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Contested Knowledge

Political Dimensions of European Ethnology and Folklore Studies in Post-War Europe

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Folklore, Folklore Studies, and Society in Italy, 1948–1978

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Introduction: History, current affairs, and memory

The historical past is something of an obsession in Italian cultural and political life, not only because of the country's rich artistic heritage and ubiquitous monuments, or the passion that feeds the historical re-enactments scene, widespread over the entire country. Rather, it is the recent past that should be the object of the contemporary historian's attention, as it haunts the houses of parliament, the press, and broadcast news.

The twentieth-century past, beginning with the twenty-year fascist period, is often in the limelight because of the inexhaustible revanchism (Eco 2018; Filippi 2019; Canfora 2024) of those nostalgic elements, which seize every occasion to attempt to reverse the judgment of history and to water down responsibilities, to dilute memories, and even to deny those values of the popular Resistance that led to the birth of the new, democratic, and republican Italy under the flag of a fairly advanced and distinctly modern constitution. A veritable folklore has emerged from under this revisionist gaze on the fascist past (Heywood 2019; 2020): from anniversary parades in honour of Mussolini's birthday to wine that is bottled and sold with his image on the label. Folklore is also evoked, improperly but unfortunately often, by some judges who choose to absolve neofascist actions as merely symbolic and innocent folkloristic performances. In this way, chronicles (i.e. news reports) and history remain entangled; the past century cannot be consigned to history and is condemned to live on with an ongoing present relevance.

The Republic has also been settling another sticky aspect of the past, an accumulation of dramatic events, scars that even today contribute to the highest debt of the Italian state that is owed to its citizens – that debt of truth represented by a long list of unsolved juridical cases, starting quite soon after the rebirth of the State and continuing down to the present (Cento Bull 2007, 82). 'I know, but I haven't the proof', is how Pier Paolo Pasolini (1974) worded his feelings regarding the bombs, outrages, and attempted coups[1] that he had been witnessing a few months before being

1. The eversive activity began with some attempted coups d'état (e.g. the Piano Solo in 1964, the Golpe Borghese in 1970), but the 'strategy of tension' came with the bomb at the Banca dell'Agricoltura in Piazza Fontana in Milan in 1969 (17 people dead) and continued with the train attack at Gioia Tauro in 1970 (6 people killed), the bomb at the Milan police station in 1973 (3 dead), the bomb in Piazza della Loggia in Bescia in 1974 (8 dead), and the bomb on the Italicus train in 1974 (12 dead). The list would grow even after Pasolini's death, with

assassinated in 1975. This unsolved case can be added to a list that continued to grow: the Moro kidnapping and killing (1978), the bomb at Bologna railway station, the Itavia plane brought down by a missile (1980), the discovery of a subversive Masonic lodge (1982), and another bombed train (1984) leading up to the season of Mafia massacres (1992–1993) that ended with the Berlusconi peace (Ginsborg 1989 [2003]; 1998). This one was a real turning point regarding the relationship between the present and the fascist past, between white-collar crime and global finance, between the Mafia and politics that is the subject of present-day parliamentary chronicles.

The Italian state's debt of truth ballooned under Berlusconi's long and hectic political hegemony; with his jokes, his irreverent performances, and his predatory sexual promiscuity, political folklore also grew, just as the credibility of and respect for state institutions were crumbling. The Boomer generation, to which I belong, thus reached adulthood, witnessing such a back and forth between history and news or chronicles that memory too may be considered a fruitful source, a gaze that tracks continuities among facts, embodying them in a generational perspective, lived history, and living testimonies. Such is my positioning as regards the topic of the present chapter,[2] which aims to focus on the first half of such a timeline, jumping from one date, 18 April, 1948, down to 9 May, 1978, marking the first three decades of Italy's recovered dignity and innocence, both quickly lost and still now desperately searched for.

This rapid overview of events has an unseen unifying thread: the weave of this chapter concerns variations in the status, nature, or role of folklore as a discipline passing from an age of assumed innocence to a stage of research and militancy, through the situation of the postwar '50s and a development of conflictual folklore. I then examine a phase which saw an academic recovery, leading to a complex modernity, down to the end of what Pasolini termed 'the Bread Age'. I weave in events and protagonists to illustrate the phases which I have witnessed or experienced.

An evolving folklore of 'innocence'

I take as a starting point the radical changes that occurred during the events, both tragic and heroic, between July 1943 and April 1945. They ended with a short season of political unity, marked by a general consensus to vote for the Republic (the first general election to take place without either census or gender bias) and the election of a Constituent Assembly, where all the political groups who had been protagonists

the massacre of Bologna in 1980 (85 deaths) and the Train 904 bombing in 1984 (16 deaths) (Zavoli 1992). The following season, known as the "lead years" saw a harsh confrontation between left extremist and neo-fascist groups, that flew into the terrorist aggression to the State by the Brigate Rosse (Luzzatto 2023), always in a lack of transparency and with state's organs under the influence of Masonic lodge as P2 (Tobagi 2023; Dondi, Iuso, Pellegrini 2024).

2. The passion for history is also spread throughout anthropological and folklore scholarship, partly because of the legacy of historicist hegemony, partly answering to the need to consolidate the disciplinary field within the Academy, an Academy that until a few decades ago was particularly restricted and exclusive. Theories, methods, debates, schools, and authors have been thoroughly analysed by Giuseppe Cocchiara, Alberto M. Cirese, Vinigi Grottanelli, Pietro Clemente, Enzo Vinicio Alliegro, and Fabio Dei – all of whom will be quoted later in this admittedly limited and brief survey, which is nonetheless indebted to each one of them.

of the Resistance were represented. After this novelty and an aspiration to cut away the fascist past (Dimpflmeier 2023; Morace 2023), a need for appeasement began to seep through the various forces, ending with an amnesty for those who had borne responsibilities within the fascist regime's administration and leadership. This reconciling tendency soon turned into a general tendency towards forgiving and forgetting, which ascribed every sin to the evil German ally (Focardi 2005). Forgetting and absolving meant that all the main sectors of the State, from local town hall clerks to full professors and judges, were posts filled with the same names as 'before' (Woller 1997; Canosa 1999; Montroni 2016). This happened also in the academic field of folklore (though a very marginal one, within the humanities), whose representatives in the new democratic order and the university had previously been fervent fascists and had held important posts during the regime (Mugnaini 2023).

The fascist regime had incorporated the main traits of this rather weak discipline, relegated by the Academy to the margins of the mainstream because of strong opposition from the dominant *storicismo idealistico*, hegemonised by philology and permeated by late Romantic and nationalistic ideals (Angioni 1972; Cirese 1972; 1973; Clemente 1983). Through tools of governance such as the *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro*, a governmental top-down hierarchic structure encompassing and governing all grassroot leisure time organizations and expressions, the fascist regime from the very start had embraced and encouraged manifestations of local pride (Cavazza 1987) and local civic or religious traditions, stressing the importance of the staticity of each social strata position, blessing rural habits and supporting urban festivals (such as the Palio of Siena) and even promoting new ones (historic football in Florence, Saracen jousting in Arezzo, and the Palio race in Asti, among others). But as Cavazza (1997) has demonstrated, as its imperialistic aims progressed, the regime switched to an anti-regionalist policy, so as to assert the undisputed supremacy of the goals of the nation, celebrating the national language (Klein 1986; 1989; Della Valle and Gandolfo 2014) against dialects, and calling on local folklore institutions to pay due homage to the State and its ally (Cavazza 1987; Savelli 2014).

