, Bruno maintains the Old World belief that a certain part of Witchcraft is inborn—one must “have the light in them,” as she says, to be a *strega*.

While Leo Martello and Lori Bruno were among the first Italian Americans to combine Italian folk magic traditions with more public forms of neopagan worship, and to interpret their practice as an ancient pre-Christian religion, the real architect of Italian American revival Witchcraft is Raven Grimassi. Raven, who was born in Pittsburgh in 1951, is the son of an American G.I. and a Neapolitan woman. Her family preserved a number of magical traditions, including removal of the evil eye, the making of curative liqueurs and tonics, divination, and folk healing, which she brought with her to the United States. Grimassi’s mother also seems to be an active bearer of folktales, one of which features the moon becoming pregnant by the morning star, called “Lucino” or “Lucifero.” It is easy to see how Grimassi connected this folktale to Leland’s legend of Diana and Lucifer, and began to interpret many aspects of his mother’s folk culture as evidence of *la vecchia religione*.

Grimassi says he was initiated as an adolescent into a family tradition of magical practice by his aunt. Like Martello and Bruno, he describes this tradition as hereditary, limited to family members, based on some inherent magical talent or ability, domestic, and secret. This fits well with what we know about folk magical practice from the ethnographic record in Italy. But it is not this tradition which he presents in his popular books *The Ways of the Strega*, *Hereditary Witchcraft*, and *Italian Witchcraft*.<sup>43</sup> These lay out in detail a system of beliefs, rituals, and practices which he claims harken back to *la vecchia religione* which “survived relatively intact throughout Italy.”<sup>44</sup> Building upon Leland, his intent is to “restore the original Tradition [sic] which Aradia had returned to the people”<sup>45</sup>—that is, nothing short of re-creating the ancient religion of the Etruscan and pre-Etruscan Italic peoples. However, the context in which that religion existed is gone, as is the context in which Italian folk magic existed before its journey to North America. Contemporary Italian Americans who want to understand the magico-religious practices of their elders have little to go on to reconstruct this original context. In order to make these folk practices understandable as part of an ancient religion, Grimassi must build a coherent system that his contemporaries can adapt for their own magical practice.

In our conversations, Grimassi was surprisingly candid about his role as an inventor of much of what appears in his books. Motivated partly by a desire to share some of his family’s folk traditions, he is nevertheless aware that much of that knowledge does not translate well into a popular New Age format. Many of his family practices pertain to rural life; others include manipulative magic and

<sup>42</sup> Bruno, interview.

<sup>43</sup> Raven Grimassi, *The Ways of the Strega* (St. Paul, 1995); idem, *Hereditary Witchcraft: Secrets of the Old Religion* (St. Paul, 1999); and idem, *Italian Witchcraft* (St. Paul, 2000).

<sup>44</sup> Grimassi, *Strega*, p. xiv.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. xviii.

countermagic that violates modern Wiccan ethics about harming none; others still are so rooted in a peasant context that contemporary American neopagans find them disturbing. For example, he described a classic folk cure which involves rubbing the body all over with a piece of meat or pork fat. The meat, having “absorbed” the illness through the magical process of contagion, is disposed of by burial or is thrown into the ocean, symbolically taking away the disease. “People today are grossed out by this,” he observed, and he jokingly imagined their reaction if he were to publish such a spell in his books: “I’m vegan; can I use broccoli instead? Can I use tofu?” Not the least of his hesitations is that his mother, who by all reports is a formidable woman, is distressed by the idea that her son has revealed secret magical practices to nonfamily members. So instead of collecting and preserving his family’s folklore, he elaborates on it, using scholarly sources to reconstruct the missing historical and ethnographic context. When he cannot reconstruct, he invents.

Grimassi, whose Italian is rudimentary, presents Italian Witchcraft as consisting of three traditions: the northern Italian *Fanarra* and the central Italian *Janarra*<sup>46</sup> and *Tanarra*. Interestingly, he makes no reference to southern Italian traditions, even though the largest percentage of Italian immigrants to North America came from that area. Each tradition is led by a *Grimas* [sic], or leader<sup>47</sup> and organized into groves, or *boschetti*. The *streghe* of Grimassi’s Stregheria, like Gardnerian Witches, worship in sacred circles, cast with elaborate formulas and gestures and watched over by guardians called *Grigori* [sic]. They worship Diana and her consort Dianus, or their Etrurian counterparts Tana and Tanus. They celebrate eight sabbats: *la festa dell’ombra* (October 31), *la festa dell’inverno* (December 21), *la festa di Lupercus* (February 2), *l’Equinozio della primavera* (March 21), *la giornata di Diana* (May 1), *la festa dell’estate* (June 21), *l’equinozio d’autunno* (September 21) and the full moons, and have life-cycle rites for initiations, weddings, child blessings and funerals. In other words, their rituals are in many ways much like those of other revival Witches, except for their Italian names. This renaming of tradition to make it seem Italian is part of an authenticity-creating process I noted previously in regard to foodways.<sup>48</sup> Stregheria differs from non-Italian American Witchcraft mostly in its focus on Roman deities, its emphasis on ancestor spirits (called *lasa* or *lares*), and its Italian-centered mythology.

Some of what Grimassi presents is clearly drawn from his own family’s knowledge and practice, and has many analogues in Italian folklore collections. He gives several spells to turn away the evil eye which have analogues in Italian

<sup>46</sup> *Ianara* is one word for “witch” in the dialect of Campania; I could find no entries for the words *Tanarra* or *Fanarra* in any dialect dictionary.

<sup>47</sup> No such word appears in Nicola Zingarelli’s *Vocabolario della lingua italiana* (Milan, 1977), the most comprehensive dictionary of the Italian language. The closest is the adjective *grimo*, meaning “wrinkled, wizened” or “poor, wretched,” p. 777.

<sup>48</sup> Sabina Magliocco, “Playing with Food: The Negotiation of Identity in the Ethnic Display Event by Italian Americans in Clinton, Indiana,” in *Studies in Italian American Folklore*, ed. Luisa Del Giudice (Logan, Utah, 1993), pp. 107–26.

folklore collections,<sup>49</sup> as well as one to St. Anthony to retrieve lost objects and another to Sts. Peter and Blaise to bless a holy stone.<sup>50</sup> His “Nanta Bag”<sup>51</sup> seems to be a rendition of Italian *brevi*, small pouches holding sacred objects which were hung around the neck for protection. He also describes divination using oil and water or cards that is in keeping with documented Italian and Italian American folk practices. But the majority of his materials are culled from historical or ethnographic sources, which he reinterprets to suit his particular bent. From Leland’s *Etruscan Roman Remains*,<sup>52</sup> he borrows the names of the ancient Etruscan deities and the importance of ancestor spirits in early Italic religion. He adapts the Etruscan alphabet, which he restyles as a secret *strega* alphabet, from works of popular archaeology. The Inquisitorial reports of the society of Diana and the Benandanti are drawn from the works of historian Carlo Ginzburg. Grimassi borrows the concept of the *veglia* from Alessandro Falassi’s *Folklore by the Fireside*<sup>53</sup> and reinterprets it as a witch family practice during which a kind of credo is recited. I even found in *Hereditary Witchcraft* a spell against the evil eye drawn verbatim from Frances Malpezzi and William Clements’ *Italian American Folklore*,<sup>54</sup> which is probably a result of my signaling that book to him as part of an extended e-mail exchange in 1996.<sup>55</sup> He calls it a Sicilian spell passed on orally on the Winter Solstice, while Malpezzi and Clements present it as Piemontese.<sup>56</sup>

To be fair, Grimassi never claims to be reproducing exactly what was practiced by Italian immigrants to North America. He admits Italian American Witches “have adapted a few Wiccan elements into their ways”<sup>57</sup> and acknowledges that he has expanded upon the traditions he learned from his mother in order to restore the tradition to its original state.<sup>58</sup> But in attempting to restore an ancient tradition, Grimassi has in fact created a new one: a potpourri of folklore, revised history, and contemporary magical practice that bears little resemblance to anything that was ever practiced in Italy, before or after the Inquisition. Now-diffuse Wiccan rituals and practices are reworked, renamed and recast as Etruscan worship; scholarly work is used to create a link between ancient religion, medieval belief and contemporary revival; folk magic is reinterpreted as the practice of an archaic cult. Almost any folk custom can be reinterpreted as evidence of the preservation of the old religion. For instance, Grimassi told me his family kept a *lararium*, or ancestor shrine. When I asked him to describe it in detail, he described a niche or shelf on the wall where photographs of dead relatives were kept, on which his mother would put a

<sup>49</sup> Grimassi, *Strega*, pp. 200–1; and idem, *Hereditary Witchcraft*, pp. 56–57.

<sup>50</sup> Grimassi, *Strega*, p. 201; and idem, *Hereditary Witchcraft*, p. 56.

<sup>51</sup> Grimassi, *Strega*, pp. 102–3.

<sup>52</sup> Charles G. Leland, *Etruscan Roman Remains* (New York, 1892).

<sup>53</sup> Alessandro Falassi, *Folklore by the Fireside* (Austin, Tex., 1980).

<sup>54</sup> Frances M. Malpezzi and William M. Clements, *Italian American Folklore* (Little Rock, Ark., 1992).

<sup>55</sup> Grimassi, *Hereditary Witchcraft*, p. 58.

<sup>56</sup> Malpezzi and Clements, *Italian American Folklore*, p. 144.

<sup>57</sup> Grimassi, *Strega*, p. xviii.

<sup>58</sup> Raven Grimassi, interview by author, August 23, 2000.

candle, or some flowers in water—the classic configuration found in many Italian and Italian American homes. Grimassi has reinterpreted a standard folk practice in light of his survivalist views.

Grimassi's books (published by Llewellyn, a New Age press) have been quite successful, selling about 60,000 copies apiece and spawning numerous Web sites and imitators. Raven himself has initiated various individuals through classes and magic circles, which meet in a room behind his well-appointed, pristine occult shop in Escondido, California. These individuals in turn have initiated others, bringing the total number of initiates in his line to about seventy. Only a third of his initiates are of Italian extraction; the rest “become” Italian through a special adoption ritual.

While it is difficult to assess the influence of Martello, Bruno and Grimassi on Italian Americans as a whole, I will present a few examples of how certain individuals have interpreted their own experiences in light of their reading of these authors.

#### FABRISIA

Fabrisia [sic], an early—albeit currently alienated—disciple of Raven Grimassi's, is third-generation Italian American born and raised in Massachusetts. She now lives in Florida where she and her husband operate a chicken farm. Fabrisia considers herself a hereditary witch, although her family did not formally initiate her into the practice, because she believes her grandmother was a *strega*, albeit under a veneer of Catholicism.

My grandmother Adelina [was] from Livorno, Italy and [my other] grandmother Mariona and grandfather Primo were from Parma. [They] were very closed and withdrawn to ANYONE who wasn't Italian, and I mean “off the boat.” My grandmother had the “obligatory” Catholic statues. I remember my grandmother always had a wonderful herb garden, and on one side of it was a statue of Mary. When she cut herbs or worked in the garden, she always turned the statue away from her work. . . . I remember them working potions and charms, always in Italiano, so as a child, I only got bits and pieces of what they were doing. When my grandmother passed over in 1963, there was no Catholic “thing,” only a simple ritual at her home. Her athame<sup>59</sup> was buried with her along with a variety of stones to “help her on her way.” She was buried in a cemetery and flowers strewn over her grave. I was only eight years old and “knew” this was different.<sup>60</sup>

What is striking about Fabrisia's description is how closely it adheres to the parameters of the classic Italian American experience. She describes *not* the elaborate sabbats of Grimassi, but an herb garden, the making of herbal remedies and charms, the presence of a special knife, and a simple funeral, perhaps

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<sup>59</sup> Wiccan ritual knife.

<sup>60</sup> Fabrisia, e-mail communication to author, July 6, 2000.

because of poverty or personal preference. She now sees these as conscious acts of resistance against Catholicism, evidence of the preservation of an ancient religion under the guise of conformity. She elaborates further on this when she narrates the story of her grandfather:

My grandfather Primo was a caretaker at a Catholic church. What a way to stay hidden. Primo's father Luigi was also a caretaker at this same church. Luigi's brother Salvatore was a priest and worked closely with many popes. . . . According to family "tales" many who attended this church were of The Ways.<sup>61</sup> Since my dad won't discuss this, I am at a loss to know for sure.<sup>62</sup>

Here Fabrisia interprets her relatives' religious activities as paganism hiding under the noses of the priests, even the pope himself. Although she first says that according to family legends her relatives practiced a pagan religion, she also adds that her father refuses to discuss these matters with her. While the reasons for his silence remain a mystery, to Fabrisia they suggest complicity in a secret magical tradition. The evidence Fabrisia presents might be interpreted in a number of ways, yet she chooses to interpret it as a sign of her family's involvement with *la vecchia religione* and as an affirmation of her current spiritual path—one that does not include Catholicism, but strives to re-create an older, pre-Christian practice.

#### PHILIP

Forty-eight-year-old Philip, who does not state his ethnic background, grew up in a Fundamentalist Christian household; his father was the minister of a small church. "I am a Benandanti [sic]," he says.<sup>63</sup>

From the time he was a small boy, Philip remembers a series of strange experiences in which he felt that he was leaving his body:

Before I could walk, I left my crib and traveled down the hall on legs not made of flesh. . . . When I was eight, I got up from my bed and crossed the room to turn on the light only to have my hand pass through the wall. Night after night I was tormented by the electric, paralyzed feeling of being disincarnate and trying to cram myself back into my body, knowing if I did not make it back by dawn I would die. . . . I've kept this to myself most of my life, a life that has been warped and twisted as I searched for an answer from religion and science. The former exorcised me, the latter operated on me for sleep apnea. Yet to this day, when I lay down to sleep I don't know if I am going to dream or fly. . . . Nine years ago, I stopped fighting and let the night take me

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<sup>61</sup> That is, were practitioners of a pagan religion.

<sup>62</sup> Fabrisia, e-mail communication.

<sup>63</sup> Information on Philip was gleaned from his Web site, available at <http://members.tripod.com/~benandanti/>.

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where it wanted me to go. I didn't have a name for it then, but that is when I became Benandanti.

In search of an explanation for his unusual experiences, Philip came across Carlo Ginzburg's *The Night Battles*,<sup>64</sup> an account of the Inquisitorial persecution of a group of Friulian men who believed that they left their bodies at night at certain appointed times of year to do battle against evil sorcerers for the fertility of the crops. They called themselves *benandanti*, literally "good walkers." One became a *benandante* by being born with the amniotic sac intact, or "with the caul." Although the Benandanti steadfastly denied accusations of witchcraft, Philip, inspired by Grimassi, interprets them as Witches, in the sense of "practitioners of a pre-Christian pagan religion." But here Philip departs from Grimassi's concept of initiatory traditions. Building on the idea that Benandanti were born, not made, he postulates a biogenetic component, perhaps related to birth trauma, that causes them to have out-of-body experiences. "Benandanti would appear in any culture, at any time, and into any social class without regard for or in reaction to the predominant religion," he postulates. "The shaman, mystic, prophet, seer, etc. reacts to an inner call. . . . These people stand outside of, and in most cases, are antagonistic towards, the established religion." Here Philip's comments echo those of Lori Bruno, whose tradition incorporates altered states of consciousness and who believes Stregheria is at least partly inborn. While Philip's interpretations are problematic from an anthropological perspective, they allow him to see himself as part of an ongoing mystical tradition that exists in opposition to Christianity, much as he now sees himself in contrast to the fundamentalist Christian tradition of his youth. The story of the Benandanti has furnished Philip with a positive explanation for his frightening experiences, and a magical context in which to understand them.

What accounts for the growing popularity of this new religion and its construction of Italian ethnicity and identity? While no single factor can explain the appeal of a new religion to a diverse group of people, I will focus on two principal mechanisms: the revaluing of traditional folk magical practices, and the politics of identity in North America in the 1990s, including the changing position of Italian Americans vis-à-vis other ethnic groups.

First and foremost, neopagan religions are frameworks for the practice of magic and ecstatic experience. As Philip's example demonstrates, it is that which draws many participants away from mainstream religions and towards contexts that provide opportunities to directly experience the sacred which are not available through official channels. For Italian Americans whose ecstatic traditions of vernacular healing and magic were lost after they arrived in North America, Stregheria and its variants provide a way to reconnect with some of the practices of their parents and grandparents. When these have been forgotten or buried, systems such as Stregheria furnish new traditions to replace them.

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<sup>64</sup> Ginzburg, *Night Battles*.

The first Italians to come to North America in large numbers at the end of the nineteenth century came primarily from the rural peasant class. They brought with them a body of traditional folk magical beliefs and practices which included a range of healing techniques, from the manufacture of tonics and philters to the use of prayers and spells to family-based practices of folk magic that included divination and the use of altered states of consciousness. These traditions, which had helped *contadini* survive the harsh conditions of the Old World, were stigmatized and misunderstood in the New as superstitious nonsense and markers of ignorance and backwardness. Representatives of the dominant culture, from social workers to Catholic clergy to educators, all decried the “superstitiousness” of Italian Americans and the tenacity with which they clung to their folk traditions. Instead of being a source of status within the community, folk magical practices became a source of shame, and their practitioners increasingly hid their actions from prying outsiders and at times from family members, as well.

The scholarly investigation of folk magical practices contributed to their stigmatization by ignoring their profoundly spiritual nature in an effort to appear more “scientific” and objective. Both Italian and American ethnographers have consistently failed to address the spiritual dimensions of folk practices, focusing instead on their relationship to social and economic structures. Folk magic has been portrayed either as a survival (e.g. by Giuseppe Pitrè) or as an emblem of underdevelopment or “false consciousness” (e.g. by Antonio Gramsci and Ernesto de Martino). Italian American revival Witchcraft represents a reclaiming of the interpretive structures as well as the actual practices, adapting them to new social realities.

Stregheria and other forms of Italian revival Witchcraft revalue what has been devalued by these progressivist discourses. Instead of being viewed as signs of benightedness, folk magical practices are recast as a complex system of occult and philosophical knowledge going back to the ancient Etruscans; rather than being regarded as superstitious nonsense, they become evidence of peasant resistance. Italian American Witches can now interpret almost any folk practice in their family as a sign that they are the heirs to an ancient mystical religion—one the Catholic Church helped to destroy.

This is particularly significant against the backdrop of the changing politics of identity in the 1990s. During the first half of the twentieth century, assimilationist paradigms dominated political approaches to ethnic identity: immigrants were supposed to gradually give up their old ways and adopt the language, beliefs and customs of the dominant Anglo-American culture. As a result of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, this model began to change. The new paradigm of multiculturalism emphasizes American society as a “salad bowl,” with each minority maintaining some ethnic distinctiveness while contributing to the “flavor” of the larger society. The Civil Rights movement also influenced the discourse of identity creation. Because African Americans, Native Americans and others who struggled for civil rights suffered egregiously at the hands of the dominant culture, discrimination and victimization became part of the mechanism for claiming a legitimate identity.



Many Italian Americans were caught in the middle of these shifting political sands. Most arrived at a time when the dominant paradigm emphasized acculturation and fitting in, rather than ethnic resistance. Many shed (or hid) the practices that made them objects of discrimination. In creating an Italian American ethnic identity, they often aligned themselves with Italian high culture, organizing Columbus Day celebrations and emphasizing Italian contributions to the arts. But in the 1990s, this strategy increasingly backfired. Columbus Day parades are no longer seen as celebrations of Italian American pride, but have been criticized as expressions of white imperialism and colonialism. In contrast with nonwhite immigrant groups that are perceived as having “authentic” cultural difference from the mainstream, Italian Americans have become subsumed under the category of dominant whites, often collectively labeled as “Anglo.” In some cases, the new paradigm becomes an excuse for Italian-bashing by other European Americans: Grimassi says he began to explore Italian traditions after being attacked by Celtic Wiccans who blamed the Romans—and by association Italians—for the destruction of Celtic culture in Britain and Gaul. At the same time, many Italian Americans remember being targets of prejudice, discrimination and hate crimes in the very recent past. Thus, Italian Americans have become targets of criticism from all sides: from newer minorities, who subsume them into the category of white Europeans, and from other European Americans, who may either continue earlier traditions of prejudice, or find new ways to discriminate, based on contemporary ideologies and historical understandings.

