TRANSLATING THE ITALIAN SOUTH: THE TARANTELLA REVIVAL FROM ITALY TO THE U.S.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores national and international redefinitions (1970s and 1990s onwards) of tarantella—a composite of Southern Italian folk music and dance traditions—as a case study to explore the theoretical and ethical issues embedded in such a process of translation. By evaluating the global recontextualizations of the tarantella genre, I investigate how the dynamics of revival and global display, and specifically through tourism, translation, and world music venues, affect our understanding of local folk/popular culture within the larger context of globalization and international migration. Unlike most publications on the revival, which study the Salentine “pizzica,” my focus is on the revival of a less-known subgenre of the tarantella, the “tammurriata” from the Naples area. I illustrate how within the revival, the ethics of place embedded in the tammurriata shift from a rural, religious, and rooted setting to an urban, secular, and migrant one. I also show how these changes influence gender roles in both the Italian and Italian American contexts.

I argue that by studying the redefinitions of Southern Italian tarantella we can locate the ways in which Southern Italian groups are constantly re-defining their local culture and identity in relation to the larger context of Italy—whose national discourse has traditionally linked the North and the South through a colonial, and orientalist, vision—as well as in relation to a regional (Mediterranean), and international/global perspectives. I also argue that the global tarantella helps to identify the ways that (Southern) Italian culture and identity are being represented and “culturally translated” within the U.S., and particularly Italian American, musical and cultural scenes.
Drawing on cultural studies methodology, I explore the socio-political and cultural significance of this revival through an analysis of songs, dance performances, and the festival scene as dynamic cultural texts. Fieldwork research offers a variety of perspectives on the revival by granting access to archival and site-specific resources, while also allowing me to reflect on the complex role of the local scholar in studying his/her own folk culture and in “culturally translating” it for foreign/global audiences.
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Introduction

The object of this study is the contemporary revival of the tarantella, a genre representative of the Southern Italian folk music and dance traditions. Since the 1970s, Southern Italian folk music and dances have been the object of a strong revival throughout Italy and, since the 1990s, in the U.S. as well. The increasing interest in this folk tradition is evident not only in the proliferation of folk music groups and of local, national, and international collaborations, but also in the extensive organization of festivals, music and dance workshops and schools, both in Italy and in the U.S.

In my study, I investigate the ways in which the current revitalization of the tarantella (from the 1990s until today) has been recuperating Southern Italian folk music and dances and recontextualized them to respond to new local, regional, national, and global needs, thus transforming them according to new socio-political and cultural trends. Choosing “place” and “translation” as key parameters of my analysis, I explore the ways in which these traditions have travelled through linguistically and culturally diverse places: from the South of Italy to the whole Italian peninsula—a composite of historically, culturally, and linguistically diverse areas—and from Italy to the U.S. In studying this phenomenon, I am particularly interested in the transformations that it has brought to these Southern Italian folk traditions; in other words, I plan to explore the changing role of the tarantella within the Italian socio-political and cultural context in the last forty years. As noted by several scholars, the current revival is ultimately transforming this folk dance genre in several ways: by introducing new song texts, styles of dancing and festival costumes, by assigning new spiritual and cultural meanings to these performances, by popularizing a festival format unrelated to Catholic celebrations,
and by recovering the pre-Christiant aspects of this folk tradition. I am also interested in these changes as they relate to gender roles in the Italian context. For example, among the new aspects currently associated with the tarantella are women’s emerging roles as drum performers at the festivals, and as the carriers of the tarantella’s pre-Christian spiritual tradition. All the changes described so far allow us to reflect on how and why different notions of tarantella have been employed over time as representative of Southern Italian culture, as well as of Italy as a whole.

Given the troubled history of the Italian South—commonly referred to as the “Southern Question”—I argue that by exploring the current redefinitions of Southern Italian tarantella we are able to locate the ways in which Southern Italian groups are constantly redefining their local culture and identity in relation to the larger context of Italy—whose national discourse has traditionally linked the North and the South through a colonial, and orientalist, vision—as well as in relation to a regional (Mediterranean), and international/global perspectives (U.S. and the international musical scenes). At the same time, studying the contemporary revival of the tarantella helps to identify the ways that (Southern) Italian culture and identity are being represented and “culturally translated” (Spivak; Trivedi) within the U.S. musical and cultural scenes.

While most debates and publications, both in Italy and the U.S., have focused on the revival of a specific subgenre of the tarantella, the Salentine “pizzica,” I focus my analysis on the revival of a less-known Southern Italian dance, the “tammurriata” from the Naples area. Developed within the rural areas of the Campania region, the tammurriata presents a localized type of performance linked to the agricultural cycle and courtship rites, but also closely intertwined with Catholic celebrations and values. The
**tammurriata**’s strong connection to its peasant history, and traditional conceptions of land, has won it the definition of “dance of the earth” (Ferraiuolo, “A Dance of the Earth”). I believe that the global revival of such a place-specific musical tradition allows for a deeper understanding of the *tarantella* revival as a whole, and especially of its transnational movement from a much localized cultural framework to a global one—something that has just become of scholarly interest even in relation to the larger *pizzica* revival. How is globalization ultimately affecting and transforming such a site-specific, land-based cultural tradition? And how do the dynamics of revival and of global display, and specifically through tourism, translation, and world music venues, operate in relation to the *tammurriata*?

Drawing on my first-hand experience as a local and a festival attendee, as well as on my fieldwork in Italy, I illustrate the ways that the revival operates within the *tammurriata* culture, while also considering the local responses to the ongoing transformation of the *tammurriata* tradition within the current revival. The debates created by these changes are in many ways similar to those created by the larger *pizzica* revival, even as the *tammurriata* is seen to present a different history and culture, as testified by the originality of its rhythm and dance choreographies. By exploring the current transformation of the *tammurriata*, I therefore hope to create a genealogy that complements the one established for the *pizzica*; a genealogy that illustrates how different notions of tradition, of local identity, and of place are exchanged, and translated, among practitioners, cultural brokers, and *tammurriata* aficionados from Southern Italy to the U.S.
This study contributes to cultural studies scholarship as it analyzes the current Southern Italian folk revival as a product of the larger socio-political history and subalternity of Southern Italy. I illustrate how the revival is informed by several, and often conflicting, ideologies, such as the local responses to the Italian nationalist model and the emergence of a “Mediterranean thought,” as well as the separatist model of the Northern League and its colonial attitude toward the South. From an international perspective, the Southern Italian tradition is also informed by world music conventions and expectations to fit the idea of an exotic Mediterranean culture.

While exploring the Southern Italian context, however, this study also makes a contribution to the transnational and cross-cultural field of Italian cultural studies. Furthermore, by focusing on folk culture and on musical performance, this study seeks to expand the notion of Italian studies to include cultural texts that have often fallen outside of Italian studies practice (Sciorra). On a more theoretical level, my cross-cultural perspective draws and reflects on the role of Italian politician and thinker Antonio Gramsci within U.S. and Italian cultural studies. Gramsci’s thought—in particular its focus on the Italian folk or subaltern—has functioned as a crucial reference point both for Italian Marxist intellectuals and for cultural studies scholars in the Anglo-American context. Gramsci’s legacy is thus particularly valuable for those scholars, like me, whose work deals with matters of translation and with comparative cultural studies. In this dissertation, I borrow extensively from Gramsci’s study of folklore as an important means of expression for popular groups, but I also add a new perspective that does not condemn the folk as Gramsci and his contemporary intellectuals did.
Following a common trend in cultural studies, this project makes use of concepts and approaches derived from several disciplines. I analyze musical and dance performances from a cultural studies perspective, while also drawing on performance studies scholarship to complement my cultural studies analysis, in the hope of continuing the growing dialogue among folklore, performance, and the cultural studies of music. Drawing on the concept of “cultural translation” (Spivak; Trivedi), I follow the current trend within translation studies scholarship to expand the notion of translation beyond literary and linguistic translation. Borrowing from the notion of place as currently discussed within cultural geography, I explore the ways that the land culture embedded in Southern Italian folk music, and especially the tammurriata, is being displaced from its original context, but also re-emplaced elsewhere.

Finally, the (auto) ethnographic approach allows me to study the Italian folk revival in all its complexity and various perspectives by providing access to archival and site-specific resources, such as unpublished tarantella material collections and a tammorra (frame drum) maker’s laboratory. Too often left at the margins of academic discourse, folklore/expressive culture/popular culture require a method of analysis that goes beyond the cultural and political reading of written texts. While supplementing my cultural studies approach, my fieldwork research has also allowed me to reflect on my position as a native of the area now removed from the tammurriata context, and a scholar working within a U.S. academic framework. Such a position has ultimately deepened but also complicated my scholarly perspective, and it raises questions about the role of the scholar/intellectual in studying folk or popular culture.
Chapter Description

The first chapter of this study presents a historical overview of Southern Italian folk music and dances and contextualizes them within the larger socio-political context of Southern Italy. It also offers an overview of the current revival—both in Italy and in the U.S.—and of the main social, political, and cultural debates emerging from it.

The second chapter presents my own analysis of the tammurriata festivals in the Naples area, as well as in the Northern Italian city of Milan. Based on my first-hand participation, as well as on interviews and site-specific research I have conducted since the summer of 2007, I explore how notions of place and land—main elements in the tammurriata tradition—are being transformed within the current revival to respond to the needs of the new festival participants, largely young urbanites from upper-middle class families with often little background on the peasant culture of the tammurriata. These changes are evident in the introduction of new dancing styles and in the combination of traditional elements and urban youth culture displayed at the festivals. At the same time, I illustrate the new aspects of the tammurriata brought forth by the revival, and in particular the emergence of (Southern) Italian women performers in contrast with the historically male-oriented tammurriata tradition.

The third chapter presents a spotlight on song lyrics and musical arrangements as a way to explore the transformation of the tammurriata musical tradition from the 1970s until today. An overview of the major voices representing the pizzica revival, such as Eugenio Bennato and his tarantella group, will be however necessary to understand the intersections between the tammurriata and pizzica revivals from a strictly musical perspective. Textual choice ranges from such well-known groups as the Nuova
Compagnia di Canto Popolare, who helped start the revival in the early 1970s, to current local groups such as E Zezi, who have employed the *tammurriata* rhythm in their left-wing critique of the Italian economic and political structure. I also illustrate how, in the last ten years, the world music label has not only provided greater access to these local voices but also spurred local debates; these debates echo music scholars’ warnings about the risk of exoticizing local music by embedding it in the world music label.

In the final section of the chapter, I explore the ways that this musical revival is explicitly contributing both to the discussion of the “Southern Question,” and to the larger debate over the South’s position as a postcolonial entity within contemporary Italy and the Mediterranean.

The fourth chapter illustrates how the revival has been exported and translated into the U.S. context by focusing in particular on New-York-based artist Alessandra Belloni’s *tarantella* performance and her *Rhythm Is the Cure Workshop*. Belloni’s performance of the *tarantella* rhythms and dances is particularly interesting, since it showcases the artist’s extensive adaptation of Southern Italian cultural forms for an international audience. I argue that this process of adaptation is a very complex, and problematic, one, since it enhances an exotic image of Italy as it often emerges in Anglo-American culture, while at the same time adding a New Age woman’s perspective to it.
The Apulia region and in particular the Salento area (also known as “the heel,” near the towns of Brindisi and Lecce) are home to the *pizzica* musical tradition; the *tammurriata*, instead, is common in the areas surrounding the cities of Naples and Salerno, in the Campania region. My hometown, Gragnano, is a small town near the city of Castellammare di Stabia, and it is located between the Gulf of Naples and the Amalfi Coast.
Defining the Key Terms: Tammurriata, Pizzica, and Tarantella

The tammurriata dance tradition, the focus of my fieldwork research, derives its name from the tammorra or tamburo, a frame drum still played today in the rural areas outside the city of Naples and Salerno in the Campania region.\(^1\) To accompany the drum(s) are the “castagnole,” or “castagnette” (castanets)—a type of percussion instrument very similar to the Spanish castanets—essential for the dancers to follow the rhythm—as well as several other percussion instruments, which vary according to each town or area. Both frame drums and castagnette are employed with slight variations by tarantella performers throughout the Italian South, including pizzica performers.

Figure 2: Tammurriata Instruments: Tammorra and Castagne

The tammurriata chant is composed of a long series of hendecasyllable distiches, which generally describe mythical, narrative, and lyrical themes. A common song template still performed today at the local festivals contains, for example, the following hendecasyllable refrain: “Bella figliola ca te chiamme Rosa” (You pretty girl called

\(^1\) See video “Tammurriata - A folk dance of south of Italy.” 16 April, 2007. YouTube. 25 April, 2011.
Rosa). Love, both for the woman and for the God, Death and Life, devotion to the
Madonna, as well as the peasant’s life and labor, are some of the songs’ main themes.
The dance is always a couple dance, male-female, male-male, or female-female, and
occurs within a circle made by the audience, the drummers and the chanters. Different
geographical areas present different dance movements, but the choreography as a whole
maintains a similar couple-dance structure (Gala, “Ballo sul tamburo”).

While both music playing and chanting featured in the tammurriata are there
mainly to accompany the dancing (De Simone, Canti e tradizioni 23), both are the
expression of individual chanters and musicians trained in the tradition. The drum, in
particular, constitutes the central element of the tammurriata, and its rhythm shapes both
the chanting and the dancing (Gala, “Ballo sul tamburo”). As a matter of fact, when
describing this tradition, several performers still prefer the term “ballo ’n copp'o
tammurre” (Neapolitan for “the dance on the drum”) to that of tammurriata, popularized
through Neapolitan scholar Roberto De Simone’s fieldwork study in the 1970s (Inserra).
The tammurriata therefore reflects already in its name the ongoing process of linguistic
and cultural translation inaugurated by the Italian folk music revival in the 1970s. This
small example of linguistic translation testifies to the larger move from a rural dance
tradition to the urban context of the 1970s Italian folk music revival, of which De Simone
remains a leading figure. As for the chanting featured in the tammurriata, dance
ethnologist Giuseppe Michele Gala defines it “canto a ballo” (singing made for dancing),
while he defines the tammurriata dancing a type of “ballo cantato” (dance accompanied
by singing). While samples of this category can be traced back to Roman times, the
“canto a ballo” performed today at the local festivals is the product of a long process of
development. As the dance component has acquired a complex structure with many geographical variants, so has the singing component been used for different purposes: namely, as a narrative subtext to the dance choreography; as an invitation to dancing; as a dialogue between the protagonists [singers]; as a representation of everyday or extraordinary events through the use of pantomime. A complex and interdisciplinary art form by definition, the “canto a ballo” has been used to express the collective identity of a group or a community, and represents one of the most successful forms of social interaction (Gala, ‘Io non so se ballo bene’). According to Gala, the presence of a textual component allows for a verbal exchange among the participants, and for the singers to “show off” their vocal abilities; at the same time, the dance allows for physical expressions of love, physical strength, and competition among group members, while also educating the participants in the accepted norms of social behavior and body posture. In folkloric practice, Gala continues, many performers do not recognize the importance of the singing component; the songs are generally viewed as a mnemonic device that helps remember the melody, or sometimes as a replacement of musical instruments. But as Roberto De Simone brilliantly illustrates in his 1979 book, which offers a detailed analysis of these texts, these songs have their own artistic value and identity aside from their dance counterpart.

The tammurriata, as Gala’s study confirms, is only one of several types of folk dance traditions common in the South and collectively known as tarantella. The term tarantella directly refers to the tarantism phenomenon, whose origin traces back to latroductism, or tarantula bite syndrome, and to healing practices common throughout the Mediterranean until the sixteenth century (Sigerist). People bitten by the tarantula would
engage in a frenetic dance in order to expel the insect’s poison; this dance would ultimately help them go through a state of trance, which accelerated the healing process. The “tarantella,” or “spider dance,” and its musical rituals, therefore, developed as part of a healing practice; the name tarantella closely resembles that of taranta (tarantula), while its “pizzica” variation takes its name from the spider’s action of “pizzicare” (to bite).

Within the current revival of Southern Italian folk music, the pizzica musical and dance genre is particularly well-known because of its frenetic rhythm and dance steps, which have lent themselves to be more easily adopted by the younger generations.²

Even as it is historically linked to the tarantism phenomenon, over time the tarantella folk dance “family” has come to include such different dance forms as the tammurriata, developed in the rural areas around the cities of Naples and Salerno in the Campania region, and the “pizzica,” common in the Salento area of the Apulia region. As Gala points out, the tarantella “as an ethnic dance model is neither morphologically homogeneous nor equally distributed over the Southern Italian territory; it is rather an ample and diversified family of traditional dances with some common elements” (Gala, *La tarantella dei pastori* 22, my translation). Elements common to the whole tarantella genre are the use of the drum to beat times—even as different types of drum are used—the extensive motion of the arms, and the couple dance format. However, the complex choreographic pattern of the tarantella is such that, while most repertories, including the tammurriata’s one, feature couple dances (not necessarily man-woman), four-dancer, circle, and processional choreographies are also possible depending on the geographical context. Adding to such complexity, in the case of couple dances, for example, the dancers’ movements can symbolize rites of fertility, initiation, and courtship, especially if

the dancers are of opposite sexes; all these variations are already present within the
tammurriata tradition. Moreover, in the case of men-men and women-women dancing,
the gestures can symbolize a lot of different things, including strictly religious meanings.

As for the drum-based rhythm, different types of tarantella feature rather different
rhythmic patterns—2/4, 6/8, 4/4, 12/8, etc.—and instruments—chant, drum, bagpipe,
accordion, violin, mandolin, flute, etc. The tammurriata, for example, makes use of the
large frame drum called tammorra and follows a duple meter, which is slow and
therefore allows for the enchanting effect of the music, while other types of tarantella,
such as the pizzica, feature small tambourines and a much faster beat based on a triple
meter. Another difference concerns the symbolic aspects of these dance choreographies;
according to De Simone, the tammurriata is always choreographed as a couple dance,
thus contributing to create a “ritualized collective moment” (Canti e tradizioni 28) in the
community, while other tarantella forms, and especially the pizzica, represent essentially
the “mythical dance of a single person” (28), such as the tarantati or victims of the spider
dance syndrom. This last aspect is evident in the subgenre called “pizzica tarantata,”
whose name bears direct relation with the tarantism ritual.3 As Gala points out, this genre
classification remains very loose and it is often hard to distinguish between the pizzica
and other subgenres of tarantella that share the same rhythmic pattern. Moreover, similar
musical and dance patterns tend to be called different things in different geographical
areas; for example, while the tammurriata presents several elements of the larger
tarantella genre, both performers and scholars agree to distinguish between tammurriata
and tarantella dances, the latter intended as a specific dance still performed in certain

areas of the Campania region side by side with the tammurriata (De Simone, *Canti e tradizioni* 28).

In an attempt to clarify such a complex choreographic pattern, Neapolitan folk musician Eugenio Bennato identifies four elements that are characteristic of the *tarantella* genre, at least in its traditional form, and that go beyond its geographical, historical, and artistic variations. These elements are the performing style, the lack of a finale, the cyclic nature of its rhythm, and a disconnect between the rhythm of the music and that of the chant that accompanies it. The particular performing style of *tarantella* consists, for Bennato, of the attitude of the musician, who appears disconnected from the audience, as if he was in fact in a state of trance. This attitude prevents any forms of direct contact between the musician and the audience. The lack of a finale is perhaps what separates more traditional forms of *tarantella* from its contemporary remaking, as well as from its more well-known world music versions. The traditional *tarantella*, Bennato continues, is a “music that never ends and the finale is at any rate non-musical, since it depends on two elements: the healing process or the death of the *tarantato*, or the end of the musicians’ performance due to too much work” (“Le leggi musicali” 89, my translation). This particular musical structure creates extremely long performances, which will often take place from sunset to sunrise in the traditional village context, and at least for several hours in a contemporary concert scenario. As for the cyclic rhythm of the *tarantella*, Bennato explains how the basic pattern of most *tarantella* forms repeats the same standard harmony over and over, which does not only give the *tarantella* its trance-like obsessive quality, but also allows for a high degree of improvisation on the part of the musicians and chanters. As one can imagine, this quality is more developed in
traditional forms of tarantella than in more contemporary ones, partly because, Bennato suggests, today’s composers tend to deviate from this simple pattern and, therefore, to reduce the tarantella’s possibilities of variations. Finally, the particular rhythmic pattern of most tarantellas creates an interesting example of cross-rhythm or himeloa, between the music, which follows essentially a triple meter, and the chant, which follows a duple meter. This element creates a sort of surprising effect in the audience, since, as Bennato puts it, “when on a ternary base the chant suddenly explodes, in an unexpected binary pattern, it creates a swing effect, and therefore a sense of disruption, as if the tarantato, past or present, was caught between a reassuring basic rhythm and an unpredictable chant pattern.” (91, my translation). The important lesson behind this element, Bennato concludes, consists of the tarantella’s tendency to disrupt and surprise, which allows it to transgress the standards of melodic singing. Historically, this quality has served the healing role of the tarantella; today it seems to favor new ways of going beyond the norms of society. In both cases, it explains the huge popularity of this musical form still today, and especially in the Italian underground musical scene, where a special search for transgression seems to be at stake. While Bennato’s musical performance is focused mostly on Apulian tarantella, and especially its pizzica variation, the rules described can be applied to the tammurriata tradition as well.

A more detailed analysis of the similarities and differences between the dance forms encompassed under the notion of tarantella falls outside the scope of this study; yet, being aware of the complexity of the Southern Italian folk dance traditions is essential to understand the dynamics of the current revival. In fact, one of the main goals of performers and scholars within the revival has consisted precisely in promoting the
complexity and variety of this Southern Italian folk tradition, and in educating both national and international audiences to such a complex folk music scenario.

A major misconception about the tarantella genre comes from its recurrent association, both in Italy and abroad, with the tarantella napoletana (Neapolitan tarantella), a specific dance choreography, also accompanied by an easily identifiable rhythm and melody, which has helped popularize a whole new genre of tarantella.\footnote{See video “Tarantella Dance.” 17 February, 2008. \textit{YouTube}. 25 April, 2011.}

Having developed within the context of urban Naples, the tarantella napoletana is also significantly different from the rural performance traditions that will be discussed in this study. The first evidence of the dance choreography known today as tarantella napoletana goes back to seventeenth-century Naples; here the tarantella transformed from a folk dance form into an aristocratic entertainment under the patronage of the Spanish viceroy. Thus, this version of tarantella carries a different aesthetic, as well as social and cultural values, than the Southern Italian folk music tradition. However, it is the one dance most people outside of Southern Italy are familiar with, as result of its successful marketing both in Italy and in the U.S., especially through early 20\textsuperscript{th}-century Southern Italian migration\footnote{A famous example is the tarantella napoletana singing performance at Connie’s wedding in \textit{The Godfather} (1972). “The Godfather – Tarantella Scene.” October 15, 2010. \textit{YouTube}. 25 April, 2011.}, as well as through rearrangements by famous composers such as Italian classic composer Giacomo Rossini (Mauro 213). Within Italian American communities, in particular, this dance is still widely performed today at weddings and other social gatherings (La Barbera). While an important element of the Italian American cultural heritage, therefore, this internationally “translated” image of tarantella reflects a stereotypical image of the city of Naples, and of Italy in general, in the eyes of foreigners.
by reducing the extremely diverse scenario of Southern Italian folk dance to a single choreography (Bennato, “Le leggi musicali”). In addition, as Bennato puts it in his article on “Le leggi musicali della tarantella” (“Musical Laws of the Tarantella”), on the international stage the Neapolitan tarantella “conveys an image that has no relation with the ritual energy of the places it is mostly associated with: mainly Salento, the Gargano area, the whole Calabria region and so on” (87, my translation). Thus, scholars of the Southern Italian folk music revival, both in Italy and the U.S., are committed to challenge this image of the tarantella and to replace it with a more thorough representation of the musical variety and place-specific cultural and social meanings embodied in the tarantella genre. This great variety of forms and contents ultimately contradicts what Gala calls the “touristic view” of tarantella (La tarantella dei pastori 24), which assumes the Southern Italian folk dance tradition to always feature courtship dances with a strong erotic component. Such a “touristic” view is however always lurking even within the Italian festival scenario, and it is even enhanced by the increasing touristicization of this folk revival phenomenon; thus new tarantella practitioners often exaggerate the erotic quality of these dances, either to increase their spectacular and “folkloristic” values, or just to adapt them to current dance tastes.

Why am I Studying the Tammurriata?

I became first acquainted with the tammurriata rhythms and dance while attending the University of Naples and living in my hometown of Gragnano, a small town lying near the city of Pompeii and within 25 miles of Naples. I remember clearly that at some time in my third year of college, in 1998-99, it became “cool” for me and my
friends to spend our weekend evenings at some old country house watching both old and young people dance to these traditional peasant rhythms, drinking local wine, and eating “peasant” food, such as “pasta e fagioli” (pasta and beans). Our hangouts seemed to have gradually shifted from the Irish pub to a more “local” type of entertainment, although this new activity felt equally exotic and in need of discovery. Most of the young people participating in these get-togethers identified themselves with the so-called “alternativi” (also defined as Italian hippies, although they represent rather a mixture of hippie and punk culture). The same people would also take part in other non-mainstream music events, often hosted by “centri sociali,” social centers where politically aware groups gather to discuss political issues, prepare for demonstrations, and/or organize cultural events open to all. It is in this same environment that 99 Posse and Alma Megretta, the two main Neapolitan hip-hop/rap groups, started their performance in the 1990s; for at least ten years their music represented an important venue for left-wing political awareness among the younger generation. Through their constant attacks on the establishment as well as their use of the Neapolitan dialect, both groups ensured a steady audience of radical thinkers.

Reflecting on these matters fifteen years later, I can see how by choosing local wine and food over beer and hamburgers, and by singing the local dialect, we were being equally radical; we were ultimately looking to our domestic roots for an alternative model to globalization. Of course, these ideas were not shared by all the alternativi, and a lot of us seemed to be going to these events mainly because they were fashionable. For this reason, when I first engaged with the festival dancing some time around the spring of 2004, most of my friends had already left this scene and considered it not as cool as they
had a few years before. In fact, while for many locals the *tammurriata* festivals were losing their fresh and exotic charm, an increasingly larger group of tourists from all areas of Italy started to flock to these local festivals; in other words, the festivals had increasingly become less local in scope and more national in appeal.