So, under the newly unfurled banners of democracy, the revival of folklore thus had to reckon with discontinuity both at the level of grassroots institutions and at the level of scholars and interpreters. The restoration of folklore studies' 'virginity' began soon enough. The chief compromised scholar, Raffaele Corso, was able to reopen his journal, restoring its previous title *Folklore* – the same one he had previously deleted in obedience to the norms of national language purification – and publishing a fairly complete collection of partisan songs (Mugnaini 2023). Raffaele Corso, who was in charge of 'Ethnography' at Naples Istituto Orientale, survived his compromise with the regime by remaining for almost all of the first post-war period as the factotum of anthropology in the academic context, managing to promote to the chair Giuseppe Cocchiara in Palermo, Carmelina Naselli in Catania, Gianfranco D'Aronco in Padua, and Paolo Toschi in Rome. All of them found shelter under the innocence of the philological approach or, in the latter case, by drawing on late-Frazerian theory when daring to touch on more complex subjects such as carnivals, feasts, and theatrical performances (Toschi, 1955).

On the ground, at grassroots level, the concept of *folk* (now 'The People', recognised and celebrated as a Protagonist, having experienced the novel possibility of being

a political subject) was undergoing a radical change. Folklore became what this new 'people' – now 'the masses' or 'citizens' – could express and demand from the institutions of the State, from politics, and from all the other traditionally dominant and hegemonic social subjects.

It is important to bear in mind that what had happened at the dawn of the Kingdom of Italy in the late 19th century was now going to be repeated: massive movements of people changing the demographic face of the country and its towns (Cumoli 2013). This meant moving from barely productive mountain areas down to the plains, where the State was strongly pushing for the reconstruction of the industrial sector; from the south to the northern regions, all heading to the industrial districts; and from Italy abroad, once again towards the Americas (Franzina 1979; 1995), Australia, South Africa, and other European countries. For example, a special agreement between Belgium and Italy brought hundreds of thousands of southern former peasants to work as miners in Belgian coal fields, so that Italy could count on this crucial energy resource (Gabaccia 2000; Bevilacqua, De Clementi and Franzina 2001; Cumoli 2009; Ricciardi 2016).

The *folk* who remained, in the words of Ernesto de Martino, 'outside history' (Levi 1945; de Martino 1949) were now moving, though in different directions: on one side towards modernity as offered by capitalism and the market, which implied leaving behind their original place and condition; on the other side to modernity as promised by the revolutionary programs of the Left (the *Partito Comunista Italiano* in first place) (Spriano 1975; Kertzer 1980; Shore 1990; Li Causi 1993), which meant political engagement for changes in the conditions of the rural masses. In practice, the latter entailed redistribution of large estates or improving the conditions of sharecropping in view of a future, more equal society. Another possibility was traditional continuity. Those who remained as shepherds, breeders, farmers, sharecroppers, sailors, charcoal burners, lumbermen, and artisans – or those who were unsure or lacking the resources to implement change – could count on two very solid pillars of support: the anti-communist and paternalistic pivot of the national government, starting already in 1948, and the Church. Let's unpack all this.

Folklore: Research and militancy

The post-Resistance season of unity ended with Prime Minister De Gasperi's trip to the USA to demand 'bread and coal', after which the Communist and Socialist parties were kicked out of the government. A general election was held in 1948, on April 18th, after a harsh campaign that saw a clash between the *Democrazia Cristiana party* (DC), supporter of and supported by the USA and the *Fronte Popolare*, in which the communist and socialist parties were allied for a political alternative, leaning towards the Soviet Union and other communist countries' models. The Church was crucial in the victory that assigned the government to the DC. The campaign was full of utopistic promises on one side and traditional certainties on the other: Virgins on pilgrimage, night processions, reminders to Almighty God against Stalin's appeal, women's honour – all were invoked as a defence against the free-love immorality of communism. Every single monastery and every parish were mobilised by the most

traditionalist of Popes, the hieratic Pius XII,[3] to win the historical battle of faith against fanatism and secularisation (Romano and Scabello 1975; Ottaviano and Soddu 2000; Novelli 2008).

Once the election was won, the political wind blew in the direction of a traditional life, innocent and pure, to be defended, if possible, against contamination by working-class ideology. Miraculous virgins continued to appear or to weep all throughout the 1950s. Though residual, in the smog of capitalist industrial development, folk traditions continued to offer subject matter to the scholars. Apart from those already named, five more are worthy of mention: Pier Paolo Pasolini, Italo Calvino, Alan Lomax, Diego Carpitella, and Ernesto de Martino.

The first two must be quoted as authors of two 'monumental' works, two editorial events that were emblematic – the second more than the first – of the new Italy's cultural production. An anthology of popular poetry, drawing on the immense repertoires inherited from the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century folklorists, was edited by Pier Paolo Pasolini (1955), respecting the original local dialect of the sources. The second, consisting of Italian folk tales, was published by Italo Calvino (1956), who plunged into collections garnered from every corner and from every local dialect, and in addition to the selection, then rewrote them in his literary style and language, thus giving Italians an extraordinary tool for remembering – or for learning something of the national oral tradition, a compendium of different regional contributions that the literary rewriting made accessible and enjoyable (Frigessi 1988).

Alan Lomax, meanwhile, had come from abroad. He loved to describe his trip to Europe as an attempt to escape the risks of McCarthyism that had been sending people to prison for their ideas. Once in Italy, Alan Lomax found in the *Accademia di Santa Cecilia* or in the RAI, in the State television, and in the young Diego Carpitella the necessary support for travelling research (Lomax 2008), from south to north and to south again, between 1953 and 1954, accumulating an impressive body of documentation and leaving the seeds of research into singing and music performance that would later flow into the constitution of – not being a merely formal separation – a separate discipline, that of ethnomusicology, founded in 1973 by Diego Carpitella (1973; 1975; Adamo 2000).

Diego Carpitella had started his professional activity earlier, when in 1952 he joined Ernesto de Martino, the more influential author, in an active bridging between the fascist and the democratic age, between idealistic historicism and Gramsci's Marxist reading, leaving an enduring footprint on Italian anthropological studies, still alive and still fruitful.[4]

Ernesto de Martino (died early in 1965) had shared, with many others, a juvenile admiration for the fascist regime, but his fidelity to the resilient antifascism of Croce

3. Pius XII participated in the electoral campaign in effigy as the protagonist of a film that was screened wherever possible (Ferrantin and Trionfini 2018), demonstrating how important the influence of cinema would later be – as a true protagonist of Italian cultural change either within the Catholic-communist conflict (Mosconi 2018) or, later, within secularisation and consumerism-oriented modernisation (De Berti 2000).
4. The legacy of Diego Carpitella had also influenced the opening of visual anthropology as a proper language and epistemic frame to understand music and performative practices, and Etnomusicologia is now a thriving and autonomous academic sector (Giannattasio 1991; Agamennone, Facci, Giannattasio and Giuriati 1991).

and his circle brought him to oppose it until he became active in the Resistance (Di Donato 1989; Charuty 2010; Alliegro 2017). As the author of an important idealistic critique of social anthropology based on historicist principles (de Martino 1941), he set out a theory of magic that cut away from Croce's view (de Martino 1948) and opened up a path based on the concept of a 'presence' – at once existential and concrete, psychological, cultural, and philosophical – that was endangered by life conditions amongst ethnological societies as well as amongst the poor daily workers of Apulia. The reading of Carlo Levi's novel *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (1945) and Gramsci's *Prison Notebook* (1948–1951), salvaged after Gramsci's death and published as soon as it became possible, led him to realise the urgency of a militant choice in favour of the rural working masses of Southern regions, who were geographically close to him and also to the Neapolitan capital of 'high culture', but actually 'outside history' and far distant, as if he and the testimonials he encountered were coming from different planets (de Martino 1976, 406). The task of the intellectual was thus to redescend the historic lines to uncover the moment and the causes that had produced the exclusion of those masses, so as to bring them again within the humanistic horizon (de Martino 1962), adopting an anti-relativistic perspective that would be labelled, later after his death, 'critical ethnocentrism'. Already in 1949, an article appeared in a national journal, *Società*, provoking not just a lively debate, as it was politically explicit in contrast to the purported neutrality of the social sciences (dear to the ethnological school), but also a discussion of the primacy of blue-collar culture, values, and role in the revolutionary process (Clemente, Meoni and Squillacciotti 1975).