Revival Witchcraft and neopaganism create identity in part by aligning participants with oppressed natives and against the dominant cultural and religious paradigms. As Chas Clifton suggests, these religions “turn the literate, often college-educated modern witch into a noble savage.”<sup>65</sup> Stregheria and allied forms use vernacular culture—the folk traditions of Italian peasants—as markers of authenticity against a cultural backdrop where identity claims necessitate a distancing from bourgeois and elite cultures by reclaiming the histories of the forgotten and the oppressed. They at once ennoble folk traditions by giving them an illustrious pedigree, and disassociate Italians from the imperial heritage of Rome and, later, the Catholic Church.

Through folklore reclamation, existing stereotypes of Italian Americans are reinterpreted as positive: Martello turns the infamous Mafia into a secret society of goddess-worshippers, while Grimassi transforms the epithets of “witch,” “heathen” and “pagan” into evidence of spirituality and devotion that have survived millennia. In the course of this, Italian folk magical traditions are finding a new and unexpected life. Of course, this has become possible only as Italian Americans have distanced themselves from their peasant roots and become part of the middle classes. Through this process, folk magical practice

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<sup>65</sup> Clifton, “Significance of Aradia,” p. 60.

has been transformed into a source of ethnic pride and distinctiveness in the face of an increasingly homogenizing mass culture.

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## García Lorca and the *Duende*

by Maria Cristina Assumma

García Lorca, as is known, was a zealous *aficionado* of Andalusian-Gypsy musical folklore, which he celebrated poetically (*Poem of the Deep Song*) and theoretically (the conferences “Historical and Artistic Importance of the Andalusian Popular Song Called ‘Cante Jondo’” and “The Play and Theory of the *Duende*”) and by means of extra-literary initiatives, like the organisation, together with the composer Manuel de Falla, of the Concurso del cante hondo, at Granada in 1922.

Particularly in the conference “The Play and Theory of the *Duende*,”<sup>1</sup> he tried his hand at a theorisation of the *duende*, starting with the use which popular aesthetics—especially flamenco—makes of it. For this, the *duende*, literally a sprite, is a profane trance, a manifestation of musical emotion which goes beyond a religious context.

Above all, García Lorca stresses the mysterious nature of the *duende*, which has nothing to do with technical mastery and artistic discipline. It is a dark force, demonic, which “acts on” the artist when his creative force peaks, in contrast with the luminous and regulating grace symbolised by the *ángel* (angel) and the normative intelligence symbolised by the *musa* (muse). The poet makes use of a definition attributed to Goethe concerning Paganini’s music: “Mysterious power which everyone feels and no philosopher can explain.” It is interesting that the enlightened Feijóo took on the aesthetic problem in similar terms in his essay *El no sé qué*: similarly to Muratori, he wondered about that certain “I don’t know what” which fascinates us but which we are unable to explain. The “I don’t know what” of the enlightened is for Menéndez Pelayo a romantic forerunner, but in my view this is a mistake, since Feijóo meant it, in García Lorca fashion, as a regulating *ángel* and a prescriptive *musa*, rather than as a Dionysiac *duende*.<sup>2</sup>

The *duende*, therefore, is freedom versus discipline (“there is no map or technique which helps us to seek it”), chaos versus order (“it repulses all the sweet geometry learned”), emotion versus reason (“it burns the blood”). On this subject, of interest is the outcome of a dance competition in Jerez de la Frontera, won by the dying *duende* of an eighty-year-old woman who, just by raising her head and her arms and tapping her foot on the *tablao* (stage), got the better of the

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[Editor’s note: This article was translated from Italian by Colin William Swift.]

<sup>1</sup> All quotations are taken from Federico García Lorca, “Juego y teoría del duende” (The play and theory of the *duende*), *Conferencias*, 2, introducción, edición y notas de Christopher Maurer (Madrid, 1984), pp. 85–109.

<sup>2</sup> Benito Jerónimo Feijóo, “El no sé qué,” in *Teatro crítico universal*, 5th ed. (Madrid, 1993), pp. 231–32: “If I heard that same voice, I would say, without hesitation, what that grace consists of which you call occult; but I would explain to you certain of those qualities, perhaps all of them, which you are unable to explain, so that when it is necessary, you can decipher that something which we cannot know, in one way or another. I think that they all can be reduced to three; the first is the looseness with which the voice is handled. The second is the exactness of the intonation; the third the ensemble of those attractive musical sequences that the trills are made up of.”

muses and the angels she was competing against.<sup>3</sup> Equally illustrative is the testimony of a flamenco *juerga* (happening) in a tavern in Cadiz, the protagonist being Pastora Pavón, *La Niña de los Peines*, defined by García Lorca as an “obscure Hispanic spirit.” While she sang accompanied only by the muse, in full possession of her faculties but without *duende*, she failed to move her expert listeners. In response to their silence, she shook herself, scorched her throat with alcohol and sang without voice, but possessed by a raging *duende*, and it was then that those present, aflame with emotion, rent their clothes, “almost at the same rhythm as the negros in the Antilles when they tear their clothes in the *lucumí* ritual, crowded in front of the image of Santa Barbara.”

Therefore, to illustrate the *duende*'s manifestations, García Lorca makes use of an interesting comparison between the ecstasy induced by the *Niña de los Peines*, which urges the spectators to rend their clothes, and that of the black *lucumí* before the image of Santa Barbara.<sup>4</sup> However, while the trance of the latter and of the ancient Dionysiac rites, with which the poet even establishes a relationship, is of a religious character, the *duende* is profane, on a par with the Arab *tarab*. It is a telluric force which gushes out of the feet; we need to awaken “in the final rooms of the blood,” as opposed to the barbarous manner of the hermit in seeking God and the subtle way of the mystic. A further oppositional couple through which the definition of the *duende* passes is thus earth/sky.

What justifies the comparison with certain religious rites is thus the state of alteration of consciousness produced by the appearance of the *duende*. This presupposes “a radical change in all the forms”; it prepares “the ladder for evading the surrounding reality.” And since it is this which brings about the release from self, it is to be associated with death. It establishes a state of struggle and, finally, possession. It does not arrive if it does not see the possibility of shooting an arrow at the artist; it passes beyond death, in that it is functional to re-creation. It is in fact a fertile force which announces “the constant baptism of things just created.”

The *duende*, insists García Lorca, assists not only creation, but also interpretation and fruition. The inspiration of the composer is transmitted to the performer and, through him, moves the public. However, it is also possible for the performer's *duende* to redeem insignificant works. This is the case of

<sup>3</sup> Similarly, says García Lorca, the muse of Góngora and the angel of Garcilaso have to give way to the *duende* of San Juan de la Cruz; the muse of Gonzalo de Berceo and the angel of the Arciprete di Hita to the *duende* of Jorge Manrique. To crown this portrait of the *duende* of Spain are Santa Teresa, Quevedo and Cervantes.

<sup>4</sup> These are worshippers of a Catholic saint amalgamated with an African god Chango of the Cuban *santería*—a religious expression of the transcultural synthesis between African and European on the island—on the basis of simple resemblances; one is the god of fire, thunder and war; the other is usually represented with a sword, symbol of the courage shown in converting to Christianity against the will of his father, struck by a ray. The date of “The Play and Theory of the *Duende*” is controversial. Scholars' opinions swing between a probable Cuban dating, going back to 1930, and an Argentinian, from 1933. The comparison with the Cuban *santería* allows us to opt for the first hypothesis, since it shows a probable interest in linking up, on the part of the poet, with the cultural horizon of his audience. However, while the conference comes later, García Lorca still doesn't neglect to make use of the experience of Afro-Cuban syncretistic rituals with the aim of profiling a brilliant explicative analogy.

Paganini and Eleonora Duse; the latter sought failed works and then made a triumph of them, thanks to her creativity. The expressive force of the *cantaor enduendado* (singer endowed with the *duende*) is manifested in the emotional meaningfulness of the lyrics and in the intensity of the voice, which, subject to dynamics of implosion and explosion, is formalised by flamenco aesthetics by means of certain techniques, for example the *pellizco*, literally “pinch.” It consists of a sort of hiccup which produces an effect of breaking the voice and creates a convulsive vocal style which denotes emotion. The same expressive function is possessed by the *gangueo* and the *babeo*, respectively guttural vibrato and labial vibrato, at the end of certain words and repeated a number of times. These are techniques which create a sort of hiccupped stammer.

Finally, we see the somatisation of the *duende* in the performer by means of the intensification of the gaze, the agonised facial expression, convulsive movements, contraction of the hands, etc. (e.g., Aurora Vargas in figs. 1 and 2). However, there are different degrees of vertigo.

Sometimes the *duende* is violent, dramatic; it manifests itself in shouting. Other times it is just an instantaneous, almost imperceptible but definitive tremor of the voice and the dance. Other times, it is a trembling, impalpable fluid which flows about here or there on tiptoe, along the course of the whole interpretation, or in a passage from it.<sup>5</sup>

The *enduendadas*’ creation and/or performance bears in itself a magic power which baptises “with dark water all those who are watching.” The effects on the public are made clear through behaviour encoded by tradition. This ranges from the outburst of the *Olé!*, which García Lorca associates with the Arab Allah!, to involvement through the *palmas* (beating of the hands), *pitos* (finger snapping), the *cajón* (percussion instrument, often improvised with the help of any resonant surface available) and *taconeo* (rhythmic beats with the feet), up to more extraordinary forms, like rending clothes and breaking bottles, glass and mirrors.<sup>6</sup>

In short, to make use of Rouget’s terminology, the person struck by vertigo is *musicante*, i.e., the one who does the singing, plays the music or dances. However, he needs something of a shove from the spectators, whose incitements, rhythmic and verbal, are concomitant causes but also consequences of his trance. These are, in turn, influenced by the performer’s *duende*, and thus *musicati*. Thus we see established, between sender and receiver of the music, a relation of mutual induction.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Fernando Quiñones, *El flamenco, vida y muerte* (Barcelona, 1981), p. 60.

<sup>6</sup> García Lorca, recounting to the Mexican poet Salvador Novo a *ñáñiga* ceremony, which he had seen in Cuba, says, “It was a young Galician, integrated in that stupendous black barbarity, the one who led the ritual dance with that same sacred grace which in Spain induced [the audience] to begin breaking bottles, glass and mirrors, as a fatal contagion of the *cante jondo*”; see Federico García Lorca, *Toda la prosa* (México, 1964), p. 307. Likewise, the *tarab* “can lead to extreme manifestations of madness and even death, or reduce itself to a pure and simple musical emotion in which nothing or almost nothing gets through to the outside”; see Gilbert Rouget, *Musica e trance: I rapporti tra la musica e i fenomeni di possessione* (Turin, 1986), p. 380; originally published as *La musique et la trance: esquisse d’une théorie générale des relations de la musique et de la possession* (Paris, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> Rouget, *Musica e trance*, pp. 382–86.



Fig. 1. Aurora Vargas (All photographs were taken by Serjio Lira)



Fig. 2. Aurora Vargas

All the arts are capable of *duende*, but music, dance and oral poetry are its privileged sphere, since they require a live body to perform them. As an instantaneous inspiration, the *duende* requires that improvisation which belongs to the creation being enacted, making it unrepeatable. There are techniques which favour the mechanism. The *cantaor*, for example, between one *copla* (strophe) and another, leaves space for the performance of the guitarist's *falsestas* (musical variation) which allows him his own specific expressive moment, and this gives the *cantaor* time to warm up. Besides, the characteristic *quejío* (lament) which usually precedes the *letra* (lyric)—we should recall the repetition of the syllable *ay*—has an expressive function (it is a demarcator of the beginning of the event, introducing the particular atmosphere necessary for the song) and a technical one: it allows the singer to get the tone and to play for time, so as to organise the improvisation of the song.

In *Historical and Artistic Importance of the Andalusian Popular Song Called "Cante Jondo,"*<sup>8</sup> written on the occasion of the Concurso del cante jondo, García Lorca stresses the inevitability of the *duende* in flamenco, since it is, in its most intimate essence, a ritual system of emotional intercommunication. The poet defends the primary rite identity of the *cante*, which even today coexists with the derived identity of performance, less suitable for the appearance of the *duende*. The demarcation between rite and performance is signalled by certain factors: the function, the sender, the message, the receiver, the code, the context and the space-time dimension of the musical act.

In the rite, the musical act has a social function, structured thus:

- a) *expressive*: the exorcism of a store of emotions linked to the social condition of the Gypsy;
- b) *communicative*: the sharing of a collective mood;
- c) *symbolic*: the symbolic assertion of ethnic identity, fruit of the participation in a ceremony endowed with an exclusive and shared language. The musical language of flamenco thus constitutes the threshold of Gypsy identity.

García Lorca is critical of Gypsy art being turned into a show, which, inaugurated by its stage emergence at *cafés cantantes* first, and then at the *ópera flamenca* and contemporary *ballet*, has come down to us in the guise of theatrical, recording, television and cinema experience. The development of flamenco from a type of ritual offering to various types of performance implies the loss of social motivation (expressive, communicative and symbolic) and the acquisition of three basic functions: commercial, entertainment and pure aesthetic enjoyment. This means that formal aspects are emphasised, to the detriment of the emotional: the inspiration (the *duende*, in short) is ousted by what is technical, the intensity by virtuosity, the improvisation by encoding, the uniqueness by repeatability.

As far as the sender is concerned, during the rite the performer (*cantaor/a*, *bailaor/a*, *tocaor/a*) has a medium's role, which, as García Lorca says, extracts

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<sup>8</sup> All quotations are taken from Federico García Lorca, "Importancia histórica y artística del primitivo canto andaluz llamado 'cante jondo,'" *Conferencias*, 1, introducción, edición y notas de Christopher Maurer (Madrid, 1984), pp. 43–83.



the pain of the race and launches it to the wind, enveloped in his voice. The *cantaor* does not behave like an actor; he identifies himself with the sentiment he is representing (like the receivers, who, rather than spectators, are interlocutors), the consequence being that in the flamenco performance the borderline between reality and fiction, between being and representing, vanishes. On the other hand, as Ortega y Gasset says, being actors and being the public means going into the unreal, knowing that it is not true, accepting fully the principle of unreality.<sup>9</sup> The *cantaor* acquires the ambivalence of the actor, in which reality (man) and fiction (the character) coexist, when he becomes a professional (*cantante*). In this case, his sincerity (the *duende*'s dimension) is conditioned by the fact of having to sing from a prearranged programme (which, moreover, ends up mechanising itself into a system of repeats), i.e., becoming, in fact, an actor. The two identities of the *cantaor* and the *cantante* can coexist in the same performer, whose behaviour depends on the ritual or spectacular circumstance in which he finds himself singing.

What has been said is often associated with the adulteration of the message. Full of sentimentalism, the *cante jondo* (whose literal meaning is, and not by chance, "deep song") is marked by the most infinite "degrees of pain and distress": for the discrimination undergone (in all Lorca's poetry the analogy is with the Afro-American), for the constant struggle for survival, the loss of freedom linked to the experience of imprisonment, the centrality of universal existential subject matter, like love, death, betrayal, etc. The emotional force of the texts and their "spiritual colour" contrasts with the "local colour" of professional song.<sup>10</sup>

As far as the receiver is concerned, in his ritual guise the *cante* turns gratuitously to a group of initiates whose identification in the *quejío* (lament) of the *cantaor*—who is, in fact, spokesman of a collective mood—presupposes the transmission of the *duende*, since it cancels out the psychic distance with the performer. However, in its "spectacularisation" and professionalisation, the song appeals to an extraneous public, who acquires the right to accede to the performance by paying for a ticket. This extraneousness means that the reception is deprived of a complete identification, and in consequence the flow of emotional communication is interrupted.

As far as the code is concerned, the receivers of the rite share the knowledge of its specific musical language. This allows them to carry out a role of incitement, which is fundamental for the release of the *duende* in the performer. This is carried out with diversified forms of rhythmic support (*palmas*, *pitos*, *taconeo*, *cajón*) and the verbal *jaleo*, always linked to the beat of the *compás* (the rhythmic phrase). There is a contrast between the participatory role of this special category of public and the passive fruition of the audience of a theatrical performance.

<sup>9</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, "Idea del teatro," *Obras completas*, 7 (Madrid, 1964), p. 463.

<sup>10</sup> García Lorca's polemical target is flamenco, but we should point out that the dichotomy established by him between *cante jondo* and flamenco has been surpassed by present-day "flamencology," which has broadened the semantic field of the term flamenco to take in both the *cante jondo* and the expressions deriving from it. Thus, we prefer to speak of "professional song."

A flamenco gathering does not need a ceremonial or festive pretext, but the celebration of a baptism, a marriage or any other type of festive occurrence during the year favours performance, in that it means the coming together of a minimal group of people. As opposed to these occurrences, it is the theatre programmes which decide the performance recurrence.

Moreover, having an exclusive character, the rite is fulfilled in the intimacy of the home, in a family context or among friends. The space, usually a small circle, favours contact with the emotional impact produced in the performer by the *duende*, heightening the contagiousness (intensification of the gaze, contraction of the face, movement of the hands, etc). Its release is facilitated by the use of alcoholic drink, which weakens rational control (we should recall that the *La Niña de los Peines* “drank down a large glass of grappa all at once as if it were fire” so as to leave herself open to possession by her *duende*). And it is also facilitated by a sense of expectation, waiting for the right moment, which requires extended performance times: the *madrugá* (dawn) is one of the most fertile moments of the flamenco *juerga* (happening). Furthermore, the nocturnal dimension fits in better with the intimacy of the song, and it is for this reason García Lorca says that “both its passionate lyrics and its ancient melodies find their best setting at night.” Conversely, the performance is carried out in the public dimension of the theatre space, in which the stage, the place of the fiction, indicates the spatial separation between performer and public and where, from a temporal point of view, the execution is dependent upon a programme, a schedule and timetable fixed beforehand.

	<b>RITE</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE</b>
Function:	Social (expressive, communicative, identificatory)	Commercial (aesthetic, recreational)
Sender:	Medium	Professional
Message:	“Spiritual colour”	“Local colour ”
Receiver:	Group of initiates	Extraneous public
Code:	Shared	Nonshared
Context:	Ceremonial	Nonceremonial
Space:	Private	Public
Time:	Free	Conditioned

Table 1

The aim of the Concurso del cante jondo, which García Lorca organised in Granada in 1922 together with the composer Manuel de Falla, was precisely that of defending the authentic expressions of the *cante*—i.e., those produced respecting their original ritual coordinates—from the adulterations springing from the fact that they had become a performance. Such an aim is declared in the conference “Historical and Artistic Importance of the Andalusian Popular Song called ‘Cante Jondo’,” which, read on the occasion of the same Concurso,

presents the initiative as a “work of salvation” of the “most emotional and profound songs of our mysterious soul.”

The dichotomy between rite and performance—which the flamenco language formalised by means of a terminological distinction *cante/canto-canción* and *cantaor/cantante*—naturally concerns the *baile* too. This, in turn, leaves aside an aesthetics of formal perfection in favour of an aesthetics of intensity which verges, in the best performers, on the vertigo of the trance. Its mechanism is based, as is usual in the music of possession,<sup>11</sup> on dynamic contrasts of *crescendo/diminuendo* and *accelerando/ritardando*, at the basis of which the extreme control of the tension is followed by paroxysmal excitation. Once the climax has been reached, it is abruptly interrupted by the so-called *corte*, which, breaking the rhythm, opposes stasis to excitation and silence to agitation in sound. In the paroxysm there is a greater disorder of movement, which is decomposed and which “dirties itself,” becoming a pure intermediary of emotions (see Aurora Vargas in fig. 3 and Juana Amaya in fig. 4). The stylisation of the dance by the academies means a reduction in the dramatic depth, leading to a distinction between *baile* and *ballet* and between *bailaor* and *bailarín*. The aesthetic specificity of the *bailarín*, founded on the technical perfection of choreographic design, supplants, and to an extent suffocates, the significative-expressive need for a dance gesture on the part of the *bailaor*. In short, the *bailarín* acquires the formal aspects but not the emotional meanings interiorised by the *bailaor*. This goes together with the fact that the first executes a prearranged choreography, while the second improvises, complying with the dynamics of the *duende*. Doubtless, the theatrical extension of the *baile* means the enrichment of the choreographic resources, in both a microstructural—the single steps—and macrostructural—the sequential solutions—sense. However, I would like to recall the voiding of that emotional charge, which was denied by the *ópera flamenca*, in favour of a picturesque pseudo-flamenco under the pressure of Franco’s ideology, whereas the *ballet flamenco* converts it into artistically more remarkable results, but no less manipulatory. It is based on a choral rather than solistic conception, which necessarily disciplines the individual impulse. Besides, it is based on a choreographic elaboration of classical musical compositions, with a narrative rather than expressive vocation.