My personal experience at the *tammurriata* festivals would have probably followed a similar trajectory as other locals’, had I not moved to Hawai‘i in the fall of 2004 to pursue my research work on Hawai‘i’s literatures and cultures. Being away from home and removed from the festival sites, I truly missed dancing the *tammurriata*, a recent activity but one filled with passion and joy; thus my memories of the festival scene were filled with nostalgia and longing for an opportunity to continue dancing while in Hawai‘i. Such an opportunity finally arrived in the spring of 2006, while I was teaching Italian at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, thanks to Alessandra Belloni’s trip to the islands, and her *Rhythm is the Cure* tarantella concert, which was held in downtown Honolulu on April 19, 2006. Upon my invitation to visit my Italian language classes, Belloni agreed to hold a workshop demonstration at the UH campus; this event turned out to be a success in terms of audience participation, while also providing a unique possibility for me to dance the *tammurriata* with a well-known professional. My acquaintance, and dancing, with Belloni during her workshops over the last five years predates this study (hence the auto-ethnographic quality of this project). My experience as a dancer participant in Belloni’s workshop has not only sparked my interest in the global revival of Southern Italian folk music and dances, but it also deeply shaped my larger project on the current transformation of this musical tradition into a global venue for cultural exchange, an important tourist attraction, and a successful business venture.
Belloni’s workshop thus already contained in a nutshell many of the elements that will be discussed in this study.

Furthermore, this personal experience has allowed me to reflect on the complexity of linguistically and culturally translating between such diverse locations as Southern Italy (my place of origin), the continental U.S., and Hawai‘i (the place where I have been living and working for several years), as well as on the many layers of translation that the movement across these different locations entails. Having immersed myself in Hawai‘i’s life to extensively research its literary cultures from the perspective of a foreign scholar, I was in a particularly good position to appreciate and reflect on Belloni’s decisions about performing, researching, and writing about Southern Italian folk music for a foreign audience. In a way, her experience is similar to mine: we both have had to deal with the problem of translating a certain culture into another and rather different one (Hawai‘i’s culture for an Italian readership in my case), as well as with the risk of estrangement embedded in any representation of that culture for such a different audience.

Having completed my research work on Hawai‘i’s literatures and cultures, it seemed only fitting to continue reflecting on issues of cultural translation and on comparative methodology through an analysis of a cultural phenomenon I am very familiar with, the tammurriata revival, and of its current representations for U.S. and international audiences.
Chapter I
(Re)Defining Southern Italian Folk Music and Dances

The complex composite of rhythms, songs, and dance choreographies that is known as tarantella developed within the peasant culture of Southern Italy, and still bears a close relation with this rural culture. Still an economically and socially depressed area today, the South of Italy has consistently remained isolated from the rest of the Italian peninsula and has developed a different history, culture, and languages. It is within such a different cultural context that its folk music forms have been able to survive and renew themselves over time. But the tarantella traditions also reflect the pre-Christian cultural roots of the larger Mediterranean area.

In his 1948 study titled History of Tarantism (Breve storia del tarantismo, 2003), American medical historian Henry Sigerist relates the phenomenon of tarantism and its musical tradition, from which the tarantella dances came to be, to pre-Christian fertility rites, and in particular to the festive rites in honor of the Greek god Dionysus. Considering the strong Greek influence throughout the Southern Italian regions of Apulia, Calabria, Sicily, and Campania—an influence derived from extensive Greek colonization—Sigerist draws many similarities between the musical ritual of tarantism and that of the pre-Christian cults of Cybele and Dionysus: the same frenetic rhythms, flamboyant dressing, highly sexualized behavior, and extensive wine drinking (41-42). Nevertheless, organized religion came to play an important role in the later development and preservation of this folk cultural form. According to Sigerist, a possible explanation for the later definitions of tarantism as a disease is precisely the need to cover such an organized ritual system within the larger Christian and Catholic frameworks. According to Italian anthropologist Ernesto De Martino, instead, the passage from a religious view
of the *tarantella* ritual to a medical one took place during the Enlightenment, when upper-class intellectuals from Naples decided to dismiss *tarantism*’s mythical and ritual qualities as an irrational mania that reflected a specific syndrome, the tarantula’s bite disease, common to many rural areas of the South (235). As a result, De Martino continues, this interpretation created an “irreconcilable conflict between the popular ideology of the *taranta* and the new science” (235), which then led to the “progressive folkloric isolation [of *tarantism*] and its gradual reduction to a ‘relic’ and ‘fragment’” (235). Both Sigerist and De Martino’s readings suggest, in any case, the existence of pagan elements within the Christian culture of Southern Italy, and both consider the *tarantella* an example of the complex coexistence of popular and organized religion in this part of the Italian peninsula. By the time of De Martino’s fieldwork expedition in the Apulia region in the summer of 1959, the *tarantism* ritual, and especially its musical aspects, showed clear signs of disintegration due to the increasing economic and social participation of the local church. As De Martino explains, the local Catholic institutions had encouraged the *tarantati* to trust S. Paul’s power to liberate them from the tarantula bite syndrome; in doing so, the Church was able to combine the tarantula myth with the Christian worship of S. Paul. Over time, this synthesis deeply affected the *tarantati*’s healing practices, since their yearly pilgrimages to S. Paul’s cathedral in the city of Galatina became more and more frequent, while their use of healing rites through music and dance became less common. In some cases, the money that was originally destined to the musicians now came to be offered to the church. By the early 1960s, the *tarantella* music and dancing seemed to have lost their deep spiritual and ritual connection. As De Martino’s study suggests, the *tarantella* had become part of the folkloric background of
the Salento area and of other rural areas of the South, and a symbol of their social and economic degradation and backwardness.

Contextualizing the *Tarantella*: The “Southern Question” Debate

The problematic socio-political and economic situation of these Southern regions had been at the center of many debates since at least the unification of Italy in 1861, and had become one of the major concerns of the post-unification government (Gribaudi). By the early decades of the twentieth century this debate had exploded into the so-called “Southern Question,” which Italian intellectual and political thinker Antonio Gramsci brilliantly delineates in his notebooks during his imprisonment by the Fascist regime. After approximately three centuries of Spanish domination in Naples and surrounding areas, the South was under the French rule for a good part of the nineteenth century (with the exception of the brief Parthenopean Republic in 1799). In 1815, Ferdinand IV of Bourbon entered Naples, and in 1816 the Kingdom of Naples was established, following the French model, as part of the larger Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. This new government encountered several moments of resistance, especially in Sicily, where an independent government was declared in 1848 and then dissolved by the king of Naples. By the time Italian general Giuseppe Garibaldi’s expedition reached Sicily’s shores in the spring of 1860, a huge revolt was spreading across the island, which ultimately favored Garibaldi’s actions. After Garibaldi entered Naples, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy (Lumley). This shift in power created a new historic course for the South and new problems as well. As historian Gabriella Gribaudi puts it, the new government, dominated by the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie of the North,
considered the South a barbaric land, a land that had been destroyed by the careless ruling of the Spanish and the Bourbons, and that needed to be deeply reformed; otherwise the national project as a whole would not fully take place.

But this reformation often took place in the form of an imposition of measures that were not suitable to the particular socio-economic structure of the South, such as heavy taxes for the already poverty-stricken peasant class. In fact, Gribaudi continues, the South was thought of only in terms of what it lacked: since the national project sought its political model in the central and Northern regions with their medieval city states and Renaissance culture and art, as well as in the linguistic model of Dante, the South—with its Spanish architecture, feudal-like land system, and extremely diverse linguistic tradition—came to represent a negative model to get rid of.

The relation between the North and the South of Italy had always been very complex, and at times conflicting. The North had traditionally regarded the South as the Other, an entity that was impossible to assimilate and, depending on the historical moment and on the viewer’s perspective, could become either a positive or a negative symbol. On their Grand Tour in Italy in the eighteenth century, members of the European elites had viewed these different parts of Italy with romantic eyes, reducing them to the stereotype of an idyllic (and erotic) pre-modern myth. But when the South turned out to be the main obstacle to the creation of the new nationalist model in the late nineteenth century, the same area and people became representative of a primitive and immoral society. As Gribaudi puts it,

The South is much more than a geographical area. It is a metaphor which refers to an imaginary and mythical entity, associated with both hell and paradise: it is a
place of the soul and an emblem of the evil that occurs everywhere, but an
emblem that in Italy has been embodied in just one part of the nation’s territory,
becoming one of the myths upon which the nation has been built. (84)
This description resembles that of many other places that have over the centuries been
encompassed under the category of Otherness, a labeling that usually served as a way to
silence the injustices brought by the colonization of these places, as well as by their
linguistic and cultural appropriation on the part of the colonizers. It is not by chance,
then, that Jane Schneider, in the introduction to a collection of essays on Italy’s Southern
Question (1998), underlines the importance of analyzing the “forceful rhetoric of the
North versus South [of Italy]” (1), a rhetoric that she considers a form of “orientalism in
one country.” As Schneider explains,

Italy was certainly affected by Orientalism. For, although the imperial powers of
the North did not envision the Italian peninsula as a land they had to colonize—its
inhabitants were European Christians, after all—it was nevertheless their goal that
Italian resources and products circulate freely in international markets, that Italian
markets be open to English and French manufacturers, and that Italian elites share
and support the world civilization system that these powers believed it was their
prerogative to create. As such they critically scrutinized the divergent polities of
the peninsula on the eve of their unification in 1860, much to the disadvantage of
the Neapolitan Kingdom of the Two Sicilies that governed the Southern region
and Sicily. (5)

Though technically the South was not a separate country to colonize, this orientalist
attitude on the part of the Northern elites clearly places Italy within the larger debate over
nineteenth-century Western colonialism and its rhetorical strategies. Because the national project developed as a political project of the Northern powers, it ultimately “failed” to take roots in the South, and the Southern Question remained a crucial problem in the mind of both Northern rulers and Southern intellectuals for many decades.

Writing during the last years of the Fascist regime from the perspective of a socialist political leader, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) shared his concern over the lack of class solidarity between the proletarian groups of the industrialized North and the peasant groups of the South. For Gramsci, solving the Southern Question ultimately meant creating a unified, national culture that would be the expression of both groups, which at the time represented for him the only two social forces that were “essentially national and bearers of the future” (*The Southern Question* 47). This new culture would help defeat what he calls the parasitic attitude of the Northern industrial powers, which were constantly treating the South as a colony. However, behind this new political model lies the need for a new intellectual class, and a new education policy, that would help liberate the Southern people from their own backwardness and lack of civic consciousness. In Gramsci’s own words,

The South can be defined as a great social disintegration. […] Southern society is a large agrarian bloc made up of three social strata: the large peasant mass, amorphous and disintegrated; the intellectuals of the petty and medium rural bourgeoisie; and the large landowners and the great intellectuals. Southern peasants are in perpetual ferment, but as a mass they are unable to give a centralized expression to their aspirations and needs. (36)
Gramsci’s words here inevitably reflect some of the earlier stereotypes associated with Southern people, even as Gramsci’s goal is to help those people reach their goals and fulfill their needs. The echo of this debate, and especially the notion of the South as a barbaric land, is later reflected in Ernesto De Martino’s ethnographic study of the tarantism rituals, *The Land of Remorse* (1961). Understanding the folk culture of these areas is crucial for De Martino, and for Gramsci before him, to address the larger problem of the Southern condition. The debate over the Southern Question is therefore strictly intertwined with the debate around the folk culture of the South. Not surprisingly, within the contemporary revival of Southern Italian folk music, this connection has been restored and brought to the fore by several scholars as crucial to a better understanding of Italian Southern culture today. In addition, De Martino’s labeling of the South as a “land of remorse” testifies to the resilience of the Southern Question debate in post-WWII Italy, a time when the quality of life of the Italian nation as a whole was greatly improving, following the larger call for modernization in all the major Western countries.

The economic and social conditions of Southern Italians have not improved much in the last fifty years, as they struggle with the highest rates of unemployment in the nation, poor economic, social, and health infrastructures, a strong mafia system infiltrating both private and public sectors, and local politics mostly based on patronage. The sporadic and often insufficient interventions of the national government have certainly not helped this situation. In a recent article appearing in the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* and titled, “Quello che serve al Mezzogiorno” (What the South Needs), the writer reminds us that one of the main reasons why the Southern Question has not been solved yet is the lack of interest of the national government toward the problems of
the South. Every now and then the government will put forth a new plan for the South, usually before general elections, but such plans are never carried out (Ranieri). In the last twenty years, and since the creation of the Lega Nord (Northern League) party in 1992, the South’s still problematic position within the Italian social formation has become a major topic of debate for both political and cultural groups, especially since Lega Nord leaders are now part of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi’s government. Lega Nord’s discriminatory comments and attitudes towards both Southern Italian and foreign immigrants to (Northern) Italy—the former accused of appropriating jobs that should be kept for Northerners, the latter of damaging the already poor economic conditions of the country—are common knowledge and are discussed daily in the Italian media. But while for some these represent only the uninformed comments of incompetent politicians, the similarities between Lega Nord’s comments and the Southern Question discourse are so strong that they deserve careful study and reflection. A strong sentiment of reaction to Lega Nord’s ideology became apparent in 2010, during the celebration for the 150th anniversary of the Italian unification. As shown in the media, this celebration has in fact reopened the old Southern Question debate and spurred the separatist claims of both Northern and Southern groups. As I will show in Chapter 3, these claims affect the current tarantella scholarship, and the tarantella revival more generally, in very direct ways.

**The Tarantella Revival: a Brief Overview**

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Italian folk music and culture were at the center of a strong revitalization as part of a larger cultural movement that borrowed from 1960s’
social rights movements in France and the U.S., and elaborated them within the Italian left-wing framework. Often working within the ideological framework of the Italian Communist and Socialist Parties, many intellectuals saw the revival of Italian folk culture as crucial to move away from increasingly capitalistic ways of living and toward Italy’s own “authentic” traditions (Biagi). The first attempt in this direction was made by the group Cantacronache from Torino, who in the years 1958 through 1961 sought to incorporate folk material in their musical project, but their shows were ultimately aimed at an audience that preferred the highbrow culture of classical Italian music. The real breakthrough was made by the group Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano, founded by Italian ethnomusicologist Roberto Leydi, whose agenda was to recover, to study, and to faithfully reproduce the oral culture of the subaltern classes (Vacca). Their work gave rise to a whole new wave of Italian music that was folk-inspired and politically engaged; this music did not limit itself to a specific geographical area but it revalued both the rice-plantation workers’ chants from the North and the peasant songs from the South, as well as the Sicilian fishermen’s struggle within the increasingly modernized economic structure. It both recuperated old folk material and composed new songs based on old material (Santoro, Il ritorno della taranta). The revivists belonged mostly to the middle class and came to appreciate the lyrical power of Italian folk music, which often focused on war, working-class struggles, and poverty; the peasants, instead, seemed less interested in revitalizing their own culture than in embracing the more glossy American musical culture that was transmitted by radio and TV and that helped them hope for a more economically stable future (Biagi).
Most of the revivalists worked and met with other scholars and performers in Rome, an important center for left-wing intellectuals at the time; this experience would in turn encourage them and prepare them to return to their own regional folk material. It is in this context that the first revival of Southern Italian tarantella and tammurriata came into being through the work of Neapolitan musician and scholar Roberto De Simone and his group, Nuova Compagnia di Canto Popolare, throughout the 1970s. In those same years, Apulian scholar Rina Durante and Rome-based scholar and artist Giovanna Marini were initiating the first wave of pizzica revival; the groups Nuovo Canzoniere del Salento first and Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino later spurred a large revival movement in the Apulia region, at the same time as the folk song tradition of the Campania region was being rediscovered and revalued by De Simone (Santoro, Il ritorno della taranta).

In the late 1970s, Italian artists such as John La Barbera and Alessandra Belloni helped make this tradition known in New York; over time, this process of “cultural translation” (Trivedi; Spivak) has contributed to popularize Italian folk music both in the U.S. and in the world music scene. In America, the revival of Italian folk music found a rich terrain in the drive for preserving the cultural heritage of minority groups, and embraced the interests of many Italian American communities. In fact, Belloni and La Barbera’s effort to export Italian folk music internationally was inspired by the contemporaneous American folk revival.

The arrival of American folklorist Alan Lomax to Southern Italy in 1953, and the collection of Italian folk songs derived from this experience, had also inaugurated a new awareness of the importance of preserving folk culture in Italy. According to Lomax, “Italian folk music has come down to our time as the most varied, the most antique and
very possibly the richest oral tradition in western Europe” (qtd. in Cohen 129). The American folk revival therefore represented a successful model for continuing the Italian folk music revitalization project on national and international scales (Biagi). An important trait d’union between Lomax’s work in the American folk music revival and the Italian folk music revival of the 1960s lies in the effort of Italian scholars and performers to bring the “life struggles of ordinary ‘folk’ […] to the attention of the general public in order that their plight might be ameliorated (and that they might not be forced to emigrate)” (Del Giudice, “Speaking Memory” 7). Therefore, the “Italian ‘folk music revival’ of the 1960s […] sought to both promote cultural conservation and advocate for sociopolitical change” (7).

The second wave of Italian folk music revival—my focus in this study—has spread throughout Italy since the 1990s and has focused on Southern Italian folk music and dance traditions or tarantella. Similarly to the 1970s revival movement, this new wave of interest in Italian folk culture presents both local and international aspects. On the one hand, it has developed within and is being affected by the larger context of world music and the revitalization of ethnic music, such as the Romani or gypsy music, which has received increasing attention in the Italian musical scenario. As I will show in the fourth chapter, textual choices and musical arrangements on the part of current Southern Italian folk musicians often include a blend of Mediterranean, African, Balkan, and other Eastern European sounds. On the other hand, this revival shares many elements with other sub-cultural sounds developed in Italy since the early 1990s, such as Italian hip hop, rap, and ragamuffin (Gala, “‘La pizzica ce l’ho nel sangue’”). Emerging in dialogue with other international sounds, this hip hop musical tradition—represented by the nationally
acclaimed Neapolitan groups 99 Posse and Alma Megretta as well as by the Apulian group Sud Sound System—is characterized by an explicit political content and an extensive use of Southern dialects. Its lyrics often narrate the difficult position of Southern Italy within its postcolonial and global configuration, and reflect on its troubled history. Its musical style often includes elements of folklore such as the traditional chanting style of pizzica and tammurriata, traditional instruments like the drums, the use of local dialect and many references to local and folk culture. While the relation between this music and the current folk music revival has often been exaggerated, and while Italian hip hop groups usually tend to dissociate from the folk music revival (Plastino, Mappa delle voci), most scholars seem to agree that the Italian hip hop phenomenon has not only preceded but also encouraged the current folk music revival (Gala, “‘La pizzica ce l’ho nel sangue;’” Nacci).

While the first phase of revival was explicitly connected to the national-popular ideology of the Italian Communist Party, its current form has been criticized for what often looks like merely touristic advertising and commercial entrepreneurship on the part of local governments and businesses. As a matter of fact, the revival has been consistently politicized; however, its current phase seems to be less connected to the idea of a national culture than to the local politics of culture, and in particular to the idea of a culturally independent South of Italy that has more elements in common with the rest of the Mediterranean than with the Italian peninsula (Santoro and Torsello). At the same time, by moving across different cultural frameworks, such as from the South to the North of Italy and internationally, the revival also necessarily comes to terms with, and helps redefine the image of Italian music (and of Italy) both at home and abroad.
Furthermore, while the 1970s revival was made possible largely by middle-class urban intellectuals such as De Simone, who worked with local informants to gather information and sound recordings, the current revival shows several examples of sound recording and music education projects conducted by local performers and bringing the voices of the old-timers to the fore of the revival. Nevertheless, the debate over who and what should represent Southern Italian folk music is still an open and important one; as I illustrate throughout this study, this debate is ultimately linked to cultural politics and to local scholars and performers' understanding of folklore, of tradition, and of place.

Debates Surrounding the Current Tarantella Revival

The current revival has brought many changes to the tarantella tradition; in particular, it has significantly moved the Southern Italian music and dance traditions from their rural and religious context to an urban and secular one. Even the local festivals, which still happen mostly in the space outside the church, now attract old and young generations of practitioners and attendees who often seem more concerned with the musical aspects of the tarantella, pizzica, and tammurriata than with their traditional connection to Christian and Catholic rituals. Dancing, in particular, seems to especially appeal to the younger generations, as Southern Italian folk dance schools and workshops keep developing everywhere in the peninsula (Gala, “La pizzica ce l’ho nel sangue”). As a result, the local festivals feature an interesting blend of attendees, many of whom will participate in the music and dances in the front yard of the church, but will not necessarily attend the religious rituals happening inside the church. When this music is

6 Of particular interest is local director Salvatore Raiola’s recent documentary Voci di tamburo (Drum Voices), the result of an oral history project involving both old-timers and younger performers of the tammurriata drum.
staged in metropolitan centers in other parts of Italy, the religious aspects of this folk
tradition usually disappear, while songs and dances are often presented on the stage and
in a concert format. In addition, different subgenres of *tarantella* are often danced and
played upon the same festival stage, regardless of their different religious and cultural
backgrounds.

As is often the case with folk revival movements, these transformations have not
only popularized the *tarantella* traditions and added new meanings to them, but also
created tensions, as each individual or group participating in this process holds a specific
understanding of what these musical traditions mean today and of how they should be
diffused and preserved. While it is not my concern here to define what Southern Italian
folk music and dances are or should be, by outlining the terms of these debates—which
center on notions of authenticity, tradition, and place—I seek to reflect on how
individual, social, and political stakes inform the current production and transmission of
the *tarantella* rhythms.

Reflecting on the current revival of the Salentine *pizzica*, dance ethnologist
Giuseppe Gala has complained about the extent of the current reinterpretations of the
*pizzica*, especially in relation to the dance choreographies: “toward the ethno-musical
event,” he explains, “one tends to have an attitude of imitation, distinction or innovation,
while in the case of the ethno-choreutic event every act of interpretation is somehow
considered legitimate” (Gala, “La pizzica ce l’ho nel sangue” 138, my translation).
Having developed later than the music revival, the revival of Southern Italian folk
dances, and of the *pizzica* in particular, in the last fifteen years has in fact “reinvented
several ways of dancing that have no direct connection with their traditional forms and
are not based on a constructive dialogue with older generations; instead, these forms come from nowhere and are simply the product of someone’s personal creation” (133, my translation). Such transformations, Gala explains, include the creation ex novo of several categories of pizzica dance performances, such as the “pizzica de core,” the “slow pizzica,” the “trance pizzica,” the “energico-pizzica,” and the “techno-pizzica.” What these subgenres have in common is a highly choreographic quality and a close body interaction between the dancers, both elements absent within the Catholic peasant culture of the South. As I will show in the following chapter, similar transformations are at stake for the tammurriata revival, and they have led to similar responses on the part of local scholars and performers.

It is important to note how Gala acknowledges the legitimacy of creative interpretation from a strictly artistic perspective, but also points out how, at least in the case of the pizzica revival, these newly invented dance choreographies ultimately lack the “collective memory” that is at the center of every tradition and that allows it to live on (133). I hope to show throughout this study that these transformations become problematic whenever they reflect a lack of understanding and respect of the social values of the tarantella traditions, such as their connections to the land and to the peasant culture of South, and of the voices of the previous generations through which these cultural traditions are being passed on.

What Gala and other local scholars fail to notice, however, is that all these changes have allowed for an increasing freedom of interpretation on the part of both musicians and dancers; these acts of interpretation include not only dance choreographies and musical styles, but also the participants’ interaction with each other and with the
festival scenario more in general. As folklorist Dorothy Noyes suggests, in the handing over of traditional knowledge from one generation or group to another, “[t]he receiver must respect, but the giver must let go. The constraint is thus mutual, as is the room for maneuver. As an ideal type of social transaction, we can contrast tradition to the total control of authoritative institutions (including inheritance) and the total freedom of commodity circulation (“Tradition” 249).

Perhaps the most significant change occurring within the current festival scene is women’s official participation in singing and percussion sessions—the two main elements of the Southern Italian musical tradition—in contrast to the primarily male performance roles still displayed in most traditional festival settings. Translated onto the world music scenario, and especially thanks to the work of Alessandra Belloni, this element has contributed to create a sort of woman genealogy for Southern Italian folk music and enters into close dialogue with both the feminist perspective and New Age spiritualism. This is indeed an important aspect of the current reinterpretations of the tarantella, but one that has not yet become an object of study among Italian scholars.

Nevertheless, in analyzing the ways that cultures, and in particular traditional ways of living, change and transform, it is also important to look at who is changing them, and why; that is, what relations of power inform this transformation. Our postmodern understanding of tradition, culture, and identity starts from the awareness that all three are constantly shifting and being redefined by both individuals and groups; in other words, that they are constantly in the making and assume different meanings according to who is defining them and for whom. At the same time, postcolonial and indigenous studies have made us aware that the transmission, and translation, of
knowledge can be a powerful tool of colonial power, and moreover, that only by recovering agency over their own past and over constructing their own future can indigenous peoples guarantee that the transformation of their culture does not become a way to silence them. As folklorist Heather Diamond illustrates in her study of the Smithsonian Hawaii Festival, “presenting Hawai‘i in terms of festival notions of traditionality required unpackaging the imagined Hawai‘i to assert and reinvent a more ‘authentic’ version of the ‘real’ Hawai‘i” (38). But in the attempt to present a “real” image of Hawai‘i, the local and the national staff had to negotiate between their often contrasting ideas of indigeneity, ethnicity, authenticity, tradition, and Hawai‘i. More importantly, while the local interpretation of these values tended to show the growing hybridity that characterizes cultural production in Hawai‘i, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival staff’s interpretation tended to fix Hawai‘i’s culture, and especially the indigenous culture, into a very rigid notion of traditionality, one that would place Native Hawaiians back in pre-colonial time.