For Ernesto de Martino, doing research was a way to contribute to the rescue of marginalised people and at the same time a way to reflect critically on the fundamentals of Western political thought, including the communist utopia. His first 'ethnological journey' started in 1952, and in ten years he produced three relevant monographs: on traditional mourning (de Martino 1958), on magic belief and practices (de Martino 1959), and on the mythic-ritual construction of the Taranta, a kind of possession traditionally cured through dance and devotion to St Paul (de Martino 1961). By inaugurating a very different way of doing ethnography, which was closer and more empathetic, de Martino fuelled debates and left an important legacy of thought, albeit without recognising 'folklore' as his own perspective.

Amongst his monumental philosophical and political reflections, from within the fascist prison system Antonio Gramsci had left pages on popular culture, traditions, common sense, and their study under the title of 'Observations on folklore' (Gramsci 1950), where *folklore* was intended as a real 'worldview', the *Weltanschauung* of subaltern social strata, to be taken seriously and interpreted in the light of its relationship with hegemonic culture, and within the political relationship of domination. Gramsci took folklore out of the traditional way of thinking of it as a historic remnant (a 'contemporary prehistoric remnant') and introduced it as an autonomous domain, to be considered and understood in a relativistic way. As the product of a history of political domination, folklore included subalternity (the acceptance of inferiority as a natural condition) as well as protest and visions of rescue. 'Progressive' folklore was, therefore, that part of the subaltern culture that had envisioned by itself the causes of life's hardships, that had foreseen a possible way out and could find a previously unheard alliance in intellectual support. Far removed from any populistic appreciation, and confident in the possibility of bringing the peasants and the marginal together in

the liberation of the working classes, Gramsci had drawn the lines for the rebirth of folklore studies. De Martino followed his view but soon preferred to concentrate on the inheritance of the subaltern rather than celebrate 'progressive' folk cultural traits.

The Italian South then came under scrutiny: political initiatives and even anthropological missions were documenting and interrogating the problems of the South. Matera (Caserta 1996), today a UNESCO world cultural heritage site (Mirizzi 2005), was then a terrible example of backwardness. The noted American socio-anthropologist Edward Banfield had declared that this backwardness was a result of a lack of collective trust; southern people owed their backwardness mostly to their 'amoral familism', chains holding them back from potential modernisation (Banfield 1958). De Martino countered such readings and provided a number of examples as evidence of progressive agency, such as the youngest mayor of Tricarico, the socialist poet Rocco Scotellaro (Mirizzi 2016), who was at once witness to and protagonist of progressive action, trying to change and document peasant conditions and hopes.

Academic folklore studies and Ernesto de Martino remained distant, and reciprocally diffident. The grassroots of folklore were potentially divided between progressive and conservative, or 'traditional', traditions, but it is important to add another plane to this scenery: that of the free researchers, blending intellectual passion and political activism. From the south-central region of Molise, for instance, a journal emerged, *La Lapa* ('The Bee'), that concentrated political and methodological debate on folklore themes. The account of the first version of *Bella Ciao* appeared there (Cirese 1953, 20),[5] just to give one example and also a heated discussion about the legitimacy of an autonomous academic field of folklore as such. *La Lapa* was a brief (1953–1955) but brilliant hotbed, founded by a school teacher and poet, Eugenio Cirese, together with his son, Alberto Mario, then a voluntary assistant to the Ethnology chair in Rome (La Lapa 1991; Fanelli 2008).

Folklore and the terrible 1950s

The 1950s were a decade of renewed international contacts and consolidation of a field of study that oscillated between the history of religions, philology, and ethnology (cultural anthropology would come only at the end of the decade) under the growing influence of Gramsci's thinking. Commenting on the debate in the three years of life of the young magazine *La Lapa*, Pietro Clemente caught a sign of intense 'intellectual workings', aiming to find a focus, both theoretical and methodological, characterising a discipline that began to find citizenship in the university and that also resumed the necessary international contacts (Clemente 1991). Still, its practitioners were unable to recover 'the irreversible laceration of the relationship between their own cognitive subjectivity and the object ("people") of their studies', which even dated back to the war years (Dei 2020, 16) and to the end of fascist instrumentalisation.

The 1950s were the site of a cluster of long-active fault-lines, which would go on to produce effects on popular life. On the political level, anti-communism marked most of the decade, until it even brought back former fascists to the government, often violently repressing strikes and demonstrations that shook the industrial districts as

5. The author simply signed this as 'c'.

well as the rural areas in protests against the authoritarian turn, gerrymandering plots (the so-called *legge truffa*), and struggles against the cost of living (Ginsborg 1989; 1998). Women became particularly involved in the 'movement for Peace' against the 'Cold War', which risked becoming a new nuclear war (Gabrielli 2005).

Modernisation seemed to accelerate. Electricity, running water, indoor lavatories – all slowly but surely became widespread amongst rural dwellers. After the advent of the Vespa and other motor scooters, the Fiat 600 arrived, enabling daily commuting for both work and leisure (Cardini 2006). A law strongly wanted by Lina Merlin, which had been in parliament since the Constituent Assembly (Gabrielli 2016), closed the brothels (Bellassai 2006). On the political level, the 'Centre' was drawn to the Right and the neofascists returned.

However, the most relevant innovation of this time was the inauguration of the age of state television. Radio had been a powerful tool for the fascist regime's propaganda (broadcasting Mussolini's speeches and slogans) (on the spread of counter-information during the war, for example, via the clandestine broadcasting of *Radio Londra*, see Isola 1998; 1999). The democratic state also used the radio for news, education, special programs for rural people, Holy Mass and the Pope's prayers, and, of course, music and songs. The first edition of the Sanremo Music Festival was broadcast in 1951, influencing the popular musical landscape and reaching even the most remote hamlet (Campus 2015).

In 1954, the State RAI channel (Monteleone 1992; Garofalo 2018) started broadcasting television programs. One single channel, the *Programma Nazionale*, spread government-controlled news as well as the Holy Mass, but also theatre performances, educational programs for the illiterate (still rather numerous), music shows and games, and the Music Festival of Sanremo (from 1955). In 1957 was added a program entirely devoted to advertisements, to promote products and brands through short sketches; jingles, sayings and slogans entered the discourse, pouring out narratives just as their products were flooding the lives of some Italians, or colonising the dreams of those who could not afford them (Arvidsson 2003; Canova 2004). Television sets – initially and for quite a long time, products for the elite – were increasingly to be found in bars, restaurants, local clubs, and even cinemas, ensuring a collective view of the most beloved programs.

The TV set was assigned the most important place in the modern Italian home. As they reached the lower social strata, the sets were honoured with and protected by hand-sewn curtains. The cultural industry had already found its way down to the people: ideals, ideologies, habits, and modes were on offer in the movies, a real battlefield for cultural and political wars. Women became the object of special attention by the print media: magazines and *fotoromanzi* – dramatised love photo novellas (Anelli, Gabbrielli, Morgavi and Piperno 1979; Abruzzese 1989; Detti 1990) – were both mirroring and changing women's imagination and desires. When television finally came (Casalini 2010), much later than in many other countries, it started to influence Italian daily life, reproducing and proposing, provoking and censoring, creating and destroying, relentlessly, from its inception to the Berlusconi era.