It is not by chance that there is usually a correspondence between the dichotomy *cantaor/cantante* and *bailaor/bailarín* and the distinction between Gypsy performer and the *payo* (non-Gypsy). Indeed, Gypsy culture is a Dionysiac culture, in which magical, prelogical, antirational thought prevails, favouring, as Roger Caillois has said, the appearance of the *ilinx* (vertigo).<sup>12</sup> However, it is necessary to consider the fact that, as we have seen, the appearance of the *duende* has recourse to an encoded technique, conventional proxemics and behavioural rules. Likewise, it emerges within a stylised and

<sup>11</sup> Rouget, *Musica e trance*, p. 119: “Even with variations of level, the examples of *accelerando* and *crescendo* . . . might be considered constituent parts of the music of possession.”

<sup>12</sup> Roger Caillois, *I giochi e gli uomini: La maschera e la vertigine* (Milan, 1981).



Fig. 3. Aurora Vargas



Fig. 4. Juana Amaya

culturally determined liturgy. The *cantor*, the *bailaor* and the *tocaor enduendados* express themselves, respectively, with a precise vocal, dance and guitaristic demeanour, which, even during paroxysm, can never lose sight of the *compás*, the rhythmic scheme which regulates flamenco musical behaviour. This is also the case for the participating spectator, whose manifestations of *duende* have to be subject to the same rhythmic severity. The *Olé*, for example, is not uttered casually, but falls when the rhythmic variations (the execution of counter-rhythms, unexpressed rhythmic passages or stress shifts) are resolved, returning to the basic beat. In such a case, it has the value of applause. Or it is uttered in the crescendo or accelerando phase; in this case it has the role of stimulus. In short, the spasm of the protagonists of the flamenco gathering does not stand apart from a precise set of rules. This demonstrates that there is no total relinquishing of consciousness and that the *duende* is not insensible to norms.

In conclusion, we should add that, even when conditions favourable to the emergence of the *duende* exist, there is no guarantee that it will emerge, and the opposite is also true. It is an unutterable state, difficult to arouse and to explain. We might make up for the difficulty by defining it with a list of synonyms: ecstasy, revelation, enchantment, spell, inspiration, fascination, aura, soul, excitation. But more success might be had by appealing—along with García Lorca—to the words of the *cantaor enduendado* Manuel Torre: “All that which has black sounds has *duende*.”



## The Folk Music Revival and the Culture of *Tarantismo* in the Salento

by Luisa Del Giudice

A south-central Italian by birth and a student of traditional song cultures by choice, still it wasn't until 1995 and in Los Angeles that I heard my first Salentine *pizzica*, played by Enzo Fina, a recently-arrived musician/artist from the Lecce area of southern Puglia. By the summer of 1996,<sup>1</sup> I had made my first trip to the Salento, returning in subsequent years to attend the mid-August San Rocco festivities at Torre Paduli (Ruffano)—a *pizzica* (and sword dance) mega-fest—and to directly experience the culture and landscape of the Salento. I began interviewing musicians, dancers, and other participants in the Salentine folk music revival on that and on this side of the Atlantic in 1996, as well as lecturing, curating, and producing Salentine cultural programs in Los Angeles in 1998.<sup>2</sup> But it was the 2000 “Performing Ecstasies: Music, Dance, and Ritual in the Mediterranean” conference and festival which became the catalyst for the process of transcribing hours of field tapes and reflecting on various Salentine experiences. Preliminary reflections are offered here.

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I wish to thank those who participated in this research over the years in ways large and small: Alessandra Belloni, Fernando Bevilacqua, Antonio Castrignanò, Annalea Chiriatti, Luigi (Gigi) Chiriatti, Carlo De Pascali (“Canaja”), Enzo Fina, Claudio Giagnotti (“Cavallo”), Alessandro Girasoli, Luigi Leone, Valentina Mazzotta, Ada Metafune, Arrigo Noviello, Maria Orlando, Enza Pagliara, Rosetta Quidano, Roberto Raheli, and others who will remain anonymous. I wish to thank the Fina-Nannotti families of Salice Salentino in particular, whose generous hospitality made it possible for me to carry out research in the Lecce area; Enzo Fina for introducing me to the Salentine musical “universe”; and Gigi Chiriatti for guiding me through that labyrinth. I also thank Fernando Colacci at the daily newspaper of Lecce, *Il Quotidiano*, who put a large number of publications on southern Puglia at my disposal. Versions of this paper have been read at *Healing: Cultural Perspectives*, American Museum of Natural History, New York, 1998; *Essential Salento: Festival of Salentine Culture*, Los Angeles, 1998; American Folklore Society annual meeting, Memphis, 1999; Kommission für Volksdichtung (SIEF) annual meeting, Aberdeen, Scotland, 1999; Fife Folklore Conference, Logan, Utah, 1999; *Performing Ecstasies: Dance, Music, and Ritual in the Mediterranean*, Los Angeles, 2000; Folklore Studies Association of Canada annual meeting in Sudbury, 2002. I thank Roberto Catalano and Sabina Magliocco for offering some helpful suggestions in the revision of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> As a fortieth birthday gift to myself, I went on a southern music “initiation trip,” with New York-based percussionist and dancer Alessandra Belloni and her husband, Dario Bollini. I had, until that date, had little direct experience of southern Italian traditional music. I am grateful to them both for their companionship and guidance.

<sup>2</sup> “Essential Salento: Festival of Salentine Culture” in 1998 was curated by me and produced by Alberto Pranzo, another transplanted Salentine-Angelino with whom I continued to coproduce, or collaborate on, Salentine cultural programs over recent years (e.g., “Performing Ecstasies: Music, Dance and Ritual in the Mediterranean,” 2000; “Vittorio Bodini: Meridian’s Surrealist (Vittorio Bodini: surrealista meridiano), Selected Poems” and the Beyond Barocco festival, 2000).

“CLASSIC”<sup>3</sup> TARANTISMO

Because the main body of literature on *tarantismo*<sup>4</sup> is not in English, I will briefly present the “classic” ritual of *tarantismo* itself,<sup>5</sup> as historian of religion Ernesto de Martino described it in *La terra del rimorso*.<sup>6</sup>

*Tarantismo* was a traditional ritual practice involving music, dance, and color, used to cure (especially) peasant women of a mythic spider’s bite. The *tarànta* (local variant of standard Italian *tarantola*) could mean “spider,” but also “scorpion” or even “snake,” that is, creatures with a venomous bite. Those afflicted by the bite were called *tarantàti* (literally “tarantulated”).<sup>7</sup> Why was this a bite by a mythic spider? Because only in rare cases had a victim been bitten by an actual arachnid, although most insisted they had.<sup>8</sup> The affected were mostly young women in situations of forbidden or unrequited love, unhappily married women, spinsters, or widows. The first bite usually occurred during summer harvest, and thereafter recurred annually (hence *rimorso* with reiterative prefix *ri-* in de Martino’s title, *La terra del rimorso*, which in Italian means both “remorse” and literally “rebitten”). Some *tarantate* have danced for many decades.

Musicians, called to the victim’s home, diagnosed the disorder and explored the *correct* antidote (i.e., rhythm) to awaken the spider, to make it dance, thereby purging the dancer of its “venom.” The pathologic tarantula answered to a pet name, had its specific personality, and its musical preferences. Lustful spiders induced erotic dance, aggressive spiders might

<sup>3</sup> I use the term “classic” advisedly, as shorthand to distinguish it from revival or neo-*tarantismo*. Classic *tarantismo* refers to the phenomenon as it was described by de Martino, who nonetheless was aware that the ritual he was studying was already in sharp decline, a shadow of itself, even though it retained some clearly defined historic elements.

<sup>4</sup> See the Appendix of this paper.

<sup>5</sup> Ernesto de Martino, *La terra del rimorso: contributo a una storia religiosa del Sud* (1961; 3rd ed. 1976; repr. Milan, 2000). A more complete account can be found in Luisa Del Giudice, “Introduction to Puglia and the Salento,” in *Puglia: The Salento*, ed. G. Plastino, Italian Treasury: The Lomax Collection, Rounder Records compact disk (1954; repr. Cambridge, Mass., 2002). The research of Karen Lütke, which closely parallels my own, came to my attention only during the *Performing Ecstasies* conference, and hence *after* I had reached (and written on) many surprisingly similar conclusions. Another English-language account, therefore, may be found in Karen Lütke, “Tarantismo in Contemporary Italy: The Tarantula’s Dance Reviewed and Revived,” in *Music As Medicine: The History of Music Therapy Since Antiquity*, ed. P. Horden (London, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Although reprinted in 2000, an English translation is still not available. Efforts by de Martino translator Dorothy Zinn, a Matera-based American anthropologist, to convince an academic publisher to publish her translation have not been successful, despite the growing interest in musical trance and ritual, and de Martino’s important contribution to that discourse.

<sup>7</sup> *Tarantati* is the unmarked (masculine) plural, *tarantate* is the feminine plural—hence the more frequent term, since the majority were women.

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the spider to which the symptoms of *tarantismo* were commonly attributed was the relatively harmless European wolf spider, or *lycosa tarentula*, while the real culprit of clinical lactrodectism in the area was in fact the *latrodectus tredecim guttatus*, a black spider with 13 red spots.



call for a sword dance, while melancholic ones seemed to prefer funeral laments (a genre practiced until recently in the Salento).<sup>9</sup> Depressed or mute *tarante* might not respond to music at all and hence induced neither dance nor song. More lively spiders also responded to a specific color which might annoy or attract the afflicted, so that the *tarantata* typically snatched ribbons, scarves, or other colored objects from onlookers.<sup>10</sup> Dance movements varied, but normally involved two phases: 1) lying face down on the floor where the dancer more or less imitated the movements of the spider, and 2) running in a circle, while pounding and stamping the spider into the ground—punctuated by brief rest periods in between (and vomiting up the spider’s “venom”).

These domestic rituals were followed by the more public events in the town of Galatina on June 28–29. During the night of June 28, and on June 29, the feast of Saint (Peter and) Paul, patron saint of *tarantismo*, the rituals inside the chapel themselves were closed off from the public by the victims’ families, but the curious could see the participants before they entered. Here the *tarantate* assembled each year to spend the night in the chapel, to dance, pay homage and be released from the saint’s curse. The saint’s statue was put behind a grate to save him from their assaults. Inside the chapel the ecclesiastic authorities allowed no music, thereby maiming the ritual at its core.<sup>11</sup> There the afflicted screamed, danced, rolled on the ground, climbed onto the altar, and sought relief.

#### NEO-TARANTISMO<sup>12</sup>

Very few *tarantate* (and only sporadically) assemble in Galatina’s chapel, and the last remnants of “classic” *tarantismo* have been largely dispersed. That is not to say they no longer exist, even though a communally-shared ritual (domestic or public) no longer seems viable.<sup>13</sup> Votive candles to the

<sup>9</sup> See Luisa Del Giudice, introduction to *Canto d’amore: canti, suoni, voci nella Grecia salentina* (Love song: songs, sounds, and voices from the Griko-speaking area of the Salento), trans. Luisa Del Giudice, with Edizioni Aramirè compact disk (Lecce, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> One woman recounted to me the story of her neighbor, a *tarantata*, and of having to ask her permission before buying a piece of cloth to sew a dress to avoid annoying her. This neighbor also routinely set the table for two, although she lived alone: one place setting for her, and the other for her *taranta*, named Addolorata.

<sup>11</sup> The disintegration of the ritual may, in large measure, be attributable to the Catholic Church’s intervention in this belief system and its superimposition of the confused and contradictory figure of St. Paul as patron saint of *tarantismo*; see de Martino, *La terra del rimorso*, p. 106. One might consider the choice of saint ironic (or apropos, depending on one’s political stance) since St. Paul both experienced ecstatic religion—on the road to Damascus—and fought this tradition as a newly converted Christian.

<sup>12</sup> Though not a perfect term because it is one which soon becomes dated, I coined this term in 1996 to refer, in conversation and in interviews, to the folk revival movement which had as its point of reference historic *tarantismo*. I note with the passing of the years that it has become a term with a certain currency.

<sup>13</sup> On latter-day *tarantismo*, see Luigi Chiriatti, *Morso d’amore: viaggio nel tarantismo salentino* (Lecce, 1995). An exhibit of related photographs taken in Galatina from the 1970s

saint continue to be lit in a small roadside shrine at Giurdignano, near Muro Leccese (see figs. 1, 2, 3), a few still go to Galatina, even though they might now do so at the crack of dawn to avoid attracting attention, and some even resort to carrying out their ritual in some secret place, in solitude. Such places are known to only a few. One suspects, at times, the presence of older *tarantati* around the edges of the piazza at public concerts, and one wonders what they might be thinking, now that they have been replaced by the new or neo-*tarantati*, euphoria-seeking youth, who have transformed this cultural practice of suffering into one of celebration.<sup>14</sup>

The *pizzica* (*tarantata*)—sometimes referred to as *tarantella* (but never when Salentines speak among themselves)—the ritual music and dance of *tarantismo*, has become the Salentine New Age rage, as followers quest for cosmic dance, mysticism and magic. Neo-*tarantati* speak of being bitten, and they call themselves *tarantati*, *tarantolati* or *attarantati*; one finds them on the piazza wherever *pizziche* are played. They buy frame drums (*tamburrieddi* in dialect, *tamburelli* in standard Italian) (see figs. 4, 5, 6); they play them; they dance. The demand for indigenous frame drums has become so great that master *tamburello*-maker Mèsciu (“master”) Nino di Nociglia, for instance, can barely keep up with production.<sup>15</sup> Today, the most important and largest *pizzica* festival takes place on August 15, the night preceding San Rocco’s feast day in Torre Paduli (Ruffano) (figs. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). Here, traditionally only men, and largely Gypsies (figs. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19), used to challenge each other to a dueling dance called the *danza della scherma* (sword dance), performed until recently with real knives, but now with fingers. We also see children (figs. 20, 21) and even women dancing the *danza della scherma* (fig. 22). The manly pantomime duel with imaginary swords (but making real hits) now alternates with a more or less erotic version of the *pizzica de core* (a courtship dance, normally between a man and woman)—today the most widely practiced version of the *tarantella* in the South. Here throngs of neo-*tarantati*, alongside traditional musicians (fig. 23) as well as the occasional exotic musician (fig. 24), beat out the rhythms of the *pizzica* from dusk until dawn, when a large-scale livestock fair takes over.

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to the 1990s documenting the public ritual, entitled *Il luogo del culto: Galatina: immagini del tarantismo 1970–1992* (*The cult’s site: Galatina: Images of tarantismo 1970–1992*), was on view during the “Performing Ecstasies” conference at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Los Angeles, in 2000. See the conference program in Appendix A of this volume.

<sup>14</sup> See the extensive collection of photographs on the topic in the photographic exhibition by Fernando Bevilacqua, *Una smodata voglia di ballo* (A Crazy Urge to Dance); see the conference program in Appendix A of this volume.

<sup>15</sup> As reported by musician Roberto Raheli, who had several on hand to sell during the Aramirè concert at Schoenberg Hall, UCLA, in Los Angeles, October of 2000.



Fig. 1. A roadside shrine to St. Paul (Giurdignano, province of Lecce) still shows signs of devotion. Also shown are the author's crutches (needed after breaking her foot while dancing the *pizzica*) propped against it (photographs by the author)



Fig. 2. Shrine to St. Paul (detail)



Fig. 3. Roadside shrine to St. Paul (Giurdignano) showing long, slender menhir behind it

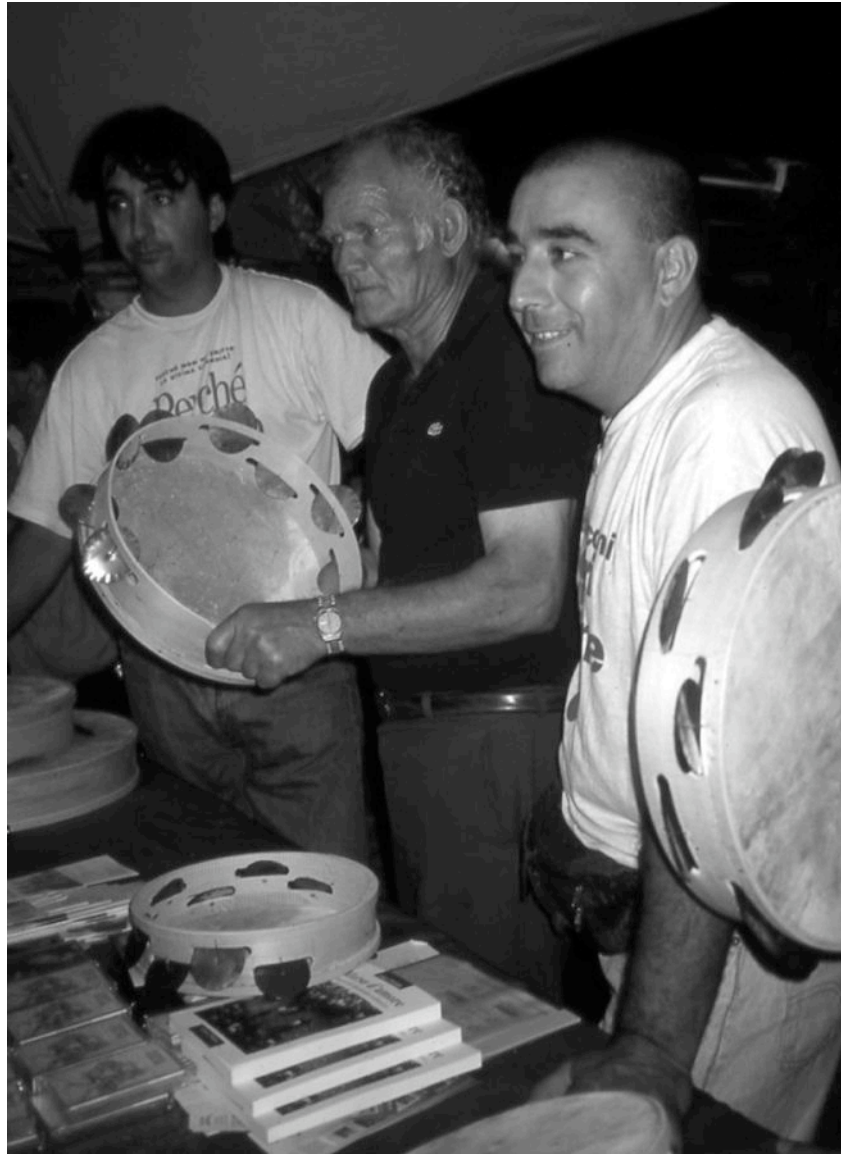


Fig. 4. Brisk sales of frame drums (*tamburieddhi*) are typical at the St. Rocco festival at Torre Paduli, Ruffano. *Center*: famed *tamburieddu* player Antonio Aloisi

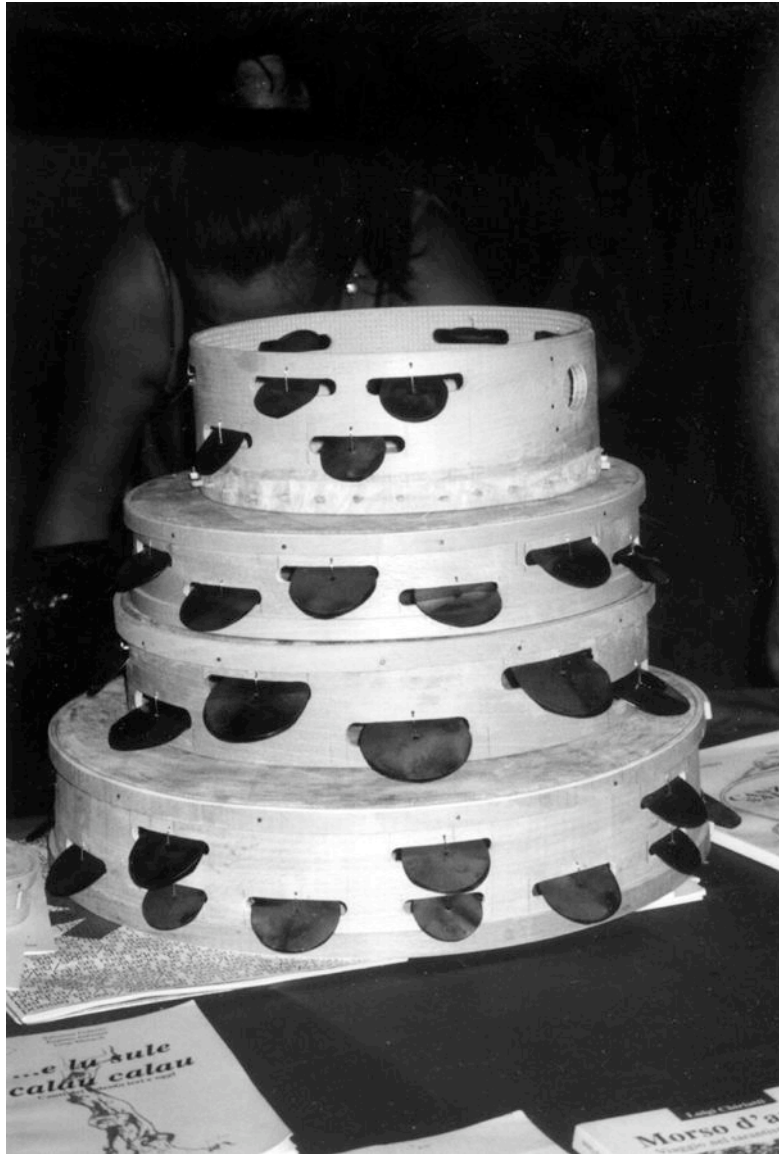


Fig. 5. A tower of Salentine frame drums on sale





Fig. 6. An up-and-coming *scherma* dancer and *pizzica* musician pitching frame drum sales