Through an analysis of the scholarship on the Southern Italian folk music revival, I will show in the rest of this chapter that, when taking certain positions in the current debate over the significance of this revival, scholars, performers, and cultural brokers are implicitly negotiating a particular image of the Italian South, an image that challenges the one transmitted nationally and internationally through the Southern Question debate. I will first analyze Ernesto De Martino’s 1961 famous study of the “spider dance” as a crucial starting point for any following study on the tarantella traditions and their revival. Understanding the terms of De Martino’s analysis of the tarantella music rituals in turn provides a point of entry into the current scholarship on the revival.
Ernesto De Martino’s Model

Southern Italian anthropologist Ernesto De Martino (1908-1965) played a crucial role within the study of Southern Italian folk culture. His interest in folklore and the history of religions, his commitment to socialist ideals and the culture of the subaltern classes, and his Southern upbringing ultimately led him to compile an accurate and thoughtful description of the cultural and religious customs of the peasant classes of the South. De Martino’s most famous works are *Naturalismo e storicismo nell’etnologia* (Naturalism and Historicism in Ethnology, 1941), *Il Mondo Magico* (The Magic World, 1948), *Morte e Pianto Rituale* (Death and Ritual Lament, 1958), *Sud e Magia* (South and Magic, 1959), and *La Terra del Rimorso* (The Land of Remorse, 1961). Today, he is considered a leading figure in modern Italian anthropology and folklore scholarship as well as an example of the historically close relation of folklore, culture, and politics in Italy. His work therefore represents an important model for analyzing the current revival of Southern Italian folk music in relation to the larger socio-cultural context of Southern Italy. Furthermore, because the current revival has also spurred a renewed interest in De Martino’s study and more generally in the methodological aspects of Italian folklore scholarship, it is important to trace the influence of De Martino’s work on the work of contemporary Italian scholars who study the tarantella revival.

Initially trained in Naples within the idealist circle of Italian intellectual Benedetto Croce (1866-1952), later De Martino came to partly revise Croce’s historicist position; as George Saunders points out, unlike Croce and many other scholars of the time, De Martino did not believe that those who are identified as “Others are ‘without
history”; instead, he was “explicitly interested in historicizing the Other, in applying Croce’s historicism to the analysis of ‘the civilizations most distant from our own’ in space, time, and ethos” (877). Brought into the specificity of the Italian social formation, this position translated into an interest in studying the living traditions of both the working class from the Northern areas and the peasant class of the South.

De Martino’s La terra del rimorso (1961; The Land of Remorse, 2005) is particularly important to this study, because it was the first to illustrate the phenomenon of tarantism in relation to the larger socio-political and cultural context of Southern Italy. As Vincent Crapanzano puts it in his “Foreword” to the recent English-language translation, “[this book] is the third and best-known of Ernesto De Martino’s on-the-ground studies of religion and magic in the Mezzogiorno” (vii). In this volume, De Martino defines tarantism as a “‘minor,’ predominantly peasant religious formation […] characterized by the symbolism of the taranta which bites and poisons, as well as the symbolism of music, dance and colors which deliver its victim from the poisoned bite” (xxi). The focus on “symbolism” helps to shed light on the psychological and cultural aspects of tarantism, and to move away from previous studies, which had focused mostly on its medical aspects. By reflecting on the data collected through his extensive fieldwork research, De Martino is able to demonstrate how psychological factors, such as unrequited love or feelings of depression connected to puberty, as well as the poor economic and social status of the tarantati (victims), must have contributed to this dancing mania. Within the new scenario pictured by De Martino, the tarantella, with its frenetic rhythms, becomes essentially a way to liberate both the body and the spirit. This is a transformative interpretation that also has its limitations. De Martino notes the
prominent participation of women in these healing ceremonies, but does not develop this element in his analysis.

It is within Italian feminist scholarship and thanks to the recent work of ethnomusicologist Tullia Magrini that the women’s role in the tarantism ritual was further explored. According to Magrini, the liberating power of the tarantella is strictly connected to the need for a venue for expressing oneself on the part of Southern Italian women, who have historically lived within the constraints of patriarchal society and of the Catholic ideological framework (Magrini, “The Contribution”).

Another important aspect of De Martino’s analysis concerns the connection he draws between tarantism and the Catholic establishment: not only did the tarantati believe in the healing power of the tarantella music, but they also attributed a special healing power to St. Paul, in whose church they gathered every year either to thank him for his healing grace or ask him to heal them. As De Martino explains in his study, on the one hand, the Church has traditionally labeled these rites as pagan; on the other hand, it has tried to draw them in its sphere by incorporating them within the larger Catholic rites. As a result, the tarantati often became poor because of the large amounts of money that they felt obliged to donate to both the church and the local musicians in order to ensure their own healing process. Such politics show how contesting definitions of tarantella have been played out for centuries in the South.

The particular psychological condition of the tarantati is also illustrated by De Martino’s use of the term “rimorso” (remorse), which in Italian has the double meaning of a literal “second bite” and of remorse in the usual sense. In the first case, remorse refers to the recurring nature of the syndrome, while in the second De Martino borrows
from Levi-Strauss to describe Southern Italy’s “wretched past that returns and regurgitates and oppresses with its regurgitation” (xxi). Viewed in this light, the “land of remorse” is not only Apulia, the region where most tarantism cases have concentrated over time, but also Southern Italy as a whole. Therefore, by understanding the phenomenon of tarantism we are able to make sense of the troubled history of Southern Italy and of its vexed relation with the industrial North (Saunders). In exploring what he considered the last remnants of tarantism, De Martino was ultimately trying to demonstrate the unique relationship among religion, culture, and politics in Southern Italy, and thus to construct a religious and cultural history of the South.

On a strictly methodological level, The Land of Remorse is first of all an ethnographic study of tarantism and a brilliant example of what today we would call a case-study approach; it is also an example of the rigorous application of scientific methods of analysis and interpretation to anthropological phenomena, which De Martino explains in detail, and justifies, in his introduction to the book. De Martino opens his introduction by commenting on ethnographic investigation and its traditional drive for objectivity. “Objectivity,” writes De Martino, “does not consist in pretending from the beginning of the research to be sheltered from every passion [. . .] Rather, objectivity is based on the commitment to tie one’s journey to the explicit recognition of a current passion, linked to a vital problem of the civilization to which one belongs” (1-2). The “ethnographic journey” therefore becomes a “coming-to-awareness of certain humanistic limits of one’s own civilization” (3). It is this self-reflexive attitude that ultimately enables De Martino to look at the South of Italy as Italy’s “wretched past”; that is, a mirror of the North’s own contradictions. It is possible to read this passage as an
anticipation of Edward Said’s famous notion of *orientalism*, as well as of Said’s observation that in the Western literary imagination the East has historically functioned as the negative counterpart or negation of the West rather than as a self-defining entity. De Martino’s analysis thus places the Italian South within the larger context of North-South and/or East-West colonial power relations.

De Martino’s anthropological approach was later expanded, commented on, and partly revised by several Italian scholars and folklorists, who also came to recognize the ambiguities embedded in his analytical model. As I mentioned earlier, De Martino’s notion of “critical ethnocentrism”—the idea that anthropologists should focus on a “critical reflection on the very categories of [their] analysis and recognition that these categories derive from [their] own ethnocentric cultural values” (Saunders 878)—was not only crucial to his larger study of “cultura popolare” (not to be translated as popular culture but as the culture of the folk), but also anticipated the notion of self-reflexivity, developed by anthropology, folklore, and cultural studies scholarship only thirty years later, in the 1980s and 1990s. As has often been noted about current work that deals with such issues, such as Said’s work on *orientalism*, this intellectual position remains problematic because it implicitly confirms the intellectual dependency of the people studied (the Italian South in De Martino’s case) upon the cultural perspective of the scholar who studies them. If viewed in the context of a post-WWII cultural situation and of De Martino’s Marxist and historicist background, however, his approach constitutes an essential step toward an understanding of subaltern culture. In his introduction, De Martino also provides historical evidence for comparisons between Southern Italy and other “primitive” societies such as India and the “New World.” The phrase “Italian
India,” used to refer to the Italian South and first circulated in the mid-sixteenth century among Jesuits in Naples, brilliantly summarizes the condition of the South in the Italian peninsula. In response to such a history, De Martino explains, his vocation soon came to be that of writing as a way to better understand the Southern Question and to help the South through its process of “rebirth and emancipation” (6).

The interest in the marginalized strata of society, and in the cultural dimensions of class, came to De Martino not only through Gramsci’s lesson, but also through his own direct involvement with the anti-Fascist movement first and with the Socialist and the Communist parties later on. Drawing on Gramsci’s reflections on popular culture and folklore—which first appeared in 1948 in Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks—De Martino sought to bring to light the remnants of Italian folk culture, and in particular to understand Southern Italy’s position as a “primitive society” within the Italian social formation. Like Gramsci, he was convinced that by studying the culture of the working classes, one could better understand these groups and therefore help them move beyond their marginalized condition. Improving the living conditions and the educational level of the subaltern groups would in turn help construct a stronger national culture and fill the cultural gap between ruling and marginalized groups in the Italian society.

Nevertheless, De Martino’s attention toward the Italian subaltern is partly neutralized by his negative view of subaltern culture and of folklore in particular. For him, as for Gramsci before him, folklore was essentially a form of barbarism that contributed to the marginalization of the popular classes. It is important to note here how De Martino’s, and Gramsci’s, notion of folklore reiterates the commonly held assumption at the time, both in European and U.S. scholarship, that folklore is by definition
something belonging to the past and about to vanish. As I illustrate in the rest of the chapter, since the 1970s the literature on the revival has moved away from De Martino’s position by embracing a more positive notion of folklore. At the same time, De Martino’s push for a “metropolitan ethnography”—“the study of archaic phenomena still present in the cultural life of modern nations” (4) — not only reiterates the notion of Southern Italy as the Italian primitive, but also shows the Neapolitan ethnographer’s attempt to move toward a more dynamic concept of folklore, one that includes the living traditions of contemporary society. It is ultimately this drive for exploring the current faces of folklore that continues to inspire today’s students of the Southern Italian folk music revival to understand the role played by the South of Italy within globalization and cross-cultural migration.

While both Gramsci’s and De Martino’s positions end up perpetuating the idea that folklore is something belonging to the past that cannot survive within modern society, their lessons remain crucial for contemporary students of Italian folklore, as they encourage an analysis of the Italian folk music revival within the larger context of the Southern Italian cultural formation and in relation to the continued significance of the Southern Question. Gramsci’s attempt to understand the culture of subaltern groups also works as a model for contemporary Italian scholars who are studying the resurgence of popular culture among young generations of Italians. As my overview of the literature on the revival suggests, Gramsci’s idea that popular culture can function as an anti-hegemonic form of expression is very common among the students of the revival. But the forces against which popular culture is played out today are necessarily different, and are less connected to the larger capitalistic structure of Italy than to the increasing
globalization of culture, as well as to the reaffirmation of discriminatory attitudes toward Southerners and foreign immigrants.

“Neotarantismo” and post-De-Martino Studies

In “Panorami e Percorsi. La Letteratura sul Tarantismo dopo La Terra Del Rimorso” (2006), scholar of the revival Sergio Torsello notes how the changing fortune of De Martino’s study on tarantism in the last fifty years is directly related to the changing attitudes toward folk culture in Italy. Not very popular at the time of its publication, the book remained unnoticed until the 1970s, precisely because it was about the Southern Question and the marginality and poverty of the South (29). At the time of its publication, in fact, many complained that focusing on tarantism, as well as on other aspects of folk culture, would be detrimental to the promotion of modernization and tourism in the Southern regions. This attitude was part of a larger political project that sought to “accelerate the modernization of the South” not only by “extending the lower classes’ participation in the cultural life of the country,” but also by eliminating those cultural “relics” that “slowed down” this process of modernization (Apolito 139, my translation). As a result, Italian anthropologist Paolo Apolito explains, the 1950-1960s tourist advertisements for the Apulia region, and the Salento area in particular, “sought to ignore, or even hide the last ‘relics’ of tarantism” (141), De Martino’s object of study.

The 1970s folk revival movement, however, spurred a renewed attention to the “cultura popolare”; in this new scenario, De Martino’s study of tarantism received new attention in academic circles, and in the 1980s several scholars, including the French anthropologist George Lapassade, started taking ethnographic trips to Salento following
in De Martino’s steps. By the early 1990s, De Martino’s thought was fully reappraised within Italian academia; this rediscovery coincided with the increasing curiosity of scholars, tourists, and students about the music and dance rituals of the tarantella. As Apolito puts it in an article published in 2000, “We’re observing a radical inversion in attitude [toward tarantism]” (141). Today, he explains, the tourist slogan reads something like this: “come to the land of tarantism […] come to know the Salento area, which has tarantism in its blood” (141). Indeed, in the last ten years, the scholarship on Italian folk music has spread to the Southern regions of Campania, Apulia, and Calabria, following the new wave of folk music revival in these areas.

Inspired by De Martino’s analysis of tarantism, this Italian scholarship on the revival has been devoted primarily to the pizzica music and dance tradition from the Salento area and the Apulia region more generally, and has often insisted on the continued significance of tarantism rituals within the current socio-political and cultural structure of Southern Italy. In their introduction to the volume Il ritmo meridiano (2002), Vincenzo Santoro and Sergio Torsello comment:

Forty years after De Martino’s study, the scene has completely changed. The plan to escort the Mezzogiorno toward “modernity” through industrialization, which was at the center of the debates on the Southern Question, is now finally put aside, leaving behind a stream of social and environmental damage. […] Nevertheless, like never before, a general interest toward [tarantism]—a phenomenon that had been relegated to the margins of modernity as symbol of ignorance, suffering, and of the “bad past” that cyclically returns—is growing and expanding (5-6, my translation).
Far from being symbols of ignorance, such folkloric practices as *tarantella* have now moved to the front stage of modernity, and from this new position they are able to question, in a postmodern fashion, the ideology of modernity, which had cast them into the margins of mainstream culture. In this sense, such emergence of folkloric practices in today’s Italian scene works in the same way as the “remorse” illustrated by De Martino. As philosopher Franco Cassano explains later in the same volume, “When a given cultural group, after converting to the religion of development and modernization and ignoring any form of self-protection, realizes it is still the last in the run for progress […] the remorse can return in an aggressive way” (16, my translation). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, it has become clear to most that the project of modernization of the South has failed; rather, the South has moved from its pre-modern state straight into postmodernity without solving any of the problems preventing its modernization. This postmodern condition allows the South to question the 1950-1960s project of modernization by showing its ambiguities and limits (Chambers). In this context, “the return to tradition” advertised by the current folk music revival, Cassano continues, “is an act of self-defense against the power of the hegemonic culture, a desire to assert different values than the ones promoted by the Westernization of the world” (16). The use of words like “Westernization” and “hegemonic” not only assigns a clearly political tone to the current debate over the *tarantella* revival, but also creates an interesting continuum with pre- and post-WWII debates around “cultura popolare” within Italian left-wing circles—an intellectual link that is worth exploring further in terms of its genesis, motivations, and scope. The importance of this debate within the Italian sociopolitical scenario is ultimately to be seen in the many similarities between the discourse on the
“modernization” of Southern Italy and the larger debate over the colonizing effect of globalization on the local cultures. In this sense, the Italian case can help illuminate the larger debate concerning the globalization of culture.

Fifty years after De Martino’s famous study of tarantism and its music rituals, therefore, a significant difference in the perception of the tarantella traditions concerns the passage from a negative view of tarantism that is reflected throughout De Martino’s ethnographic work to the celebratory tone of today’s festivals. Together with the commodification of tarantism to promote local business and tourism, this celebration of tarantella has indeed contributed to making Salento, and Southern Italy more generally, the land of “rinascita” (rebirth) rather than a land of remorse (De Giorgi). As a result, the main task for local and global scholars is not so much to study and/or recover the tarantism rituals, but rather to understand how the “current repositories of the tarantism culture and its young neophytes perceive this form of expression, judged shameful until a few decades ago” (Bevilacqua 385, my translation). Without a doubt, the purpose of recent work on tarantism cannot be thought to be the final discovery of the “authentic meaning of this mythical-ritual system” (Apolito 142, my translation). For Apolito, this caveat means that our current knowledge of tarantism is a form of discourse, and it is as discursive as the view of tarantism shared by De Martino’s coevals. For Salvatore Bevilacqua, instead, the main issue at stake in this so-called “neotarantismo” (neotarantism) is an “appropriation of the tarantism rituals” (390), which moves in three main directions: first, toward an affirmation of the local identities of the South and/or of the social identities of the (Southern) Italian youth; second, toward a use of tarantism myths for specific political and cultural purposes; and third, toward a use of these myths
for specifically commercial purposes. A closer look at each of these directions will offer a better understanding of this complex revival phenomenon.

**Competing Redefinitions of Tarantella**

In his volume *Il pensiero meridiano* (1996), Italian philosopher Franco Cassano brilliantly illustrates a view common to many Italian students of the revival, especially those writing from the Salento area. These scholars consider the liberating potential of the *tarantella* as crucial to the construction of anti-hegemonic, local and regional identities that are shared by a large population throughout the Mediterranean, and that contest the homogenizing effects of both globalization and nationalism. This view has spurred the creation of what Cassano calls “Il pensiero meridiano” (Meridian or Southern thought), an alternative to the Think-Global slogan, which is shaped by the hegemonic position of the most powerful countries. But the local identities (re)affirmed through the folk music revival are not fixed; instead, they are the product of a long series of political and cultural changes often linked to the ever-growing migration process of workers from the Northern coasts of Africa and of other parts of the Mediterranean. The need to understand, and recuperate, one’s identity as a Southern Italian seems due, especially in the Salento’s case, to the growing role of the area as the centre for Mediterranean migration in the last twenty years, and therefore to the need to understand Salento’s changing identity. Santoro and Torsello describe the current “pizzica movement,” which developed in the Salento area of the Apulia region and has became popular throughout the Italian peninsula, as a “phenomenon typical of ‘modernity,’ but that exists both ‘within’ and ‘in spite of’ the paradigms of modernity” (9, my translation). “In a land marked by a century-old
inclination to syncretism,” they explain, “the pizzica, with its geographical and cultural background, presents itself as an ‘identity marker’ in the proper sense. But the identity expressed by *pizzica* is open, hybrid, and welcoming; it bears the dynamic quality of dance, and constantly looks for a time, space, and ways to relate to the ‘other’” (9-10). This understanding of the *pizzica* revival in turn shows that the importance of the current *tarantella* movement as whole consists in its affirmation of a local identity that exists within a larger globalized structure, and that is constantly in dialogue with the larger Mediterranean culture through migration. This particular reading is however felt to be controversial by many: as anthropologist Gianni Pizza points out, the main risk embedded in such a position consists of essentializing the South, as well as the Mediterranean, through the image of the “Meridian thought,” and thus of perpetuating the same ideological mechanisms involved in the creation of the Southern Question. In his letter to Santoro and Torsello in the volume quoted above, Pizza comments: “Mediterraneo, as well as South and North, are material, intellectual and sentimental products that can be felt as pre-existing and natural only through the enforcement of ideological structures” (Pizza, “Lettera a Sergio Torsello” 53, my translation). Further insisting on the ambiguity of Cassano’s model, Pizza concludes: “It is for this reason that I don’t believe that ‘the Meridian thought’ represents the right critical answer to the strategies of hegemonic power [. . .] the stereotyping of certain practices should not be fought with the practice of stereotypes” (55).

A different framework for understanding the social history and significance of the current *tarantella* revival is provided by that of *neotarantism*. Rome-based radio journalist Anna Nacci, conductor, since 1999, of the radio show Tarantula Rubra (Red
Tarantula) that is entirely devoted to Southern Italian folk music, first introduced the word “neotarantismo” to label this latest wave of Southern folk music revival (Nacci, *Tarantismo e neotarantismo*). Nacci’s active participation in the revival debate, through her radio show programs and the organization of several conferences and publications on the matter, attests to the spreading of the revival to both the Italian capital and the whole Italian peninsula since the late 1990s. In her introduction to the volume *Tarantismo e neotarantismo* (2001), the result of the first big conference on the revival held in Rome in 2001, Nacci defines the revival as “a movement without geographical or cultural barriers, an expression of joy, of new ways of communicating that is different from the ones forced upon us from above, of new forms of catharsis and liberation” (23-24, my translation). Nacci’s position is unique but also problematic for several reasons. On the one hand, the neotarantism label shows a reduction of the revival, which is occurring in different forms in several Italian regions, to the pizzica revival spread from the Apulia region. On the other hand, Nacci’s definition of neotarantism reveals an inaccurate reinterpretation of the historical tarantism phenomenon as something positive, and thus very different from the phenomenon described by De Martino. More importantly, in Nacci’s view, the revival is not so much connected to the specific social and cultural history of Southern Italy, but rather to a more general need for alternative ways of expression among young generations of Italians coming from every part of the peninsula. Even as it traces similarities between today’s mainstream forms of expression, such as fast food and Anglo-American rock/pop—the product of a globalized, metropolitan Italy—and the claustrophobic, patriarchal Catholic structure discovered by De Martino in the most remote, rural areas of the South, Nacci’s interpretation looks at the revival
mainly as a postmodern cultural movement, thus implicitly dismissing its cultural specificity.

While Nacci’s view of the revival can certainly help us to understand the increasing participation of young people in the local festivals, including the tammurriata festivals that will be the object of my analysis in the following chapter, I believe that the relation between the revival and the historical, socio-political, and cultural context of Southern Italy cannot be overlooked. In addition, several scholars have challenged Nacci’s use of the term neotarantism for its historical inaccuracy, since it seems to suggest the continued presence of tarantism practices today, even as tarantism in the proper sense cannot be found anymore.

Further developing Nacci’s interpretation of the revival, Salvatore Bevilacqua critiques the use of the term neotarantism, as the term assumes a close relation with the specific phenomenon of tarantism. The need to dance the tarantella on the part of the younger generations has, he points out, nothing to do with tarantism and trance in their proper sense; rather, it becomes an “antidote to boredom, a negative result of cultural homogenization” (392, my translation). While accepting Nacci’s view of the revival, therefore, Bevilacqua also rejects her use of the tarantism myth to explain the revival movement. He also states: “even as they borrow from the cultural heritage of the older generations, the Italian youth perceives the ‘spider dance’ differently, and mainly as a choice; in doing so, they are counteracting to the pressure of cultural uniformity, rather than paying homage to the values of the [tarantella] tradition” (392). Nacci and Bevilacqua are not alone here; several scholars believe that the current recovering of the tarantism music rituals reflects the need for an alternative cultural model to the one
developed through globalization. In the last twenty years, the French anthropologist George Lapassade has worked extensively on *tarantism*, developing Gilbert Rouget’s ideas in his seminal book *Music and Trance* (1985) and applying them to the Italian social formation. The originality of Lapassade’s theory consists in recuperating the trance element that is traditionally associated with *tarantism* and in projecting it onto the current folk music festival scene; he explains how by reaching the state of trance young generations are not only able to reach an altered state of mind, but can also create new ways of communicating with each other, while also expressing their rejection of hegemonic cultural expressions.

Trance becomes a powerful antidote to increasingly globalized ways of living, in Italy and elsewhere, and can help recuperate more “authentic” ways of feeling and communicating with each other. In Lapassade’s view, the *tarantella* therefore plays a role very similar to that of electronic music and other subcultural musical expressions within the current globalized world order, while the *tarantella* festival context shares many elements with rave parties and other alternative musical venues. The main problem with Lapassade’s reading of the revival is that he applies the notion of trance to the current festival scene, a cultural context that does not feature elements of trance in its proper sense. Lapassade is aware that today’s *tarantella* festivals often reflect a “*moda giovanile*”—a youth fashion—(Nacci, *Tarantismo e neotarantismo* 34), and thus a very different phenomenon from *tarantism* practices; however, even if these festivals don’t stimulate actual trance, Lapassade seems to suggest, their meaning cannot be simply dismissed as a trend or commercial product, since they remain important moments of reconnection with one’s own local identity. This last aspect, which Lapassade calls
“etnicizzazione” (a process of “ethnicization” or re-ethnicizing, 34), clearly resembles Franco Cassano’s idea of a “Meridian thought.”

Finally, an element shared by both Lapassade and Nacci’s reading of the revival is the explicit use of the term “anti-egemonico” (anti-hegemonic). This term clearly reflects the indebtedness of contemporary Italian anthropology and sociology scholarship to Gramsci’s thought, and in particular to his discussion of hegemony. It also reflects how at the root of the contemporary scholarship on the revival are ideas of the Italian left wing. However, especially in Nacci’s and Lapassade’s cases, it remains unclear to what extent such forms of cultural expression as the tarantella festivals can perform an anti-hegemonic function in the actual practice of being (Southern) Italian citizens. When reading the work of Lapassade and other scholars of the revival, one often has the impression that the anti-hegemonic quality of the tarantella remains an overused slogan rather than a concrete and achievable goal.

To conclude, as Sergio Torsello also suggests in the article “Panorami e Percorsi” discussed above, a common limit to most studies on the current folk music revival consists of their tendency to construct an overly positive notion of tarantism and of its spider dance, a notion that often lacks, as in Nacci’s, Lapassade’s, and Cassano’s cases, an adequately critical perspective. Another problem consists of their tendency to essentialize the revival as typically Salentine, and therefore to dismiss other folk culture phenomena within the larger Southern-Italian context. At the Quarant’anni dopo De Martino conference held in Galatina (Apulia) in 2000, several Italian scholars of De Martino’s work had already warned against the risk of generalization and historical inaccuracy behind the current revival of tarantism music. In particular, Apolito’s talk,
included in the conference proceedings, views current interpretations of *tarantism* as reductionist. He mentions two main forms of reduction: the “psychological” and the “folkloristic” (143); the first reduces the *tarantism* phenomenon to its medical and psychic aspects, in the same way as the pre-De Martino studies; and the second, and opposite, dismisses this specific social phenomenon as simply a “folkloristic tradition” (138). Once *tarantism* becomes synonymous with Southern “folklore,” according to the layman use of the term, Apolito warns, its appropriation for touristic advertisement is already in place. He also suggests that what is lost in the current reinterpretation of *tarantism* is the human aspect of the phenomenon: the revivalists seem to have completely forgotten the many oral histories of suffering on the part of the *tarantati*, as reported both by De Martino in Apulia and later by his colleague Annabella Rossi in the Campania region (Rossi). At the same time, Apolito continues, the re-appropriation of the *tarantism* rituals on the part of Salentine people does carry profound meanings within the current socio-political context of Southern Italy. This return to *tarantism* in fact shows how “this time it is the Apulian people, and in particular its educated, critical, and post-modernist urban section, who lay a claim to *tarantism* as a positive, noble, and deep symbol of their own history and difference” (145). As I will show in the fourth chapter through a textual analysis of the revival music, this act of reclamation implies the redefinition of the South as a Mediterranean postmodern.