The end of the '50s, however, offered some signs of change that would only ripen later. These included the election of John XXIII, the innovator pope who launched the modernisation of the Church; the entrance into the government of the socialist party; and the construction of the Autostrada del Sole, begun in 1957, which progressively

sliced through the 'boot' from Milan to Rome and down to Naples, uniting valleys with bridges, piercing mountains with tunnels, dividing fields, woods, and properties, running alongside villages and making available to the (still few) fortunate car owners the spectacle of rural Italy. This is the moment in which Italian folk culture experienced the 'expansion' that Hermann Bausinger (1990) located in the age of technology. Before, the fascist regime had organised folk parades; now, modernity allowed individuals to put together the puzzle of a changing country.

Conflictual folklore

The 1960s were central to global modernisation, and every country registered a confluence between internal movements or dynamics and global influencing events. In this presentation of the Italian case, those will be taken as a given.

The decade started with the first general census, which recorded the overtaking of agricultural workers by industry workers: Italy was finally one of the industrial nations. The over-traditional and confessional governments were no longer adequate to the new identity, and some important changes were at hand. The political turmoil of the previous years, however, reached a boiling point with the repressive policies of the umpteenth government to be supported by the votes of the neofascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI), the ill-famed Governo Tambroni. Ignited by the decision of the MSI to hold its national congress in Genoa, a city awarded a gold medal for its role in the Resistance, the resulting protests spread all over the country, with political and economic claims as common cause. On 5–7 July 1960, from Licata in Sicily to Reggio Emilia, the repressive police unit, the *celere*, broke up the demonstrations and killed one person in Sicily, five in Reggio Emilia. This dramatic event is also worth remembering, in following our thread, for the song that was promptly created by Fausto Amodei and soon incorporated into the already vast repertoire of political songs and lyrics in use at that time during political events, be they protests or festivals (Bermani 2003; Fanelli 2017).

Music and songs became the component of folklore that would take the stage, overshadowing almost all else. The previous decade's political dynamics had polarised the intellectuals into positions for or against the reactionary and conservative government policies; now an impressive list of journals, conferences, and newspaper debates would show how poets, musicians, painters, theatre personalities, movie directors and actors, from Pier Paolo Pasolini to Franco Fortini, from Dario Fo to Vittorio Gassman, just to mention the most well-known, were active in committees and organisations. They stood together with others who were less famous but closer to what was *folk*, that is, popular culture as an expression of an intimate and ontological conflict against bourgeois high culture. The most advanced sector of Italian culture was intimately linked to the most engaged scholars and interpreters of *folk*, seeing in popular culture a tool for the construction of a different political future.

So, in the early 1960s, interest in folklore emerged from a scene of independent and politically driven initiatives. More than academic research, it was able to influence ongoing events, either as regards political conflicts or cultural and artistic experimentation. The same Fausto Amodei, for instance, was part of the group that founded the *Cantacronache* band in Turin, being joined by other young musicians, such

as Luciano Berio, Sergio Liberovici, and Michele Straniero, as well as by Italo Calvino and Franco Fortini, amongst others (Bermani 2003; Fanelli 2017). There, research and creativity were fused in the effort of giving 'a working-class future' a proper and new culture. Later, other groups emerged, for instance, under the push of Gianni Bosio (Fanelli 2009), a 'cultural organiser', who quite independently from obedience to any political party animated the scene of left-wing editorial and musical production. In 1962, Gianni Bosio and Roberto Leydi gave birth to the *Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano* (Bermani 1997), and after a decade of theoretical political elaboration, they dove into fieldwork. Gianni Bosio discovered the power of the *magnetofono*, then a heavy tape recorder, which had the power to give back a 'voice' (Bosio 1975). The power of *folk* voices overtook the weight of the words that the early gatherers and scholars had generously transcribed. Together with the voices, the music, rhythms, vocal techniques, and timbres sounded as a resource, either for testifying to the creativity of *folk* or for overstepping the boundaries of the Italian music national treasures, which now appeared as stale class privilege.

The hallmark date for this decade is 1964, June 21st, when the seventh edition of the Festival of the Two Worlds was held in the beautiful town of Spoleto in the province of Perugia. This creation of Giancarlo Menotti celebrated the link between the new Italy and the USA, hosting a music show consisting in the performance of national traditional songs and music, presented by Franco Fortini, selected by Roberto Leydi, and directed by Filippo.

Work songs, love songs, and war songs are listed on the program entitled *Bella Ciao*, then decidedly less famous than today. *Bella Ciao*, representing the partisans' heritage (Bermani 2020; Flores 2020), was then thought and offered as a derivation of a more ancient work song of women who worked in the rice fields. The title caught the attention of fascists and of the well-thinking public who filled the Italian-style Caio Melisso Theatre. The show went on until one of the singers decided to also sing the second stanza of a World War I antimilitarist song, which called army officers traitors against the poor soldiers. The audience in the stalls exploded in protest, and from the higher tier of boxes the performers' friends responded. It was a real incident (Marini 2005), followed by a trial for offenses against the national army, on one side, but on the other by the birth of a myth – *Bella Ciao* itself – making the fortune of folk singers and musicians such as Caterina Bueno or Giovanna Marini,[6] and by the memorable mark of the loss of the innocence of folklore. It had reached adulthood and could afford to take up the burden of an official cultural and political role in the life of Italian society.

6. Caterina Bueno (1943–2007) and Giovanna Marini (1937–2024) were protagonists of the folk music scene since the time of the folk revival, developing an intense activity of research and reproposal, and being socially and politically engaged (Plastino 2016); see also the biography movie *Caterina* (Corsi 2019). Giovanna Marini also activated a music and choir school in Rome and in Paris (University Paris VIII Saint Denis), and has given rise to an intense creative activity of contemporary music (compositions, theatre operas, and movie soundtracks (Macchiarella 2005). See also the biography movie *A sud della musica. La voce libera di Giovanna Marini* (Curi 2019).

Folklore: The academic recovery

The ferment of such a complex decade as the 1950s had no place, though, among the concerns of academic scholarship. Paolo Toschi continued in the direction of the long-running journal, *Lares*, which he had restarted in 1944; he carefully kept away from engaging in 'theoretical elucubrations' or 'the ethical and political passions so alive on the Gramscian side' (Dei 2020, 17). Toschi was 'attentive to international contributions, which however [he] selected exclusively from the field of folklore in the stricter sense of the term', with 'no trace of structuralism, nor even of the entire Italian "debate on folklore"; starting from the reading of Gramsci' (Dei 2020, 19). His own works, too, reflected his late adhesion to a previous theoretical approach (the simplistic Frazerian approach to popular rituals and theatrical performances) in the face of rich and detailed documentation, according to the style of earlier folklore times. Carmelina Naselli continued to give historical-philological attention to ritual and poetry, being ever more cloistered in her regional reality. Giuseppe Cocchiara, conversely, addressed new topics: the myth of the noble savage (1948), the land of Cockaigne (1956), and the upside-down world (1963). He also offered two impressive histories of folklore studies, both European (Cocchiara 1952) and Italian (Cocchiara 1947); the former was widely translated and read (D'Amato 2010), while the latter was less successful.

However, as the 'negligent' attitude of *Lares* shows, academic folklore studies remained marginal both within the academic field and in the sociopolitical domain, where politically oriented scholars and artists were enjoying a real moment, just the beginning of the most relevant decade of our history.