Fig. 7. San Rocco's feast day (night of August 14): San Rocco statue inside the church





Fig. 8. San Rocco's feast day (night of August 14): colored ribbons are purchased by pilgrims and often attached to tambourines



Fig. 9. San Rocco's feast day (night of August 14): festive night lights



Fig. 10. San Rocco's feast day (night of August 14): food vendor with piles of honeyed and fried sweets

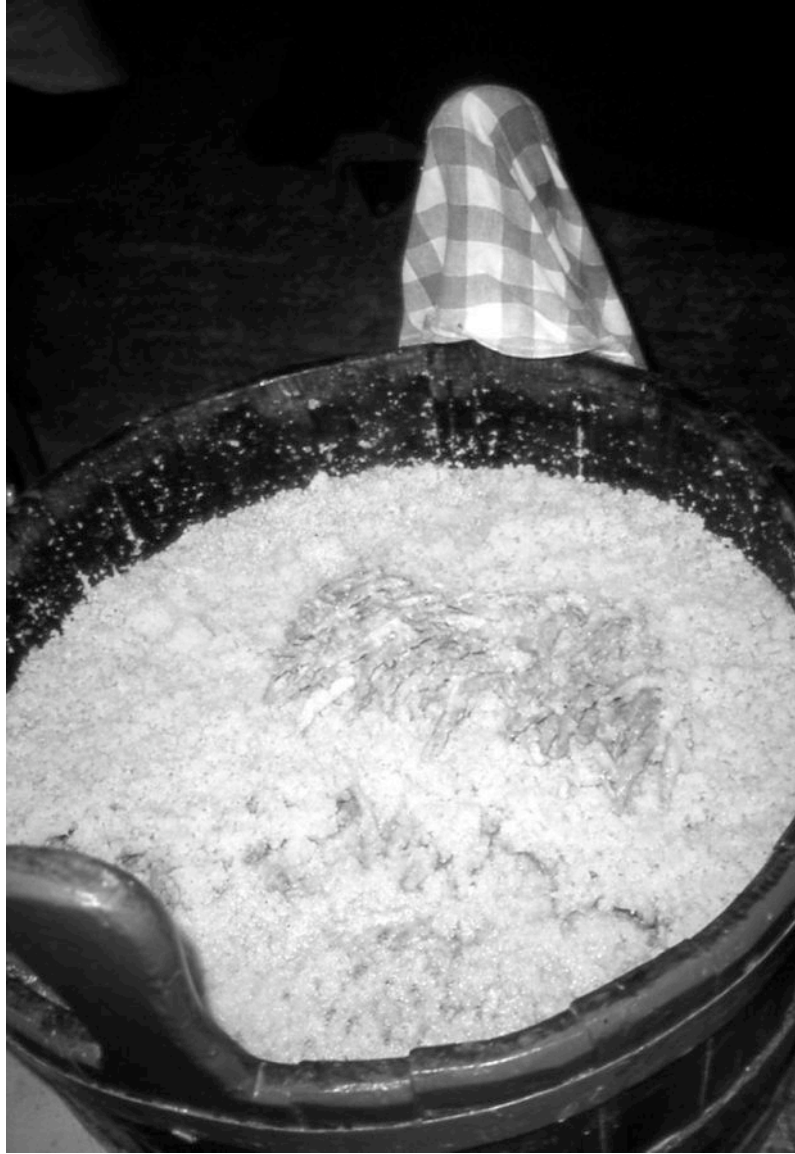


Fig. 11. San Rocco's feast day (night of August 14): *scapece*, a traditional small fish, marinated in bread crumbs, vinegar, salt, and saffron, is sold

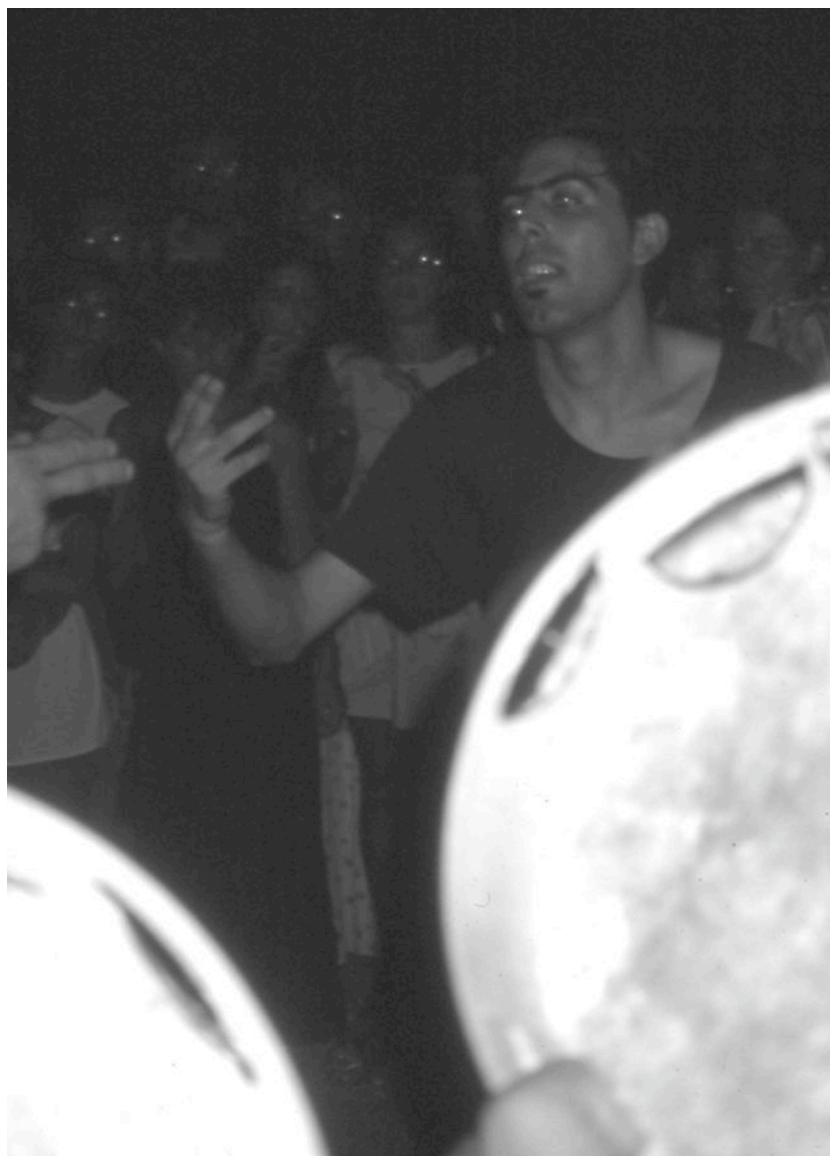


Fig. 12. The traditional Rom (Gypsy) sword dance (*danza della scherma*), now mimicked with fingers, is danced by a Salentine Rom, Claudio Giagnotti, known as “Cavallo” (“Horse”), at Torre Paduli



Fig. 13. Claudio Giagnotti (“Cavallo”)



Fig. 14. Carlo De Pascali “Canaja” (“Scoundrel”) dancing the sword dance



Fig. 15. Another (Rom?) sword dancer





Fig. 16. Another (Rom?) sword dancer

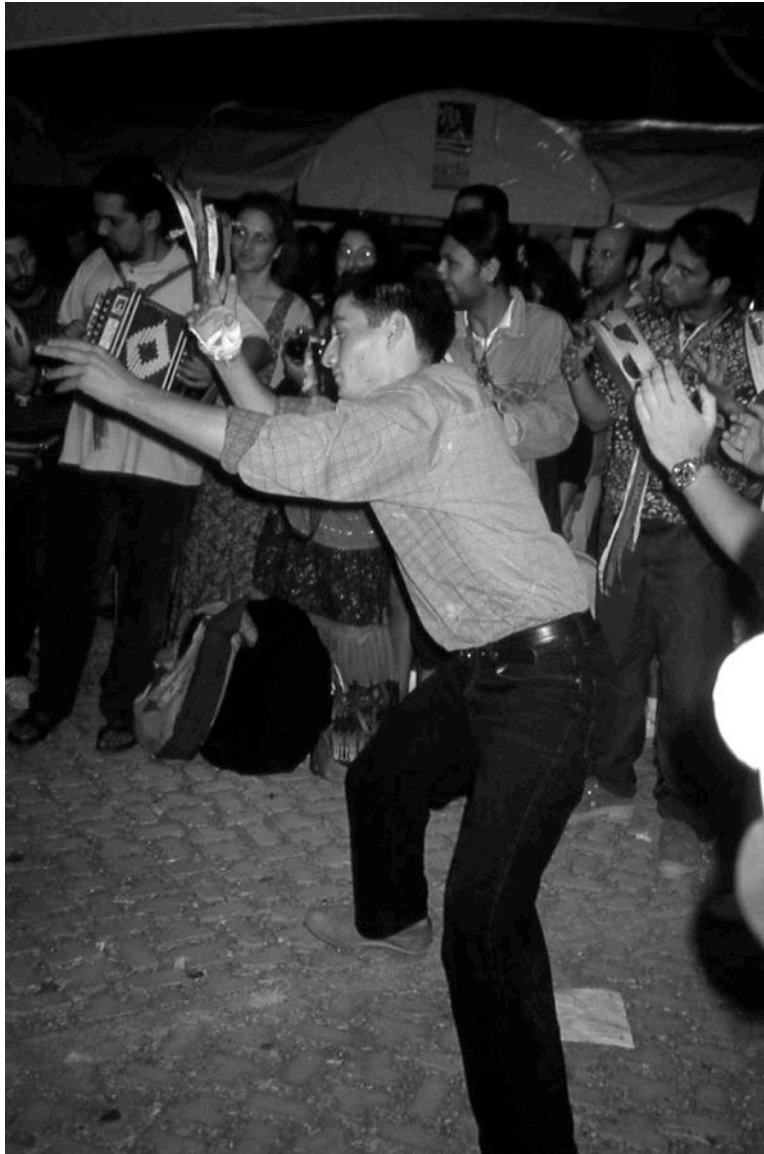


Fig. 17. Carlo De Pascali “Canaja” (“Scoundrel”) dancing the sword dance



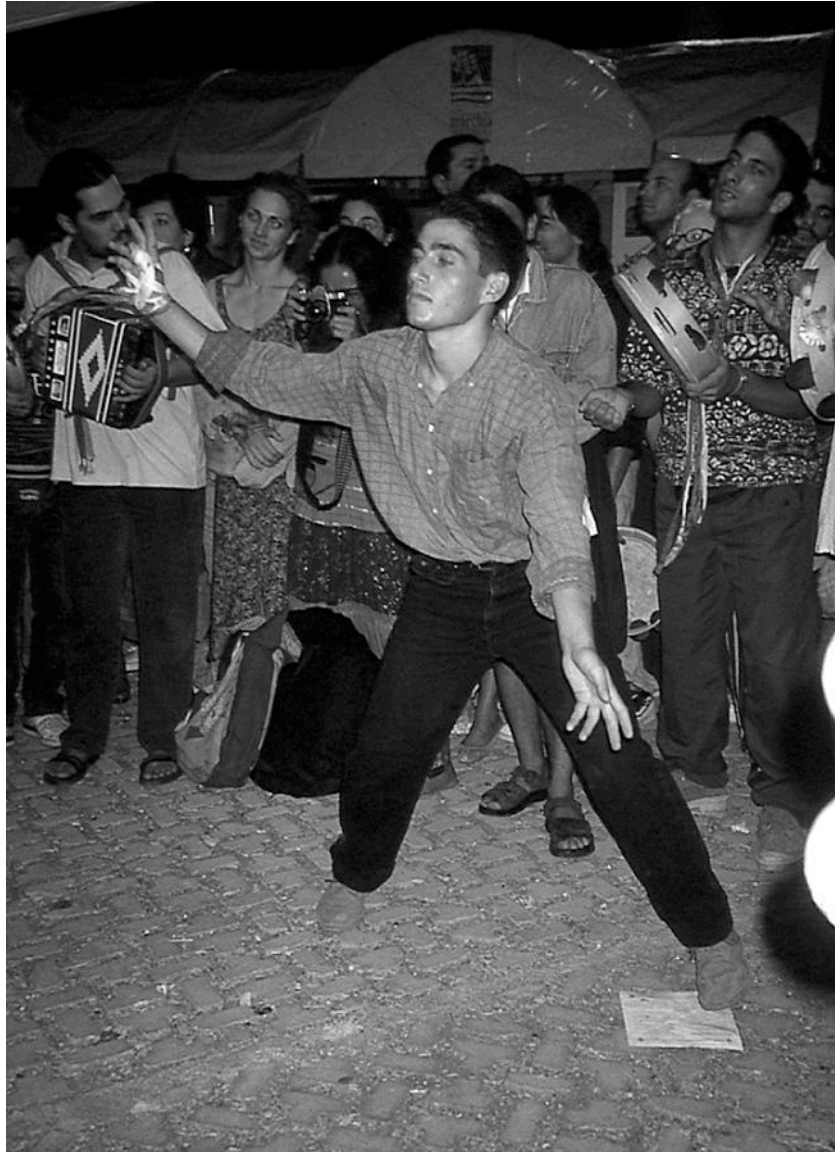


Fig. 18. Carlo De Pascali “Canaja” (“Scoundrel”) dancing the sword dance



Fig. 19. Carlo De Pascali “Canaja” (“Scoundrel”) dancing the sword dance



Figs. 20 and 21. Young boys dancing the sword dance at Torre Paduli



Fig. 22. Ada Metafune dancing the sword dance with Carlo “Canaja”



Fig. 23. Traditional, local musicians of the older generation



Fig. 24. An “exotic” musician (a bagpiper from the Emilia region) joining in *pizzica* playing

The ensembles playing *pizziche* have sprouted like mushrooms throughout the Salento. While some are more or less traditional, others offer exotic new fusions, integrating Middle Eastern, South American, and even Jamaican sounds (e.g., tarantamuffin by Sud Sound System,<sup>16</sup> or Eugenio Bennato’s Taranta Power concerts). Some fuse differing southern regional Italian music traditions, such as Neapolitan *tammorriate* with Salentine *pizziche* (e.g., repertoire of the ensemble Terra de Menzu, “Middle-Earth”), while others

<sup>16</sup> On ethno-rap and tarantamuffin, including interviews with the Sud Sound System (who generally deny any knowledge of, or interest in, the phenomenon of *tarantismo*), see chapters “Tarantamuffin,” “L’etnorap,” “Lo stile salentino,” and “Una conversazione” in Goffredo Plastino, *Mappa delle voci: Rap, ragamuffin e tradizione in Italia* (Rome, 1996).

are interested in *techno-pizziche*, often mixed by DJs at discotheques. Names recalling *tarantismo* symbols, and harkening back to its reputed Greek cultural origins, abound: *Arakne Mediterranea* (Mediterranean spider), *Ghetonia* (“barrio” in Griko), *Novarakne* (new spider), *Zoè* (life). The revival movement has also given the shrinking Griko minority a newfound caché.<sup>17</sup>

Much ink has flowed on the topic of *tarantismo* since Ernesto de Martino’s seminal text on the topic, *La terra del rimorso*, was published in 1961. Recent years have witnessed a flurry of publications and other productions: conferences, festivals, concerts, and commercial sound recordings, in what has become a veritable *tarantismo* industry. Further, Salentine musicians, having grown exponentially, are traveling farther afield, giving the *pizzica* greater exposure on the World Music stage. I entered this picture as an academic and public programs curator, in an attempt to bring greater attention to Salentine musical culture to Los Angeles audiences.<sup>18</sup> However, as a folklorist and, specifically, a folksong scholar, I was not content to leave it at that and soon made the folk revival an object of formal study, of fieldwork, and of personal experience.

#### RESEARCH PARAMETERS

This study does not seek to be an account of the sociopolitical history of the revival. Such an account would roughly parallel other regional, national, and international “roots” movements, and here would have touched on the radical socioeconomic restructuring of society in postwar Italy, the disruption of traditional peasant society, its oral and ritual expressions (e.g., the culture of *tarantismo*), and the political struggle entailed by the reclamation project of “deep” Salentine cultural identity.<sup>19</sup> Neither does this study attempt to trace the Salentine revival’s intimate history (e.g., ensembles, collecting campaigns, publications),<sup>20</sup> although a few chronological guideposts follow. The first field recordings of Salentine traditional music (from the archives of Luigi Chiriatti)<sup>21</sup> were released in 1978 under the Albatros label.<sup>22</sup> Young

<sup>17</sup> Griko (also known as Grecánico) is the dialect of the Greek-speaking Salentine minority. On the Greek component of the folk revival, see Del Giudice, introduction to *Canto d’amore*.

<sup>18</sup> See n. 2 above.

<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note on that front, however, how close to peasant culture many in the movement today still are—many of whom are either children or grandchildren of active independent farmers or of landowners of *masserie* (rural farm structures)—and hence witnessed Salentine song culture firsthand, even if, in the second case, from a certain distance.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Luigi Chiriatti, *Opilopilopipilopillo: Viaggio nella musica popolare salentina 1970–1998*, with Edizioni Aramirè compact disk (Calimera, 1998).

<sup>21</sup> See the conference and festival photographs in Appendix A and B of this volume.

<sup>22</sup> See Brizio Montinaro, ed., *Musica e canti popolari del Salento*, 1: *Canti rituali e di questua, stornelli, contrasti, canzoni satiriche e d’amore*, Albatros VPA 8405, sound recording (Milan, 1977); and idem, ed., *Musica e canti popolari del Salento*, 2: *Ninne nanne, invocazioni, moroloja, canzoni*, Albatros VPA 8429, sound recording (Milan, 1978).

leftist Italians were finding inspiration in traditional music groups such as the Inti Illimani (from Chile), as well as the Neapolitan group Nuova Compagnia di Canto Popolare, closer at hand, taking in, along with this “new” music, the political message fueling folk revivals worldwide. In the 1970s, the Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino (made up of Rina Durante, Bucci Caldarullo, Roberto Licci, Luigi Chiriatti, and Daniele Durante) became the Salento’s first folk revival group. Many have made the transition into the more recent revival of the early 1990s (e.g., Chiriatti in Canzoniere di Terra d’Otranto, and later, Aramirè: Compagnia di Musica Salentina; Licci in Ghetonia; and Durante in Canzoniere Grecanico). It appears that part of the motivation behind this second phase revival was the increasing multiethnicity of Italian (and Salentine) society. Many began to examine their own ethnic identity vis-à-vis foreign ethnicities in their midst. They asked themselves, for instance, why Moroccans and Albanians did not readily relinquish their cultural identities, while Salentines did so easily? Reflection on their own traditions and the search for what identified them as Salentines helped bring the *pizzica* to the fore, and spawned some of this folk music revival’s reconfiguration. Chiriatti’s archive did much to bring new attention to the entire panoply of Salentine musical traditions. Therefore, not only the World Music movement, but also a degree of nativism and the desire to shore up the apparent rift between the old and the new Salentine society, motivated a new generation of folk revival musicians. Some such musicians were more or less *radicati sul territorio*, rooted in the Salento—that is, concerned about historic roots, interested in field recordings, and in rediscovering older “source” musicians and singers (such as Uccio Aloisi or Uccio Bandello).<sup>23</sup> But the revival of the 1990s, with its proliferation of ensembles, has sometimes been viewed (as far as repertoire is concerned) as incestuous, derivative, reductive, as feeding on itself. The methodical publication of Chiriatti’s sound archive, as well as of other important archives (e.g., the Lomax collection)<sup>24</sup> ought to provide more materials with which to enrich the musical repertoires of revival Salentine ensembles.