**The Politics of Tradition**

Scholarship on the revival does not only reiterate the discursive, political nature of this revival movement, but it also brings to the foreground the role of politics and
tourism in the festival context. Gianni Pizza’s work is particularly relevant here, since in his article “Tarantism and the Politics of Tradition in Contemporary Salento” Pizza illustrates how local politicians, cultural brokers, and scholars of the pizzica revival all employ the image of tarantism to support their own politics of culture. Today, Pizza explains, “‘tarantism’ is a complex field of cultural production [...] a complex interweaving of various practices of writing, art, cinema, philosophical reflection, academic anthropology and cultural politics put in play by local institutions” (200). Pizza’s words echo those of Sergio Torsello, when he notes how only twenty years after the first folk revival, the study of “musica popolare” (folk music) in Italy has ceased to be an “oggetto” (object) of study and has become a “progetto” (project), in the sense that it is consciously employed by the local cultural brokers and tourist agencies to promote an exciting image of their land and culture. To further illustrate this point, Pizza brings in the example of La Notte della Taranta (Night of the Taranta), a festival organized every summer since 1998 by the local institutions in the small town of Melpignano, in the Salento area. Over the years, the festival has become the most renowned event within the Southern Italian folk music revival, and it is attended every year by thousands of people, mostly young, from all parts of Italy. Based on my personal experience, many of those who participate in the tammurriata festivals in the Naples area also make their annual trip to Salento for La Notte della Taranta festival. Such a huge popularity has however elicited varying responses among scholars and musicians; the last group, especially, has complained about the increasing commodification of the festival by local politicians who seek to upgrade the touristic image of the area. It is worth noting here how the claim that

7 In 2000, the success of this event spurred the creation of a similar event in Naples city, titled “La Notte della Tammorra.”
*tarantism* practices are now being exploited to promote a positive image of the South is precisely opposite to the one held by the students of the Southern Question forty years ago, when *tarantism* was something to forget. In addition, the festival has attracted much criticism for having monopolized huge sums of public funds coming from the European Community (Pizza, “Tarantism and the Politics of Tradition”). It is important to note that Pizza’s criticism is not an isolated case; instead, it reflects the opinions of several scholars, performers, and locals who have been appalled by the huge changes brought to the *pizzica* tradition by La Notte della Taranta Festival framework and who have circulated their ideas mostly on the internet. On his personal website, local student of the *tarantella* Vincenzo Santoro, for example, has written extensively on the problematic revival of the *pizzica*, and his comments are widely accessible on the web (Santoro, VincenzoSantoro.it).

As in many other cases of folk revival in other parts of Europe and in the U.S., the main terms of the debate have often come down to “fake” vs. “authentic” and “tradition” vs. “modernization.” As I will show in the next chapter, this debate informs the *tammurriata* festivals as well. While each person involved has a different opinion regarding the “authenticity” of the La Notte della Taranta festival and of the *pizzica* revival in general, evident differences remain between the ancient *tarantism* practices and what Pizza defines as “a ‘popular dance’ with an indefinite trance meaning” (Pizza, “Tarantism and the Politics of Tradition” 201). For example, a major point of debate among the local practitioners has been the inclusion in the festival program of non-local, nationally and internationally known musicians who did not have a specific knowledge of *tarantella* and of *tarantism*, but were experts “of that ‘ethnic’ music which has had so
much success in the global market of reinvented traditions” (216). More importantly, Pizza argues that “the transformation of tarantism into a positive symbol, freed of its connection to suffering, is ultimately possible only because the symbol has been totally decontextualized, reified, and projected onto an ill-defined universal dimension” (205). This process of decontextualization has helped move not only the pizzica tradition but also the tarantella genre as a whole from a strictly localized sphere to a global one, and has put them into dialogue with other world music sounds. As I will illustrate in my third and fourth chapters, the term “decontextualization” is particularly relevant to this discussion, because it brings the Southern Italian folk music revival not only within the larger debate over the transmission of folk traditions (see Briggs and Bauman 1992 and/or Bauman and Briggs 2003), but also within the larger context of cultural translation.

This process of decontextualization goes hand in hand with tourist advertisements to create what Bevilacqua calls a “successful formula of ‘ethnotourism’” (393). In the case of the pizzica revival, for example, Bevilacqua argues, “the promotion of Salentine culture […] now aims at seducing this new ‘type’ of tourist who defines himself in opposition to mass tourism and as being in search of a sense of Otherness in the ‘authentic’ land of pizzica” (400, my translation). In this sense, Bevilacqua continues, the Italian pizzica revival comes to be part of the larger world music trend. At the same time, Bevilacqua reminds the skeptics of the current tarantella performances that the revival is also spurring great musical creativity on the part of the local performers, while also contributing to the social affirmation of the South. In Bevilacqua’s own words:
The exit from isolation and marginalization, in other words, the ‘cultural survival’ of the Mezzogiorno depends in large part on the activities of these numerous organizations and aficionados, willing to revalue and transmit a musical and chorographic heritage (including that of the traditional instruments).

(393, my translation)

Bevilacqua’s words are significant because they explicitly link the dynamics of the revival to the social and cultural conditions of the South. I believe this point to be crucial toward an understanding of the revival; following Bevilacqua, in the fourth chapter of this study I will explore the dynamics of cultural production embedded in the revival through my analysis of song lyrics and musical structure.

**Tarantella Scholarship in the U.S.**

The volume *Performing Ecstasies* (2005), titled after an international conference held in Los Angeles in October of 2000, illustrates the Italian revival from the perspective of American folklore studies and for U.S. and international audiences. The volume explores the intersections between music and ritual in the *tarantella* from both historical and contemporary perspectives, and in its traditional and revitalized forms. Notably, the Southern Italian folk music and dance revival is looked at comparatively in relation to other ritualized music genres of the Mediterranean and beyond. Of special interest is Italian Canadian folklorist Luisa Del Giudice’s essay on “The Folk Music Revival and the Culture of Tarantismo in Salento”; here Del Giudice draws on her own participant observation and interviews in Salento since 1996. This experience allows her to conclude, somewhat sarcastically, that the “pizzica (tarantata) […] the ritual music and
dance of tarantismo, has become the Salentine New Age rage, as followers quest for cosmic dance, mysticism, and magic [...] They buy frame drums; [...] they play them; they dance” (Del Giudice, “The Folk Music Revival” 220). Del Giudice’s position is therefore very close to that of Pizza and other scholars who focus on the touristic and “folkloristic” aspects of the revival. However, Del Giudice’s interest lies in asking “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? [... And] how and to whom does tarantismo continue to have meaning today?” (241). After interviewing several dancers, musicians, and collectors, as well as personally observing several elements of the local folk culture—including current healing practices and women’s close connection with popular religion—she ultimately concludes that, “despite a radically changed socioeconomic milieu, many cultural (as well as some ritual) aspects of tarantismo persist and continue to be referenced—sometimes obliquely” (242). Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Del Giudice’s study lies in her analysis of women’s role within the current revival, which opens up a completely new perspective—one that is mostly absent in the Italian context—while also bringing to the forefront the relation between Southern Italian women practitioners and their Italian-American and international counterparts. This connection will be explored in depth in the fifth chapter of this study, specifically in relation to the work of New York-based Italian artist Alessandra Belloni. Reflecting the current interest for pizzica performances in Italy, U.S. scholarship has focused mostly on the pizzica revival and its connection to tarantism. A good example is Laura Biagi’s Ph.D. dissertation, titled “Spider Dreams: Ritual and Performance in Apulian Tarantismo and Tarantella” (2004),
as part of her doctoral work in the Department of Performance Studies at New York University. Based on her extensive bibliographical research and fieldwork in Italy, Biagi’s study represents a good overview of the Italian folk music revival from the 1970s to the present; she also devotes a whole chapter to the export of this music revival to the New York musical scene. A growing interest in the mystical power of the tarantella is also confirmed by the recent publication of Karen Lüdke’s book, *Dances with Spiders: Crisis, Celebrity and Celebration in Southern Italy* (2009). This book explores past and present rituals of tarantism by analyzing testimonies of contemporary Southern Italian women and comparing them with those of historically famous tarantate, in an attempt to demonstrate the continued significance of tarantism rituals within current Southern Italian society. Inspired by the growing popularity of pizzica in the world music scene, Lüdke’s study stands as an important example of the type of work yet to be done by Italian scholars in relation to women’s role within the tammurriata cultural tradition.

**Current Scholarship on the Tammurriata**

Musician and scholar Augusto Ferraiuolo contributed an article on the tammurriata music and rituals in Boston’s North End to the volume *Performing Ecstasies*. While focusing on the export of tammurriata to the U.S. Italian American communities, Ferraiuolo also describes the tammurriata in its Italian context as “a song, a dance, a prayer, a sound, a rhythm, and ecstasy” (133). In other words, according to Ferraiuolo, the tammurriata has a complex symbolic function beyond the strictly musical and choreographic ones, which, he seems to suggest, makes the tammurriata as important as the pizzica in helping Southern Italians imagine their own sense of cultural belonging.
Also in relation to the *tammurriata* symbolism, he writes, “[t]he 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” (147). Then, as an example of this forest of symbols, he focuses on the dancing circle, which stands for the circularity, and thus the ritual quality, of the *tammurriata* as a whole. In addition, Ferraiuolo writes about the temporality of the *tammurriata*, which “happens on a metahistoric plain—unavoidably ecstatic—in its etymological meaning” (148). These words create a direct link between the trance element present in the Apulian *pizzica*, as discussed above, and the *tammurriata* tradition. This interpretation not only explains much of the *tammurriata* rituals connected to the cult of the Madonna in Southern Italy, but it also draws an important similarity between the *pizzica* symbolism and that of the *tammurriata* tradition as a way to open up a new perspective on Southern Italian folk music for U.S. performers and scholars. By doing so, however, Ferraiuolo is also carrying on the meta-historical interpretation of the *tarantella* that informs De Martino’s analysis; such an analysis ultimately leaves in the dark the socio-political aspects of the *tarantella* revival, and of the *tammurriata* revival in particular, which I will explore in detail in the following chapter.

Entering the debate over the current folk music and dance revival and over its global marketing for tourists, Ferraiuolo responds that the *tammurriata* is not a thing of the past, but “belongs to a very live present with its social dialectic and social dynamic” (148-149); in fact, he continues, the continued significance of the *tammurriata* today is possible because of its transformation into a “reinvented tradition” (149). Today, he explains, the *tammurriata* has become “a pull for tourists” (149); a way to employ
traditional culture for political purposes, as is the case of the Neapolitan folk group E Zezi; and as a contribution to “new urban musical tendencies” such as Neapolitan hip hop groups Alma Megretta and 99 Posse. Finally, Ferraiuolo suggests that the tammurriata is a “dance of the earth,” thus highlighting its close connection to the rural context it originated from; however, he does not explore this connection in depth, something I will analyze in the next chapter of this study.

Except for Ferraiuolo’s article, the main studies of the revival, including Anna Nacci’s fieldwork-based analysis of the current festival scene where she extends her definition of neotarantism to the tammurriata festivals, contain no discussion of the tammurriata festivals. This exclusion is important to note, since it extends for the most part to international scholarship, as illustrated in the previous section. Overall, the tammurriata musical tradition and its festivals have seldom been the privileged object of study. Most publications on the topic tend to circulate locally and have not received national or international attention. More importantly, the explosion of the pizzica festivals on a national level has not only overshadowed the revival of the tammurriata, but has also extended the scholarship on the pizzica revival to the tammurriata festivals, without properly explaining the differences between these two musical and festival traditions. The only attempt in this direction is the 2004 publication of an edited volume—currently out of print—titled Tammurriate. Canti, musiche e devozioni in Campania (Tammurriatas. Chanting, Music, and Devotion in Campania), which was part of a larger series titled Le Voci del Folklore (Folklore Voices). In the introduction to the volume, the editor Antonello Lamanna defines this study as one of several editorial steps towards an understanding of the traditional music festivals still held in the rural areas of the South.
This editorial choice sprung, he explains, from the assumption that Southern Italian folk music traditions are quite complex and vary greatly from region to region. According to Lamanna, an important peculiarity of the *tammurriata* festivals is their resilience within the current postmodern scenario:

Today there are many occasions (and among these the many religious festivals) where older and younger generations dance together in the space outside the churches, just as they did in the past, though, of course, music and dance canons have changed; in some cases, they remain very similar to the past, in others, they are completely new (11, my translation).

As Chapter 3 will illustrate, the scene described here by Lamanna is still very common at the local *tammurriata* festivals. This scenario sets the *tammurriata* festivals in many ways apart from the *pizzica* festivals, which have transformed into big global festivals even at the local level. This difference with Apulia’s situation allows Lamanna to conclude that, “[i]n Campania it is still possible [...] to visit the places where the *tammurriatas* are still evocative and rich of meanings” (11). Even as it betrays the local scholar’s tendency to consider the traditional forms of *tammurriata* as the only legitimate ones, Lamanna’s comment speaks to the need to isolate the *tammurriata* festivals and explore them in their complexity and originality. More importantly, Lamanna suggests that the tradition is still alive, and, in fact, it has never disappeared, since several of its tradition bearers are still around. It is important to keep this fact in mind, Lamanna explains, to avoid dismissing these folk expressions as something belonging to a past long gone (12); it also prevents us from looking at these festivals as isolated events, unrelated to the socio-cultural context in which they happen and to their protagonists. The
“chanters” interviewed by Giuseppe Mauro for this publication therefore “are not figures of a TV program, but real protagonists. They are alive, often not young anymore, but still with a strong voice and eagerness to tell their stories” (12). By making these people the protagonists of this study, Lamanna ultimately shows how the tammurriata festivals are something different from the global touristic phenomenon of the pizzica revival. This effort to bring the local voices to the fore of the revival is not limited to Lamanna; on the contrary, it is becoming very common within the local cultural scene. An important example in this sense is represented by local film director Salvatore Raiola, author of a recently released film documentary titled Voci di tamburo (Drum Voices, 2007); in the film Raiola observes the world of the tammurriata through the voices of the old-timers and through the intermediation of well-known local performer ‘O Lione. The film, translated into English and several other European languages, has received several awards both in Italy and in Europe and represents an important new trend for the global export of the tarantella traditions.

Although the tammurriata and pizzica have different histories, locations, symbolism, rhythms, melody, and dance, and although the local tammurriata festivals still retain many traditional elements, based on my experience as a festival attendee and on my fieldwork research, I can testify to the many similarities in the current festival dynamics of pizzica and tammurriata festivals. Not only are both musical traditions now featured together in many folk music festivals all over Italy, but even the local tammurriata festivals are now at the center of a large debate concerning their increasing transformation into touristic venues. I believe that all these elements ultimately allow for
a study of the *tammurriata* festivals that explores the same questions asked by those of who studied the *pizzica* revival and that may come to different conclusions.

**Frameworks and Methods**

Because in exporting Southern Italian folk music to the U.S., artists like Alessandra Belloni have extensively relied on world music aesthetics, to conduct a study like this one it is essential to explore the idea of “world music,” its values, boundaries, and problematic aspects. In particular, I am interested in exploring how world music politics and aesthetics affect the ways that folk music performances are decoded by their global audiences as well as the ways that folk music artists adapt their own performances and musical styles to the world music label, and, consequently, how they help that folk music culture transform into a global phenomenon with its own specific characteristics that are different from the ones it held in its original context.

The attention that this kind of folklore performance is receiving today confirms the increasing resurgence of local ways of expression within (and against) the larger context of globalization. At the same time, global trends affect, and enhance, this kind of revival by introducing it to the international market through tourism and world music venues. In his 1991 article, “The Global and the Local: Globalization and Ethnicity,” Stuart Hall notes how the ever-growing globalization process has brought forth an opposite localizing effect, as a way to respond to the growing sense of loss of one’s identity and sense of belonging. The Southern Italian case functions as an entry point not only into the larger debate over the current transformation of Europe, but also into the larger picture of cultural globalization and the responses to it. The tension between the
global and the local, now at the center of many studies within both the social sciences and the humanities, is played out in the Southern Italian case by the drive for localized forms of cultural expression, and simultaneously, the export of such forms of local culture into the larger national, regional, and global arenas via a process of “cultural translation.”

Furthermore, the revival of Southern Italian folk music is occurring on multiple levels: as a resurgence of local traditions, as anti-hegemonic ways of expression in response to the neo-conservative political model of Berlusconi’s government and of the neo-colonial and racist policies of the Northern League, and as the emergence of a regional perspective encompassing all Mediterranean cultures. The coexistence of such diverse cultural trends confirms Hall’s idea that “the response [to globalization] seems to go in two ways simultaneously. It goes above the nation-state and it goes below it” (27), while at the same time testifying to the continued significance of the nationalist model within the Italian scenario. The resurgence of localized cultural forms within the global configuration, and their transformation and exploitation within the global market, are now widely discussed also within folklore studies. Therefore, an analysis of the Southern Italian folk music and dance revival also furthers our understanding of the role of folklore within the current global configuration.

While discussing my approach to world music in this section, I will be foregrounding how my study is informed by and seeks to contribute to cultural studies, folklore studies, and as seen later in this section, translation studies. The problematics of cultural translation, place, and not only performance but performativity will emerge as especially relevant to my approach in the whole dissertation.
First developed in the 1980s by the British record industry, “the terms ‘World Music’ and ‘World Beat’ were coined in order to create a marketing niche in industry discourse for non-Western acts and genres” (Born 26). Therefore, since its inception, the notion of world music has had to do with the idea of consuming, and representing, other musical cultures, which makes it both an extremely powerful and a complex musical phenomenon. The intellectual and academic responses to this cultural phenomenon in the last fifteen years have typically divided into those warning against the dangers of commodification lurking behind the world music project and those celebrating the global flow of diverse music cultures allowed by the increasing interest in the world music label. For those who choose this second possibility, anthropologist Steven Feld comments, “world music participates in shaping a kind of consumer-friendly multiculturalism, one that follows the market logic of expansion and consolidation” (Feld, “A Sweet Lullaby” 168). Interestingly enough, these terms are exactly the same as those employed in recent discussions of globalization, and in particular its effects on cultural dynamics: “That any and every hybrid or traditional style could so successfully be lumped together by the single market label world music signified the commercial triumph of global musical industrialization” (Feld, “A Sweet Lullaby” 151).

It is precisely in response to the ongoing debate on the globalization of culture that anthropologist Steven Feld, in his seminal 1994 article “From Schizofonia to Schismogenesis,” famously describes world music as a type of “mediated music, commodified grooves, sounds split from sources, consumer products with few if any contextual linkages to the processes, practices, and forms of participation that could give them meaning within local communities” (259). Here, Feld borrows from Canadian
composer and writer Raymond M. Shafer the use of the word “schizofonia”—the disconnect between an original sound and its reproduction—and applies this concept to world music rhythms. Following a common trend within globalization studies, Feld responds to the concerns raised over the globalization of local music by pointing out how local rhythms have been increasingly popularized through global networks; at the same time, he also suggests that the disjunction between these rhythms as they were in their original context and the way they are now being globalized needs to be fully taken into account. What is even more important for this study is that the split between sounds and the community they originate from, as discussed by Feld, not only echoes the critique of globalization and its dislocating effect on peoples and cultures, but it also amplifies on a global scale the disconnect between the current revival of the tammurriata and the old tammurriata festivals in Italy.

The relation between world music and tourism is another aspect of globalization that is of particular relevance to this study. Tourism, already present in the Italian festival scene, is also closely associated with world music and with the idea that people can enjoy a variety of music cultures without belonging to the communities they originate from. While tourism has existed for centuries, globalization has definitely enhanced it. As Simon Frith writes in his article, “The Discourse of World Music,” “[w]orld music thus remains a form of tourism […] just as ‘world travelers’ are still tourists, even if they use local transport and stay in local inns rather than booking package tours and rooms in the national Hilton” (320). This conjunction of tourism and world music politics is, I believe, at the core of the current revival of tarantella in the U.S., as my fourth chapter will show.
As David Guss illustrates through his analysis of the politics of festival in the village of Catuaro (Venezuela), traditional forms of expressive behavior have indeed expanded rather than disappeared under the pressure of modernization. Nevertheless, in looking at festival behaviors we need to keep constantly in mind that “these forms will always be threatened with appropriation and commodification” (6). For the same reason, one has to be careful in identifying these festivals simply as sites of resistance to globalization trends. In fact, national ideologies often privilege certain readings of these events as a way to appropriate festival performances and bring forth a certain national image; in this way they have contributed to a reduction of meaning. To ensure that they serve to construct a certain national image, these events are then marked as “traditions” and their authenticity legitimized.

While the politics of cultural transmission are key concerns for both folklore studies and ethnomusicology, the move from the Southern Italian to the American and international contexts signals, I believe, a key moment of “cultural translation” that is worth exploring, especially since the work of New-York-based artist Belloni—the main example of trans-cultural translation I will be analyzing in this study—is generally defined as a major representative of Southern Italian traditions in the U.S. and internationally. I am very much aware of the risks involved in applying a translation studies framework to non-literary texts: as translation studies scholar Harish Trivedi demonstrates, too often the notion of translation has been invoked in a purely metaphorical way at the risk of losing theoretical rigor and accuracy of analysis. At the same time, several cultural critics have constructively employed the notion of “cultural translation”—an entry point into a whole range of translation issues that go beyond the
strictly linguistic realm and into the politics of culture (Trivedi; Spivak) — to explore the intersections between translation and the production of culture. Furthermore, although some people would object to the idea that a dance, and a piece of music, can be actually translated, the cultural studies of music has widely shown how a certain music and dance functions as a language in the sense that it can mean different things for different performers and audiences; this idea creates an interesting relation with translation studies scholarship (Clayton, Herbert, and Middleton).

Both folklore studies and translation studies have developed along parallel lines, thus showing similar concerns over issues of authenticity; both disciplines have now come to support more dynamic concepts of tradition and of text, respectively, and to downplay authenticity as the only indicator of the value of cultural products. As folklorist Regina Bendix puts it,

Traditions are always defined in the present, and the actors doing the defining are not concerned about whether scholars will perceive a given festival or piece of art as genuine or spurious but whether the manifestation will accomplish for them what they intend to accomplish. ‘Inventing traditions’ is then not an anomaly but rather the rule, and it can be particularly well studied in industrial and postindustrial nation-states exposed to extensive intercultural contact. (132)

The many parallels between these two disciplines therefore justify, and even encourage, the study of folklore from a translation studies perspective and vice versa.

Once we move away from questions of authenticity, the role of space and place in the cultural translation of traditions assumes more significance. In her introduction to the
volume *Music, Space and Place* (2004), Sheila Whiteley follows a common trend in highlighting the importance of space for an understanding of music culture:

As well as providing the socio-cultural backdrop for distinctive musical practices and innovation, urban and rural spaces also provide the rich experiential settings in which music is consumed. In each case, music becomes a key resource for different cultural groups in terms of the ways in which they make sense of and negotiate the ‘everyday’. Both as a creative practice and as a form of consumption, music plays an important role in the narrativization of place, that is, the way in which people define their relationship to local, everyday surroundings.

(2)

Given that students of globalization underline the importance of looking at its spatial dimension, that folklore scholarship is connected by definition to localized ways of living and communicating, and that both the *pizzica* and the *tammurriata* rhythms are embedded within the rural culture of Southern Italy, studying the Italian folk music revival from a spatial perspective can help us understand how traditional cultural forms are being displaced and transformed within the global framework. The notion of place, as currently discussed within cultural geography, allows us to explore the ways that traditional conceptions of place and of land embedded in Southern Italian folk music and dances are played out, transformed, and translated within the current revival. Focusing my analysis on the current revitalization of the *tammurriata* tradition within the framework of cultural translation, I will illustrate how the revival movement has displaced Southern Italian folk music from a rural setting into an urban context where middle classes search for a
reconnection with traditional ways of expression, and how this tradition has also been exported and translated for U.S. and international audiences.

When exploring the ways that Southern Italian groups are revitalizing their own “sense of place” (Feld and Basso), that is, their connection to their own local roots, it is important to understand the ways that their local culture is redefined and re-imagined within the contemporary cultural scenario. As Hall points out, again in “The Global and the Local: Globalization and Ethnicity,” the localities re-emerging in response to globalization are not necessarily the same localities, since their sense of being-in-place is now being “constructed” to fit the current politics of place; however, it is exactly the discursive nature of these localities, continues Hall, that allows them to dialogue with, and be part of the new globalized world order. The performative quality of such interactions justifies, and even calls for the use of performance theory to understand the Southern Italian folk music revival. Following Judith Butler’s famous notion of “performativity”—the idea that gender, and identity, are historically and culturally constructed and thus discursive—performance studies scholars are now re-reading actual performances in light of the performativity of culture. Not only is the notion of performance crucial to conduct a thorough analysis of the Southern Italian folk music and dance festivals, but exploring the current redefinition of tarantella from a performance studies perspective allows us to explore how traditional notions of place and of land are performed within the revival context. In other words, we are able to explore how these traditions are re-invented according to current local, regional, and global needs.
Chapter II  
The Tammurriata Revival in Italy

In this chapter, I will focus on the current *tammurriata* festival space in Italy as the scenario for social, political, and cultural meaning-making, and I will draw on my personal experience as a local and a festival participant, as well as on my fieldwork research both at the local festivals in the Campania region and in the major city of Milan. In doing so, I intend to further explore folklorist Deborah Kapchan’s question in her study of the cult of possession within Moroccan Gnawa music, as it is exported to Europe and U.S. via the world music stage. In her study Kapchan asks, “How do aesthetic styles associated with the sacred inhabit new, nonsacred contexts, and what does this amalgam produce in the global circulation of sounds and meanings?” (*Traveling Spirit Masters* 2).

I believe that these questions are already at stake within the Italian context, as Southern Italian folk music and dances move from local to national venues. I argue that, as the revival transforms the local festivals and helps this music travel nationally and internationally, it also contributes to shift the ethics of place embedded in the *tammurriata* cultural tradition from a rural, religious, and rooted setting to an urban, secular, and migrant one. Moreover, once the revival reaches the global dimension, such as in Milan’s festivals, the *tammurriata* festival space acquires many characteristics of a world music event, including its most problematic aspects, while at the same time allowing for more flexible notions of gender, class, and social behaviors and also providing Southern immigrants with a space for reconnecting to their own cultural roots.