What was too theoretical and overly politicised was at the same time weaving a quite new texture between renowned and unknown personalities, between the anonymity of folklore and the signature power of famous artists. High culture and low culture – as *Bella Ciao* in Spoleto had dramatically proved – could walk side by side in an attempt to build a new future. Nonetheless, 1961 was also the year of the second national competitive state exam for academic positions, recruiting three more scholars, (previously only called *libero docente*, being authorised to teach as temporary contract staff in a university) who were later hired by different universities as full tenured professors: Giuseppe Bonomo (a pupil of Giuseppe Cocchiara), and Giovan Battista Bronzini and Alberto Mario Cirese (pupils of Paolo Toschi) (Alliegro 2011).

We will now follow the third of these, who obtained tenure at Cagliari University, crossing the late career of Ernesto de Martino (soon to die in 1965). An expert in folk poetry, Cirese sailed far from his mentor's topics and approach. He could count on his time in France – discovering there the early structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss (Cirese 2010)[7] as well as the *Musée de l'Homme* – but he was also well into hot

7. A long, different story of folk studies could start with Cirese's introduction of Lévi-Strauss into Italian debate: that of translation policies. Some foreign works enter early: Propp's *Historical Roots of the Wonder Tales* (1946) was translated in 1949, but his first work, *Morphology of the Tale* (1928), arrived only in 1966, within the blooming structuralist season (*Nuove ricerche semiotiche*, 1973). Many of the innovative authors (e.g. Hermann Bausinger, Linda Dégh) or the performance turn (*Towards New Perspectives in Folklore* by Americo Paredes and Richard Bauman, 1972), as well as some classics (*The Singer of Tales* by Albert Lord, 1960) remained

intellectual debates and close to the freelance fieldworkers who were now protagonists of the so-called 'folk revival'. A Marxist, though never sympathising with the orthodoxy that reigned within the Communist Party, Cirese took inspiration from Gramsci's thought and philosophy, proposing a new perspective for the discipline that he saw as being part of a general anthropological view, called *demologia*, besides *etnologia*. He argued that both should investigate the so-called 'cultural unevennesses' (*dislivello*) that history had produced – within complex societies, for the first subdiscipline, or amongst them and the as-yet-underdeveloped societies or those suffering under colonial dominion, for the second (Cirese 1973).

The metaphor of unevenness operates on the basic concept of 'cultural differences', which does not imply merely neutral alternatives but must be conceived within a hierarchy, so that Maria Callas and Giovanna Daffini, the singer of *Bella Ciao*, are historically placed – the first as hegemonic and the second as subaltern. Demo-anthropology has a duty to identify the value of the latter, understanding the link between a cultural fact and its social, economic, and political conditions, so as to cooperate towards an expansion of general consciousness and change as regards a state of dominance. Drawing on Gramsci, the dominating relationship at the political level is transposed into the hegemony/subalternity dialectic at the cultural level. Cirese's proposal cut away from 'survival' theory and invited us to conceive of folklore as a field where the diachronic perspective – traditional historicism – had to be completed with a synchronic approach, where the present relationships and exchanges with the hegemonic culture were able to give way to a 'worldview' connotating the life of real social groups. Ending the late-Romantic concept of people as a national entity and to going ahead with Gramsci's definition of 'subaltern and instrumental social strata', such an opening up made possible the reunification of the immediate political goals of freelance folklorists and the systematic work of academic scholarship. Cirese's proposal was developed all through the 1960s and found its first final edition in 1971, followed by an update in 1973.

One important move is worthy of mention, thanks to Tullio Tentori, a functionary in the Ministry of Culture (then external to the university) who was an expert in Native American cultures. Having returned to Italy, with a Wenner Gren Foundation grant Tullio Tentori pushed a group of colleagues to open up the perspective for importing American cultural anthropological methods and authors, shifting away from the traditional historical-cultural approach which still characterised the ethnological school (Grottanelli 1977; Signorelli 2021). Amalia Signorelli, one of the signatories of the Memorandum (1959),[8] remembered that 'it seemed to us that the peasants of Portella della Ginestra [who were killed by the Sicilian independentist Mafia in 1947] and of the land occupations in Italy or the combatants of the Algerian war, or the

untranslated. The attention to international scholarship and translation has been improving neatly during the last decades (Clemente and Mugnaini 2001).

8. Also signing this manifesto in 1958 with Signorelli were Tullio Seppilli, Liliana Bonacini Seppilli, Romano Calisi, Guido Cantalamessa Carboni, and Tullio Tentori. The Memorandum was the arrival point of a long collective march, as Tullio Seppilli recalled in his narrative *curriculum vitae* (http://www.antropologiamedica.it/tullio-seppilli/, 14.06.2025 10 February 2025), which opened a new season. Tullio Seppilli would later be the founder of medical anthropology specialisation and its journal, *Antropologia Medica*, now open access: https://www.antropologiamedica.it/am/ (14.06.2025 10 February 2025).

protagonists of the various violent and contradictory paths of decolonisation in Africa, posed research problems that were unmasterable within the schemas of the cycle of life from the cradle to the grave or of the diffusion of cultural traits in concentric circles', the diffusionism that has survived, for instance, within Catholic-driven ethnology (Signorelli 2021, 76). The main trait of the 'new' discipline was found in a systematic attention to linking the cultural level to economic facts and social structure, evidently drawing on a Marxist approach, that would characterise this American culturology in an Italian sauce. Catholic soil and Marxist seeds were then at work together, coherently with the turn that the Catholic Church was also experiencing. The new Pope, John XXIII, launched the Second Vatican Council. The times were indeed a-changin' (Dylan 1964).

Now the scene was brimming with various labels. Ethnology, marked by the former disgraced colonial enterprise, was still following historical-cultural methods, with minor attention paid to British social anthropology (Lanternari 1973; Clemente 1983); it was also a bridge to the study of internal survival traditions (with Raffaele Corso being its mentor and the self-proclaimed heir of the founding father, Giuseppe Pitré); Letteratura delle tradizioni popolari later on replaced by Storia delle tradizioni popolari, dealt mostly with oral poetry and narrative tradition, swinging from philology to a historical approach; Storia delle religioni, spanning from aboriginal cults to folk religious practices, covered the ritual and symbolic topic in general. Cultural Anthropology, oriented indifferently towards cultural and social dynamics either internal or international, was, the latest arrival and the bravest subject to knock on the academy's narrow doors, with its attention to immediate and urgent social problems. Tullio Seppilli, for instance, between Florence and Perugia, was able to join up the attention to folk heritage and to health policies with bodily and psychiatric questions, to the condition of women and the question of religion. Amalia Signorelli would remain faithful to the Southern regions, but now began studying migration, housing, politics and development, peripheric life, tradition and patronage (Signorelli, Trittico, Rossi 1977[9]).

Folklore: complex modernity

The academy was now – and even more so in the following decade – full of intertwining paths but also jealousies and reciprocal diffidence, often following the lines of ideological and political orientation (leftist vs Christian democratic or nostalgic), sometimes even internal to the Left (communist vs socialist, the latter being also divided between reformist and revolutionary leanings). Similar situations could be said to characterise the grassroots folk life, where patron saint festivals took place alongside the *Festa dell'Unità* ('Festival of Unity') – a widespread festival tradition inaugurated by the Communist Party – in some places in contraposition, elsewhere just adding to each other, together making up the scene of a multifaceted and alive popular and local life (Savelli 2010; Mugnaini 2023).

9. For a posthumous summary of her work, which developed under the banner of renewal and openness to the anthropology of the contemporary, see D'Aloisio 2018.