The goal of this research is to focus specifically on the transformation of the culture of *tarantismo* within the folk music revival (*la riproposta* in Italian, that is, “a reproposal” or “reassertion”). How does *tarantismo* continue to “mark” the Salento and the participants in the neo-*tarantismo* movement? What part do women play in this revival? What parts of the ritual practice have survived, and how? How has this cultural phenomenon been transformed and how is it understood today? That is, how and to whom does *tarantismo* continue to have meaning?

Although classic *tarantismo*—once so widely diffused, but, in the space of a few decades, largely silenced—is, by common consensus and by observable

<sup>23</sup> See Del Giudice, preface to *Bonasera a quista casa: Antonio Aloisi, Antonio Bandello “Gli Ucci”: Pizziche, stornelli, canti salentini*, by Luigi Chiriatti, trans. Luisa Del Giudice, Edizioni Aramirè compact disk (Lecce, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> See Del Giudice, “Introduction to Puglia and the Salento.”

fact, a phenomenon of the past, Chiriatti and others continue to state how heavily it impacted Salentine culture and how it finds myriad ways of expressing itself still. Indeed, despite a radically changed socioeconomic milieu, many cultural (as well as some ritual) aspects of *tarantismo* persist and continue to be referenced—sometimes obliquely. I attempted to identify a few such references through a sampling of testimonies from musicians, dancers, and collectors, as well as through direct participation/observation.<sup>25</sup>

Field questions ranged from those meant to provoke self-reflection (Could one still be *tarantato* (bitten) today, and what might this mean? Would they consider themselves *tarantati*? How would they respond to the music? Would they experience an altered state of consciousness?) to those which touched on the sociological (i.e., the parameters of neo-*tarantismo* as determined by gender, age, and class, for instance). Direct experience with Salentine programming, as with local tourist festivities, allowed me to observe the revival's cultural politics and economics in the Salento and abroad. Beyond these varied concerns were the theoretical questions found in the scholarly literature, but which, in the final analysis, seemed less relevant to this study—despite the fact that they have shaped part of the revival's discourse and practice, according to the greater or lesser taste for scholarship and abstraction among participants in the folk revival themselves.<sup>26</sup> Such theoretical musings ask: was *tarantismo* a cult of possession; a dance epidemic (like the dance manias of the Middle Ages); a shamanic practice; or a remnant of female spirituality?<sup>27</sup> Indeed, this essay treats only a few of the issues mentioned above, specifically: the symbolic culture of revival *tarantismo*, the range of its current musical practices and political attitudes, and the female perspective within this cultural movement.

<sup>25</sup> A broken foot while dancing the *pizzica* on the piazza of Surano on August 14, 1998, will attest to my direct participation/observation while in the field.

<sup>26</sup> Recall that present folk revivals, as those of the past, are often guided by university-educated urbanites who may be well versed in the scholarly discourse surrounding the revival itself. This revival is no different (cf. Sabina Magliocco, "Imagining the *Strega*: Folklore Reclamation and the Construction of Italian American Witchcraft," this volume).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. orgiastic Dionysian cults in Andromache Karanika, "*Ecstasis* in Healing: Practices in Southern Italy and Greece from Antiquity to the Present," this volume; and Gianfranco Salvatore, *Isole sonanti: scenari archetipici della musica del mediterraneo* (Rome, 1989). Note the equation of ancient Greek and modern Salentine womanhood in the following passage from Salvatore, p. 229: "... quanto fosse subalterno il ruolo della donna già nel mondo greco, dove la tipologia della menade scarmigliata corrisponde solo a quel momento eccezionale in cui l'oppressione della subalternità degenera in temporanea follia: esattamente come avviene, ancora dopo quasi venti secoli di cristianesimo, alle cattoliche e devotissime tarantate del Salento" ("... how subaltern the role of women in the Greek world was, where the typology of the Menad with unkempt hair, corresponded only to the exceptional moment in which the oppression of that subaltern state degenerated into temporary insanity: in exactly the manner in which it still does, after almost twenty centuries of Christianity, to the Catholic and most devout *tarantate* of the Salento").



## SPIDERS AND SAINTS

The symbolic culture of *tarantismo*, which spun webs of meaning—literal and metaphoric—around spiders and spider bites, is part of a living culture as well as of revival discourse. While few any longer speak of an actual spider's bite, as Luigi Stifani, musician to the *tarantati*, continued to do until his recent death,<sup>28</sup> the culture still makes reference to the bite, at some times more or less consciously, at others more or less metaphorically. Primary *tarantismo* lexicon survives in common Salentine expressions, such as, for example, *E chè, t'ha pizzicato la taranta?* (And so, has the tarantula bitten you?), meaning "What's the matter with you?" As many Salentines remember,<sup>29</sup> fear and awe of spiders was instilled from an early age, as children were warned never to harm them because they could do (spiritual) harm in return. Spiders continue to provoke anxiety.<sup>30</sup> Yet, just as the *pizzica* was positively transformed into a celebratory dance/music, so has the spider's "venom" become a welcome, infectious, existentially altering substance. In personal conversation or correspondence, I find many references to the bite's positive connotations (as in "to catch the bug" or "to get hooked"), such as one person who wrote to me that "On a trip to the Salento in [the] summer of '99 I [kind of] stumbled onto the 'neo-tarantismo' revival, and after having been 'bitten,' I have remained fascinated by the phenomenon." A recent New York *pizzica* concert announcement boldly invited the public to "Get Bitten!"

Indeed, the (symbolic) spider abounds and can be found on tambourines, tourism brochures, and anything remotely touching the Salento.<sup>31</sup> The spider also offers an interesting area for ritual overlap, particularly for Italian Americans coming into contact with Salentine *pizzica* culture. The urge to

<sup>28</sup> Stifani vividly describes his phenomenology of the disease and the musical cure's exegesis in the documentary film *San Paolo e la Tarantola*, 1991. Winspeare, director of the feature film based on *tarantismo*, *Pizzicata*, created the documentary as a senior thesis for the Munich film school where he was trained. For Stifani's experience as a musician/healer as told in diary form, see Luigi Stifani, *Io al sento ci credo: diario di un musico delle tarantate* (As for me, I believe in the saint: diary of a musician to the *tarantate*), ed. Luigi Chiriatti, Maurizio Nocera, Roberto Raheli, and Sergio Torsello, in collaboration with the Istituto Ernesto de Martino, with Edizioni Aramirè compact disk (Lecce, 2003). Stifani died, paradoxically, on June 28, 2000, St. Paul's feast day. No one failed to comment on this strange "coincidence." (See Luigi Chiriatti, "For Luigi Stifani," this volume.)

<sup>29</sup> E.g., Chiriatti, *Morso d'amore*, pp. 13–22; and Enzo Fina, personal communication.

<sup>30</sup> Davey, who examines this most common of phobias in Western cultures, notes how the fear of spiders indicates it is closely associated with the disease-avoidance response of disgust, and is due to the association between spiders and disease in Europe after the tenth century. It is peculiar to Europeans and their descendants, but is not common to non-Europeans; see Graham C. L. Davey, "The 'Disgusting' Spider: The Role of Disease and Illness in the Perpetuation of Fear of Spiders," *Society and Animals: Journal of Human-Animal Studies* 2, no. 1 [electronic journal] (1994), available from <http://www.psyeta.org/sa/sa2.1/davey.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Even our program brochures for "Essential Salento" and "Performing Ecstasies," alas . . .

replicate spider imagery encompasses both the Halloween Gothic sensibilities *and* the newly discovered *tarantismo* culture. (Salentine spider kitsche is nowhere near American Halloween proportions, yet shows strong growth potential.) The celebratory and the horrific thereby happily comeingle, making it rather easy for Americans to find gifts and artifacts to send back to Salentine friends (e.g., Halloween spider stickers, earrings, rings, glow-in-the-dark hanging spiders, windup spider toys, etc.; or, from the southwestern U.S. perspective, even a tequila bottle, “Tarantula” brand, potentially blending *tarantismo* and Mexican sensibilities).<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, at some level, the belief system which made St. Paul the cause and cure of various malaises in the Salento continues to be operative.<sup>33</sup> Votive offerings to St. Paul are still made at his various shrines (e.g., roadside shrine at Giurdignano, or in Galatina), presupposing a continuing belief in his efficacy as a saint, one who retains influence over spiritual/physical well-being. Even among participants in the revival, reference to the saint continues to be made: Chiriatti’s existential battle with the saint and the culture of *tarantismo*, over which the saint presided, is amply recounted in *Morso d’amore*.<sup>34</sup> Further, when Roberto Raheli faced a large Los Angeles audience in concert for the first time (October 18, 1998) and found he had partially lost his voice, he made an only half-jesting allusion to St. Paul’s problematic nature—suggesting, perhaps, that the saint was not pleased by what was about to take place, which I interpreted as the saint’s objection to a performance of ritual Salentine music in an “inappropriate” context.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> One sees (and imagines) spiders and spider webs everywhere. On a personal note, I can attest that the Salentine road system itself began to read like a spider’s web, and after driving in circles for hours, I became convinced that it was itself a giant web—and not of the WWW “superhighway” sort. It was literally impossible, at times, to get from point A to point B without going through points X, Y, and Z, by some circuitous route. I was frequently caught in it against my will, despite years of experience with Italian road travel and the use of excellent Italian Touring Club maps. To my great surprise, this sense of the road system resembling a giant spider’s web was independently confirmed by Alessandra Belloni, who had had similar driving experiences. I have since learned that the peculiar trade and commerce history of the area accounts for this fact, one which modern road projects are attempting to relieve; see Vito Orlando, *Feste, devozioni e religiosità: ricerca socio-religiosa in alcuni Santuari del Salento* (Galatina, 1981).

<sup>33</sup> See, for instance, the title of a recent publication, *Io al santo ci credo* (As for me, I believe in the saint) by Luigi Stifani, who remained a firm believer in St. Paul, and in the spider’s actual bite, until his death (see Luigi Chiriatti, “For Luigi Stifani,” this volume).

<sup>34</sup> Chiriatti, *Morso d’amore*, pp. 13–22.

<sup>35</sup> I confess that as I placed my crutches against this shrine one night, in order to photograph it, I too had some second thoughts about the appropriateness of my/an outsider’s place on the piazza of Surano, where I broke my foot dancing the *pizzica*. As for what caused me to slip, the fact that I was dancing in new platform sandals bought that very morning did not seem to be half as convincing as St. Paul’s curse, a curse that struck me *while dancing* and in the *foot* (which, along with the hands, is the traditional somatic *loci* of the malaise). The mishap could have seriously compromised my continued research, since I could no longer drive my rental, stick shift car, as well as my participation in the Torre Paduli festival the very next night—had it not been for obliging nuns in an institute in Salice Salentino who provided both

## SALENTINE MUSICIANS AND OTHERS

Musical practice was at the core of classic *tarantismo* and so it has remained the focus of the Salentine folk revival movement more globally. The great majority have been reawakened to Salentine cultural identity through its traditional music, the *pizzica*—as song, instrumental, or dance.<sup>36</sup> It was surprising to discover how many classic musical practices, although transformed, have maintained their (traditional) structure and dynamics. These traditional elements include the search for individualized, “innate” musical rhythms which promote (therapeutic) dance; the key role of the musician in that system; the relationship between musician and dancer; and the continued ability of the *pizzica* to produce altered states of consciousness.

The *tamburieddu* (frame drum) and the *pizzica* have become potent acoustic symbols of the Salento today. They have nearly submerged all other musical genres and instrumentation. Some ensembles have made the *pizzica* the almost exclusive focus of their repertoires (e.g., the ensemble *Alla Bua*). The *pizzica* dominates for a variety of reasons. It is the most immediately usable (“consumable”) music genre, for as dance music, it crosses generational lines (from the young techno- and rave-inspired to more traditional dancers). Further, it appeals to World Music sensibilities and feeds into the general interest in ecstasy-producing musical genres—and hence may be more easily marketed. Yet, beyond these fairly obvious reasons, and more significantly, many Salentines believe that the *pizzica* is the very essence of the Salento, its (literal) heartbeat—primal, ancient, sacred.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the *pizzica*’s “profanation” is to be decried, not least because any musical distortion of this ritual music, evolved and honed over the centuries, prevents the *pizzica*’s continuing efficacy as a therapeutic musical genre.<sup>38</sup> That is, the traditional *pizzica* sounds as it does for a good reason, and hence should not be altered but, rather, carefully studied and replicated. This indigenous,

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crutches and wheelchair (thanks to physician Giovanna Fina’s intervention), and for friends such as Roberto Catalano, Nancy Romero, and the Fina-Nannotti families, who wheeled me about the Torre Paduli festival and drove me to interview appointments thereafter.

<sup>36</sup> E.g., Edoardo Winspeare, “Confessioni di un malato di Pizzica,” *Contrappunti* (May 1996): “La scoperta di questo ballo è stato l’inizio di una catarsi grazie alla quale ho scoperto molte cose della mia terra, del mio rapporto con gli altri e specialmente con me stesso” (“The discovery of this dance [the *pizzica*] was the beginning of a catharsis, thanks to which I discovered many things about my land, about my relationship to others, and especially about myself”).

<sup>37</sup> As elder musicians maintain, the drumbeat replicates the heartbeat, and to learn to play the *pizzica* rhythm, one needs merely to put one’s hand on the heart (Raheli, personal communication). (To anyone who has experienced an ultrasound fetal monitor, the similarities are quite striking.) A paradox seems to emerge, however: if the Salentine drumbeat does replicate the heart’s rhythm, it (the *pizzica* rhythm) would appear to be basic to humanity as a whole rather than to Salentines in particular.

<sup>38</sup> See Roberto Raheli, “*Pizzica Tarantata*: Reflections of a Violin Player,” this volume.

ancestral rhythm is seen as innate, almost genetic. It is in the blood.<sup>39</sup> It is the rhythm of the Salentines. (One of the possible implications of this attitude seems to be that one must *be* Salentine in order to experience, understand, and play the *pizzica* properly.) Just as each *tarantata* has been “marked” or “stamped” by her (or his) particular rhythm—the argument seems to go—so is the Salento marked by the *pizzica*’s deep musical structure (even though it is sometimes understood that the *pizzica* itself is not reducible to *one*, but admits of *many* variants, and individual Salentines prefer and respond to specific *pizzica* variants).

So much have the frame drum and *pizzica* become synonymous with the Salento that nativists would police who is and is not sanctioned to produce these symbols (to play them, to dance to them—and perhaps even to speak about them), warranting perhaps a “denomination controlée” system for drums (like the D.O.C. for wines). As more conservative musicians have been fond of repeating: Let ensembles experiment with fusion sounds; just don’t call them or sell them as “Salentine.” As with other folk revival movements, the one emerging around the culture of *tarantismo* generates the familiar debate over the traditional (“authentic,” “pure,” “insider”) vs. the nontraditional (“contaminated,” “hybrid,” “outsider”). In the relatively small world of the Salentine folk revival, the growing economic incentive for the performance of Salentine music,<sup>40</sup> the constant recombination of musical ensembles, infighting, and jostling for position and public funds can make for an explosive mix. “Outsider” may be construed as 1) Neapolitans playing their traditional music on Salentine stages, thereby overshadowing homegrown music; 2) Americans presuming to appropriate Salentine music and play it abroad; 3) Salentine musicians themselves using “world” instruments to play Salentine music; or 4) the occasional, truly exotic presence at traditional music events (e.g., conga drums at the Torre Paduli festival; or the Israeli singer Noa singing the *pizzica* on Salentine stages during the 2002 Notte della Taranta spectacle). The question of “open” vs. “closed” with respect to musical systems finds ensembles all along the

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Sarah Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2001), especially the chapter on “Blood that Matters.”

<sup>40</sup> A recent journalist ascribes the general anxiety possibly produced by this economic factor and wonders if the tarantula might not eventually vindicate itself (cf. n. 32 above) in an article entitled, “E se la taranta si vendicasse?” (And what if the tarantula took its revenge?): “A dispetto della nuova religione, articolata in denaro-merce-consumo che ha fondato e colonizzato il ‘villaggio globale,’ i venditori di *pizzica* non riescono a liberarsi completamente dell’idea di consumare in qualche modo un ‘sacrilegio.’ Forse perché la *pizzica* era legata al tarantismo e il tarantismo alla malattia e alla sofferenza. La sacralità della sofferenza confinava con la sacralità della terapia. Il rito circoscriveva il tabù e scandiva il risarcimento al totem ‘taranta.’ Oggi il totem denaro ha svuotato ogni tabù. E se la taranta si vendicasse? Cambiomogli nome e usiamo il ritmo dei 6/8 come diavolo ci pare. La taranta nascosta in un remoto anfratto del Salento ha uno sguardo che non promette nulla di buono” (Luigi A. Santoro, “E se la taranta si vendicasse?” *Quotidiano di Lecce* [August 8, 2001], 1–6). I thank Karen Lütke for bringing this article to my attention.

spectrum: from the innovative and experimental (i.e., Canzoniere Grecanico, Zoè) to the more traditionally conservative (i.e., Aramirè, Alla Bua). In cranking up the volume and beat, and blending traditional with contemporary music genres, some cite the need to remain economically viable, since younger audiences seem to prefer rap, house, or techno music (i.e., techno-*pizzica*). In the *pizzica*, the needs of those in their twenties, as well as the cultural, ecological, and spiritual interests of New Age baby boomers in their 40–50s, seem to find a meeting ground, even though the specific variants preferred may vary. Some are fond of pointing to the fact that the *pizzica* knows no frontiers and can be widely adapted. There may indeed be room for all approaches to this traditional music, even though, according to some, the market is becoming saturated.

Polemics about insider/outsider can become particularly ferocious around the Torre Paduli festival on August 15–16 in an intricate dance of exclusion and intrusion. The Torre Paduli festival has, indeed, undergone dramatic transformation, judging by firsthand accounts, simply because it did not remain an exclusively local event. As is the fate of festivals the world over, this festival too has become a favored destination of “cultural tourism”—the fastest-growing sector of many economies. One performer described the festival of the mid-1980s as an almost exclusively male event, where many ex-convicts and Gypsies danced, in those days with real knives, and where real violence was entirely possible. Because this musician escaped potential violence so narrowly when she attempted to join in the drumming, she was less than eager to return to Torre Paduli in the mid-1990s, but was equally surprised by the radical change which had taken place there. Among other changes, it had become a more open festival, attended by men, women, children and tourists; and it was more celebratory, with dancers and musicians of varying abilities participating. On the other hand, that change has not been entirely welcomed by locals who have attempted to keep the Torre Paduli festival Salentine. For instance, the town’s own elders boycotted the festival altogether in the mid-1990s since, as they saw it, it had been hijacked and irreparably transformed by some of the young and by outsiders of various sorts. They were accused of showing little respect for the very rhythms themselves—the traditional rhythms that had been played there for generations.

While conservative “insiders” seek ways to narrow the field, “outsiders,” irresistibly drawn to this music, wonder how they might participate—more or less *responsibly*—in this culture. From the “outside,” Salentine culture may seem rather conservative and inward-looking, not tolerating outsiders well—neither from close nor farther afield. Many Salentines themselves confirm this to be accurate. Several well-traveled aficionados of Italian folk cultures (Italians themselves), for instance, have expressed frustration of various sorts. One man lamented the fact that, while in the Barbagia, Sardinia, locals *wanted* outsiders to participate in their circle dance, in the Salento it was instead very difficult to enter the *ronda* (circle) as a dancer or musician. A

female musician noted the marked difference between the regional attitudes in Calabria or Campania, as opposed to the Salento—which appeared more closed, as well as generally more restrictive towards its own women.

On the other hand, both desire for and fear of exposure towards outsiders has been well borne out by the many examples of traditional cultures appropriated by non-natives (as well as by commercial interests)—as a direct outcome of Salentine “openness.”<sup>41</sup> It was, on my part, the fear of potentially contributing to this process which halted any plans for promoting Salentine folk culture through tourism—despite the fact that the desire for foreign tourist dollars forms an explicit incentive of local Salentine authorities’ “investment” in cultural festivals abroad (and at home).<sup>42</sup> Only recently has this music been widely exported to international audiences throughout Europe, the Mediterranean, and beyond. But the aims of performers and Salentine officials are not always in tune. Indeed, for some musicians, the *only* reason to export Salentine musical traditions is not to enlighten the world (nor to attract tourist dollars), but to have Salentines themselves—including local authorities—better appreciate their own traditions (presumably by showing its wide appeal), and therefore more generously support folk culture programs at home. According to this view, Salentine musical exports are not for *us* but for *them*.