In *Festivals, Tourism and Social Change* (2006), David Picard suggests that the increasing globalization of the local festivals has ultimately shifted the festival away from
the idea of a cohesive community, thus “creating festivals that are global in appeal, ungrounded in local identity and demonstrat[ing] the characteristics of placelessness” (229). “The global traveler,” Picard explains, “neither expects nor seeks authentic festivals” (229). On August 14, 2008, at the festival of Materdomini (in the Campania province of Salerno), I met Eleonora, a young dancer from the Salento area—the core of the current pizzica revival—who has been touring to the tammurriata festivals for at least the last five years. Based on my observation of the festivals and my talks with the local participants, Eleonora’s story is similar to that of many other young people now visiting the tammurriata festivals from other parts of Italy. When I asked Eleonora about the reason for such an ongoing interest, she answered that, as someone who grew up dancing the pizzica, getting to know the tammurriata is a sort of natural next step, especially since the tammurriata is now becoming as well known as the pizzica everywhere in Italy. As a Southern Italian and a dance lover, Eleonora thinks it is important to familiarize oneself with a musical tradition that is also from the South. My friends confirm that, as young people like Eleonora tour to the tammurriata festivals, more and more people from Naples and the entire Campania region pay their annual visit to the summer pizzica festivals. These folk music trips testify to the current transformation of the Southern Italian festivals into tourist destinations. Even though Eleonora’s case is different from that of the typical “global traveler” described in much literature on tourism, still her example confirms the tammurriata’s gradual shift from the local to the global musical scene, following the pizzica example. As a matter of fact, you don’t have to be from the South, or from the countryside for that matter, to dance the tammurriata today. While this change is not negative in itself, it does bring forth a series of questions regarding the
shifting values and meanings that people assign to this music and dance tradition as it travels from local to national and global scenarios.

In the next sections of this chapter, I will first introduce some of the most remarkable changes brought by the current revival and touristicization of these local festivals. Then, I will focus on a few specific aspects of this transformation, and, in particular, on the passage from a local, sacred, and rural space to a global, secular, and metropolitan one. I believe that analyzing this shift will help us further understand the role played by the Southern Italian folk music revival as a whole within the socio-political and cultural scenario of contemporary Italy.

To illustrate the current changes in the *tammurriata* tradition, I here use the notion of “decontextualization,” a much employed term within contemporary folklore scholarship (Bauman and Briggs, *Voices of Modernity*). As the word suggests, “decontextualization” refers to the process of moving a certain cultural tradition out of its original socio-political and cultural context. The explicit reference to the process of decontextualization on the part of my interviewees is indeed crucial, as it directly connects the *tammurriata* festivals to the larger debate over the “loss” of traditions, and the need to preserve their authenticity, within both folklore and translation scholarships. Interestingly enough, the notion of decontextualization shares many similarities with that of “schizofonia”—the disconnect between an original sound and its reproduction—that ethnomusicologist Steven Feld applies to world music rhythms (“From Schizofonia to Schismogenesis”). While both these frameworks of analysis deal with the changing context of folk music traditions, an analysis in terms of decontextualization, and its kin term “recontextualization,” allows me to focus on the movement across
geographical/socio-political/cultural/linguistic borders and from the local to the national level, rather than simply on the loss of authenticity at stake during the process of transformation. In other words, I am able to discuss both what is being lost/cancelled/transformed and what is being gained/added/created. In addition, a discussion of the ways that the tammurriata revival has been recontextualized on a global scale, in the following chapters, will allow me to explore the outcomes of such a movement across national (and national language) borders.

Another useful way to explore the revival of the tammurriata is through the category of place, a much-discussed term within the social sciences in the last fifteen years (Cresswell). In his introduction to the volume *Ethnicity, Identity, and Music: the Musical Construction of Place* (1994), ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes underlines the importance of studying musical expression in relation to place. He states, in fact, that “music is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them” (5). I believe that Stokes’ point is crucial to understand the tammurriata music tradition and its geographical variants; these variants represent a way for each local community to preserve its own uniqueness while at the same time relating to different lifestyles in other communities. The meaningfulness of music in relation to place is also evident in the tammurriata tradition, as this tradition is embedded within the peasant culture of Southern Italy. Because place can be defined as a space that has become “meaningful” for a certain person or group (Cresswell), an analysis of the revival from a place perspective will allow me to explore not only the loss of the tammurriata’s original cultural context, and its “spirito d’a festa,” (spirit or core of the festival) but also the ways
that this tradition is being emplaced elsewhere, that is, recontextualized within the
geopolitical and cultural scenario of those who get to know the *tammurriata* as tourists or
migrants. But exactly how is this Southern music tradition being made meaningful in
other parts of Italy? And what are the socio-political, cultural, and ethical costs of such as
a re-emplacement?

Crucial keywords for my analysis of the festivals are those of “community” and
“group,” two much-debated terms within folklore studies scholarship, following Dan
Ben-Amos’ 1967 definition of folklore as “artistic communication in small groups” (qtd.
in Bronner 30). In folklore studies, this approach not only guaranteed the specificity of
the folklorist’s analysis, but also opened up his/her reflection to the exploration of the
contested definitions of folklore, and of tradition, both within the same group and in
relation to other groups. As Dorothy Noyes shows through her analysis of the Italian
Market Festival in downtown Philadelphia, folk groups are often extremely
heterogeneous units, where different members have different ideas about what the group
is about, what connects group members together, and who belongs or doesn’t belong to it.
Proposing the alternative framework of “networks,” Noyes concludes that groups are, in
fact, an “invention” as much as communities and nations are, and that, although we
(folklorists) may, in theory, believe in their integrity, “working ethnographically, we are
aware of the fragility of the group concept put to the test” (449). In his article, “Phantoms
of Romantic Nationalism in Folkloristics,” Roger Abrahams complains, similarly, that
folklorists are not doing enough to address the increasing level of hybridity and
multivocality of contemporary society; according to Abrahams, the very notion of
community needs to be redefined according to this new perspective. He also warns that
“this [old] concept of community […] permits us to salvage an ideal […]. [A]s long as we imagine folklore to reside primarily in small groups, especially those organically connected to the land in small and self-enclosed communities, we will continue to romanticize the folklore enterprise” (22). Following Augusto Ferraiuolo’s example in his study of Italian-American festive practices in Boston’s North End, I will try to “approach the identities negotiated by and through the event of the feast” (108), while keeping in mind that the feast allows its community/ties to affirm it/themselves.

Another key term for this analysis is therefore that of “festival” or “feast.” In his Preface to Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival (1987), Alessandro Falassi asserts that, even though in the common English use the term festival can assume different meanings according to its scope and purpose, in the social sciences, the term usually refers to:

- a periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and sharing a worldview. Both the social function and the symbolic meaning of the festival are closely related to a series of overt values that the community recognizes as essential to its ideology and worldview, to its social identity, its historical continuity, and to its physical survival, which is ultimately what festival celebrates. (2)

This definition shows a clear and direct relation between the festival and the community it is organized by and for. It also assumes the community to be more homogeneous and unified than it is in the everyday practice. As I will show through examples from the local
festivals, the passage from the traditional to the revitalized festivals, and from the local to
the national/global scenes, marks a huge break with this definition of festival, in that the
contemporary versions of the tammurriata festivals do not appeal necessarily to one
coherent group or community.

Finally, performances, another lens through which I analyze the tammurriata
festivals, have been variously defined by students of dance, ethnomusicology, and the
social sciences. Here I will follow folklore scholar Deborah Kapchan’s definition as
“aesthetic practices […] whose repetitions situate actors in time and space, structuring
individual and group identities” (Kapchan, “Performance” 479). Kapchan’s definition is
crucial to this study, since it clearly illustrates the close relation between performance and
identity formation, in the same way as Falassi’s definition of festivals highlights their
connection with the local group or community. Moreover, this definition shows how
repetitions play a central role in any given performance; Kapchan goes as far as saying
that “repetitions, whether lines learned, gestures imitated, or discourses reiterated” are
what makes performances the “generic means of tradition making” (479). As confirmed
by my analysis of the current tammurriata festivals, a strong concern among old-timers
and local performers is over what they see as the lack of repetition, in the sense of
imitating the old-timers and thus learning from them; this lack, they warn, will ultimately
create disruption in the tradition-making process, and, as a result, the end of the
tammurriata tradition.
A Participant-Observer’s Analysis

The analysis of the *tammurriata* revival presented in this chapter is based on my personal experience as a local festival participant over the past ten years, as well as on the fieldwork research I have been conducting since the summer of 2007, both in the rural areas of the Campania region—the site of the local *tammurriata* festivals—and in the major Italian city of Milan. The extensive use of personal data in this section follows the increasingly common tendency among scholars in the humanities to directly participate in their object of study, and vice versa, to discuss subjects they have a personal and/or cultural affiliation with. Often borrowing from Donna Haraway’s famous notion of “situated knowledge,” scholars in the social sciences have increasingly emphasized that knowledge is always situated within specific cultural formations. This implies not only that the way we perceive our objects of study is reflected through our own socio-cultural lens—which thus needs to be recognized as a general premise of our fieldwork research—but also that we can best get to know what we can directly perceive, and live, through our own bodies, that is, by “embodying” our experience (Stoller 23). Because, as performance studies have widely demonstrated, performance is strictly connected to one’s body perceptions, a methodological approach to fieldwork that passes through the body’s knowledge, of both the performers and the scholar, is been increasingly favored by folklorists, anthropologists, and ethnomusicologists who deal with cultural performance (Kapchan, *Traveling Spirit Masters*). My own active participation in the local festivals, both as an audience member and as a dancer, thus allows me to understand certain aspects of the *tammurriata* performance that I would not be able to understand only through my scholarly observation of this dance.
As a student of folklore and cultural studies, I do need to deconstruct the authenticity that many local festival participants tend to attach to their own way of performing the *tammurriata*, as if it was the only way to perform the *tammurriata*; still, as someone locally born and bred, I am not able to relinquish my own investment in the truth-value of my own music tradition. I don’t have enough tools to fully contribute to this debate here, but I do need to take it into account in my analysis of the *tammurriata* festivals, since authenticity and tradition are essential terms of debate within the current *tammurriata* revival. In addition, I need to re-consider my personal involvement in the *tammurriata* revival as a local, since my participation in the local cultural formation is constantly shifting from the role of an insider or local to that of an outsider (a scholar living abroad). In recent experience, several local participants have defined me as an outsider-scholar, rather than as an insider-participant; at the same time, a large component of my fieldwork has been possible through my familiar and local connections, while my knowledge of the local festivals is inevitably filtered through the perspective of family members and local friends. As Ferraiuolo suggests in his own study, in “choosing a reflexive approach,” one has to face, among other things, “questions of recognizability, issues of emotional distance and excessive proximity, confusions of roles where the dangerous feeling of nostalgia plays[s] a major part” (108-109). One of the biggest challenges in my fieldwork has been to acknowledge these shifts, and make them accessible to my readers in my field-data reports. I also agree that nostalgia can play a crucial role in this type of research, and given my own position, the risk of romanticizing my past and present experience with the local festivals is always lurking. Like Ferraiuolo, I will approach both my own identity as a local-scholar-participant and that of the other
participants in terms of “ephemeral identities” (108); in other words, identities that are unfinished and constantly negotiated. In this way, I hope to be able to look at the “multiple identities and belongings” present within the festival space, and outside of them, and to “analyze the dynamic game of entrances, escapes and cultural commuting” (108). At the same time, I will look at the local community from a broader perspective and, in particular, as a crucial term of comparison and contrast with other local communities and with the national and global communities as a whole.

Figure 3: Tammurriata Festival Locations

This map shows the major cities of Naples and Salerno in the Campania region. It also highlights (in red) the town of Pagani as well as the other festivals locations of my fieldwork research, Nocera Inferiore, Maiori, and Somma Vesuviana. The town of Gragnano, my home town, is also where both my interviewees, Raffaele Inserra and Pia Vicinanza, reside.
Dynamics of Change in the *Tammurriata* Festival Scene

While Apulian *pizzica* festivals have come to represent a typical summer vacation trip and a huge world music event—mainly as a result of La Notte della Taranta festival and other government-sponsored events—*tammurriata* festivals have attracted tourists’ attention only in recent years; this isolation has in turn allowed the *tammurriata* music scene as a whole to retain many of the elements of the religious festivals, as confirmed by several scholars of the *tarantella* (Lamanna). Perhaps the most important element of continuity is represented by the festival calendar, which still follows the pre-Christian agricultural cycle, from planting to harvest, together with the Catholic celebration cycle, from Christmas to Easter, and the Marian cycle, a series of seasonal celebrations devoted to the Virgin Mary. Furthermore, the local festivals still show, to different degrees, the traditional festival structure: people sing, play traditional instruments, and dance the *tammurriata* in the space outside the church, where the Madonna’s painting or statue is being displayed for the believers and everyone else to admire. Even so, several elements seem to indicate the slow but steady transformation of these festivals into global-scale events, and to many it is only a matter of time before the *tammurriata* music scene comes to resemble the one created by the *pizzica* revival.

As a growing number of tourists are attracted to the local festivals, several concerts and festivals are being organized outside of the traditional calendar, while the traditional festival sites are becoming increasingly commercialized. In her analysis of places, times, and performance devices associated with both the old *tarantism* rituals and contemporary *pizzica* performances, Karen Lüdke states that “[i]n modern circumstances, performances may still be linked to seasonal and religious cycles, but detachment from
these cycles—be it, for instance, [...] a lack of common belief systems—gives more credit to other cycles, such as those of commerce, politics and tourism, often boasting their closeness to nature and the authentic past as a catchphrase” (169). A similar dynamic seems to be at work within the current tammurriata festivals; perhaps the best example is that of the Madonna del Carmelo, commonly known as Madonna delle galline (Madonna of Carmel or Madonna of the Hens) festival, one of the main traditional festivals in Campania, which happens every year a week after Easter Sunday in the town of Pagani, near Salerno. The original name of Madonna of the Hens derives from a local legend, which recounts how the Madonna statue was found by hens in the agricultural area where the church stands now; even today, on the days of the festival it is possible to note groups of hens resting or scraping around the statue. This anecdote alone testifies to the strong connection between the local festivals in honor of the Madonna and their agricultural context.\footnote{Se video “Madonna delle Galline 2009 – Tammurriata.” 20 April, 2009. \textit{YouTube}. 25 April, 2011.}

A quick trip to Pagani on the festival days will immediately draw attention to the increasing commercialization of this festival, mainly due to the city government’s efforts to draw in as many visitors as possible through an intensive publicity campaign and the help of local sponsors. As a result, on the festival days Pagani’s public gardens, a vast area adjacent the church of the Madonna delle galline and usually devoted to musicians and dancers, have become a huge fair with food stands, antiques and other craft sales, as well as exhibitions of local artists. The increasing number of visitors—hundreds of them—in the last five years or so has also created a new festival infrastructure: the current festival brochure enlightens future visitors on the new traffic and parking regulations, strict police surveillance throughout the town, bus tour facilities for people...
coming from other areas, child care units, and even tourist guide and interpreting services. A big *tammorra* monument, titled “Welcome to Pagani, the town of the tammorra,” has also been placed at the entrance to the town, as a way to welcome the visitors in search of the celebration site, and to advertize the town’s leading role in the current folk music revival. These elements are clear signs that the Madonna delle galline festival has become a huge source of profit for the local authorities. The use of interpreters’ services also suggests the increasing presence of foreign tourists, thus showing how the scope of the festival is shifting from a much localized context to a global one. For the Pagani residents and authorities to consciously think of their own town as “the town of the tammorra,” it takes the creation of a global touristic infrastructure; Pagani residents are evidently engaging with this touristic framework and exhibiting their localized performances on a global scale.

As a result, the Madonna delle galline festival has now been assured a steady group of followers both locally and nationally, which allows the peculiar history and traditions related to the Madonna delle galline to continue in a global context, while at the same time transforming this festival into something very different from its older version. Following the current trend in the literature on tourism and festivals, David Picard points out how “the festival as a locus for international visitors and a tool for place marketing increasingly employs standardized elements of the spectacle to appeal to a large-scale audience” (232). “The notion of celebration,” Picard continues, “denotes shared thanksgiving or commemoration and is usually found within closely knit groups such as families. Spectacle, conversely, suggests a distancing between the viewer and that which is being visually consumed” (232). The Madonna delle galline festival has not only
moved outside the framework of Catholic celebrations, thus becoming Pagani’s main city festival, but it has also become a spectacle open to tourists worldwide. Moreover, transforming one’s own town space to fit the global tourist market, while at the same time advertizing it as one of the most authentic sites of the tammurriata tradition, ultimately represents yet one more example of what Dean McCannell has famously defined as “staged authenticity.” As anthropologist Nestor Garcia Canclini also illustrates in his book, *Hybrid Cultures* (1995), “in order for traditions today to serve to legitimize those who constructed or appropriated them, they must be staged. The patrimony exists as a political force insofar as it is dramatized—in commemorations, monuments, and museums” (132).

The case of the Pagani festival stands out compared to other local festivals; in most cases, the hints of change are almost imperceptible, as they seem to concern less the festival structure and more the way that each individual musician, dancer or group participates in the celebration. On July 26 2008, I visited the small town of Lettere, near my hometown of Gragnano in the Naples area, on the occasion of the Sant’Anna (Saint Anne) celebration, another renowned tammurriata venue. While prominent among the local tammurriata performers, the Sant’Anna music scene consists of a rather small group of practitioners, who gather every year in a small open space adjacent the Sant’Anna Church. As of 2010, no elements point to the creation of a tammurriata festival infrastructure like the one created in the city of Pagani; and as of 2010, both musicians and participants know each other well, since they all come from the surrounding towns and villages, and they all have been participating in this celebration for a number of years. Within this close-knit environment, on July 2008, I could however
spot a small group of *alternativi* playing and dancing the *pizzica* within the same physical space as the *tammurriata* dance circles. Although a minority compared to the *tammurriata* practitioners, the group’s activity was nonetheless significant, given that the music site was rather small and crowded. As a result, several musicians and visitors started complaining, more or less loudly, about their presence; this remonstrance ultimately led the group to retreat to a less crowded area. This episode shows how a slow and steady shift in the participants’ perspective toward the *tammurriata* festivals is reaching even the most rural areas. Borrowing again from Picard, I would say that the *pizzica* group’s behavior also suggests a desire to consume a “spectacle” that they are not closely related to: performing the *pizzica* on a *tammurriata* performance site suggests a detachment from both music traditions. At the same time, it also confirms a willingness to move beyond the traditional celebration framework and toward a more globalized performing style.

More importantly, this small incident not only bears evidence of change in this once much localized celebration site, but also draws attention to various and often conflicting uses of the *tammurriata* performance space. The *tammurriata* practitioners evidently perceived the *pizzica* group’s activity as interfering with the main music performance, and thus as a form of disrespect toward what they consider as the true essence of the Sant’Anna celebration. As a matter of fact, within the small-sized performance space of Sant’Anna—which hosts up to fifty people approximately—there is no designated main performance group or style; rather, spontaneous circles of musicians and dancers can be observed to form at any given moment without any kind of organization whatsoever. Nevertheless, the *tammurriata* has been closely linked to the
cult of Sant’Anna for at least three generations, which makes the *tammurriata* a long-standing tradition associated with this celebration site. But even granted the importance of the *tammurriata* for the Sant’Anna devotees and festival participants, such a strong reaction toward different types of performance, like the *pizzica* in this case, suggests a willingness to assign the *tammurriata* an official role as the only authorized performance within the Sant’Anna celebration space—a role that it has very likely never played before—as a way to regulate the use of the performance space according to one’s own performance needs and interests. As folklorist Charles Briggs suggests in his article, “The Politics of Discursive Authority in the Invention of Tradition,” the need for authenticity is at stake whenever a certain tradition goes through a process of change, caused by either external or internal factors; until then, the truth-value of that tradition is not necessarily weighed against its authenticity. In other words, this concern over the “true” local festival tradition is a reaction to the current changes in the festival structure and it should not be considered as an absolute value.

While the presence of *pizzica* practitioners in conjunction with the *tammurriata* performance remains an exceptional case within the small and cohesive community of the Sant’Anna festival, in the last few years an increasing number of cultural events in Naples city and other more urbanized areas—that is, far away from the traditional festival sites—have featured a more comprehensive display of Southern Italian music, while also participating in the current interest in world music sounds. The July 2008 edition of the “Festival internazionale di musica etnica” organized by *Ethnos*—a cultural association established in 1995 in the city of Torre del Greco (Naples) to “look for sounds, voices, and instruments, to discover artists, to show the soul of far-off places…” (Ethnos
—featured *tammurriata*, *pizzica*, and *tarantella* in the same performance space as other Mediterranean and Northern African, Balkan, Middle-Eastern, and Caribbean sounds. As the artistic director Gigi Di Luca explains in the festival program booklet, by including Southern Italian voices *Ethnos* is “going back to [our] origins to remain faithful to the real meaning of the word ‘ethnic’” (my translation). In other words, in the current global context, where cross-cultural migration is increasing, the word ethnic can be read as a general term for being rooted in a certain place, as well as for being part of the subaltern cultures of the South. To confirm this perspective, the fifth and last day of the 2008 festival was entitled, “Le terre del rimorso” (The Lands of Remorse). Entirely devoted to Southern Italian folk music rhythms, it included free dance and music workshops, a conference, and a concert featuring artists from several Southern regions. As explained in the program, the title of this last event called for continuity between the current conditions of the South and those described by Ernesto De Martino in his 1959 trip. It also seemed to encourage the audience to envision a closer relation between the lands of *pizzica* and of *tammurriata*, and therefore to move beyond the scope of the traditional *tammurriata* festivals. This festival has attracted a wide and consistent audience since its inception, thus ensuring that its organizing committee has the support of the local authorities; all the same, their project has not been spared criticism by several practitioners and even some groups featured on the festival program, who did not appreciate being displayed on the festival stage, since they believe that doing folk music on a stage means altering its true essence.\(^9\) The conservative attitude of the local performers, especially the old-timers, toward a festival format they are not used to, is understandable; yet, the Ethnos festival offers a positive example of change within the

\(^9\) This issue clearly emerged during the conference session of the 2008 festival.
tammurriata festival context—a change that goes beyond commercialization and that seeks to attach new meanings and values to the tammurriata music tradition, as it moves toward an urban and global music scene. These new meanings have to do with the troubled condition of the South today and with constructive collaboration between the degraded Italian South and the migrant cultures from Africa and the Mediterranean.

Different tammurriata performers, groups, and communities have reacted and adapted to change in very different ways; in some cases, a festival structure has been willingly adopted by the local performing groups, rather than imposed by the local authorities. The Festa della Tammorra, which has been held in the town of Somma Vesuviana (appendix) for the last four years, developed with the collaboration of a local cultural association La Pertica, whose members are tammurriata practitioners eager to share their skills and passion for the tammorra with locals and outsiders. As Luca Iovine, the youngest member and musician, explains, Somma Vesuviana has a long tradition of tammurriata, and every year performing groups from all over the Naples area have flocked to this town to participate in the tammurriata circles. Luca has learned to drum since he was a little boy thanks to his uncle, who is widely recognized as a leading drummer in the area and who initiated Luca to the art of the tammorra. A look at the Festival website, edited by Luca, clearly shows how the Somma Vesuviana performers do not see their opening to the global market as a way to degrade their traditions. Thanks to Luca, the association has also a MySpace and a Facebook page, which places their event within a much wider context than the traditional festivals.

When I visited their office on June 2, 2009, I was struck by the welcoming atmosphere: once in the office, Luca and other members showed me through their
*tammorra* lab, and the photos of the festival’s previous editions. When I told them that I was accompanied by some of my “American” professors, they immediately invited us all to celebrate with local wine and then also invited us to dance. While this convivial attitude is typical of *tammurriata* performances, which have always represented moments of general celebration for the local communities, Luca and his fellow performers seemed very much aware of their official role as tradition bearers and also eager to sell their image (and hopefully their drums!) to a foreign audience. To more conservative eyes, this attitude ultimately contributes to the destruction of the *tammurriata* tradition (Inserra); however, I believe that there is something more complex at stake here. In her study of the folklore revival among Udmurts, a Finno-Ugrian ethnic minority living in the ex Soviet Union, folklorist Anna Leena Siikala points out how in moving from the local to the national and to the international spheres, Northern Russian minorities have transformed their private rituals into “public performances,” thus responding to the new global configuration “in a way which is simultaneously traditional and modern” (71). As a result, she continues, “the construction of traditions and cultural identity today must be viewed against the tendency towards globalization, within the framework of the interaction between nations, and not only on the local level, or merely as a national, local, ethnic, gender and social class signifier” (82). Following Siikala, it is possible to suggest that perhaps the Somma Vesuviana festival represents not only a successful way of preserving folk traditions within the contemporary globalized scenario, but also a sign that, within the globalized world framework, identity formation closely follows the dynamics of global communication and exchange; in other words, that by representing one’s cultural values for a global audience one ends up constantly testing and re-making
his/her own identity. As Stuart Hall points out, once reconfigured within a global framework, one’s local identity, that is, one’s sense of being-in-place, is not the same as it was in its original local context; rather, it is “constructed” to respond to the new global order.

Another changing aspect of the *tammurriata* music tradition regards the organization of dance and instrument courses and workshops both locally and nationally. Drawing again from Karen Lüdke’s analysis of the *pizzica* revival, it is possible to identify the changing time frame and space of the *tammurriata*: the organization of *tammurriata* dance and music workshops and courses has expanded the dancing time to the whole year round, while also moving this tradition out of the festival grounds and to other private and public places. This shift has also created a movement from the rural to the urban areas, thus ultimately contributing to change the *tammurriata* tradition into an object of consumption for urbanites in search for something new and/or alternative to mainstream entertainment places. The workshop format, in particular, has contributed to make the *tammurriata* something that people learn in class rather than on the festival grounds. The first time I heard about a *tammurriata* course was in the winter of 2004, while I was enrolled in the MA program in English at UH Mānoa. Having spent most of the spring and summer participating in the local festivals with my two closest cousins, I was happy to hear that they had decided to take a class to improve their dancing skills. The class was being taught by Roberto Valestra, a young dancer from our area who has been part of the festival scene for several years. Going back to the local festivals in the summer of 2007, I realized that many dancers on the festival grounds had taken or were taking some sort of class. As Gianni Pizza notes for the *pizzica* revival, it is quite easy to
identify those who have learned the *tammurriata* in class: their hands movements and dancing steps tend to be faster, more choreographic, and above all quite sexualized, thus moving apart from the Catholic-peasant tradition of Southern Italy. Following Pizza’s analysis of contemporary *pizzica* performances, I am able to conclude that this new style of dancing reinterprets the *tammurriata* tradition according to contemporary dancing styles as well as gender codes. Furthermore, similarly to Katherine Borland’s study of salsa fever in New Jersey, I can see that through the revival the *tammurriata* dance has “moved toward a cosmopolitan, elite aesthetic” (473) which lies very far from the peasant aesthetic the *tammurriata* is traditionally associated with. As in the case of studio-based salsa, the creation of a new *tammurriata* aesthetic is evident in the instructors’ need to teach rhythm and signaling techniques (Borland), two elements that are absent from the traditional way of learning the *tammurriata*.