At the central level, a governmental turn towards collaboration with the socialist party was intended to close down dialogue with the post-fascist (now neo-fascist) right and the so-called *Centro-sinistra* season of governments timidly heading towards a limited social-democratic welfare-state policy.

A concrete sign of such change was the opening of a second channel on State television. While the *Programma Nazionale* became the 'First' channel, maintaining the monopoly of official and religious communication (Holy Mass was broadcast every Sunday and feast day), the 'Second' channel offered more chances to enjoy sport, leisure, entertainment, and even some remarkable examples of journalism and reporting activities. That other institution always present in the national life, the Church, was passing through a radical, even if only partial, transformation implemented by the Second Vatican council, and also 'grassroots Catholicism' started to find some champions destined to be enduring.

Lorenzo Milani, from an agnostic and intellectual Florentine family, converted around 1943; he was ordained in 1947 and would become a protagonist of a hard, radical challenge against the Church's negligence of social inequality. Already during the 1950s he had been removed from an urban parish and sent to an isolated hamlet in the Florentine Appenines, where he set up a school for the remaining peasant children. The Barbiana school soon became a laboratory where personalities from every intellectual field were invited to visit, to answer the questions of those both neglected and at the same time privileged pupils. Don Lorenzo Milani himself grew as a figure of national relevance, also because of his position in favour of conscientious objection (against militarist and nationalistic discourses), praising the right to disobedience and proclaiming the obligation of Christians to respond to the needs of the poor.

His main fortune – posthumous but still alive and influential – was linked to the publication of *Lettera a una professoressa* ('Letters to a teacher'),[10] a collectively conceived diary produced by him and his pupils, which accused the State school of class discrimination and at the same time criticised the lack of esteem and superficial disdain that the school was reproducing regarding the culture, skills, and values of the peasantry as well as blue-collar workers and other exploited subjects. The fortune of Don Milani (Batini, Mayo and Surian 2014; Roghi 2017; Ruozzi and Canfora 2017) matured in a climate that would find his acme far from Italian squares and fields, between USA and Europe, including protests against the Vietnam War and the invasion of Prague.

The year 1968 is too well known and at the same time such a vast topic that it can be but mentioned here. Italy, too, saw streets stormed by workers and students; schools, universities, churches, and sections of the Italian Communist Party were shaken by debates and performances, revolving together around 'grassroots culture' and the political avantgarde. Its particularity, however, was the strength of the Communist Party – the most important of the West European scene – which governed half of the

10. *Lettere a una professoressa* was published as collective writings in 1967 right after the death of don Lorenzo Milani (School of Barbiana 1967). Regularly republished and commented on (Gesualdi 2007), it has enjoyed a rather international diffusion. The English translation by Nora Rossi and Tom Cole (1969) is now available online: https://archive.org/details/LetterToATeacher-English-SchoolOfBarbiana/page/n87/mode/2up (Accessed 23 February, 2025).

nation at the administrative level. The radical challenge that the movement brought to the internal and international equilibrium was probably perceived as a danger, and on 12 December 1969, a bomb exploded in a Milan bank, the Bank of Agriculture, dear to rural entrepreneurs, opening the never-ending story of massacres going unpunished.

It was the beginning of the bloody decades, marked by terrorism, by tough State repression on one side but also by State responsibility in active red herrings and connivance when not conspiracy with the neo-fascist terrorist factions and forces. Political violence became a beaten track, either by the new extremist Left and revolutionary movements or by the neo-fascist groups, overtly supported by the administrators of the police and forces of repression (Costalli, Guariso, Justino and Ruggeri 2023).

Such was the social climate, mostly experienced in the important industrial towns (Milan and Turin) and the university cities (Rome, Naples, Bologna, and Trento). Through family links, which were active between migrant groups and their original villages or regions, even more isolated places were caught up in such events, so that no public folk performance or festival could escape from taking a position. On such a polarised horizon, the neutrality of tradition started to be attractive again as a possibility for survival, so that between the Festa dell'Unità and the patron saint festivals, new urban festivals came to the fore (Mugnaini 2023). In some cases, the new festivals drew on former fascist inventions; elsewhere they were brand new, adopting patterns already well-established and functioning, and took root in the self-redefinition of local communities.

Pro-loco associations, collectives of either communist or Catholic grassroots, or even both communist and Catholic, populated popular life, both urban and rural, sometimes in ephemeral ways, sometimes giving birth to real local cultural institutions and operating in the research, documentation, and defence of local or social knowledge and skills.

Again, social life was bringing issues to the attention of academic folklore, which despite Cirese's innovation was still attracted by a peasant heritage and by traditional forms, neglecting the mesh with mass culture, on one side, and with political challenges, on the other. Such, at least, is the convincing position of Fabio Dei (2018), who has summed up the reasons behind the academic folklore studies attention deficit. His epistemic paradigm, even if it soon became dominant within the Academy, remained more preached than adopted and actualised.

Alberto Cirese himself was swinging between personal political engagement and the practice of prudent scientific work that he loved to evoke, quoting a sentence borrowed from a socialist mayor friend who warned him: between philology and socialism, give priority to philology, then do the socialism (Fanelli 2007). In the writing of a disciplinary history that would attune the past (from Romantic roots, positivism, Croce's historicism, and then Gramsci's political turn) to his present systematic proposal – as to his personal research, he chose a formalist and structural approach to traditional topics (popular poetry) (Cirese 1988) – a way out from mere documentation, dialoguing with updated international schools and authors. On the level of the main national project, he conceived and led collective research on oral tradition that aimed to cover the national territory, promoting the contributions of many local collectors as well as many young collaborators, who were destined to later become actors on the academic and intellectual scene.

From 1968 until 1972, forty or so young scholars hunted down oral narrative – spoken not sung – which was documented and still available in every region. Tape-recorded, as so convincingly demonstrated by Gianni Bosio (1975), it was delivered to the funding institution, *the Discoteca di Stato* (the official music and sonic archive in Rome). Alberto M. Cirese, Liliana Serafini, and Aurora Milillo then classified more than 11,000 recorded texts, according to the Italian classification system of D'Aronco and Lo Nigro but also making them available under the Aarne-Thompson Tale-Type index and partially under Thompson's Motif Index from 1975 on (Cirese, Serafini and Milillo 1975). This real monument, still rarely promoted or used, somehow reinforced the impression of a discipline which still tended to overlook complexity and was still attracted by residual traditional or marginal areas. Though for different reasons, the regional distribution of the records shows how the regions most affected by emigration were the most documented, together with tiny, mountainous Valle d'Aosta; the migration-destination regions (Piedmont, Emilia Romagna, and Lombardia) were more poorly attended to.

The decade flowed into the following one, still under the sign of a social life of conflictual dynamics and political instability. Governments lasting less than a year (from 1963 until 1979, 18 governments can be counted), albeit firmly Atlanticist (with NATO and the USA alliance), were sensitive to social conflict. Solidly in the hands of the same party (*Democrazia Cristiana*) and the same people, there were different governments but only five leaders, one of whom was a stable presence in every government since 1948, and leader five times.

However, despite this political dance, Italian society was changing rapidly, pushing the political institutions to acknowledge the delay that the State was accumulating in comparison with people's lives. The harsh confrontation between the unions and industrialists saw the approval in 1970 of the *Statuto dei lavoratori*, an advanced law in defence of the freedom of the unions and of workers' rights.