THE FEMALE CULTURE OF (NEO-)TARANTISMO:  
DANCERS, HANDMAIDENS, AND ECSTASY

De Martino noted the predominately *female* culture of *tarantismo*: the afflicted/dancers were mostly women, as were those assisting them; and women had been its traditional drummers. The female culture of the frame drum in the Mediterranean is well established.<sup>43</sup> Just as the friction drum (also played in the Salento), with its long stick repeatedly slipping in and out of the

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<sup>41</sup> The mixed reaction—the desire for, and fear of, outsiders—has received much attention in recent anthropological literature. See, for example, the special issue of the *Journal of Folklore Research* 30, no. 1 (1993), entitled *Foreigners and Foreignness in Europe: Expressive Culture in Transcultural Encounters*, edited by Regina Bendix and Barbro Klein, on the outsider in European contexts. With respect to tourism and its impact on these reactions, see *Tourism Alternatives: Potentials and Problems in the Development of Tourism*, ed. Valene L. Smith and William R. Eadington (Philadelphia, 1992) (especially the contribution by Greenwood and Pi-Sunyer).

<sup>42</sup> The Salento has become a festival and concert-producing “machine”—particularly during the summer months when Italian (and increasingly foreign) tourists come to its beaches, and are also drawn to the Salento’s music. Many learn to dance the *pizzica* in discotheques as well as on public squares during summer festivals and concerts throughout the area.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Domenico Staiti, “La mania telestica nelle fonti figurative apule,” in *Tarantismo, transe, possessione, musica*, ed. Gino L. Di Mitri (Nardò, 1999), pp. 9–21; and Judith Cohen on the Portuguese drum, “‘My Soul’s There Already and My Heart’s on Its Way’: Portuguese Women’s Pilgrimage Drum-Songs,” this volume.

drumhead, has widely made of this a symbolically male instrument,<sup>44</sup> the fact that blood is often spilled on the taut and rough frame drum by a musician beating on it (see fig. 25) may give support to the Salentine *tamburello* being *perceived* (consciously or not) as a maidenhead, hence a female instrument. Luigi Lezzi (as seen in the film *San Paolo e la Tarantola*) further explores the symbolism of the frame drum and concludes that it replicates, in microcosm, the *tarantata*'s world, wherein two conflicting forces are simultaneously present: the steady, repetitive rhythm played out on the skin of the drum, like a heartbeat (representing order), and the uncontrolled noise made by the metal jangles (representing chaos). Hence, the instrument encompasses the irrational, the antisocial aspects of the *tarantata*'s life which must be called back and regulated by the steady rhythm that helps reintegrate her into an orderly universe. A feminist perspective may indeed have inverted this scheme, however.<sup>45</sup> Further, it will be remembered from the literature that *tarantismo* often was passed on through the female line (by example, from mother to daughter). Indeed, the spider itself was always female and produced matriarchal spider genealogies: the spider's daughters and granddaughters continued to bite the women of any one family.

If the frame drum was *tarantismo*'s predominant musical instrument and women were its traditional musicians, then it stands to reason that women played a central role in this once widely diffused ritual,<sup>46</sup> a ritual which, in many instances, they largely managed themselves.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the question which begs investigation is: where are the women? Where are the older women, once musicians to the *tarantate*, and where have the *tarantate* themselves gone? Where are the younger neo-*tarantate*, as dancers and musicians?

<sup>44</sup> Valentina Mazzotta notes that in her previous ensemble, a woman "appropriated" the friction drum (in Italian *putipù* or *cupa cupa*) and played it with great dignity—presumably, therefore, avoiding snickering and catcalls from the audience.

<sup>45</sup> Feminist theorists might invert this by stating that the noise allows the *tarantata*'s world-view to temporarily prevail, with its new and subverted sense of "order," while the steady beat recalls her back to duty and patriarchal "order"—that is, the very cause and substance of her *disorder* and *existential chaos* (cf. Sandra M. Gilbert, "Introduction: A Tarantella of Theory," in *The Newly Born Woman (La jeune née)* by Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, trans. Betsy Wing, *Theory and History of Literature* 24 (Minneapolis, 1986), pp. ix–xviii). The male and the female are here in direct opposition, where sanity/insanity, order/disorder are inverted, according to gender. I thank Deborah Kapchan for calling my attention to the work of Gilbert, Cixous and Clément.

<sup>46</sup> Just how widely diffused the phenomenon was, even within living memory, may be illustrated as follows: Chiriatti estimates that Calimera, with a population of 5,000, had roughly 40–45 recognized *tarantati*. He notes that if one adds to this figure all those who came into direct contact with the phenomenon—musicians, family, friends, and neighbors—the number of those exposed to *tarantismo* was rather significant.

<sup>47</sup> A significant (historic) clip from Fernando Bevilacqua's film, *Bit: stretti nello spazio senza tempo*, documents this entirely female milieu. Apparently, at the margins of a rural locale where women are stringing tobacco leaves is a young woman dancer and older female musicians.



Fig. 25. A frame drum is considered “initiated” once it has a musician’s blood on it

Few women hold prominent musical roles today. One finds few women on concert stages, other than in supporting roles (or as the “pretty face,” that is,



the singer in the ensemble). “Stanno lì . . . con le mani legate” (There they stand . . . with their hands tied), laments one female musician. They continue, however, to constitute the majority of dancers on the public piazzas, but they are surprisingly absent as cultural activists.

It is clear that those who lived intimately with *tarantismo* within their own families or among neighbors (rather than through the revival) remain hidden dancers, hidden musicians. They have no illusions about the phenomenon’s newfound appeal, and react with visible pain at the memories of the phenomenon as witnessed or experienced decades earlier, when *tarantismo* was still widely practiced. Such witnesses remember it as a horrific ritual of despair. One young woman in her thirties was traumatized by the experience of assisting her afflicted mother. She relives the humiliation of being under public scrutiny at Galatina. She cannot listen to the *pizzica*—unfortunately for her, now everywhere—without reexperiencing pain and loathing. Only on her wedding day was she able to temporarily overcome this family legacy and experience instead the joy of dancing the *pizzica* herself. Similarly, many former female drummers will no longer drum in order to *not* call back the “bad old days,” as though the musical objects themselves, and the sounds they produce, could indeed bring it all back. There are few exceptions to this general avoidance in the older generation (e.g., Nonna Stella Catamo; see fig. 26). But older Salentines, generally speaking, may not participate also because they do not recognize as theirs the new musical culture purporting to be traditional, and could not hope to dance their version of the *pizzica* to the newer, faster-paced *pizzica*. This generation, although largely in the background, nonetheless provides “source” musicians and dancers sought out by those participants in the revival most concerned with “authenticity.”<sup>48</sup>

#### MALE MUSICIANS AND WOMEN DANCERS

As some musicians have noted, women are the first, and sometimes the only, ones to respond to the *pizzica* rhythms, to come forth and dance when the music is played publicly. It is still upon their bodies, therefore, that the music plays, their bodies that incarnate and reproduce these rhythms in movement.<sup>49</sup> Male musicians and female dancers still form a powerful *connubium*. Indeed, the traditional dancer’s practice of discerning her own

<sup>48</sup> The literature on the construction of authenticity and identity is substantial but will not be examined here. I refer the reader to only a couple of recent works: Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison, Wisc., 2001); and Pike, *Earthly Bodies*.

<sup>49</sup> At least one revival musician posits that there may actually be some *physiological* basis for the way the female body “receives” *pizzica* sounds and rhythms; that is, the female body seems more particularly receptive to them.



Fig. 26. Nonna Stella Catamo, a traditional *tamburieddhu* (frame drum) player, once musician to the *tarantate*, at her son's establishment, Bar Menhir, which often hosts informal music events

correct musical rhythm by intently listening to the instruments,<sup>50</sup> thereby bringing dancer and musician in close physical proximity, may therefore curiously still be present today. Many current women dancers engage, consciously or unconsciously, in selecting ensembles or individual musicians who can best make them dance. One woman spoke of how deeply moved to dance she was by her favorite musicians (also personal friends), a feeling which no other musicians could inspire. This particular style of singing or playing became irresistible, and when dancing to this music, she experienced the sensation of actually dancing *with* the musician. Musicians are particularly sensitive to this dynamic and can easily spot those in the audience whose feet or hands begin to move—just as Stifani did in his diagnostics decades before. These subtle signs expose those who *need* to dance. If possible, musicians will make a conscious effort to bring them into the circle, to make them dance, by approaching the dancer and playing insistently close by. They might sustain the effort for longer periods of time. Seasoned dancers, too, many of them women, speak of a similar role as facilitator, as they sometimes invite into the dance circle those in need of dancing.

#### THE *TARANTATA*'S REHABILITATION

The revival participants, of course, may be acutely aware of traditional attitudes and values, gender roles, and musical practices proper to the culture of *tarantismo*, sometimes through primary bearers of traditions, and sometimes through the literature. They may carefully replicate their reenactments in accordance with tradition while instead transforming and profoundly reinterpreting other aspects of the culture's past. The music of *tarantismo* has been recast as a celebratory practice of current Salentine identity. It follows that the figure of the *tarantata* has also been positively recast. Not only has the stigma been lifted from the *tarantata*'s shoulders, there seems to be a growing positive reevaluation (romanticization? glorification?) of this figure as she undergoes something of an apotheosis. She has become a heroine, passing from something of a feared outcast to shaman.<sup>51</sup> Possessed by a spider god with whom she becomes one, temporarily unbound by societal norms, she explores the existential fringe via the dance, bringing spiritual and mental health back to herself and to the community (which is literally standing around her). She is not merely a

<sup>50</sup> See, for instance, the documentary *La taranta*, which shows a *tarantata* approaching Stifani's violin, and thereby attempting, one presumes, to carefully discern and imbibe these sounds.

<sup>51</sup> Magliocco suggests parallels may be found in feminist reclamations of other previously stigmatized practices, such as witchcraft; cf. Cynther Eller in *Living in the Lap of the Goddess* (New York, 1993); Jone Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism* (London and New York, 2002); and *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, ed. Charlene Spretnak (Garden City, N.Y., 1982). For a Sardinian example, see Sabina Magliocco, "Coordinates of Power and Performance: Festivals as Sites of (Re)Presentation and Reclamation in Sardinia," in *Ethnologies* 23, no. 1 (2001), 167–88, a special issue of the journal entitled *Festival*, edited by Pauline Greenhill.

passive receptor of musical vibrations that others played to awaken her, therefore, but a spiritual leader, acting on behalf of those incapable (though just as needy) of freeing themselves. This role of dancer/shaman has been consciously adopted by at least one female dancer/musician. Other women speak instead of a humbler role as “handmaiden,” as they engage in facilitating personal expression and hence healing in others.<sup>52</sup>

*Tarantismo* has been viewed largely as a ritual serving various forms of female sexual and social dysfunction (i.e., as a way for women, often in the first throes of puberty in a highly repressive society, to exorcise frustrated sexuality and social oppression). What continuity might there be between modern Salentine women and their dancing ancestors? How has Salentine culture changed vis-à-vis gender roles? Does neo-*tarantismo* still address this specific need? A standard fieldwork question I asked was: is it still possible to be *tarantati*? Significantly, women more readily answered in the affirmative: yes, it *was* still possible to be a *tarantata*. Some forthrightly identified themselves as *tarantate*. Indeed, during interviews with women, I seemed to hear latter-day echoes of the laments recorded in the earlier literature: they recounted modern life stories of intolerable and oppressive family dynamics, sexual frustration, social injustices, and basic lack of personal freedom in a culture which one of the few woman musicians described as *maschilista fino in fondo* (chauvinist to the core). Despite their appearance as modern women, Chiriatti has cautioned, one should not assume things have significantly changed for Salentine women. Few have any degree of economic independence, and many still lead heavily circumscribed lives.

And so, some women still turn to traditional musical strategies for dealing with such existential problems. Some dance. Others play the drum or sing. One woman, forbidden by her parents from performing this music publicly, nonetheless did, but had developed a peculiar concert voice, one resembling the voice of renowned Niceta Petrachi (Simpatichina) found on an early Albatros recording<sup>53</sup>—and a voice she used only when “inside” the music. On the concert stage, far from her oppressive family, with her eyes closed and at peace with herself, she sang as one of only a handful of female members of a Salentine ensemble. This traditional vocal style seemed to incarnate a personal and collective history of traditional Salentine female identity, and proved deeply moving to her audience for this reason, too. Another young woman in her twenties told of not being able to go out at night unescorted; another of not being permitted to attend college outside the local area. In an earlier era, the female lament might instead have had to do with the choice of marriage partner (as in the film *Pizzicata*).

Even today, the erotic possibilities of the *pizzica* should not be minimized. It is indeed a means of sexual, bodily self-expression, and its wide appeal to

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *Le Striare* below.

<sup>53</sup> Montinaro, ed., *Canti rituali*, tracks A3, A5, B3, B10; and idem, ed., *Ninne nanne*, track B4.

women (and some men) may also be related to this fact. Some openly acknowledge this. The entire area of gender relations in the Salento, their representation in and mediation through its music and song cultures, merits further investigation. Statements such as “I canti d’amore salentini sono di genere maschile. La donna, almeno nelle centinaia di essi [di cui dispongo], non parla quasi mai”<sup>54</sup> are extremely significant.<sup>55</sup>

#### FEMALE CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

So absent were women from the music-producing scene in the Salento that a need to affirm and reappropriate this female culture produced a short-lived, but nonetheless significant, female group called *Le Striare* (The Witches) which formed and disbanded in 1997. It brought together eclectic and socially diverse women (e.g., housewives, a beautician, a psychic, an intellectual, musicians, and others; see fig. 27) in a unique, quasi self-help group, with no pretensions to being professional musicians.<sup>56</sup> They sought to bring out the timid and the shy and to facilitate their initiation into the dance circle. One of the group’s leaders, a psychic and healer (fig. 28), interviewed during the summer of 2000,<sup>57</sup> continued to see her role as something of a “handmaiden” of St. Paul (my term). In the pilgrim’s chapel at Galatina that summer, during the earliest hours of the morning, she assisted the few afflicted who came to seek the saint’s grace. She kept the cameras and voyeurs away, made order in the chapel itself, and even played the music so needed by such pilgrims.

<sup>54</sup> Brizio Montinaro, introduction to *Musica e canti popolari del Salento*: Salentine love songs are of the masculine gender. Women, at least in the hundred or so songs [at my disposal], rarely speak.

<sup>55</sup> In considering this wider Salentine song tradition I have written elsewhere: “The Salentine song tradition metaphorically speaking, could provide an entire medicine cabinet of love potions, the most potent of which is the *pizzica* itself. These songs can cure love’s bite: the languishing variety, the comic, the violent and uncontrollable passions, even hatred and revenge against lovers or their scornful parents. Most frequently, however, love in these songs is not celebratory, but problematic and conflictual.” See Luisa Del Giudice, “Healing the Spider’s Bite: ‘Ballad Therapy’ and *Tarantismo*,” in *The Flowering Thorn: International Ballad Studies*, ed. Thomas A. McKean (Logan, Utah, 2003), pp. 23–33.

<sup>56</sup> They included Annalù Sabetta (coordinator), Cinzia Villani, Anna Giordano, Tiziana Stefano, Anna Rita Avantaggiato, Valentina Mazzotta, Stella Grande, Patrizia Sambati, Tiziana Boccadamo, Donatella Lettere, and Stefania de Dominicis, but the group was opened to all women “che si sentono striare” (“who feel themselves witches”); cf. Chiriatti, *Opilopilopopilopillo*, p. 127.

<sup>57</sup> After a most productive and insightful interview, lasting approximately two hours, during which I tested recording levels and so forth, it was both mysterious and shocking to find, once I returned to Los Angeles and began transcribing field tapes, that this interview tape was completely blank. For this reason, I was not able to provide details or direct quotations, but rather reconstructed it from memory.



Fig. 27. Among the once-active group of self-named witches (*Le Striare*) was musician  
Valentina Mazzotta



Fig. 28. Another *striara* (witch) psychic and healer

While such deliberate acts of female presence are not typical, there are notable exceptions: Ada Metafune of Ruffano (fig. 29, 30) not only frequently takes “center stage” literally *inside* the dance circle (*la ronda*),

but also dances the traditionally male-only sword dance of the Gypsies at Torre Paduli, often with traditional male dancers, whose respect she has earned. She is frequently surrounded by a group of women dancers and is conscious of her strong leadership role (fig. 31). She is a professional therapist, and conducts dance workshops as well. She and other women are often the focus of attention during the Torre Paduli St. Rocco festivities.



Fig. 29. Ada Metafuno selling frame drums at Torre Paduli





Fig. 30. Ada Metafune dancing the sword dance with Carlo “Canaja”



Fig. 31. Ada Metafune dancing a *pizzica* with another woman at Torre Paduli

Although not Salentine, Alessandra Belloni, a New York-based percussionist and dancer, actively pursues her role as music and dance

therapist,<sup>58</sup> encouraging women in her workshops to experience the healing power of this music, to reappropriate a female drumming tradition, to dance . . . and to self-identify as *tarantate*. They informally refer to themselves as *le tarantate*. The cover of her recent CD, entitled *Tarantata: Dance of the Ancient Spider*, features a photograph of Belloni dancing as though entranced—provoking a polemic reaction among some Salentine musicians. Typically, as reported by Belloni, her most loyal New York followers are southern Italian American women in search of their deeper cultural roots.<sup>59</sup>

The female component of the folk revival is a chapter waiting to be more fully articulated. What form will female resistance and self-expression take in the future Salento? Will its embodiment be largely restricted to dance? Or will women claim larger portions of the discourse on Salentine culture? Signs of a wider awakening are evident as increasing numbers of women (many nonnative) are drawn to Salentine music and dance. Besides the specific case of Italian American women, many of whom are making *tarantismo* an object of study as well as personal and artistic expression, several scholars of dance performance and dance therapy are increasingly becoming involved in Salentine programs (e.g., Roberta Collu, Karen Lütke; also see the program and festival photographs in Appendix A and B of this volume). The growing female presence in music and dance circles will surely contribute to a synergistic cultural response.

#### THE MEANINGS OF (NEO-)TARANTISMO

*Tarantismo* has heavily marked the culture of the Salento and continues to shape cultural discourse today. The “mythic” bite (*pizzica*) continues to have individual and sociohistoric meaning. But how has *tarantismo* as a concept evolved, and what are its present-day meanings? Of course, gender, level of formal education, age, professional vs. nonprofessional status of musicians, and social class are all factors contributing to the multivocality of responses. People have been attracted to the movement for a variety of reasons, from the professional (hence the economic motivation), to the cultural and ecological (heritage preservation and continuity), to the personal (liberation and healing). Briefly, the question of semantics will be reviewed here from the individual (dancer’s, musician’s) and the collective (the sociopolitical commentator’s) perspectives.

<sup>58</sup> Her drum and dance workshops are entitled “Rhythm is the Cure.”

<sup>59</sup> This particular audience may prove an unexpected niche for the music revival, as Alessandra has experienced in New York. As a result of “Performing Ecstasies,” I too noted that the festival had made a strong impact on Italian American women. One woman who attended from Chicago wrote: “The ‘Performing Ecstasies’ conference was life-altering for me. I never expected it to be so powerful and to ignite a larger movement of the *pizzicata* [sic] music here in the U.S. . . . I hope you will continue to [do this important work and] weave together and recover more and more of its meaning as it impacts Italian American women specifically.”

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 “A CRAZY URGE TO DANCE”<sup>60</sup>

Neo-*tarantismo* is commonly equated with the dance itself, and with the physiological urge to dance—what I call the “dancing shoe syndrome.”<sup>61</sup> That is, when the *pizzica* is played, those who are *tarantati* must dance (or vice versa, those who must dance may be identified as *tarantati*). For example, there is the story of 'Ntoni, a *tarantato* who could not resist the *pizzica* rhythms, despite his own best interests (i.e., releasing a bicycle's handlebars and falling off when he heard *pizzica* sounds).<sup>62</sup> Note variations on this theme: “It is a passion which is in the blood”; “How can you not dance when you hear the *tarantella*?” This passion may be linked to a very specific “rhythm of one's own.”<sup>63</sup> Winspeare, for instance, speaks of the dance obsession of his early initiation period as he was overcome by *una febbre danzatoria* (a dance fever), dancing three hours a day and achieving a near-physical state of nirvana. The period of initiation into this music culture is frequently remembered as all-consuming, as it invades and upsets both conscious and sleeping hours.<sup>64</sup>

## EXISTENTIAL OR ALTERED STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Paraphrasing button accordionist and composer Alessandro Girasoli: *tarantismo* is simply *un modo di essere* (a way of being), a technique, highly developed in *tarantate*, of freeing oneself from tension through music and dance. *Tarantate* are highly competent practitioners of a technique for the release of anxiety; they are freer spirits, and are able to channel their energies in this way.