As I was able to witness on several occasions, the new *tammurriata* performance style has created some friction on the local festival grounds, as both older and younger participants have often complained about the distraction that it creates, especially among the old-timers, who often feel intimidated by these highly choreographic steps and end up watching from outside the dancing circle. Many local participants have reacted by sticking to the old-timers during the festival time, committed to learn only from them, while others seem to use the festival ground as a space to test the dancing skills learned in private classes. At the *Madonna De Bagni* festival in May 2007, I was accompanied into the dancing circle by Assunta Aiello; a graduate student from my area and also a *tammurriata* aficionada, Assunta has participated in the local festivals for several years and, she explained to me, that is how she learned to dance. According to Assunta, this is
the only way to actually get to know the old-timers and become familiar with their world. In turn, becoming familiar with this world is, for Assunta and many of her friends, the only way to learn the tammurriata.¹⁰

Indeed, all the changes in the tammurriata illustrated so far become much more evident, complex, and in some ways problematic, when the tammurriata is transplanted in other Italian cities or any other places that are outside the cultural world of the tammurriata. Needless to say, the tammurriata loses its geographical and cultural specificity and, in many cases, its choreographic variety, or, in other cases, its several geographical variants become dancing styles to learn mechanically next to one another without any understanding of the original cultural context. Many factors may have contributed to this transformation in the passage from the local festivals to the ethnic festivals all over Italy, the main one being the increasing number of folk-music academies in all the major cities. In Milan, the most global/European city in Italy where the latest trends arrive quickly, several cultural centers have been popularizing the tammurriata music over the past five years at least. In addition, classes of pizzica and tammurriata in Milan are now as popular as belly dancing, capoeira, salsa, and other global rhythms, and several people choose to take all of them. Within this framework, the tammurriata ceases to be a place-specific and land-based music tradition, and becomes one of several “global-ethnic” music cultures. At the Sud Sud Festival held in Milan in June 2007, I had the opportunity to watch tammurriata dancing from a new perspective. Set within the suburban space of Cascina Monluè, which every summer hosts non-mainstream and world music events, the festival featured several folk groups on stage, while also allowing impromptu performances in the vast grass area adjacent the stage.

While a tammurriata group was playing on stage, several young people started dancing, inspiring curiosity in the rest of the audience. Judging from the fast and highly choreographic way that these young dancers moved, it is possible to assert that many had learned to dance the tammurriata in a classroom. In other cases, they were very likely just improvising for lack of better knowledge; as a result, their steps represented a type of “global folk dance,” a mix of flamenco, tarantella, and gypsy steps that little resembled the tammurriata. I think that the audience’s reaction on this occasion was the result of bringing a Southern peasant cultural form into an urban Northern context, especially since most Southern immigrants living in the area were probably back home for the weekend. At the same time, it does in many ways confirm the transformation of the tammurriata into a “global-ethnic dance,” a dance removed from the tammurriata’s original cultural context and cultural and social values.

A few days later, a big open-air concert in Milan’s central square, Piazza Duomo, featured L’Orchestra La Notte Della Taranta, a music group that has famously drawn on some of the most traditional pizzica rhythms and lyrics to give them a more pop flavor. Dancing by the stage was a group of about twenty people, including myself, who happened to be more familiar with the pizzica rhythms and steps. The version of pizzica that we danced was not too different from the version of tammurriata I had watched at Cascina Monluè, since most dancers—myself included—seemed to be “pizzica tourists.” As a result, our dancing ceased to be strictly Southern Italian and it closely resembled other examples of ethnic dancing. What to make of these urban and secular performances of tammurriata and pizzica, when the performers are, as in my case, very familiar with their cultural framework and values? Do these performances testify necessarily to the
gradual disappearance of the \textit{tammurriata} cultural values and its transformation into a type of exotic entertainment? And does the geographical distance from a certain location, such as the \textit{pizzica}-centered Apulia region in my case, necessarily place me in the position of a global tourist? I believe that attempting to evaluate the authenticity of the “global \textit{tammurriata}” is not only useless but also disruptive, since it does not allow us to focus on the modalities of change in the \textit{tammurriata} and in the new aspects that this change carries with it. That said, the often conservative attitude of the old-timers toward what they see as something totally unrelated to their performance tradition is understandable, especially given the common lack of interest and respect toward the cultural world of the \textit{tammurriata}. In the following section, I will report on their perspective on the matter to better understand, and respect, the cultural world they come from, as accessed through their own words.

\textbf{Local Voices}

Starting in spring 2007, I have been contacting several festival participants, performers, and cultural brokers to get an understanding of how these people view the current \textit{tammurriata} revival. As might be expected, the \textit{tammurriata} revival has sparked negative criticism on the part of several local performers and old-time festival participants, and this is often reflected in the comments of younger participants as well. Key issues in this debate surround the notion of “tradizione” (tradition) and whether the \textit{tammurriata} tradition is being passed on, restored, or destroyed by this new wave of revival. Several tradition bearers seem very concerned that this revival may pass on a somewhat adulterated, inauthentic version of this tradition.
A key voice in this debate is that of Raffaele Inserra, a tammorra performer from my home town, Gragnano, who is considered by many a leading figure of the tammurriata music tradition today. I first met Inserra in June of 2007 through my cousin, whose mother is Inserra’s cousin. I called him up and introduced myself as someone from Gragnano, his own town, and a relative. This introduction, together with our having the same last name, ensured his good disposition toward me. He was surprised to hear that I was doing this research in Honolulu, and he eagerly offered his point of view and research advice on the tammurriata. When I later told him that in Honolulu I had met the tarantella artist Alessandra Belloni and that she had referred me to him, he talked about their first encounter back in 1982 in Calabria, and about how Alessandra had over the years made several trips to his domestic drum shop and had even sent several of her foreign students, colleagues, and tarantella aficionadas to his house. She even had his wife, a professional seamstress, sew some of her show outfits. This story represents in a nutshell the dynamics of globalization as they affect local traditions today. Raffaele Inserra showed me around his shop, where he builds his drums, made of local wood and goat skin. He explained the whole process, and then he played some music for me. I was amazed by the quality and the sound of his drum and by his outstanding technique. I decided to buy a tammorra, and told him I would take it with me back to Honolulu, which I did. He showed me the basic moves to learn how to play, and to get my fingers used to the instrument. He advised me to practice every day for some time, before trying any complex rhythmic patterns, and he also recommended playing the drum often to ensure that it would keep producing a good sound. “The drum wants to be played,” he added.
I visited Inserra again on June 6, 2009. He invited me to visit his new drum lab-
shop, an old mountain shelter that he and his music group had put together in the
previous months. I went there with my cousin Giovanna Sicignano, at the time a regular
festival participant, who happened to know Inserra’s young collaborator, Catello. Catello
is a young guy from a village nearby, who was brought up in a family of drum
aficionados—his dad (I discovered he was our high school custodian) has been making
and selling drums and castanets for years. Catello is very good at working with wood so
his expertise is a perfect match for Inserra, who is an expert in preparing drum frames
and skin. Together, they have been travelling around Italy and Europe to participate in
folk music festivals. Catello’s girlfriend, Hiram, grew up in the coastal city of Torre Del
Greco, and has discovered the *tammurriata* through the revival; she now joined Catello
and Inserra on their tours, as a dancer.

Since our first meeting, Inserra has presented himself as a family-oriented and
devout person with very traditional views, which reflect his Southern and rural
upbringing. His views on the *tammurriata* appear equally traditional. Inserra told me that
he learned to play the drum when he was sixteen or eighteen (he does not remember
exactly) from the late Antonio Torre, who is now recognized by local performers and old
timers as the best *tammorra* player of all times in Naples. Inserra went to one of these
music gatherings and he was so fascinated that he bought a drum. He remembers,
laughing, that they sold him a paper drum for 300 lire and that his father scolded him and
told him to take it back, but that the drummer wouldn’t exchange it. After asking Mr.
Antonio Torre to teach him, and being laughed at and refused, Inserra stubbornly
continued to drum until Antonio decided to teach him a thing or two. It was typical of a
maestro not to teach you until he saw that you had a real passion for the instrument, he says. And so he became acquainted with the local musicians and chanter; Zi Giannino is the only one who is still alive. That’s the main problem, Inserra says: now most of the old-timers are gone, and interestingly enough, there are not many people his own age (he is 47) who can teach the young generations. Inserra’s generation, in fact, has almost totally forgotten about the *tamburo*. This fact was later confirmed by my mother and other people of her generation. When I asked Inserra about the youngsters he teaches, he answered with a tone of bitterness that it’s rare to find guys like Catello, who are well acquainted with this tradition and also with the rural culture that is behind it, and who are willing to put a real effort into it. Playing “o’ tamburo” is very difficult, Inserra reminded me, and yes, anyone can play, but the quality or “sound” will not be the same. He has not heard the “sound” of Antonio or other masters for years, he says. What he particularly dislikes is the attitude of most youngsters, who seem to show no “humbleness” or willingness to accept the master’s teaching. They think they can learn fast and by themselves and they don’t respect the *tammorra* master’s advice, he says. That is evidently frustrating for Inserra, who seems to believe very firmly in the relation of respect between the master and the disciple. If the master tells you that you play well, he continues, it’d be “nu sprone” (an encouragement), he says, and if you continue after that it means you really love the *tamburo*.

When I asked Inserra about the revival of the *tammurriata*, he commented that now this music has acquired a high-class tone, becoming bourgeois, snob. “You see these kids,” he continues, “they just need to come to the party with a buttega e vin [the bottle of wine] they think that’s enough, these are ‘fricchettoni’ [hippies]. They could go to an
agriturismo to do this instead. They like to come and eat traditional food with the old-
timers, but they don’t even know or learn what it is, like that time when a guy confused
lard with pancetta!” Moreover, these kids’ performance often lacks style. They also lack
physical resistance, he complains! Style for Inserra is something that distinguishes good
musicians: “every finger is different,” he says. Among the tammurriata performers,
people talk about style that is “fino” (fine) and “strafino” (of exceptional quality).
Another important thing that Inserra explains is the “il tamburo segue la voce” (the drum
follows the voice) and not vice versa. This point is crucial because it shows the human
relation that is behind this music: the musician needs to know the singer well and know
his style in order to accompany him. In other cases, if the singer is not that good, the
musician will have to adjust his playing to the singing. From this comment it is evident
that in the current revival context the human relationship is missing, because often the
young musicians learn on their own and then come to the festivals with their drum and
start drumming by themselves, creating small alternative groups. Ultimately, what is lost
for Inserra is “‘o spirito da festa,” (the soul of the feast). This loss also works against the
traditional rule of respect, according to which when a musician goes to a festival, he will
let the locals play first and then he will ask permission to play himself.

Commenting on Belloni’s work, Inserra says that she has been very good at
selling this dance in America, thanks also to her flamboyant shows and costumes. “si sa
vendere” (she can sell herself). But, he continues in Neapolitan dialect, “in America, o
ppo ffa, ma cca. . . ?” (In America, she can do it, but here…?). “In fact, the audience does
not care, especially if foreign, they don’t know. The problem is that you cannot say that
you’re doing Italian music, you’re doing something else.” Then, in Neapolitan: “Sti suon
chissti cca. e’ nata cosa” (these sounds are something else). This is “forma di superficialità” (a form of superficiality), he continues, it is a way of “trasmettere distorto” (transmitting a distorted vision). The problem is, however, that young people today, even locally, don’t have many models to follow, so if the tradition is “dead,” you need to “invent according to a book. And that’s a different thing from oral tradition.” The thing is, he concludes, “tu ja sape’ aru vien e poi sai aro’ vajie” (you have to know where you come from to understand where you wanna go). This is the problem of the “continuità da tradizione” (continuity of the tradition), he concludes.

It is interesting to juxtapose Inserra’s perspective with that of Pia Vicinanza, a young woman from my hometown, who in the last few years has been in close contact with several local performers and has also learned to dance the major tammurriata styles. Vicinanza well represents the current tammurriata revival, as she first got in touch with this music tradition when she was in her late 20s through her uncle, whom she defines as a “music lover,” and who took her to her first dance festival in October 2001. At the time, Vicinanza had already earned her BA degree in Psychology from the University of Rome, and was attending a course in academic dance techniques for dance instructors at the Accademia Nazionale di Danza. After participating in several local festivals, she decided to make the tammurriata the object of her final course project. In 2005, this project became a published book titled Tammurriata Anima e Corpo (Tammurriata Soul and Body), and as of today it is one of the few published volumes on the tammurriata. Tammurriata Anima e Corpo (2005) looks at the tammurriata from a dance studies perspective, while also insisting on the importance of this dance as a form of “social expression and communication” (this is the book’s subtitle). In the last few years,
Vicinanza has been organizing *tammurriata* dance workshops for several elementary and intermediate schools in the Naples area, therefore contributing to increased awareness of this type of performance among the younger generations, while also creating a professional space for herself in an region that is particularly afflicted by unemployment.

What is most interesting for my own study is Vicinanza’s use of fieldwork research—her participant observation in the local festival scene and her interviews of the *tammurriata* old-time performers—for her own exploration of this dance phenomenon. I interviewed Vicinanza at her apartment in Gragnano on June 10, 2009. As I was particularly interested in her experience with the old-timers, I asked her how long and to what extent she had participated in the local festivals. She answered that, since 2002 she has not only participated in most local festivals, but she has also gotten to know and become friends with several local musicians and dancers. She was even recruited by the well-known local drum performer Antonio Matrone (known as ‘O Lione, the lion, for his red hair) to dance for his group throughout Italy at several folk music events. Although her participation in the festival scene has not been as consistent in the last two years—she gave birth to two baby girls—she is still in touch with most of her dancing crew and friends.

According to Vicinanza, being able to form a bond of trust and friendship with the old-timers is crucial to fully understand their music. Her participation in the local music scene therefore included spending time with the musicians and their friends outside the performance space by eating, drinking, and talking story; as the festivals become more and more commercialized, she explains, these social activities are increasingly conducted outside the public sphere of the festivals and within the private circles of the musicians’
houses and backyards. Vicinanza’s insistence on the social aspects of her relation with the old-timers seems to go beyond her need to get a full insight as a researcher; in fact, she often commented on the need for the younger generations to get in touch with the peasant world that the tammurriata music originates from. When I asked about her knowledge of this particular world, Vicinanza admitted that, like many other young people of our generation, she grew up in a rather urbanized area, so she was never fully in contact with the peasant culture of the old-timers she danced with. For Vicinanza, dancing the tammurriata has been a way to enter this world and learn about its values; by commenting on this point she implicitly counteracts Inserra’s idea that the younger generation does not care about the human relationship aspect of this music tradition.

Obviously, Vicinanza’s view of the revival scene is not as negative as the one expressed by Inserra; at the same time, when I asked her about how she feels about the current festival scene, she admitted that many young people learn to dance, but they remain disconnected from all the other aspects of this cultural tradition. In her mind, it is ultimately a matter of love: feeling the passion towards this dance and music leads one ultimately to want to understand the old-timers’ passion for dancing/playing. It is this passion that, she adds, she is going to pass on to her own children when they grow up, by taking them to the festivals. As long as it encourages this interest in and love for our traditions, she concludes, the revival is a positive phenomenon. Moreover, when I asked her how the older performers and old-timers received her interest for this music culture, she said that her personal experience has been very positive: everyone she met seemed very pleased to teach her what he/she knew. But she also admitted that some people, like Inserra for example, would be less eager to accept her participation in the local music
scene. In contrast, others are always very open to meet new young dancers and musicians, and to introduce them to their own music circle. Interestingly enough, when I asked her about whether she ever felt uncomfortable hanging out with the old-timers, whose cultural background is still associated with a strong patriarchal system today, she answered that she never felt discriminated against because of that, and that all the old-timers had been welcoming towards her. We must consider that within the traditional festival scene, women were either not allowed to participate, or if they were, they would usually play dancer or singing roles. Through ‘O Lione’s group, Vicinanza was able to perfect her dancing style, but, she adds, she learned most of it at the local festivals by dancing with the old-timers. This way she was able to learn several styles, according to whom she was dancing with, so she does not follow one style in particular, and she is able to teach all of them.

Finally, when I asked Vicinanza why she believes it is important to keep this music tradition, she answered, “perché fa parte della nostra storia, del nostro territorio” (because it is part of our history, of our land). These words well explain Vicinanza’s commitment to educate the younger generation in the tammurriata; as she was explaining to me during the interview, it is a pity that our generation grew up with foreign and Italian pop music, but we don’t know anything about our own cultural heritage. More importantly, Vicinanza’s words remind us of the strong connection between the tammurriata tradition and the geographical and social land it developed from.

Another important voice in the local tammurriata context is Giuseppe (Peppe) Dionisio, a drummer, dancer, and cultural broker from the town of Scafati, near Pompeii. Since the early 1980s, Dionisio has worked to preserve the tammurriata tradition of his
area, associated with the Madonna dei Bagni festival. I met Dionisio on June 11, 2009 at the small coffee place in Scafati. I was referred to him by a friend as one of most knowledgeable persons about the tammurriata; Dionisio’s familiarity with the tammurriata rhythms comes not only from his participation in the local festivals since a very young age (he is now in his fifties), but also from his interest in studying, and writing about the tammurriata in the last ten years. The result of his longstanding involvement with this music tradition is the publication of the volume Il volto della tradizione. Riti e tammurriate nella festa dei Bagni (The Face of Tradition. Rites and Tammurriatas in the Madonna Di Bagni Festival, 2003) In the book, Dionisio illustrates the history of the festival and its ritual aspects, while also offering a spotlight on four tradition bearers whose performance has been particularly significant for the preservation of the local cultural heritage.

In the early 1980s, Dionisio started a cultural association called “Proposta Popolare” (Folk Proposal) whose main goal was to put together old-timers and young musicians and to open up a dialogue between these two different schools of performance. While in the 1970s folk revival the local peasants remained at the margins, Dionisio explains, now instead they would play a leading role in the local music scene. The three best performers of the Madonna dei Bagni festival—Antonio Torre, Vincenzo Pepe, and Giovanni Del Sorbo (known as Zi’ Giannino)—were invited to lead the group. For Dionisio these musicians, who have passed away except for Zi’ Giannino, represent a living “patrimonio culturale” (cultural patrimony) that needs to be preserved. Over time, the group managed to revitalize the Madonna dei Bagni festival, which had been dismissed following the devastating 1981 earthquake and the consequent closing of the
Madonna dei Bagni church. Among other things, the group restored the “carrettone,” a horse and carriage that is open on all sides and that can carry at least ten people. My mother remembers going to the Madonna dei Bagni festival on a carrettone when she was little. By restoring the carrettone, Dionisio and his friends were performing their “ritorno alla tradizione” (return to tradition). However, the creation of a committee for the preservation of the Bagni cultural heritage, Dionisio continues, brought about the decline of the festival, of its “atmosphere,” due to the local authorities’ effort to use this heritage for their own economic benefit. In the meantime, many old festival regulars, mainly peasants, have stopped attending the festival, while more and more educated students have started flocking to this event. Street artists have also started taking part in the festival, although, Dionisio points out, “it does not belong to them.” The increasing decontextualization, and consequent loss of value, of this festival is evident for Dionisio in the overuse of the term “paranza” to indicate the current performing groups. According to Dionisio, “paranza,” which in Neapolitan dialect indicates a multitude of people, would usually refer to particularly big groups of performers, while now it is used for any type of group. For him, this misuse of a key term in the tammurriata indicates a clear lack of interest in getting acquainted with the cultural context of the tammurriata music tradition on the part of the younger generations.

For Dionisio, there are ultimately three important elements to keep in mind if we really want to preserve this tradition: “attenzione, passione e rispetto” (attention, passion, and respect). Only by following these principles can today’s revivalists recuperate their own local cultural identity. But to reach these goals, he states, we need to “re-educate” the younger generations to the importance of the tammurriata tradition and its values.
Dionisio himself has taught seminars on the *tammurriata* cultural heritage in the local public schools. Within this educational framework, the cultural exchange with the *pizzica* is more than welcome, Dionisio says, but it needs to be done “without getting too far from the cultural specificity [of the local festivals].”

**Deconstructing the Tammurriata Tradition**

The view of the *tammurriata* tradition expressed here by both Peppe Dionisio and Raffaele Inserra is common to tradition bearers in many other folk revival scenes, and to the folklore studies tradition both in the U.S. and internationally. Since its inception in the second half of the nineteenth century, folklore scholarship has sought to revitalize folk traditions by recuperating what folklorists saw as the most authentic aspects; as a matter of fact, this project drew on a very rigid definition of folklore and of tradition, one that has been largely contested within contemporary folklore scholarship (Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity*). Borrowing from Hobsbawm and Ranger’s famous study, today social scientists prefer to look at traditions as constructed or “invented” according to the personal and/or collective investment of those who invent them and in light of the larger socio-economic and political structure they exist in. Once the notion of tradition as a homogeneous whole, which folklore studies has traditionally drawn on, was deconstructed, authenticity ceased to be a possibility for the folklorist and the social scientist more generally. While my interviewees’ words testify to the importance of looking at the *tammurriata* as something more than a set of choreographies and drum patterns, they also betray the ambiguity of any folklore project that tries to establish the true or authentic values of a certain tradition. By comparing each of their definitions of the *tammurriata* and the way the *tammurriata* should be according to them, one can get a
sense of the local politics of tradition within the tammurriata revival. When my interviewees speak of the difference between those who are familiar with the rural culture of the tammurriata and those who are not, they are indirectly contributing to these politics; in fact, while the few old-timers still participating in the tammurriata festivals are peasants and thus still well acquainted with this culture, many of the current tradition bearers are already partly outside that rural world. Raffaele Inserra works as a clerk in a local mall, but he still cultivates his father’s piece of land on the weekends and holidays; Pia Vicinanza’s experience is completely removed from the rural culture of the tammurriata; Peppe Dionisio works for a local health center. As a matter of fact, those who are now considered expert scholars or performers of the tammurriata are all living in the more urbanized areas of Gragnano or Pompeii. While some of them are still connected to the rural past through their family history, they often have white-collar jobs; therefore, they are not part of a “peasant culture” any more themselves. Their personae and their daily lives are two different things.

Furthermore, De Simone and other local scholars’ observations on the tammurriata ultimately suggest a willingness to define themselves as authentic tradition bearers, and to put down other performers and/or scholars. In his harsh criticism of today’s tammurriata performances, De Simone, for example, does not seem to take into account his own role as an urbanized scholar who visited the local festivals in the 1970s, and whose perspective on the tammurriata might have been as romanticized as that of other scholars at the time (Biagi). Valestra and Vicinanza’s projects of education regarding the historical and cultural specificity of the tammurriata represent very stimulating efforts; and yet, their position is not much different from that of other young
urbanites without a deep knowledge of the peasant world of the *tammurriata*, a world that they are now discovering for the first time through the revival. For all these reasons this renewed effort to revitalize the peasant values of the *tammurriata* represents a rather complex project, and carries with it similar feelings of nostalgia for the “folk” and the “popular” as the ones displayed by the 1970s revival movement. Therefore, the attempt to define the most authentic version of *tammurriata* and the most genuine way of performing this music remains ironic to say the least. Raffaele Inserra’s sceptical attitude toward the young urbanites is equally problematic, since in the last few years he has accepted many invitations to participate in folk-music festivals all over Italy as well as in several European states; his group was also featured by the 2007 Sud Sud Festival at Cascina Monluè. In addition, because his advertised image is that of the best *tammurriata* player in Italy today, he has also become an icon for the globalized version of *tammurriata* that is popular outside Naples. Inserra’s role within the current revival is thus a complex one, and symbolizes the many intersections between local traditions and global market.

As suggested by Briggs, the need to determine whether a certain tradition is or remains authentic is strictly connected to the local/national/global politics of culture, and to the socio-economic and political interests of those groups who invest in the authenticity or inauthenticity of a particular tradition. In the case of the *tammurriata* tradition, being defined as an official tradition bearer also means ensuring one’s own group/town/political affiliation, the support of the local authorities and, as their tradition becomes popular on a global scale, of the national and European agencies as well. In other words, because Southern Italian folk music has now become very popular both
nationallly and internationally, it has spurred the local politics of tradition to interrogate the authenticity of other revitalized *tammurriata* performances and to designate the local performances as the “most traditional” ones.

To fully comprehend the current recontextualization of the *tammurriata*, it is neither valuable nor enough to search for, and identify, the “authentic” *tammurriata* tradition. As discussed above, my acquaintance with Assunta Aiello put me in contact with the local old-timers on the Madonna dei Bagni festival site; thanks to Assunta, I was admitted for the first time into the dancing circle (“o cerchio”), usually left to the more expert and/or brave dancers. Being well acquainted with all the regulars, Assunta was able to point out whom I should be dancing with first and who would be able to teach me this or that style. Being acquainted with her turned out to be the best way to dance in the circle and to watch closely the old-timers’ style. This in turn ensured that I would “be on the safe side,” and “do things right,” and thus receive the old-timers’ permission. It is not difficult to imagine, however, how this need to do things right will be replaced by other needs and understandings of the *tammurriata* tradition, as this tradition moves away from the circle of the local performers and audience. As folklorist Regina Bendix reminds us, “[t]raditions are always defined in the present, and the actors doing the defining are not concerned about whether scholars [or locals] will perceive a given festival or piece of art as genuine or spurious but whether the manifestation will accomplish for them what they intend to accomplish” (Bendix, “Tourism and Cultural Displays” 132). In other words, the concern over practicing a certain version of *tammurriata* that is respectful of the old-timers’ teachings makes sense within the framework of the local festivals, but it is not
enough to explain the dynamics of recontextualization of the *tammurriata* outside this framework.