Political confrontations now multiplied, diversified into the women's movement, gay fronts, pacifists, either Catholic or lay. If the 1950s had seen the glorification of purity and virginity in the beatification of a poor raped girl, the mid-1960s saw a young Sicilian girl who, after being kidnapped and raped, publicly refused to accept the 'marriage of reparation'. Pier Paolo Pasolini travelled Italian beaches asking questions about love of every kind (see his 1963 movie *Comizi d'amore* ['Love Meetings']) and continued to create scandal with his novels and movies. In 1971, his movie adaptation of Boccaccio's *Decameron* showed how indecent but alive was the potential of one of Italian literature's classics but also how widespread and important was the discourse of sexuality within popular culture (Corso [1914] 2001), despite Catholic moral imperatives. In 1968, the penal code from the fascist regime was purged of the norm that absolved husbands or male relatives who killed a wife or female blood relative in order to save their honour. In 1970, a peculiar and short-lived parliamentary majority passed a divorce bill.

Modernity was even shaking up the private life of the Italians. The reaction of the confessional Right was furious: four years later, the entire electorate was invited to vote in a referendum. Grassroots groups and movements from both sides engaged in a fierce battle that divided clerical *democristiani* and neo-fascists from liberal, radical, socialist, and communist voters. A bitter electoral campaign, just as had happened in 1948, was conducted from every bell tower and every monastery, inviting the Christians to vote

– and, of course, to vote 'yes' to the abrogation of the divorce law. Italians obeyed and went *en masse* to the polling stations: 87% of the voting public. But 60% disobeyed with their ballots and the law was saved. In the industrialised regions, 70% answered 'no', as well as in the communist-led regions such as Tuscany. Those debilitated by migration and persistent poverty answered 'yes' but with a tiny margin, even where, as in the traditional Catholic Veneto, almost nobody remained at home (93.6% of voters came out to vote). The margin between the obedient and the disobedient was a mere 55,000 votes.[11] Italy had disobeyed: the electoral ballot and the confessional were no longer aligned or allied.

Folklore: The end of the 'Bread Age'

Again, Pier Paolo Pasolini suggested to both churches, the Catholic Church and that other church, the Communist Party, that the result of the referendum showed also how a third, till-then unseen protagonist was the real winner of the awkward confrontation that the conservative front had imposed on the Italians. Market forces and consumerism were leading the scene; an irresistible and unresisted push towards homologation with new bourgeois trends began to cancel internal and social differences (Pasolini 1974a). That author of *Canzoniere Italiano* and singer of proletarian and marginalised persons, in a personal polemic with Italo Calvino, wrote that he was not nostalgic for any previous peasant Italy, nor did he think of it as a golden age:

> The men of this universe […] lived what [the novelist] Chilanti called "the age of bread". That is, they were consumers only of the bare necessities. And it was this, perhaps, that made their poor and precarious life one of extreme neediness. While it is clear that superfluous goods make life superfluous. (Pasolini 1974b)

Italians were undergoing an 'anthropological mutation'; the poet saw it in a clearer way than other specialists, and he would pay with his life, within a year, for having spoken the truth.

This anthropological mutation was taking place not only at the level of mass behaviours, with peasants and workers all longing to become merry consumers; it happened also at the level of law. In 1975, the bill on 'Family Law' abolished a husband's patriarchal rights over his wife and offspring (Barbagli, Castiglioni and Della Zuanna 2004). In 1976, schools were opened to the participation of parents, who could then lead school councils; participation and assembly were hot keywords, contrasting with more reactionary temptations which did not remain silent for long. If a Christmas Eve coup attempt planned by a former fascist commander failed, to a resounding silence from the press and government, in May 1974 a bomb exploded in Brescia, during a union rally; later on in August, there came another one, this time on a train. Neo-fascist organisations, with the support of 'deviant State bodies', were trying to halt history,

11. Data from Ministero dell'Interno, https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it/index.php?tpel=F, 14.06.2025 10 February 2025.

destroying whoever happened to be passing by. The market, that emerging subject according to Pasolini, did not remain still.

The academic situation had already changed since the report that Alberto M. Cirese wrote (Cirese 1971; Noyes 2017) for the first issue of *Ethnologia Europaea*: from the 12 chairs or courses, taught mostly by temporary research staff, now almost all the universities offered one of the variously denominated courses; faculties were growing in number to respond to the rapidly growing demand of the post-'68 students.

Folk music and song traditions were now (1973 was the first national conference) the object of a new matter, leaning in more to a technical, musicological, and historical approach than to a new social and political understanding, despite the initial steps of its founder, Diego Carpitella, who left 'Storia delle tradizioni popolari' and gave birth to 'Etnomusicologia' in 1976.

From Sicily, with the pupils of Cocchiara, Aurelio Rigoli, and Antonino Buttitta and Elsa Guggino (herself founder of a *folk* studio in Palermo), or Luigi Lombardi Satriani in Messina, then to Naples and finally in Rome, to Udine with Gianpaolo Gri, passing for Cagliari, with Enrica Delitala and the younger Giulio Angioni; in Bari where Giovanni Bronzini took the direction of Lares; in Perugia and Florence, with Tullio Seppilli, Florence, Carla Bianco, or Paola Tabet, and to Gian Luigi Bravo in Turin, Italian universities hosted a growing sector, where folklore was often taught as an object of research even if not always under its own proper flag.[12]

Si parva licet, even the historical university of Siena was granted three new faculties by the government: one in Economics, one in Pedagogy, and one in the Humanities, where Alberto Cirese was asked to move from Cagliari, becoming its first dean in 1974.

In the same year as the final version of Cirese's handbook *Cultura egemonica e culture subalterne* (1973), Luigi Lombardi Satriani from Messina published *Folklore e profitto* (1973), a vehement critique of how traditional heritage was delivered into the hands of capitalism. Lombardi Satriani started from a regional perspective and would remain particularly linked to his native region, stressing the presence of an ontological 'contesting folklore', hinting at Gramsci and de Martino, more than the relational and differential dialectic that Cirese had been pointing to. However, Lombardi Satriani's book was also the most explicit critique of the marketing of traditions by the cultural and mass industries (Lombardi Satriani 1973).

Media and mass culture

First: the television growing influence, from news, to theatre and music. Already during the 1960s, RAI had hosted some pearls of journalism: Sergio Zavoli's investigations into Franco Basaglia's critique of psychiatric hospitals as total institutions (Foot 2015) saw RAI cameras entering the San Clemente hospital in Venezia, from its confines bringing back the voices and images of humanity locked up inside.

12. *La Ricerca Folklorica*, a leading journal since 1980, in 2017 and 2018 devoted two numbers (nos 72 and 73, edited by Gianni Dore and the director Glauco Sanga) to 'Italian anthropology autobiography'; from these, it is possible to have a detailed image of the generation entering the academic and folklore research scene by the 1970s.

Ranging from foreign classics (Chechov and Shakespeare) to national (Pirandello) and even apparently local works (De Filippo, with his Neapolitan language), theatre had been offered to growing audiences. After previously having to gather in a public hall or in the bars, they could now enjoy a TV set in almost every home. Shows and quiz games continued to influence language and modes of interaction.

Music also deserves to be focused on. In 1954, *Volare*, sung by Domenico Modugno, had become so successful that any possible alternative from the folk side was out of the question. Now the scene was more pluralist. Besides the great interpreters, also some *chansonniers* were active; Francesco Guccini or Fabrizio de Andrè, for instance, brought into the music scene new topics, new values, and gave a voice to protests and aspirations for change. The folk revival, which had come to the fore with *Bella Ciao*, continued to be present at every strike, every demonstration, and every Festa dell'Unità; it had even created its own 'market' area. Even television opened its arms, and in 1974, a special section of *Canzonissima*, a three-month-long song contest, was reserved to 'folk music'. Many of the protagonists of the folk music revival were seduced by the TV appeal and offered their different voices and outfits and faces to a kind of paternalistic gaze, disconcerting those intellectuals who had formerly welcomed their arrival. Official theatre, after the incident at Spoleto, had seen many other folk-based performances, starting with Dario Fo's *Ci ragiono e canto*. In 1976, Roberto de Simone, a musician from Naples who was already the founder of *Nuova Compagnia di Canto popolare*, brought to the Spoleto festival *La Gatta Cenerentola* a musical adapting the Cinderella story, drawing on versions gathered from oral tradition, melting together the political, humour, gender, sexual innuendo, and tragedy from the point of view of content, and folk music patterns with baroque madrigals and polyphony on the musical side. Since then, *La Gatta Cenerentola* has become a lasting proof of the way in which different historical languages and expressive resources may be fruitfully used, thanks also to new cultural market possibilities (Sapienza 2006).