When in the grips of the saint's dancing curse, classic *tarantate* were indeed believed to be in a trance state and while in this state could accomplish incredible acrobatic feats: they could dance for days, slither like a snake between the legs of a chair, climb to great heights and throw themselves down (from the altar in the Galatina chapel, or from precariously stacked chairs), or hold on and hang from ropes.

Musicians, dancers, and singers are variously affected by the music. However, when asked about the possibility of “trance,” or of an “ecstatic” or “altered state” induced by the dance or by *pizzica* music, few were willing

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<sup>60</sup> After Fernando Bevilacqua's photographic exhibit, *Una smodata voglia di ballo*.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. “The Red Shoes,” Hans Christian Andersen, 1845.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Chiriatti, *Morso d'amore*, pp. 23–26; also Del Giudice, “Introduction to Puglia and the Salento.”

<sup>63</sup> See the section subtitled “Male Musicians and Women Dancers” and n. 50 above.

<sup>64</sup> Edoardo Winspeare, “Confessioni di un malato di Pizzica,” *Contrappunti* (May 1996). See also Roberto Raheli, “Il cerchio,” in *Il cocchiere dei sogni* (Alezio [Lecce], 2000): “. . . quell'aria l'hai in testa neppure un momento ti lascia da solo. Ti gira nel cuore, ti avvolge, ti prende, ti porta più dentro, nel centro del cerchio” (“. . . that tune, you have it in your head, not even a moment does it leave you alone. It circles in your heart, it envelops you, it takes you, it leads you further in, into the center of the circle”).

to claim a state of ecstasy or trance (although some ensembles market their CDs using these terms). Many preferred more modest terms akin to “altered state of consciousness.” The nature of this “altered state” is variously described and named. A term used more than once is a spatial one, *andare fuori*, “to go,” or “to spin out”—that is, to go outside one’s normal state of consciousness, to lose sight of one’s immediate surroundings. In dance practice, however, it is just the spatial opposite: one may enter this state while *inside* the circle or *ronda*. A violinist and an accordion player in one ensemble speak about occasionally “going out” while playing the *pizzica*, and of guiding each other back to full consciousness and to the musical piece at hand. Feats of endurance while in this state have been described by musicians: for example, playing a single *pizzica* for 20 minutes and longer, without quite knowing how they did so.<sup>65</sup> Dancers describe their experiences as a state which could be associated with feelings of harmony, self-appreciation, beauty—suggesting a going *inward*, that is, at the center of the circle, at the center of themselves: “I feel beautiful inside and out when dancing,” or “I feel in harmony, free.” Raheli speaks of the magic and pull of being inside the *ronda*, inside the circle and the song, for the first time as the moment of highest catharsis and of unity (with oneself or a partner with whom one is linked through the eyes). But it can be an elusive state leading to the desire for more knowledge, for deeper experiences, and therefore can never be fully seized and held.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, one highly seasoned dancer noted the evolution of her dance experiences: whereas earlier in her career as a dancer she often lost sight of her surroundings, now instead, “when I am really inside the music,” she says, “I am perfectly conscious of my surroundings.” A singer describes her experience in this way: “I close my eyes and feel beautiful darkness when I sing, almost as though I were asleep.” At times, however, *andare fuori* may also refer to breaking social norms, as in the case of women who, while at the height of their cathartic dance experience, publicly bare their breasts. It is generally recognized that the virtue of this dance therapy is its *natural* (rather than substance-induced) method for attaining a sense of well-being and release from an assortment of existential ills. For many who are drawn to the music revival, it is this personal and experiential side—which clearly functions cross-culturally—that holds the greatest attraction.

#### A SALENTINE SOCIOPOLITICAL RESPONSE

To percussionist Enzo Fina, *tarantismo* instead is the Salentine’s historic, but still typical, response to sociopolitical trauma. In this interpretation of *tarantismo*, which essentially follows that of de Martino, Fina continues to

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Enzo Fina’s experience of an altered state as player of the “fina” (see Roberto Catalano, “Development and Hypnotic Performance of an African Lamellaphone in the Salentine Area: The Fina Case Study,” this volume).

<sup>66</sup> Raheli, “Il cerchio.”

lament the historic passivity of Salentines (the sort of response which produced phenomena such as *tarantismo*). Salentines still need to be jolted out of their lethargy, albeit the socioeconomic forces crushing them today are global (e.g., waves of refugees washing up on their shores, the first Gulf War, E.E.C. regulations changing the dynamics of local agriculture). Against the prevailing trends of globalization and ecologic disaster stand those of Fina's persuasion, who defend bio-cultural diversity, as well as local and indigenous cultures. For Salentines this means defending local cultural expressions such as *tarantismo* and continuing thereby to use it to express what is *not* within the social norm. *Tarantismo*, according to this viewpoint, is paradoxically seen as a means of jump-starting change. The spider—here representing the “dark side”<sup>67</sup>—is useful for finding solutions to life's problems by allowing us to venture “outside the box,” if even temporarily. According to Fina, our *taranta sorella* (sister spider), therefore, should not be killed, but treated as a valuable companion. If the music revival can bring Salentines out of their shells and communally interacting once again, Fina hopes they may awaken from their passivity and demand socially progressive change. The music becomes a catalyst for sociopolitical action.

#### A COMMUNAL REAFFIRMATION OF SALENTINE CULTURAL IDENTITY

Evidently, part of the magic of being inside the circle may be the very fact that Salentines are dancing in harmony with Salentine tradition. In the early 1990s the revival movement brought Salentines together once again in spontaneous, informal and intimate settings such as the *curti*, and now more publicly (at local, national, and international levels), after a long period of neglect, shame, confusion, and silence. Owning one's historic past, however painful, is healing. Indeed, in reactivating the symbolic culture of *tarantismo*, Salentines may even be commemorating a history of social malaise and class oppression. As the music scene becomes more crowded and noisy, however, many are beginning to distance themselves from the piazzas and retreating to quieter places.<sup>68</sup> They are not always unhappy at the general interest the

<sup>67</sup> I infer that Fina is using a Jungian understanding of “shadow” to refer to this “dark” side of Salentine culture.

<sup>68</sup> Some, indeed, would argue for another ancestral sound: *il sibilo lungo* (the long murmur), a quieter sound heard at dawn while standing next to the silver “sentinels,” the Salento's massive olive trees (see figs. 32, 33, 34). A passage of Antonio Verri's, fondly quoted by Fernando Bevilacqua in his film *Bit*, and used again as the title of his photographic exhibit on Salentine landscapes during “Essential Salento” (but also widely cited by various local writers), focuses attention on the land, on man's communion with that land, and on the silent, barely audible sound of that bond: “Cambia, cambierà di molto il volto della campagna, degli aggregati umani, di interi paesi . . . quel che non cambierà mai sarà l'idea del dialogo con la terra che l'uomo ha stabilito dal tempo dei tempi, il grosso respiro, il ‘Sibilo lungo’ che si può udire solo di mattina, mirando nella vastità dei campi, con accanto sentinelle silenziose gli alberi d'argento . . .” (“It changes, it will change much, the face of the land, of gathered humanity, of entire towns . . . what will never change is the idea of dialoguing with the

revival has awakened in Salentines in general, even in those merely interested in the music as a disco dance beat. At least it provides a *natural* means of exploring ecstasy. Some, such as Luigi Chiriatti, however, do voice the fear that the movement may prove to be only a flash in the pan if it is “consumed” too quickly. This sentiment has prompted many to plan for the long haul as they establish public archives, produce publications and sound recordings, and continue to collect, and insist that Salentines become widely educated about, their own traditions—beyond the musical ones.

One can appreciate why such reenactments of communal rituals (be they musical, festive, culinary, or other) are so important, and, in the specific Salentine context, how the music revival is contributing to other acts of cultural renewal.<sup>69</sup> Salentine festivals and *sagre*, local journals,<sup>70</sup> exhibitions, films,<sup>71</sup> and more now abound. This is a symptom of health. Many in the revival—from photographer Fernando Bevilacqua to writers such as Chiriatti—pay tribute to one man, a poet, Antonio Verri (1949–1993), publisher of the journal *Quotidiano dei poeti* (The poet’s daily), who inspired an entire generation toward creativity. Chiriatti calls him a *costruttori di uomini* (a builder of men) who brought together Salentines of all sorts and encouraged them (“tormented them”) to express their collective Salentine identity in whatever way necessary—by reciting, writing, performing, photographing, and so forth. He devoted his every breath to fostering local creativity, encouraging the timid to come forth, to overcome perceived limitations, and to express their personal experience of the Salento. These acts of individual expression would help restore communal health. Hence, from this perspective, it may be inferred, it was the (unofficial, homegrown) communal solidarity upon which *tarantismo* was predicated that was its greatest asset, value, and brilliance. The participation of those standing around the circle was as critical as the dancer at its center, and together they created communal stability, endurance—in the face of the crushing conditions of peasant life and the appalling indifference of the authorities toward their plight.

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earth, that humanity has established from time immemorial, the long breath, ‘the deep murmur’ which can be heard only in the early morning, while looking out over the vast fields, while standing next to the silver trees, the silent sentinels . . .”)

<sup>69</sup> Take for instance the case of filmmaker Edoardo Winspeare: after making documentaries on Capaera in Brasil and on Flamenco music in Spain, both experiences caused him to take a second look at his native *pizzica*. He describes his discovery and emersion in the vortex of this music, beginning in 1989. It was the music which brought him back to his land, where he began to merge identities in a profound way.

<sup>70</sup> See the journals *Le pietre* and *Kurumuny* (the latter is the term for a young olive tree, about 30 years old, or for the offshoot which grows from the base of an old tree).

<sup>71</sup> Edoardo Winspeare has given the culture of *tarantismo* and its music great attention in recent documentary and feature films such as *Pizzicata* and *Sangue Vivo*. The success of *Pizzicata*, in particular, has brought *tarantismo*, and the *pizzica*, to the attention of a wide, predominantly Italian but also international, audience.

Many in the revival pay tribute to Verri by continuing to play midwife to one another's creativity, such as Agostino Casciaro (see fig. 35), a papier mâché maker (a traditional art in the Salento). He has begun publishing a new narrative series, *Il cocchiere dei sogni* (The coachman of dreams) (coedited with Annalea Chiriatti, with a reclining, dreaming, Buddha-like Verri on its masthead), featuring local writings and reflections on all aspects of Salentine culture. He also sponsors La Sagra dei Curli (The Festival of Twirling Tops), a two- to three-day retreat that began in 1997 at Vignacastri (Lecce), to which Salentines come to share their stories.

It may not at all be the question of personal ecstasy, in the end, which is of greatest value in the music revival—although so many do dance, sing, or play an instrument—but instead that, through its own primal sound, the region can own its history and be brought into harmony with itself. The culture and music of *tarantismo* has evolved, adapted, embraced and enfolded many disparate elements into its circle and is proving remarkably resilient. Most importantly, it still dances Salentines back to communal health while (today) publicly celebrating Salentine cultural identity.





Fig. 32. Examples of the ubiquitous “silent sentinels” (olive trees) on the Salentine landscape, much beloved of the local poet Antonio Verri, who writes of these “sentinelle silenziose gli alberi d’argento”



Fig. 33. Examples of the ubiquitous “silent sentinels” (olive trees) on the Salentine landscape, much beloved of the local poet Antonio Verri



Fig. 34. One of the ubiquitous “silent sentinels” (olive trees) on the Salentine landscape, much beloved of the local poet Antonio Verri, who writes of these “sentinelle silenziose gli alberi d’argento”

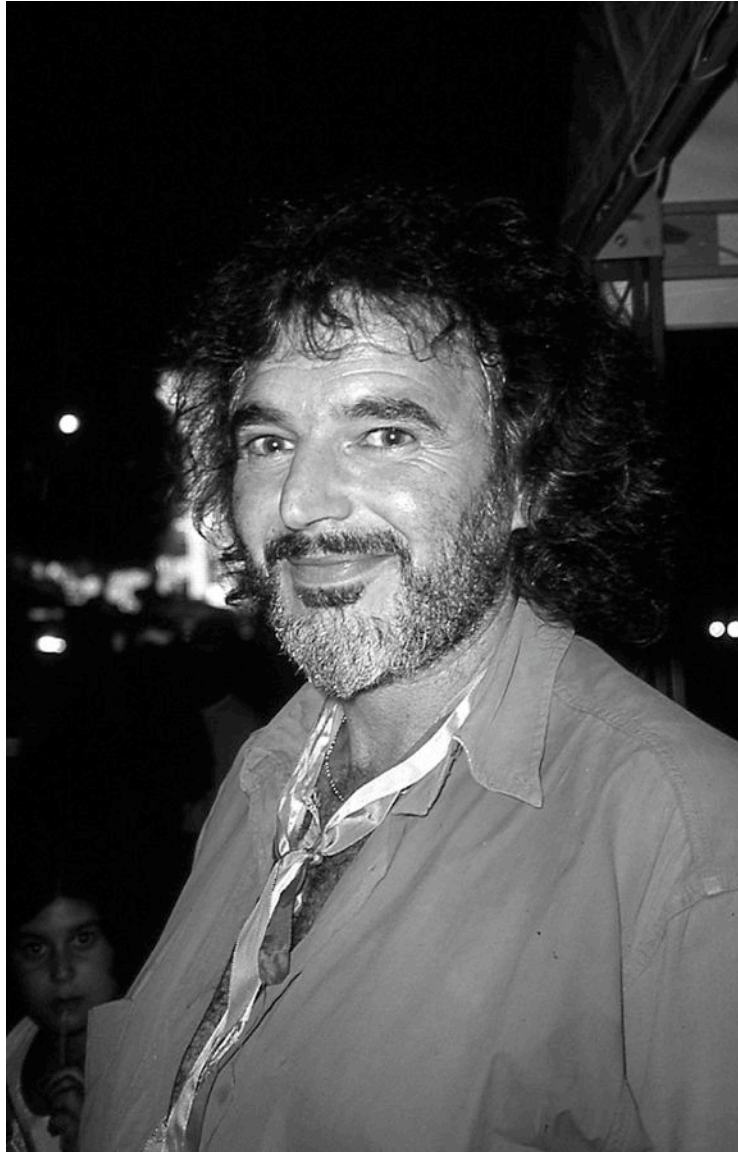


Fig. 35. Agostino Casciaro, cultural activist and organizer of La Sagra dei Curli (The Festival of Twirling Tops)

## Appendix

While the literature on *tarantismo* is vast and will not be summarized here, references to many key, historic texts can be found in *La terra del rimorso*. Offered here below instead are more recent publications on the topic, some reprints of historic texts, along with critical works, and some fiction. A list of films (documentary and feature) and recordings (field recordings and revival) on the music of the Salento is also included. This list does not presume to be inclusive, for the literature is augmented almost daily.

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Del Giorgi, Pierpaolo. *Tarantismo e rinascita: I riti musicali e coreutici della pizzica-pizzica e della tarantella*. Lecce, 1999.

Di Lecce, Giorgio. *La danza della piccola taranta: cronache da Galatina 1908–1993 a memoria d'uomo*. Rome, 1994.

Di Mitri, Gino Leonardo, ed. *Quarant'anni dopo De Martino: atti del Convegno internazionale di studi sul tarantismo, Galatina, 24–25 ottobre 1998*. 2 vols. Nardò, 1999.

Gallini, Clara, ed. *Ernesto de Martino: la ricerca e i suoi percorsi*. La Ricerca folklorica 13. Brescia, 1986.

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*La tarantola iperborea: scrittori del Settecento svedese sul tarantismo*. (Eighteenth-century Swedish writings on tarantismo: Harald Vallerius, Emanuel Swedenborg, Mårten Kähler.) Reprint. Nardò, n.d.

Mina, Gabriele, and Sergio Torsello. *La tela infinita: bibliografia degli studi sul tarantismo mediterraneo 1945-2004*. Nardò, 2004.

Panico, Fernando. *Il vestito bianco: ricerca etno-antropologica sul tarantismo pugliese*. Milan, 1983.

Rossi, Annabella. *E il mondo si fece giallo: il tarantismo in Campania*. Vibo Valentia, 1991.

Salvatore, Gianfranco, et al. *Transe, guarigione, mito: antropologia e storia del tarantismo*. Nardò, 2000.

Schmeer, Gisela. *Il panno rosso: dove si narra di un uomo pizzicato dalla tarantola*. Lecce, 2001. Fiction.

Schneider, Marius. *La danza delle spade e la tarantella: saggio musicologico, etnografico e archeologico sui riti di medicina*. (Original title: *La danza de espadas y la tarantela: Ensayo musicológico, etnográfico y arqueológico*.) Edited and translated by Pierpaolo De Giorgi. Lecce, 1999.

Turchini, Angelo. *Morso, morbo, morte: la tarantola fra cultura medica e terapia popolare*. Milan, 1987.

### **Filmography**

*Bit: stretti nello spazio senza tempo: viaggio nel tarantismo salentino*. Directed by Fernando Bevilacqua. Lecce: Argo Video, 1995. Documentary.

Carpitella, Diego. *Meloterapia del tarantismo*. 1960. Documentary.

*La sposa di San Paolo*. Directed by Gabriella Rosaleva. Arba Films, 1990. Feature film.

*La terra del rimorso*. Directed by G. Mingozzi. 1982. Documentary.

*Morso d'amore*. Directed by A. Miscuglio and R. Daopoulos. 1981. Documentary.

*Pizzicata*. Directed by Edoardo Winspeare. Basic Cinematografica, 1996. Feature film.

*San Paolo e la Tarantola*. Directed by Edoardo Winspeare and Stefanie Kremser-Koehler. 1991. Documentary.

*San Rocco: Etno '98*. Directed by Biagio Panico and Antonio Portone. Associazione Novaracne, 1998. Documentary.

*Taranta*. Directed by Gian Franco Mingozzi. Pantheon Films, 1961. Documentary.

### **Sound Recordings**

Alla Bua. *U rusciu de lu mare: Antidotum-tarantulae*. Stella Lucente. Compact disk.

Aramiré: Compagnia di Musica Salentina. *Opillopillopiopillo*. Compact disk.

Belloni, Alessandra. *Tarantata: Dance of the Ancient Spider*. Sounds True compact disk STA MM00117D.

Canzoniere di Terra d'Otranto. *Bassa musica*. Il Canzoniere compact disk CTO0001.

Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino. *Ballati tutti quanti ballati forte ca la taranta è viva e nun è morta*. Dunya Records compact disk fy 8011.

Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino. *Carataranta: incanti e pizzichi della taranta*. Il tamburello compact disk.

Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino. *Ni pizzecau lu core*. Compact disk.

De Giorgi, Pierpaolo, and Tamburellisti di Torrepaduli. *Pizzica e Trance*. Compact disk.

Di Lecce, Giorgio. *Arakne mediterranea: Attarantati 1*. Al Sur compact disk.

Ghetonìa. *Grecìa salentina: canti e musiche popolari*. Compact disk.  
Ghetonìa. *Malìa*. Compact disk.

L'Aia Noa. *Salento Pizzica e Tarante*. Compact disk.

Lomax, Alan, and Diego Carpitella. *Puglia: The Salento*. Alan Lomax collection, Italian treasury. Rounder compact disk 82161-1805-2.

Martino, Don Ciccillo, e i suoi alunni. *Il mito delle tarantelle*. Compact disk.

Menamenamò. *Cunti, canti e soni*. Compact disk MC 9701.

*Pizziche salentine 2*. Anthology. Il tamburello compact disk TAMB003.

Xanti Yaca Compagnia delle arti. *La luna dei borboni*. Compact disk.

Zoè, Officina, and Canti e Danze del Salento. *Terra*. Altre compact disk.

Zoè, Officina. *Sangue Vivo*. Altre compact disk.