The need for a different framework of analysis is especially evident when discussing the religious aspects of the *tammurriata*, which represent, I believe, the core of its transformation within the current revival. In his influential 1979 book, *Canti e tradizioni popolari in Campania* (Songs and Folk Traditions of the Campania Region), Roberto De Simone had already complained about what he saw as a “loss of devotion” among the younger generations participating in the *tammurriata* rituals; it is much harder, however, to measure this “loss of devotion” and to decide to what degree the local festivals are becoming secularized. On May 29 2007, I participated for the first time in the Festa Dell’Avvocata, a traditional *tammurriata* festival devoted to the Madonna Avvocata (Mary Advocate); the festival happens every year by a small church that lies on the mountain top near the small town of Maiori, on the Amalfi coast. There is only one old, rugged mountain path leading to the church, and the hiking trip to the top takes about five hours. When my friends and I finally arrived at the top, to our surprise we spotted a huge number of people assembled on that impervious hill and spread out over the surrounding valleys, as if they represented, in fact, an entire town. Among them there were, surprisingly, many older people; some of them had come with the helicopter arranged by the police; the younger ones had been there camping from the night before. In front of us, the procession with the Madonna statue had just begun; many people, of different ages and social groups, accompanied the procession singing and praying. I could not but feel the energy of that moment, and its sacredness for the people in the audience. I asked a woman who was standing next to me where she came from; she answered that
she was from one of the small villages on the Amalfi coast. Her friend had asked her to bring flowers to the Madonna on her behalf since she was too old to make the trip. For the first time, my friends and I felt that we too were pilgrims, by hiking to the top and experiencing that special moment.

However, not everyone in the festival space was engaged in the procession. Only the ones standing within the walls of the church space were. All the others outside seemed rather engaged with other activities: some of the younger ones were forming their own music and dance circles, and performing both *tammurriata* and *pizzica*; some were barbecuing or just hanging out; some seemed to be there to watch everybody else. Judging from these behaviors, the festival had all the characteristics of a big social event; one of my friends called it the Woodstock of the Amalfi coast! The attitude of those outside the church perimeter spurred the negative reaction of my trip companions, who felt people, even if they are not religious, should pay more respect to the Madonna feast, the main reason for the festival to start with. At that moment I felt inclined to agree with them, even though I am usually not particularly interested in the religious aspects of these festivals.

It also became very clear to me how the festival space was physically divided into sacred and secular spaces, and yet, the two kept intersecting in several ways. The obvious spatial separation between the sacred and the secular evident within this festival site also represented, in a nutshell, the current revival phenomenon, as well as the different meanings and values that different groups of audiences are giving to the festivals today. Moreover, given the peculiar history and geography of this festival site, considered by many one of the most “authentic” sites of the *tammurriata* tradition, these signs of
change become even more striking. As De Simone reminds, “only ‘la devozione’ [devotion], that interior feeling that is connected to the myth, is able to give rise to the musical expression and to determine its collective role in the community [. . .] This ‘devozione’ is defined by the community as the emotional component that determines the ‘need for’ the chant and the music, as well as their social role” (De Simone, *Canti e tradizioni* 9, my translation). It thus becomes natural for someone as firmly rooted in the religious tradition of the *tammurriata* as De Simone to ask non-believer performers and participants the reason for their performance. But I believe that this question is misleading, since it looks at the current revival only in terms of what it lacks without asking what new perspective it brings into the *tammurriata* context. A more constructive question would be to ask how the *tammurriata* rituals have changed, or been replaced by new rituals, within both the 1970s and 1990s revivals.

It is also important to keep in mind that the coexistence of the sacred and the secular is inherent to the history of the festival, as “religious festivals have evident secular implications, and secular ones almost invariably resort to metaphysics to gain solemnity and sanction for their events and for their sponsors” (Falassi 3). More importantly, the sacred and the secular have always intermingled within the religious structure of Southern Italy, with its strong emphasis on popular religious icons and rites (De Martino). As Giovanni Vicidomini, president of the Center for the Research and Preservation of the folk traditions of Nocera Superiore (Salerno), also points out, the secular roots of the *tammurriata* are evident throughout its history, which is intertwined with Greek and Roman pagan rituals (qtd. in Mauro 213). This perspective highlights how the idea of devotion, so important in the *tammurriata* according to De Simone, is a
very complex one that has to do with both organized and popular religion, and that is thus hard to define. It also clarifies how the Christian, and Catholic connotations of the tammurriata are the product of recent historical change and thus cannot be used as the standard for judging the value of today’s tammurriata performances.

Nevertheless, the detachment from Christian values and rituals among many younger tammurriata participants, especially in the current revival, needs to be taken into account to fully comprehend the dynamics of the revival. My personal experience at the Madonna Avvocata festival has taught me that understanding and respecting these rituals and values is an essential step toward understanding the tammurriata rituals and values, even though one may not personally accept the truth-value of Christian and Catholic rituals. Failing to acknowledge the important relation between the tammurriata and the religious culture of the South ultimately means extrapolating a set of choreographies, melodies, and rhythms from the cultural context they developed from. This element reveals the process of decontextualization at its most problematic.

Recontextualizing “‘O Spirito Da Festa”

In the same way as tarantella scholars such as Gianni Pizza have done in relation to the pizzica revival (see Chapter I), deconstructing what the local performers call the “tammurriata tradition” is crucial to understanding the local politics of revitalization. Yet, as suggested by my experience with the religious aspects of the tammurriata, people who experience cultural traditions in their everyday life, and on their body, do still believe, of course, in the truth value of those traditions, because it is part of their value system. For this reason, it is important to get a better understanding of the cultural world they refer to when they talk about the “tradizione.” Developed within the peasant
tradition, the *tammurriata* carries with it a very close connection between the human and geographical spheres, and a strong emphasis on the importance of the land and its values. In defining the *tammurriata* in the introduction to her book, Pia Vicinanza states, for example:

> The tammurriata […] expresses a distinctive ethnic identity, a much localized sense of geographical and cultural belonging: it is a rite, a feast where once the peasant told the story of his life, of his faith, of his labor in the fields, his love, through the sound of the drum, the singing, and the dance. (23)

The chanting, dancing and drum playing therefore reflected, and recounted, the peasants’ labor, while also allowing them to express their worldview. Quoting Corrado Sfogli, member of the 1970s folk revival group Nuova Compagnia di Canto Popolare, Vicinanza also reminds us that “musica popolare” (folk music) is always “il suono di un territorio” (“the sound of a specific place” 20). The reason for this close connection between the *tammurriata* and its geographical place lies in the fact that, as performers execute the *tammurriata*, “in that moment music becomes the history of that place” (25). From this standpoint, Vicinanza warns us, it is important that the young dancers and performers “be open to knowing the culture of the peasant world, which embraces the *tammurriata* tradition, and maintain a certain degree of sensitivity toward the cult of the land, which is re-enacted during key moments of the *tammurriata* dance” (25, my translation). This perspective on the *tammurriata* among local performers and scholars helps us understand what is considered to be missing within the current *tammurriata* revival.

The close relationship between the music and the peasant world is further stated by Vicinanza, when she describes the *tammurriata* dance as a “dance that loves the
contact with the land; in older times, for example, the women would dance barefooted, […] while their hand gestures in the dance reflect the daily gestures of the peasants such as seeding and harvesting” (47). The importance of the land theme is confirmed by the extensive use of pastoral imagery on the part of the chanters; as in many other land-based societies, references to the land and its fruits are also often employed metaphorically to convey private or taboo topics such as love stories and sexual intercourse. More generally, rural imagery and metaphors are often used metatexually by the old-timers to describe the quality of a certain chant or rhythm. De Simone reports, for example, that some old-timers liken the chant to a “‘fruit of the season’: sour if you get it before its time and rotten if you get it too late” (De Simone, Canti e tradizioni 9, my translation). This symbolism fits well within the larger symbolic structure of the tammurriata, in which every element contributes to the life cycle, as well as the agricultural cycle and the Marian cycle.

This ethics of place has gone through major changes within the current revival, even at the local level. A first look at the local festival sites clearly shows very simplified and sexualized dance performances, absent from the peasant culture of Southern Italy, as well as hippie clothing and attitudes, especially on the part of the younger participants. In addition, because most young people who learn to dance the tammurriata today are not familiar with the peasant culture embedded in the tammurriata rhythms, the tammurriata ends up losing its traditional symbolic and ritual functions. As suggested above, these changes have spurred a strong reaction on the part of several local performers and aficionados, both old and young. As part of remaining anchored to one’s own territory, and at the same time to opening up a dialogue with other soundscapes, they believe it is
crucial to be able to recognize which local version of *tammurriata* is being performed. In this sense, their attempt speaks to the need of recontextualizing the *tammurriata* within the national and global folk festival scene. After my cousins decided to take the *tammurriata* course with Valestra in the fall of 2004, they soon found out that the course focused on a specific subgenre of the *tammurriata*, the so-called “Pimontese,” from the close mountain town of Pimonte. The Pimontese, my cousins later explained to me, is the type of *tammurriata* that we are most closely connected with, since it developed within the geographical area we grew up in. Ironically enough, we were not aware of this musical heritage until Roberto Valestra’s class; the *tammurriata* choreographies we were familiar with are the Giuglianese and the Paganese, the most commonly danced at the local festivals.

Viewed in this light, Valestra’s teaching initiative seemed to stem from a desire to reconnect us to our own local traditions, while also asserting the *tammurriata*’s complex history and geographical specificity. As confirmed by Valestra in our later talks on the subject, this perspective informed the theoretical introduction to his dance workshop.\(^\text{11}\) As my younger cousin, Giovanna Sicignano, points out, it is important to be familiar with the geographical differences embedded in the *tammurriata*, since they reflect the historical and cultural specificity of this tradition. The current trend to mix and combine these different types of *tammurriata* into a single blend, evident in the dancing styles of the younger generations, therefore, covers up the historical and cultural complexity of the *tammurriata*. However, Valestra’s ambitious project seems to have quickly lost its charm. Learning only the Pimontese, Giovanna explains, would ultimately put Valestra’s students in a strange position; when they went to the festivals, they could only dance

\(^{11}\) Informal conversation, Festa Della Madonna De Bagni, June 2005.
among themselves, because they did not know the other steps. In other words, once the Pimontese was moved out the classroom context and back into the local festival scenario, it seemed out of place, since by now, other styles of *tammurriata*, such as the Paganese and the Giuglianese, have come to represent the whole of the *tammurriata* genre in the eyes of both local and global audiences. As a result, many students, including my cousins, soon stopped going to Valestra’s classes, which they felt were not stimulating enough. This example ultimately confirms the complexity and limits of recontextualizing the *tammurriata*, even within the smaller and cohesive context of the local festivals, because of the current urbanized and secular social formation of Italy.

Based on my interviews, another element that gets “lost” in the current *tammurriata* revival is the “spirito da festa,” (literally “the essence of the feast”); that is, the role that a particular festival performed within the social framework it originated from. Today’s festivals, several scholars and old-timers complain, aren’t the crucial social events that they were thirty years ago, when young people in the South of Italy, and women in particular, didn’t have as many opportunities to socialize as today. In an article that appeared in Naples’ leading newspaper, *Il Mattino*, on December 27, 2005, Roberto De Simone goes as far as mourning the “loss” of the *tammurriata* tradition that was still visible at the local festivals up to the 1970s. The old festivals, he explains, embodied the tradition and showed its resilience among the local participants; as a matter of fact, he adds, they were a “moment of the highest musical socialization.” “A traditional festival,” De Simone continues, “combines celebratory and didactic elements, and here the role of the maestro, thorough his own examples and authority, makes it possible for the tradition to continue” (De Simone, “Tammurriata,” my translation). The
ritual character of the old festivals, where the performers would play and sing out of devotion to the Madonna, seems to be lost today, and so are its pedagogical moments, since now many performers learn at workshops and schools. As the ritual function of the festivals disappear, concludes De Simone, the whole process of “socialization,” expressed by the *tammurriata* music rituals and rite of passages, disappears as well.

De Simone further illustrates his perspective on the revival when he discusses his own methodological approach to the popular chants of the rural areas near Naples in his 1979 book. Even as he makes extensive use of recording devices to preserve these chants, De Simone is fully aware of the fact that this music “is first of all ‘not reproducible’ [...] because it arises only after a relationship has developed among its performers, and between these performers and the audience” (De Simone, *Canti e tradizioni* 11). He therefore makes sure to record only on the day of the festival or soon before or afterwards, and to gather groups of performers who are friends and know him from past festivals. The ‘not reproducible’ quality of this music, De Simone seems to suggest here, makes the act of decontextualization particularly problematic. This view of the *tammurriata* tradition is crucial to understand its current transformation and the criticism it has given rise to locally, since this music tradition rests on the close human relationship among the performers and the dancers, the chanters, and the audience. Once this relationship is broken, many suggest, the whole tradition is disrupted.

Following a common feeling among the *tammurriata* aficionados, Pia Vicinanza’s introductory remarks to her book, *Tammurriata anima e corpo*, echo De Simone’s reflection on the *tammurriata*: “‘Musica popolare,’” Vicinanza states, clearly reflects the relationship between the music and the person who produces it. She further expands on
this point by asserting that, “There is no school to learn the folk dances, but only
initiation from and imitation of the old-timers, the only source of knowledge for those
who don’t want to contribute to a fake and corrupted version of the ‘cultura popolare’”
(19-20, my translation). For De Simone, instead, this disconnect between the performers
and their audience has ultimately given rise to extremely standardized dance steps and
performance styles; thereby suggesting a difference here between the “unaware”
repetition of old performances and the interactive repetition of forms and contents that
originates within the ritual framework. When the tradition ceases to “entrust to its ritual
[…] the repetition of its meanings and values” (De Simone, “Tammurriata,” my
translation), De Simone explains, the art of improvisation in chanting and drumming,
typical of oral culture in general and of this culture in particular, loses out. According to
De Simone, it is above all the loss of improvisation that characterizes the current
festivals, which he defines as “shreds, larvae […] stumps of expressions that cannot be
possibly redefined, and that have lost the interactive relation with the society they
originated from.” (De Simone, “Tammurriata”). Interestingly enough, this “social”
disconnect happens also at the body level; in fact, De Simone explains, the standardized
dance steps that can be watched at the festivals today are the product of the disconnection
between the body/soul of the dancer and the drum. So the great performers such as
Antonio Torre would synchronize their sounds to their body movements in a way that
showed how “it was the human body, its acting, the sound body which made the drum
pulse and not vice versa.”

But if the traditional ritual and symbolic functions of the tammurriata have been
lost/transformed, is it possible to trace a new ritual within the current festivals? And if so,
what type of ritual is it? What meanings does it bear? And which social group does it support? First, it is important to note that the revival is attracting an increasing number of young people in search of non-mainstream entertainment; as a result, the current *tammurriata* festivals, both the traditionally-structured ones and the recently “invented” ones, are increasingly assuming the characteristics of a big social event. In this regard, I believe it is possible to apply Anna Nacci’s reading of the current *pizzica* revival (Nacci)—as expressing a need for alternative ways of expression among young generations of Italians—to the *tammurriata* revival. In other words, these revivals can be read, I believe, as an important social phenomenon that contributes to define new ways of communication, self-expression, and group identity formation among the younger generations. This is particularly evident in the large urbanized space of Milan city, which is now being physically and symbolically inscribed by the performance of Southern Italian and other ethnic dances. As Judith Hamera, author of the volume *Dancing Communities* (2007), states:

> Every day, urban communities are danced into being. This is more than a metaphor. It is a testament to the power of performance as a social force, as cultural poesis, as communication infrastructure that makes identity, solidarity, and memory sharable. Communities are danced into being in daily, routine labor, time and talk backstage and off—sometimes way off-stage, as well as on stage. They are danced into being by virtuoso technicians and earnest amateurs. Diverse, generative urban communities emerge at dance’s busy intersections of discipline and dreams, repetition and innovation, competition and care. (1)
If dance performance can work as a powerful social force, then the extensive performing of *tammurriata* and other ethnic dances within Milan’s largely urbanized space certainly contributes to the everyday social interactions among the city residents, as well as to their understanding and sharing of notions of identity, belonging, and place.

The close relationship between Italian subculture and the *tammurriata* revival also suggests that this music may be taking on new meanings and a new social role within Italy’s social formation, even though these values are different from the ones it supported within its rural framework. Even as it moves from the rural areas of the South to the urban and richer areas in the North, one constant element of the current festivals consists of the dancers dressing and acting like the *alternativi* in the Naples area: a confirmation that the current folk music revival acts as, among other things, an expression of youth subculture. That the *tammurriata* can take on an important social role is further confirmed by the extensive participation of its performers in social protests and other big social events taking place in the major cities of Milan, Naples, and Rome, such as anti-war and No-Global marches, and Gay Pride. I have personally witnessed this participation on several occasions.

Furthermore, while the older festivals tended to confirm a normative perspective on family, social relationships, sexual behaviors, and religiosity, the current festivals allow for a wider range of perspectives on these topics, while at the same time also contributing to affirm and/or recuperate alternative ways of socializing through music and dance. An example of such an alternative perspective is the increasing participation of women musicians even in the traditional festivals. While women have always participated in the festivals as dancers, their role as drummers and chanters is much less
discussed in the literature on the *tammurriata*. In fact, when talking with tradition bearers, I personally got the impression that they perceive the women’s role in the festivals to be separate from that of the musicians. When I asked Raffaele Inserra whether he was teaching his young daughters to drum, he answered that he would rather encourage them to dance, thus implying that the drum would not be as appropriate for them. Women, of course, have been playing the drum and chanting for many generations before this one; most old-timers remember the names of the best women performers in the area; and on several festival occasions, I have had the opportunity to watch these older women performing with an energy and skill as high as those of their male counterparts. But somehow the women’s participation as drummers tends to disappear from the collective memory of the *tammurriata* tradition, which has been invented and consistently led by a group of mostly male performers and operates within the larger patriarchal structure of the Southern peasant society.

On the other hand, the current, “touristic,” festivals are bringing forth, and legitimizing, the image of the female performer. On the Festa di Materdomini, on August 14, 2008, I could personally testify to such a transformation: near the main *tammurriata* circle was a very old woman with her drum, playing on her own. All around her, there was a group of young dancers who listened attentively, and in some cases even recorded her performance with their camera or mobile phone; every time the woman finished a song, they would encourage her to play more. In a matter of minutes, the woman was able to attract an audience of at least twenty people, all praising the quality and style of her performance. I found this moment to be very interesting, not only because it showed the possibility of a constructive dialogue between the older generation and the younger,
but also because it seemed to give an official role to the woman performer, entrusted by the younger generations to pass on what she has learned. The use of recording devices seemed to confirm this moment of entrustment by adding an authoritative quality to it. More importantly, in cities like Milan, where the immigrants from the South remain a large component of the population, performing the *tammurriata* or *pizzica* or just participating in a related music event often becomes a way for Southerners to reconnect to practice cultural traditions from their hometowns and villages and to reconnect with other Southerners. One could get a quick glimpse of the type of dynamics at the June 2009 concert of the folk-inspired Apulian group Sud Sound System: as soon as the group started performing the famous hit, “Le Radici Ca Tieni” (The Roots you Have), a hip hop remixing of Apulian *pizzica* sung in the local dialect, the entire audience, at least one thousand people, started singing along, in dialect. Moments like this one have revealed to me the importance of doing Southern Italian (folk) music today in the city of Milan. The experience of my brother, my cousins, and their friends as immigrants in this city, as well as my experience as participant observer, have over the last few years confirmed this importance. In this sense the city of Milan works as a powerful example of what globalization scholar Arjun Appaduraj calls “ethnoscapes”; that is, “landscapes of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers and other moving groups and persons” (297). The *tammurriata* performances occurring within this ethnoscape thus play an important role, as they help both performers and audiences, both Southern Italian and foreign immigrants, express and share their own ethnic identities within the globalized space of Milan city.
On June 19, 2009, I had the opportunity to meet I Briganti, a folk-music group that has becoming widely known in Milan and the surrounding areas. As Gianpiero Caruso, the group’s leading drummer, explained to me, for them making Southern music has been a way to reconnect to their home culture, and/or to cultivate a passion they had from before. Caruso, for example, comes from Naples, where he learned to drum at the tammurriata festivals many years ago; once he found a job in Milan, he looked for a way to continue his hobby as a drummer and chanter, when one year ago I Briganti contacted him to ask him if he was willing to work with them. Their group features a violin, a complete novelty for a Southern Italian folk music group. Their repertoire, however, features only traditional songs from the Southern folk tradition, with only a few musical variations. Judging from their musical style, it is safe to say that their purpose seems to be to educate people in the rhythms of the South, while allowing people from the South, both new immigrants and second-generation, to reconnect with their origins. Laura, the group’s singer and dancer, has in fact being teaching both pizzica and tammurriata dance classes for a few years, although she has grown up dancing the pizzica in the Apulia region. The June 22 concert, hosted by a small ARCI cultural circle in Milan’s Isola quarter, had been organized as a class-ending dance party, so I had the chance to meet Laura’s students, mostly second-generation people from Milan who wanted to reconnect to their family’s history. Together with them, however, there were also a couple of Southerners living in Milan, who already knew how to dance well. A young girl from Milan came to the class together with her friend, out of curiosity, she said, although she didn’t know much about it before. Ultimately, it is a mix of reasons that attract people in Milan toward the tammurriata or the pizzica, and it is hard to single any of them out; at
the same time, the importance of this music tradition in the lives of young generations of Southern immigrants is be taken fully into account in studying the dynamics of recontextualization of the *tammurriata* in Italy.

Music, Martin Stokes explains, helps us “relocate ourselves” in the face of the general sense of dislocation characterizing our modern age. “The musical event,” Stokes explain, “evokes and organizes collective memories and present experiences of place with an intensity, power and simplicity unmatched by any other social activity. The ‘places’ constructed through music involve notions of difference and social boundary. They also organize hierarchies of a moral and political order” (4). Stokes points out how, contrary to what most people may think, “music and dance […] do not simply ‘reflect.’ Rather, they provide the means by which the hierarchies of place are negotiated and transformed” (4). Music, therefore, often becomes the key to re-make space meaningful to us within the current globalized world of dislocation. Drawing on Stokes, it is possible to assert that perhaps the new rituals associated with the *tammurriata* contribute to re-locating the younger generation within the current social formation of Italy. As Borland says of the salsa revival in New Jersey, perhaps it is also possible to assert that the current *tammurriata* scene “represents a middle ground that appeals to diverse social subjects in differing ways,” while also enabling a “community created not by shared ethnicity or location but by a voluntary affinity for a particular cultural style” (475). The *tammurriata* schools outside Naples are in fact creating circles of aficionados who are linked by their passion for this type of performance, while Naples expatriates can find a venue for reconnecting with their own cultural heritage in these new communities.
Nevertheless, the competing notions of *tammurriata* existing within the current revival, as well as the touristic and exotic way in which the *tammurriata* is brought to audiences outside the local context, remain important points to reflect on. On January 9, 2010, I participated in a *tammurriata* music and dance workshop organized by Milan’s ARCI Scighera association and hosting Raffaele Inserra and his group. That experience has made very clear to me the competing notions of *tammurriata* emerging from its recontextualization in such a global city as Milan. The audience’s reaction to Inserra’s teaching method and workshop organization—a mix of improvised historical accounts, personal anecdotes about his own experience with drum playing, and an explicit critique of the current revival and its watering-down of the *tammurriata* tradition—was, of course, quite negative. Neither did the *tammurriata* dance performance included in the workshop, an example of Pimontese from Inserra’s home area and my own, attract much interest from the participants; the Milan-based friend I was dancing with complained for example about this version being too slow and boring. I also heard several participants complaining at the end about having wasted their money without being able to learn how to play the drum or dance. In the highly structured context of Milan city, where productivity is considered a must, Inserra’s workshop had miserably failed. From the perspective of a Southerner whose ideas are firmly rooted in the rural culture of South, however, this workshop became a way to educate Milan’s middle-class urbanite audiences about the *tammurriata* music culture. On this occasion, I couldn’t but admire Inserra’s effort to remind his audience that before learning to drum, sing, or dance the *tammurriata*, it is important to learn, and respect, the cultural framework it came from.
Chapter III

Revitalizing Southern Italian Folk Songs

In this chapter, I will discuss the *tarantella* revival by focusing specifically on song lyrics and music arrangements of both folk music and folk-inspired music from the South. While local and national festivals offer direct testimony of the revival in terms of the current changes to dance choreographies and to the spirit of the event, as well as of the changing relationships of dancers, musicians, and communities involved, the vast and diverse corpus of music rearrangements of Southern Italian folk music offers a crucial perspective on the revival. For one thing, music arrangement of Southern Italian folk music has lent itself to a wider range of variations than the choreographies have; as a result, by rearranging older songs and composing new melodies and song lyrics, contemporary artists have been able to make a strong impact on this folk music tradition, thus largely contributing to its current redefinitions. It is also important to look at these texts because, as of today, there is no overall study of the revival from a textual analysis perspective. In addition, the song lyrics often explicitly introduce the listener to the cultural and linguistic world of Southern Italian folk music, as well as to the socio-political context that has given rise to the revival; a textual analysis of these texts therefore will also help illuminate the ideological mechanisms involved in the creation of the currently re-invented traditions of both *pizzica* and *tammurriata*.

Indeed, because these texts offer a direct representation of the revival, as well as an often-explicit comment on the cultural worlds of the *pizzica* and of the *tammurriata*, they also provide a privileged perspective on the socio-political and cultural context...
within which this music tradition has developed, and especially on the Southern Question debate. Through my analysis of the representations of the South emerging from these texts, I will ultimately investigate how the current revival challenges the orientalist image of Southern Italy emerging in national and transoceanic discourse. I also explore how at stake within contemporary Southern Italian folk music is a re-imagining of the South from a Mediterranean perspective. I argue that the celebration of a Mediterranean identity embraced by Southern Italian musicians has the potential to become a constructive response to the harsh conditions of Southern Italy and a constructive alternative to previous imaginings of the South. In the actual practice of both the revival music and scholarship, however, and especially as it is coded as world music, it also risks remaining an aesthetic endeavour that reiterates longstanding stereotypes of exoticism associated with the South.

In her introduction to the volume, *Music, Space and Place* (2004), Sheila Whiteley states,

Music [...] plays a significant part in the way that individuals author space, musical texts being creatively combined with local knowledges and sensibilities in ways that tell particular stories about the local, and impose collectively defined meanings and significance on space. At the same time, however, it is important to note that such authorings of space produce not one, but a series of competing local narratives. (3)

By exploring the ways that these texts “impose collectively defined meanings” on the Southern Italian space, as well as by analyzing the “competing local narratives” at stake
within the revival, I hope to get a better understanding of the ways that this revival is reflecting and helping redefine the ideas of South and of Mediterranean.

In the first part of this chapter, I will look at the 1970s folk music revival, in an attempt to trace a genealogy of the current revival, whose protagonists’ experiences would not have been what they are today without the extensive work done by their forerunners in the 1970s. Methodologically, while in the second chapter the focus of my ethnographic observation was the tammurriata from the Campania region, here I will have to enlarge the scope to the music revival as a whole, especially when discussing the current revival, since several Campania artists are now navigating several music spheres, including the Apulian pizzica.