Different dynamics were simultaneously operating. The concept of leisure time had arrived, and summer holidays (mostly from abroad) were changing the face of the coast (Berrino 2011), as well the celebration dates of the patron saints of those villages from which millions had migrated to the North. Now, all industries closed in August; it became the month when migrants went back as tourists, so that even the patron saints owed to accept the more convenient August dates for their celebration.

The local promoters of *folk*, under the influence of a distant but competent nostalgic gaze, could now count also on the growing number of faculties and universities. Grassroots movements gave birth to museums (Cirese 1977; Clemente and Rossi 1999; Clemente 2010; Bravo 2001) created by local lovers of the past, who were often nostalgic for the departed 'peasant civilisation' and supplied with the vast, overwhelming array of artefacts – working tools, home furnishings, craftmanship, hand-made garments, and *ex voto* pieces – even portraits of Mussolini, to remind visitors that he, too, should be considered a distant passion. Now a new turn in economics or in history (under the influence of the French *longue durée* or the Annales historical school), joined anthropology and demology in offering scientific support to local initiatives.

The institution of regions, in 1975 (predisposed since 1948 but hitherto not applied Constitutional principle), enabled the twenty new intermediate bodies to become active on the cultural level alongside all the others, thus facilitating a more intense dialogue between academy and periphery,

To date, the most complete history of Italian academic anthropology is that of Enzo Vinicio Alliegro (2011), who trawled through a mass of State competition reports, essay summaries, and biographies. His volume – over 500 large pages – stops in 1975. In my personal chronology, the timeline would include at least two more dates: in 1975, in the newborn anthropological school in Siena, its representatives Pietro Clemente, Maria Luisa Meoni, and Massimo Squillacciotti published a collection of press articles and field notes by Ernesto de Martino, wrapping up and reopening the debate on folklore (Clemente, Meoni and Squillacciotti 1976) and its links with politics and hegemonic culture; still today, they provide fruitful and provocative readings. Pietro Clemente – who joined Siena, together with Pier Giorgio Solinas, having been invited by the dean Alberto M. Cirese – was kindly told to start teaching and researching 'Storia delle tradizioni popolari' with some author in mind. Giuliano Montaldi (who had been publishing the autobiographies of urban marginal people) (Montaldi and Alasia 1960; Montaldi 1961), don Lorenzo Milani, and Frantz Fanon, whose *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon [1961] 1963) had left a mark on his conscience, opened his view to embrace all the 'damned' and the 'dominated'.

Conclusion

Such is then my partial and personal perspective – oriented also by my fellowship with Pietro Clemente and with Alberto M. Cirese's mastery – on the main character of Italian folklore studies over the time period under consideration. Considering it from the perspective of today's ongoing and prevailing trends, what is evident is the lack of any nationalistic or romantic mood, and its lack of objectification and essentialisation that give them an enduring actuality. This is even more so when contrasted with the simplistic recent adhesion to the objectifying and essentialising Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) paradigm of today (Mugnaini 2016).[13]

Let me close with the end date of May 1978. This month seems to be a crucial turning point: on 13 May, the law abolishing the mental hospital was approved. Law 180, known as *Legge Basaglia*, owed its name to the psychiatrist who since the 1960s had begun to demolish the rationale of mental asylums, advocating for a different concept of mental illness and its treatment. On 22 May, the law decriminalising abortion was approved, notwithstanding the Vatican's lightnings. However, the political hallmark is the 9th of May. The president of the *Democrazia Cristiana*, Aldo Moro, who had been working towards collaboration with the Communist Party, was killed by the *Brigate Rosse*, a left-wing terrorist movement that had already shed the blood of judges, industrialists, journalists, and workers, such as Guido Rossa. With this 'attack on the heart of the State', the history of Italy was altered and in a contorted way headed for the present problematic situation. It struck my generation as a hallmark, a welt on our memories. Both history and the chronicling of current affairs hereafter find too much space taken up by memory, and that cannot be given the responsibility for generalisations. It was

13. The UNESCO ICH Convention (2003), which has had a significant impact on cultural policies and practices of valuing local cultures in Italy since its ratification in 2007, has been influenced by the different characteristics of the states that have adopted it (Bendix, Eggert and Peselmann 2017). For a critical approach, see Hafstein 2018.

in 1978 that I and many others entered the Academy as the first member of the family, lineage, or village to dare the university. My generation's access to academia was also partly a result of the history of the university, and of those disciplines that were talking about the past – our past, as I hope I have been able to illustrate here.

Epilogue

The 1980s passed in a so-called 'retreat', a withdrawal from the squares into private living rooms and the satisfaction of consumption. With the collapse of the Berlin Wall, even the Left, which had severed ties with Soviet totalitarianism since the 1970s, felt co-responsible for the communist legacy, starting a process of rethinking that also involved social disciplines. Cultural anthropology and demo-anthropology (as Cirese had renamed folklore studies) began to look elsewhere as well. Within the Academy, interpretivism became fashionable; on the ground, folk's performing skills quietly underwent a reorientation towards aesthetic evaluation and spectacular consumption (festivalisation, in the sense of Valdimar Hafstein; see Hafstein 2018). Ethnographic fieldwork moved from the land towards the museums; the neutralisation of the discipline was making it fit perfectly with the twenty years of Berlusconi's deculturation, ready for the onset of the heritage era (Mugnaini 2016). The lost innocence seems to be within reach again – just avoid looking at the world of immigrants, at the new urban poor, at the growing needs of the elderly in society, at the unbalanced access to socialising resources, at the daily life of precarious workers, at the languages and the restricted codes of the youth, at the persisting global division between the hegemonic and academic culture and a new popular one, and at the movable but resisting and now globalised unevenness.

A law has been approved by Italian Parliament[14] that will include folklore in a strong national framework of identification procedures and preservation aims, focusing on how local history fits into national history and how the re-enactment of the local past shows the continuity of a national people (so the bill was discussed in the parliamentary process). Heritage is once again a matter of national pride. The State and regions will watch over it and fund it (poorly) with tourism spin-offs and other symbolic rewards, with a nationalistic identity policy in mind. Valdimar Hafstein questions heritage strong policies: 'when, that is under what conditions and which circumstances, is protection not a means of dispossession?' (Hafstein 2018, 49). Will the Gramscian approach of Italian folklore studies be replaced by the nationalistic celebration of Italian folk wealth? The preservation framework risks becoming a shaping structure, washing away the main theory now widely shared across national and disciplinary boundaries.

Let us hope that someone will resist.

14. Legge 7 ottobre 2024, n. 152 Disposizioni in materia di manifestazioni di rievocazione storica e delega al Governo per l'adozione di norme per la salvaguardia del patrimonio culturale immateriale. GU Serie Generale n. 244 del 17-10-2024 [Law 7 October 2024, n. 152 Provisions regarding historical re-enactment events and delegation to the Government for the adoption of rules for the protection of intangible cultural heritage. *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, General Series No 244, 2024-10-17]

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