## Appendix A

### Conference and Festival Program

#### Performing Ecstasies:

#### Music, Dance, and Ritual in the Mediterranean

conference, public lectures, concerts, workshops, exhibitions, films

Under the auspices of the Consul General of Italy

**October 7–28, 2000**

#### Locations

IIC - Istituto Italiano di Cultura  
1023 Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90024, (310) 443-3250  
CAFAM - Craft and Folk Art Museum  
5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036, (323) 937-4230  
Popper Theater/Ostin Hall in Schoenberg Bldg., UCLA  
415 Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90095, (310) 206-3033  
St. Alban's Episcopal Church  
580 Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90024  
Lyman Hall, Pomona College, Thatcher Music Building  
340 North College Ave., Claremont, CA 91711, (909) 621-8155  
Angeli Caffè  
7274 Melrose Ave., Los Angeles, CA, 90046 (323) 936-9086

#### October 7, 2000 through February 2001

#### CAFAM

#### **Exhibition: *The Lomax Collection: Photographic Essay***

Anna Lomax Chairetakis, Goffredo Plastino, curators

Black and white photographs taken on the pioneering ethnomusicological field collecting campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s, by Alan Lomax in Italy and Spain. Most shown for the first time

#### **Exhibition: *Musical Instruments of Trance and Ecstasy***

Roberto Catalano, curator

Exhibit of the musical instruments used in the traditional rituals of trance and related phenomena throughout the Mediterranean

#### Saturday, October 14, 2000

#### CAFAM

#### **11:00 A.M. Illustrated Lecture: *Italian Traditional Song***

Luisa Del Giudice

#### **12:00 P.M. Demonstration: *Sounds of Italy and the Mediterranean***

Roberto Catalano

#### **2:00 P.M. Children's Workshop: *Dancing Out the Spider: Salentine (Italian) Drumming Traditions***

Enzo Fina

**Sunday, October 15, 2000**

St. Alban's Church

**4:00 P.M. Concert: *Stabat Mater* by Gioacchino Rossini**

St. Alban's Choir

St. Alban's Choir, soloists and a full symphonic orchestra under the direction of James Vail presents Gioacchino Rossini's celebrated *Stabat Mater* (1841), a dramatic setting of the thirteenth-century sequence traditionally attributed to Jacopone da Todi. The work will be preceded by the Gregorian chant setting of the text, sung in procession.

IIC

**Festival of Film: *Music of the Salento, Puglia*****5:30 P.M. "Tarantismo" in Film: *A Guided Tour***

Luisa Del Giudice

A guided tour (in English) by Luisa Del Giudice through selected film clips of documentary and feature films on *tarantismo*, the traditional southern Italian dance therapy for the bite of the mythic spider. Films include the classic documentary *Taranta*, directed by Gian Franco Mingozzi, 1961, and narrated by Nobel prize poet, Salvatore Quasimodo; *San Paolo e la Tarantola*, directed by Edoardo Winspeare and Stefanie Kremser-Koehler, 1991; the more recent and wordless *Bit: stretti nello spazio senza tempo: viaggio nel tarantismo salentino*, directed by photographer Fernando Bevilacqua, 1995; and others.

**6:30 P.M. Wine and cheese****7:30 P.M. *Sangue Vivo*, U.S. Premier (English subtitles)**

Q &amp; A with director Edoardo Winspeare

U.S. premier of this recent release (with English subtitles). Presentation by director Edoardo Winspeare (director of the award-winning film *Pizzicata*) and artistic director Giorgia Cecere (cancelled)

**Tuesday, October 17, 2000**

Angeli Caffè

**6:00 P.M. Dinner*****Food Traditions of the Mediterranean: Salento, Southern Puglia, Italy***

Evan Kleiman

Los Angeles Slow Food Convivium highlights the quintessentially Mediterranean cuisine of the Salento, a cuisine based on olive oil, bread, vegetables, fish, and wine. This special food event, in conjunction with the conference "Performing Ecstasies: Dance, Music, and Ritual in the Mediterranean," is hosted and prepared by Los Angeles chef, restaurateur, food writer, and convener of the Slow Food Convivium of Los Angeles, Evan Kleiman, at her well-known Westside restaurant, Angeli Caffè—long known for its promotion of Southern Pugliese specialties and products.

IIC

**7:00 P.M. Festival of Film: *Musical Devotions***

*A Voice From Heaven: In Loving Memory of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan* (G. Asaro, 1999) (in English); *La Uglia: riti di attraversamento del fuoco in Basilicata* (The



“Guglia”: Firewalking Rites of Basilicata) (F. Marano, 1993); *La devozione sonora* (N. Scaldaferrì and S. Ciani) (in Italian)

**October 18–28, 2000**

IIC

**Exhibition: *Il luogo del culto: Galatina, immagini del tarantismo: 1970–1992*  
(*Pilgrimage to Galatina: Images of Tarantismo 1970–1992*)**

Luigi Chiriatti, curator

Photographs from the collections of Luigi Chiriatti, taken in Galatina (1970–1992), the traditional pilgrimage site of Salentine *tarantati*

**Exhibition: *Una Smodata Voglia di Ballo (A Crazy Urge to Dance)***

Fernando Bevilacqua, curator

The folk dance and music revival in photographs taken throughout southern Puglia during the 1980s and 1990s

**Wednesday, October 18, 2000**

St. Alban’s Church

**7:00 P.M. Workshop: *Southern Italian tambourine and ritual dances***

Alessandra Belloni

**Thursday, October 19, 2000**

Gamelan Room, 1659 Schoenberg Bldg., UCLA

**2:30 P.M. Lecture/Demonstration: *Music of Sufi Tradition and Other Ecstatic Traditions of the Middle East***

Ali Jihad Racy and Ensemble

This UCLA ensemble includes singer Ahmed El-Asmer performing Mawwal and Qasida (traditional Arabic songs), percussionist Souhail Kaspar, and solo improvisations on the *nay*, *buzuq* and *oud* by Dr. Racy, professor of ethnomusicology, UCLA.

Dodd 275, UCLA

**5:00 P.M. Lecture: *Reinventing the Past: Hollywood Myths of Ancient Rome***

Valerio Manfredi, Classical Archaeologist, Bologna, Italy

Schoenberg Hall, UCLA

**8:00 P.M. Concert**

***Tarantismo and Traditional Salentine Music***

Aramirè

***Tarantata: Dance of the Ancient Spider***

Alessandra Belloni

**Friday, October 20, 2000**  
 Popper Theater, UCLA  
**9:00 A.M.–3:00 P.M. Conference**  
 Panel Sessions (Sessions 1 and 2)

**9:00–9:30 A.M. INTRODUCTION AND OPENING REMARKS**

Tim Rice, UCLA; Luisa Del Giudice, Italian Oral History Institute

**9:30 A.M.–12:00 noon SESSION 1: PERFORMED ECSTASIES AND TRANCE IN ANTIQUITY**

Chair: Joseph Falaky Nagy, UCLA

***Ritual and Ecstatic Dances in Classical Literature and Ceramic Iconography***

Valerio Massimo Manfredi, Department of Classical Archaeology,  
 Università Bocconi, Milan, Italy

***The Protean Performer: Mimesis and Identity in Late Antique Discussions of the Theater***

Ruth Webb, Department of Classics, Princeton University

***Trance, and the Uses of Ecstasy on the North African Rim in Late Antiquity***

Nancy van Deusen, Department of Music, Claremont Graduate University

**1:30–3:00 P.M. SESSION 2: TRANCE AND HEALING**

Chair: Robert Gurval, UCLA

***Healing in Ecstasy: Ancient Greek and South Italian Practices***

Andromache Karanika, Princeton University

***Harnessing Ecstasy to Heal: Music, Movement and Therapy in the Context of the Salento, Italy***

Karen Lüdtkke, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Oxford

**Presentation of CD: *Canto d'amore: canti, suoni, voci nella Grecia salentina***

(Love Song: Songs, Sounds and Voices from the Griko-speaking Area of the Salento), Lecce: Edizioni Aramirè and UCLA Ethnomusicology Department

**3:00 P.M. Concert: *Sacred or Secular? Ecstasy in Early Music***

UCLA Sounds

The UCLA Sounds Early Music ensemble features vocal and instrumental works of the Middle Ages through the seventeenth century. In conjunction with the “Performing Ecstasies” conference, the Sounds presents a program that explores settings of ecstatic texts from the first half of the second millennium C.E. The program includes musicological commentary by the performers.

***Iberian Jewish Women’s Songs: Ritual, Dance, Meditation***

Judith Cohen, with Tamar Ilana

Songs of Sephardic, crypto-Jewish, and medieval Iberian women and their cultural diasporas, performed by Judith Cohen, with Tamar Ilana, accompanying themselves on traditional percussion and string instruments

St. Alban's Church

**5:30 P.M. Workshop: *The Pizzica and Salentine Drumming Traditions***

Enzo Fina

Pomona College

**8:00 P.M. Concert: *Tarantata: Dance of the Ancient Spider***

Alessandra Belloni

**Saturday, October 21, 2000**

IIC

**9:00 A.M.–5:00 P.M. Conference**

Panel Sessions (Sessions 3 and 4)

**9:00–12:00 SESSION 3: AFRICA AND AFRICAN MUSICAL CROSSROADS**

Chair: Nancy van Deusen, Claremont Graduate University

***La religion chantée: un mawlid à Kenadsa (Chanted Religion: A Mawlid in Kenadsa)***

Abderrahmane Moussaoui, University of Oran (USTO), Algeria

***Music of the Gnawa in Morocco***

Antonio Baldassarre, Independent Scholar, L'Aquila, Italy

***From Pantalone to Papa Legba: The Influence of Commedia dell'arte on the Manifestation of Divinities in Haitian Vodou Ceremonies***

Donald Cosentino, World Arts and Cultures, UCLA

***Migration, Discovery, and Hypnotic Performance of an African Lamellaphone in the Salentine Area: The Fina Case Study***

Roberto Catalano, UCLA

**1:30–3:30 P.M. SESSION 4: ON MUSICIANS, SINGERS AND DANCERS**

Chair: Luisa Del Giudice, Italian Oral History Institute

***“My Heart's There and My Soul's on Its Way”: Portuguese Women's Pilgrimage Drum-Songs***

Judith Cohen, York University, Canada

***Luigi Stifani, musicista delle tarantate: l'uomo, la musica, e la taranta (Luigi Stifani, Musician to the Tarantate: The Man, His Music, and the Tarantula)***

Luigi Chiriatti, Associazione Culturale Aramirè, Lecce, Italy

***Pizzica Tarantata: riflessioni di un suonatore (Pizzica Tarantata: Reflections of a Musician)***

Roberto Raheli, Associazione Culturale Aramirè, Lecce, Italy

***Reconstructing the Sense of Presence: Tarantula, Arlìa, and Dance***

Placida Staro, Independent Scholar, Bologna, Italy

**3:30–5:00 P.M. Roundtable: Musicians “Performing Ecstasies” and Transformative Experience**

Ali Jihad Racy, Alessandra Belloni, John LaBarbera, Edoardo Winspeare, Enzo Fina, Morteza Varzi

**Sunday, October 22, 2000**

IIC

**9:00 A.M.–5:00 P.M. Conference**

Panel Session (Session 5)

**9:00–12:00 A.M. SESSION 5: ITALIAN RITUALS OF HEALING, DEVOTION AND MAGIC**

Chair: Donald Cosentino, UCLA

***Dance of the Earth***

Augusto Ferraiuolo, Department of Cultural Anthropology, Università di Cassino, Italy

***Body/Sound Performance in Two Religious Rituals from Basilicata***

Nicola Scaldaferrì, Department of Music and Theater, Università di Bologna, Italy

***Folk Revival and the Culture of Tarantismo in the Salento***

Luisa Del Giudice, Director, Italian Oral History Institute, & UCLA

***Tracing the Ways of the Strega: The Construction of Italian American Witchcraft***

Sabina Magliocco, California State University, Northridge

Freud Theater, UCLA

**2:00 P.M. Concert**

***Voices of Mystical Devotions: Sufi Music from the Arab World***

Ali Jihad Racy Ensemble

***Mediterranean Music of the Crossroads***

Musicantica

IIC

**6:30 P.M. Festival of Film**

***Italian Rites and Festivals*** (in Italian)

Luigi Di Gianni, filmmaker (RAI, 1958–1972)

Short documentaries on festivals of Southern Italy, by renowned filmmaker, Luigi Di Gianni, made between 1958–1972 for RAI (Italian National Television and Radio): *La madonna del Pollino* (The Madonna of Pollino); *I Fugenti* (The Flagellants); *Sud e magia* (South and Magic); *Nascita e morte nel meridione* (Birth and Death in the South); *Il male di S. Donato* (St. Donato's Disease); *La potenza degli spiriti* (The Power of Spirits)

***The Dance of the "Ori" [Gold]: The Traditional Carnival of Ponte Caffaro***

R. Morelli (RAI, 1987–1988)

**Saturday, October 28, 2000**

CAFAM

**11:00 A.M. Workshop: *Traditional Social and Ritual Dances of Northern Italy***

Placida Staro

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**Organizing Institutions**

IOHI - Italian Oral History Institute, in collaboration with  
UCLA Department of Ethnomusicology  
UCLA School of the Arts and Architecture  
IIC - Istituto Italiano di Cultura of Los Angeles  
City of Los Angeles Craft and Folk Art Museum  
Claremont Graduate University

**Co-Sponsors**

California Council for the Humanities  
UCLA Center for European and Russian Studies  
St. Alban's Episcopal Church  
Italian Heritage Culture Foundation  
Sounds True  
Pomona College  
UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies

**With the support of**

Remo Percussion Inc.  
UCLA Department of Classics  
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UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures  
UCLA Romance Linguistics and Literature Program  
UCLA Center for Jewish Studies  
UCLA Folklore and Mythology Program and Archives  
Center for the Study of Religion at UCLA  
Slow Food Convivium of Los Angeles  
Angeli Caffè  
With the participation of Turath.org, Sangeet School of World Music and Dance,  
Fieri National, Claire Chandler, Tom Nixon of KPFK  
Festival/Conference Organizer: Luisa Del Giudice, IOHI  
Organizing Committee: Alberto Pranzo, IOHI; Timothy Rice, UCLA; Nancy van  
Deusen, Claremont Graduate School  
Webmasters: Jack Bishop, David Martinelli, UCLA Ethnomusicology Lab  
Exhibition Curatorial Assistance: Marcie Page, CAFAM; Giovanna Zamboni,  
Italian Culture Heritage Foundation  
Graphic Design: Giorgio Borruso

## Appendix B

### Conference and Festival Photographs

Photographs by Luigi Chiriatti, Mary Ciuffitelli, Luisa Del Giudice, Meri Howard, Karen Lüdtkke, Betsy Mathias, and Rosa Serratore



Fig. 1. At conference opening, *front, right to left*: IIC Director Guido Fink, Italian Consul General Massimo Roscigno, IOHI Director Luisa Del Giudice, and speaker Valerio Manfredi; *back, center to right*: Nancy van Deusen, Ruth Webb



Fig. 2. Antonio Castrignanò, Luigi Schito, Roberto Raheli, Luigi Chiriatti of Aramirè singing at exhibition opening, Craft and Folk Art Museum

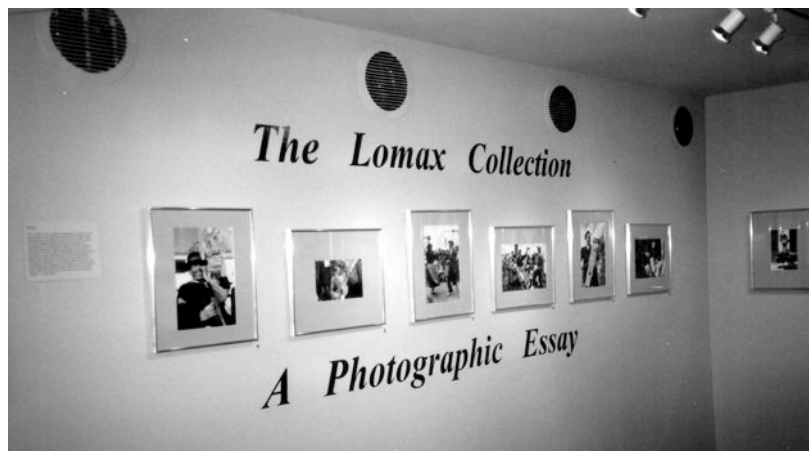


Fig. 3. *The Lomax Collection: A Photographic Essay*, curators Anna Lomax Chairetakis, Goffredo Plastino (Craft and Folk Art Museum)



Fig. 4. Opening reception at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura (IIC)



Fig. 5. Opening reception at IIC: *at center*: Giorgio Borruso, Performing Ecstasies graphic designer, and Alberto Pranzo, IOHI; *in the background*: Luigi Chiriatti's photographic exhibition





Fig. 6. Roberto Catalano's lecture/demonstration on southern Italian and Mediterranean instruments

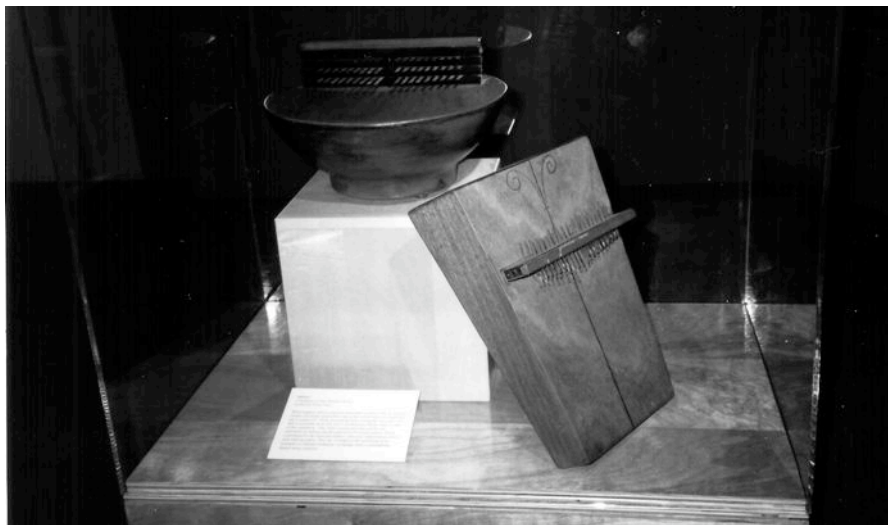


Fig. 7. *Musical Instruments of Trance and Ecstasy*, curator Roberto Catalano (Craft and Folk Art Museum)



Fig. 8. *Musical Instruments of Trance and Ecstasy*, curator Roberto Catalano (Craft and Folk Art Museum)



Fig. 9. *Musical Instruments of Trance and Ecstasy*, curator Roberto Catalano



Fig. 10. Taking a conference dance break:  
Luigi Chiriatti and young friend



Fig. 11. Enzo Fina and Salentine  
drumming workshop for children



Fig. 12. Enzo Fina and Salentine drumming workshop for children



Fig. 13. Speakers Augusto Ferraiuolo and Sabina Magliocco



Fig. 14. Ali Jihad Racy and Ensemble: lecture/demonstration of Sufi traditions from the Arab world



Fig. 15. Ali Jihad Racy Ensemble in concert at Freud Theater, UCLA





Fig. 16. Placida Staro, Marie Di Cocco and Celeste Di Pietropaolo during the workshop on “Traditional Social and Ritual Dances of Northern Italy”



Figs. 17 and 18. Placida Staro demonstrating Emilian fiddling style



Fig. 19. Martha Gowan of UCLA Sounds in concert:  
“Inebria Me—Sacred or Secular? Ecstasy in Early Music”



Fig. 20. Judith Cohen and Tamar Ilana, musicians:  
“Iberian Jewish Women’s Songs: Ritual, Dance, Meditation”



Fig. 21. Judith Cohen on Portuguese square drum



Fig. 22. Roberto Catalano singing Sicilian carter's song



Fig. 23. Lorenzo Buhne, Roberto Catalano, Enzo Fina of Musicàntica



Fig. 24. Musicàntica in concert at Freud Theater, UCLA



Fig. 25. Aramirè in concert at Schoenberg Hall, UCLA





Fig. 26. Fernando Bevilacqua, Salentine photographer from Muro Leccese and curator of the exhibition *Una Smodata Voglia di Ballo* (A Crazy Urge to Dance)



Fig. 27. Conference speakers outside the Istituto Italiano di Cultura, *left to right*: Nicola Scaldaferri, Luigi Chiriatti, Augusto Ferraiuolo, Placida Staro, and Donald Cosentino



Fig. 28. Enzo Fina, Karen Lüdtkke, Roberta Collu, Antonio Baldassarre



Fig. 29. Speaker Donald Cosentino at IIC



Fig. 30. Abderrahmane Moussaoui



Fig. 31. Roberto Catalano, Enzo Fina, with instrument “fina”



Fig. 32. Luigi Chiriatti, Luisa Del Giudice, Kedron Parker, Lorenzo Buhne



Fig. 33. Luisa Del Giudice and Roberta Collu, dancing the *pizzica*



Fig. 34. Roberta Collu and Karen Lüdtke dancing the *pizzica*