First, however, I would like to provide a few examples that show how varied and politicised this revival has become in the last few years. The popularity of Southern Italian folk music within the larger Italian music scene is confirmed primarily by the astounding proliferation of folk music groups and of album production, ranging from self-production and distribution at the local level to national and international distribution via the world music label. This atmosphere of revitalization has allowed not only for the recording and transcription of the songs of the old timers, following the example of folklorist Roberto De Simone and his 1979 collection of Campania’s folk songs, but also for the formation of new folk groups, whose members belong to the current generation and are committed to reinterpreting this “sound of the tradition” for a contemporary, urban audience. In addition, the reworking of Southern Italian folk sounds into contemporary Italian music is becoming increasingly common, as the revival

12 Recent examples related in particular to the tammurriata are the publication of Feste e tamburi in Campania (1991) by Giuseppe Michele Gala, Carlo Faiello’s Il Suono della tradizione (2005), and Gabriele Caracciolo’s “E bì e bà” Canto e Ballo sul tamburo nell’area napoletana (2005).
movement stimulates the creativity of many young musicians. An interesting example of this type of music mélange is the album *Rockammorra* (2009) by Neapolitan musician Joe Petrosino. In the album, Petrosino juxtaposes rock sounds and instruments with the *tammurriata* rhythm, as well as with Neapolitan folklore. The result is a unique combination of traditional and modern sounds confirming the many possibilities of redefining the *tammurriata* today beyond the mere revitalization of traditional melodies and sounds.

A particularly interesting piece is represented by the song “Vesuvius” (2009), whose title recalls the well-known E Zezi’s song, “Vesuvio” (1996)—which I will also discuss later in the chapter. The video of the “Vesuvius” song opens up with a black-and-white view of a mountain scene, from which it is possible to view the city of Naples and Mount Vesuvius, the dormant volcano famous for having caused the destruction of Pompeii in 79 AD. The camera then moves to a close-up shot of Nando Citarella—a Southern drummer who is known throughout Italy, and through artist Alessandra Belloni, even in the U.S.—showing him in the act of playing the *tammorra* drum and singing a *tammurriata* style narrative about the volcano. Two women dancers follow a typical *tammurriata* choreography, while Petrosino adds the rock sound of his bass to this bucolic scene.13 Although still known mostly in the region, this unique piece, developed thanks to the collaboration of well-known local drummers Nando Citarella and ‘O Lione, presents a combination of old and new, older and younger generations of local musicians with a common love for the *tammurriata* rhythm. One can only hope to see more of this type of project in the future.

Furthermore, the revival is also leading to various types of transregional music collaborations and activities, the two main examples of which are Eugenio Bennato and Daniele Sepe, two Neapolitan folk musicians who have become particularly famous throughout the Italian peninsula on account of their interpretations of tarantella from several regions. Their need to move beyond the geographical boundaries of the tammurriata has also led to an interest in similar folk sounds from other parts of Europe and the Mediterranean, such as Balkan music in Sepe’s case. Another significant example in this context is represented by Neapolitan musician Raiz, the main voice of the Neapolitan hip hop group Almamegretta, who in a recent piece employs the gypsy sounds of the Balkans and remixes them into a tammurriata narrative sung in Neapolitan dialect and titled “Tammurriata dell’Est” (“Eastern Tammurriata”).

The large extent of this revival is further confirmed by the vast and diverse reinterpretations and echoes of both pizzica and tammurriata within other music genres. Several critics have noted the many intersections between this folk music revival and the Italian hip hop and rap music of the 1990s (Plastino, Mappa delle voci). Southern Italian groups such as 99 Posse and Almamegretta from Naples, as well as Sud Sound System from the Apulia region, have often borrowed narrative tropes, sounds, and languages from their folk music heritages. A well-known example of this musical mixage is the song “Sanacore,” released by Almamegretta in 1995. For these groups, borrowing from their rich folklore heritage is part of a larger project that has to do with the counter-hegemonic No-Global discourse (Plastino, Mappa delle voci).

As the revival increasingly transforms into a nation-wide touristic and commercial phenomenon, several well-known artists, both from the South and from other Italian
regions, have been paying homage to the *tarantella* revival, while also reflecting on the cultural and social complexity, and ambiguities, of this phenomenon. Singer-songwriter and musician Vinicio Capossela, originally from a small mountain village near Avellino (one of Campania’s provincial cities), often brings the strong folklore heritage of his place into his diverse music style, ranging from Italian pop to jazz. In his 1996 song, “Il ballo di San Vito” (“Saint Vito’s Dance”), Capossela brilliantly represented the current craze for Southern Italian folk music, and especially for the *tarantism* myth; San Vito Dei Normanni is a small town in the Apulia region that is famous for a particular type of *pizzica*, usually called the “pizzica di San Vito” (San Vito’s *pizzica*). The song, tuned to the *pizzica* rhythm, opens with a typical festival scene that well illustrates the close relation between the sacred, the secular, and the touristic at stake within the current festival scene:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salsicce fegatini</th>
<th>Sausages chicken liver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>viscerè alla brace</td>
<td>grilled intestines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e fiaccole <em>danzanti</em></td>
<td>and dancing lanterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lamelle <em>dondolanti</em></td>
<td>swinging lamellas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sul dorso della chiesa <em>fiammeggiante</em></td>
<td>on the back of a blazing church</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second stanza, instead, Capossela introduces the theme of the land, central to Southern Italian folk music, as well as the role of the South in relation to the Italian nationalist project and to the “Mediterranean imagination”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vino, bancarelle</th>
<th>wine, vendors’ booths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>terra arsa e rossa</td>
<td>scorched, red land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terra di sud, terra di sud</td>
<td>Southern land, Southern land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The singer’s voice then moves to what is at stake today in the reinvention of tarantism and its music rituals:

Vecchi e giovani pizzicati
vecchie e giovani pizzicati
dalla taranta, dalla taranta
dalla tarantolata
cerchio che chiude, cerchio che apre

cerchio che stringe, cerchio che spinge
cerchio che abbraccia e poi ti scaccia.

This song carries powerful lyrics: note in particular the musical effect of the rhyme (in bold in the text), and the repetition of certain words and phrases that recreates the obsessive quality of the spider dance rhythm. Both the lyrics and the captivating pizzica rhythm have made this song into a big hit among the younger generations; its success, especially among left-wing intellectuals, ultimately shows the immense rhetorical power displayed today both by the taranta myth and by the Southern Question: they both function as important local narratives that counter the Think-Global discourse, the racist narrative of the Northern League, and the still profoundly colonial narrative of Italy’s

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15 Both terms “pizzicato” and “tarantolato” refer to the person bitten by the spider syndrome.
national government. If the “historical quality of a popular song” lies “not so much in the information it contains as in the changes that take place in its form, in its words and music” (Filippa), then Capossela’s text works as a powerful historical document of the current revival.

The 1970s Revival: a Politically Engaged Folk Music of the South

Because the first wave of revival represented the Southern Italian response to the larger folk-reclamation movement happening throughout Italy in the 1970s, the main element characterizing this first phase of revival is its political involvement. The political nature of this folklore project is evident not only in the song lyrics that will be discussed in the following pages, but also in the dynamics of music production and distribution: all the groups performing during this period were largely appealing to a liberal, urban intellectual audience. A closely related aspect to consider in the analysis of these texts is thus the role of the left-wing intellectual in studying and rearranging them. Roberto De Simone’s work of transcription and rearrangement of local folk songs clearly confirms that his project is one done from above, one that tried to recuperate folk culture and make it more accessible to both national and middle-class audience. Unlike De Simone, the folk music project of E Zezi, the other main voice of the revival in the Campania region, has developed from a group of workers and has constantly strived to remain lowbrow, thus creating the basis for a counter-intellectual current within the folk music revival. Furthermore, as Eugenio Bennato’s Musicanova project illustrates, the political commitment of these years also consisted of celebrating Southern Italian languages and cultures, while also challenging the stereotypes associated with the South by Italian
national discourse. Even as these artists’ goals were similar, however, their ideas of folk music and their composing and performing methods were quite different. Still today, this difference remains a central element to the debate over the revitalization of Southern Italian folk music, although the terms of the debate have now become local vs. global and also local/folk music vs. world/ethnic music.

As shown in the Table below, most artists and groups contributing to the 1970s revitalization of Southern Italian folk music were in fact from the Campania region, and in particular the Naples area, while the revitalization of the Apulian *pizzica* was just starting to develop thanks to Nuovo Canzoniere del Salento and Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino.

**Table 1: Major Voices of the 1970s Revival**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist/Group</th>
<th>Album Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place of Release</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>De Simone/NCCP</td>
<td><em>Cicerenella</em></td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Campania</td>
<td>Ricordi (Milan)(^{16})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Simone/NCCP</td>
<td><em>Li Sarracini Adorano lu Sole</em></td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Campania</td>
<td>EMI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Zezi</td>
<td><em>Tammurriata dell’Alfasud</em></td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Campania</td>
<td>I Dischi del Sole (Milan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennato/Musicanova</td>
<td><em>Musicanova</em></td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Campania</td>
<td>Lucky Planets (Milan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino Salentino</td>
<td><em>Canti di Terra d’Otranto e della Grecia Salentina</em></td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Apulia</td>
<td>Fonit Cetra (Italian RAI)(^{17})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennato/Musicanova</td>
<td><em>Brigante Se More</em></td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Campania</td>
<td>Lucky Planets (Milan)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{16}\) It was bought by the BMG Corporation in 1994.

\(^{17}\) RAI is Italy’s national radio and television broadcast, which until very recently was sponsored mostly by the Italian government.
Spurred by Ernesto De Martino’s 1961 study of tarantism, and by the increasing attention toward folk culture on the part of both U.S. and international intellectuals, such as Alan Lomax, the 1970s revival of Southern Italian folk songs developed largely thanks to the work of Neapolitan musicologist Roberto De Simone, and in particular to his study of Canti e tradizioni in Campania (Songs and Folk Traditions in Campania, 1979).

De Simone’s scholarly volume is clearly inspired by De Martino’s analysis of the Apulian spider dance ritual, both in its attempt to recover a rural tradition about to vanish and in its use of a scientific methodology, including on-site fieldwork and the use of informants for recording the songs. Following De Martino’s example, De Simone’s study breaks away from the systematic approach to folklore that had characterized most folklore scholarship in the nineteenth and early twentieth century—its emphasis on genres and geographical variants. De Simone’s study focuses instead on the “linguaggi” (languages) of this music, “a language,” De Simone states, “that is based on a myth” (Canti e tradizioni 8, my translation). The myth invoked in both songs and melodies refers to the popular cult of the seven Madonnas, and it is used to “exorcize sexual frustration, fear of death and existential crises derived by everyday, social, and historical conditions” (8). By applying De Martino’s model of analysis to the folk songs of the Campania region, De Simone’s study is ultimately able to create a genealogy of the tammurriata song tradition which parallels that of the spider dance. As a result, De Simone’s study represents the first authoritative account of the rural folk culture around the city of Naples and in the Campania region as a whole; it is a key text to understand the tammurriata music tradition, its religious and mythical dimensions; and it offers a model for analysing both musical and textual elements of the tammurriata. Contemporary
Italian scholars of the *tarantella* revival (Giuseppe Gala, for example) have followed De Simone’s text in recording and transcribing local folk songs. Furthermore, the book represents an important work of translation on several levels: De Simone is the first to translate the *tammurriata* song lyrics from Neapolitan dialect into standard Italian, and the first to interpret the peasant world of the *tammurriata* for the Italian urban middle-class. Considering the important work of recording conducted in the same areas by American folklorist Alan Lomax only twenty years earlier, De Simone’s transcription and comment on the folk music of the Campania region stands in a direct line of continuity with Lomax’s international perspective, while also adding to it a much more local, and regional, interpretation of this musical heritage.

Besides his own work of recording and transcribing this folk material, De Simone also encouraged the development of, and worked with the folk music group called Nuova Compagnia di Canto Popolare or NCCP (New Folk-Song Group). Debuting in 1970, NCCP’s talent was soon recognized at the internationally renowned Spoleto Festival both in 1972 and 1974, followed by participation at several festivals both in Italy and abroad; soon, the group became the most representative voice of the 1970s folk music revival in Italy. Indeed, NCCP has served not only as a model for playing folk music in the South, but also as a debut platform for many Southern musicians engaged with the revival of this music. Neapolitan singer Beppe Barra started his career as a vocalist for NCCP, but soon began to make a space for himself in the local music and theatre scenes, and is now acclaimed as one of the best voices of Neapolitan music. After debuting as a musician with NCCP at a very young age, Neapolitan Eugenio Bennato has developed a successful artistic career on his own. Moreover, NCCP deeply impacted the work of several artists
belonging to the so-called Neapolitan School, such as well-known singer-songwriters Pino Daniele and Edoardo Bennato, Eugenio’s brother. NCCP’s masterpieces include both music projects and theatre pieces, such as La Gatta Cenerentola (Cinderella Cat), first performed in Spoleto in 1976 (Manzotti). Well-known among both older and younger generations of Southern intellectuals and folk music amateurs, La Gatta Cenerentola is based on a literary tale by seventeenth-century Neapolitan writer Gianbattista Basile, which recounts, in Neapolitan dialect, the story of Cinderella from the perspective of a Southern girl in seventeenth-century Naples. NCCP’s version of the story adopts Basile’s plot, as well as its many references to the local folk culture, but reframes it within the Southern folk music tradition; in doing so, NCCP is able to recuperate folk melodies, texts, and rhythms overlooked by both the mainstream “canzone d’autore” (art song) and the more recent and foreign-inspired pop music production.

It is thanks to NCCP, and through their performance of La Gatta Cenerentola, that such older music genres as the seventeenth-century tarantella napoletana and especially the “villanella” form first came to the attention of modern audiences. The villanella, in particular, is a rural type of song originating in Naples that became very popular by the 16th century. The villanella was a parodic reaction against the more refined madrigal; however, some of the most famous villanelles were composed by madrigal poets. The villanella represented, therefore, a sort of conversation between the music culture of the Spanish court and the folk culture of the lower classes (Gala 1992). For this reason the villanella, as a genre, well suited NCCP’s overall music project. As a result of NCCP’s careful work of research and music arrangement, several villanelles are
now well known among older and younger generations of Neapolitans. At the same time, NCCP also composed several new songs in the villanella and tarantella fashion. A thorough study of NCCP’s extensive repertoire from the 1970s until today goes however beyond the scope of this chapter. Here I will offer just a few examples among their most popular songs that show NCCP’s view of Southern Italian folk music and its methodology in rearranging this music for a contemporary audience.

From its start, NCCP was committed to educating its audience in the folk music tradition of Naples and of the Campania region. As the NCCP’s website points out, “Nuova Compagnia di Canto Popolare was founded in 1970 to spread the authentic values of the folk traditions of the Campania people” (my translation). While clearly responding to the marketing needs of any folk music project, the appeal to authenticity contained in this definition also sets the basis for a longstanding debate over what is “authentic” Southern Italian folk music. In addition, NCCP’s experiments with the local folk music material in the 1970s provided an important step toward making contemporary Southern Italian folk music, and their rearrangements of well-known folk songs still represent today an important model for any folk-inspired music project in the South. The main strategy employed by NCCP in revitalizing the local folk music culture (largely recovered through De Simone’s fieldwork) consisted in recuperating older or less known songs or versions of songs, and doing so to historicize different versions of the same musical form. An example of this is their “Tarantella del ‘600” (“Seventeenth-Century Tarantella”), which frames the mainstream and stereotypical version of tarantella napoletana within a specific label and historical period, thus implicitly differentiating it
from other, less-known, variants of tarantella. Another famous example is represented by their interpretation of the well-known Neapolitan song “Tammurriata Nera,” (“Black Tammurriata”), written by Edoardo Nicolardi and arranged by E.A. Mario in 1945. As the U.S. army occupied the streets of Naples following Italy’s liberation from fascism, the song described an unusual event: the birth of a dark-skinned child from a local woman. An overtly satirical comment on war times and their effects on the moral customs of Naples’ citizens, the song makes use of the tammurriata rhythm as a way to express the voice of the people: “I don’t understand the things that happen sometimes / and you can’t believe what you see. / A baby is born, he is born black, / but his mother calls him Giro / yes, sir, she calls him Giro.” Popularized in the 1950s by Neapolitan singer and musician Renato Carosone, the song was then rearranged by NCCP in 1973; NCCP’s version was so popular as to remain in the hit parade for weeks and, soon enough, it became the most quoted version of the “Tammurriata Nera” (Mauro 212).

NCCP’s version makes wide use of both folk instruments, such as the tammorra drum, and more classical instruments, mainly guitar, mandolin (widely employed in the canzone napoletana), and violin; in addition, it employs both music and theatre elements—the lyrics are dramatized rather than sung—to create a performance effect. By approaching this song through drama, NCCP is able to make the audience feel the song simultaneously closer to the “voice of the people,” expressed here in vivid tones, and farther from it—the use of dramatic devices derives from De Simone’s education and career in theatre, and is far from the culture of the tammurriata. As is the case with other

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19 “Giro” or “Ciro” is a typical Neapolitan name.
folk music projects of the 1970s, such as Roberto Leydi’s Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano, 
NCCP’s project therefore brought lowbrow and highbrow cultures together. This goal 
was reached in two related ways: by incorporating folk material into the larger repertoire 
of Italian art song or *canzone d’autore* and theatre (Bermani), and by “contaminating” the 
highbrow culture of the *canzone d’autore* with elements from the uneducated, rural 
culture of the South. This point is crucial for an understanding of the role of folklorists 
and intellectuals during the first music revival, since, as Laura Biagi also discusses in a 
recent publication, these intellectuals were looking at the folk culture of the peasants 
through their urban middle-class lens and education.

When NCCP was making its way into the national musical scene in the 1970s, 
another group from Naples brought to the folk-music revival a unique musical project 
and a politically engaged agenda. The Gruppo Operaio di Pomigliano D’Arco E Zezi 
(The Workers’ Group from Pomigliano D’Arco, E Zezi) takes its name from the “Zeza,” 
a carnivalesque play very common within the traditional rural culture of the Campania 
region. The group emerged in 1974, during one of the hottest moments for the workers’ 
movement in the Campania region: harsh working conditions, and a series of lay-offs 
inaugurated by the Italian colossus Fiat in the Pomigliano D’Arco’s factory. Bringing 
together workers, unemployed, and left wing militants to respond to local and national 
social politics, the group took their political-artistic program out on the streets and on the 
stage. A detailed and careful study of their music, as well as a historical overview of the 
group’s development in the previous twenty-five years, was conducted in 1999 by 
Neapolitan scholar Giovanna Vacca, to whom I’m largely indebted for the textual

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21 In the Neapolitan dialect, “E Zezi” is the masculine plural equivalent of “Zeza,” and thus refers to the 
group members, mostly males.
analysis of the songs reported here. According to Vacca, E Zezi’s overall project consists of drawing “the folk culture of the area away from the urban middle-class model, as well as using these folk elements as a political instrument in line with the Italian folk music revival” (45). The genesis and development of the group since the 1970s shares many similarities with other contemporary revival groups, and especially with NCCP, who represented the main model for the development of E Zezi’s project. But its politically engaged music holds them in a special position within the scenario of the Southern Italian folk music revival.

Since its inception, the group has not only privileged forms of expression that were closer to the “people,” such as the tammurriata rhythm and narratives, but has also made the streets and the post-industrial architecture of Naples and elsewhere its main performing sites. In addition, E Zezi has polemically dissociated itself from NCCP. According to Vacca, by developing as a workers’ group, E Zezi managed to develop a grassroots folk voice in direct contrast with De Simone’s urban middle-class look at the rural folk tradition. “E Zezi wanted to incorporate everyday happenings, ‘history,’ into their peasant songs,” Vacca explains, “while De Simone had looked for those moments of symbolic escape from everyday life emerging from the ritual elements of the rural folk songs of the Campania region” (46). For their use of folk culture, Vacca points out how E Zezi have been able to “reconnect to modernity, ingeniously and attentively, the threads of traditional culture in its most lively and liberatory aspects: a tradition to live not in mournful nostalgia, but as an opportunity to produce meaning and a common identity, to reflect on one’s own values and to relate to others” (39). In other words, since E Zezi emerged from a political struggle, their political messages intervene in specific
struggles—a different politicization of folk music from NCCP, a counter-cultural force rather than a liberal one. Another element confirming their countercultural position is their consistent use of the Neapolitan dialect: their Neapolitan-only website is a brilliant example of a counter-hegemonic use of one of the subaltern languages of the South (E Zezi).

On a strictly musical level, doing politically-engaged music geared mainly to the working class and to the “common people” like them also means finding the right melodic and musical media. E Zezi’s use of the tammurriata rhythms, melodies, and narrative devices was meant to bring the workers back to the pre-industrial world that had characterized the South until very recently, and that is still very much alive in the most rural areas of the Campania region. According to Vacca, bringing the values of the tammurriata on the stage ultimately meant bringing back the cultural values of a world that was not affected by the fordist structure of Pomigliano’s industry, and by its tight and overbearing work schedule. In other words, E Zezi were able to counter the rigid and “unnatural” division of labour typical of modern capitalism by drawing on the less rigidly regulated rhythms of rural life, where workers are able to communicate (often through music) while working. In an interview, the singer Marcello Colasurdo, for many years a leading figure in the group, comments on this aspect:

Alfasud has been a mess…[Alfasud] has changed the life of the country, but it has also brought cultural backwardness…Some workers used to say: “It’s true that in the fields I had to work more hours, [but] I worked when I wanted, and I could breathe fresh air, and if I wanted to lie down I could do it. Even working for
fourteen or fifteen hours a day, the rhythms were not the same as here [in Alfasud].” (Vacca 109, my translation)

The world of the factory is given direct representation in the songs “‘A Flobert,” also known as “Sant’Anastasia” from the name of the town where the story is set, and “‘A ferriera” (“The Iron Mill”). Released on their first album, “‘A Flobert,” one of the group’s most famous songs, recounts the story of a toy factory that exploded in the industrial area of Naples on April 11, 1975, killing twelve workers. The disaster was found to be due to the total lack of safety measures on the part of the managers.

According to Vacca, here E Zezi move from the traditional structure of the tammurriata texts to that of the narrative song; indeed, the song’s incipit, with its explicit reference to the date of the explosion (“Friday, April 11th, in Sant’Anastasia / All of a sudden a noise / I heard and I was so scared”) resembles the 1970s political ballads employed by folk music revivalists both in England and in the U.S. (Vacca). This structure is supported by the use of a very slow rhythm and melody evocative of the ballads and by the extensive use of the flute.22 As the story develops, however, “‘A Flobert” becomes a more generalized denunciation of the workers’ condition: “And those who go to work have to face even death / we die one by one / because of these bosses. / What are we waiting for / to condemn these bosses / who make us work / with the danger of kicking the bucket.”

The repeated use of “we” in these verses implies not only a group identity and a common destiny as workers, but also the collective identity of the people. Both songs, in fact, present a strong choral quality that helps represent the voice to the community in a way that echoes the “Tammurriata Nera” discussed above. See, for example, this passage from “‘A Ferriera” where the neighbors are inviting the entire community to find out what

happened in the *ferriera*: “People hurry up / down the ferriera / hurry up...it’s ‘Ntunino’s turn /...a father...poor man.” Released in 1994, “A ferriera” recounts the story of a worker who died after falling into a container with boiling iron, and employs a narrative style that is very similar to the one employed in “A Flobert.”

But in order to employ the *tammurriata* as a form of political intervention, E Zezi also had to challenge and modify the whole *tammurriata* tradition from a ritualistic and thus a-historical musical form to one that would express contingent historical facts. The Italian South, Vacca explains, lacks the tradition of social or workers’ songs that can be found in the North as well as in other countries. Therefore, to create a politically-engaged *tammurriata*, E Zezi had to transform a strongly religious tradition into a secular one, unlike NCCP, whose musical production intended to preserve the musical and cultural values embedded in the rural world of the *tammurriata*. So, in the first phase of their musical production, E Zezi would often borrow from traditional *tammurriata* chants and re-purpose them according to their own needs; over time, however, they have come to create an entirely new repertoire. This repertoire is rather varied, ranging from the song-slogan, as in the song “Pose e sord” (“Leave the Money”), to the social ballad and several examples of classical *tammurriata*. More often than not, however, these elements are brought into a mix of cabaret, stand-up comedy, and social protest moments that in many ways anticipates the post-modern cut-and-mix of the folk-inspired Italian rap from the 1990s.23

Finally, a look at Eugenio Bennato’s forty-year involvement with Southern Italian folk music is essential to understand fully the genealogy and current development of the

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revival. Co-founder of NCCP together with Carlo D’Angiò, Bennato worked with NCCP on several albums and travelled with them to musical festivals in Italy and Europe. Later in 1976, he founded the group Musicanova, which ensured him success in both local and national scenes. This group featured Bennato and Carlo D’angiò as musicians and composers, singer and guitarist Teresa De Sio, and percussionist Toni Esposito. First appearing with the Musicanova project, the last two members have become well-known in Naples’ musical scene. From 1977 through 1980, the group released five albums; the most well-known is *Brigante se more*, released in 1980. The Musicanova project consisted of a conscious and well-informed reinterpretation of Southern Italian folk music in a modern key. The result was a type of music that especially pleased the young audience represented by the 1970s student movement and left-wing intellectuals, but it often encountered the criticism of folklore scholars, including De Simone. Defending himself from such criticism, Bennato declares that the explicit intention at the time was “to explore a new and autonomous activity of musical composition, although it would still be linked to the style and aesthetics that the tradition masters had illustrated and taught us” (Bennato, *Brigante se more* 16). He further explains that from his perspective, “musica popolare [folk music] is very much alive, and to stay alive it needs to carry meaning, and to carry meaning it needs to represent contemporary reality, and in order to do this, it needs to constantly renovate itself” (105).

This vision was announced in the album *Musicanova* (1978), whose title literally means “new music.” The song “Pizzica Minore” from this album borrows the captivating, frenetic rhythm of Apulian *pizzica* and combines it with the Neapolitan dialect: a first in the history of the Southern Italian folk music revival. It also employs both traditional
instruments, such as the *tamburello* (a small drum used in the *pizzica*) and more high-brow sounds, such as the violin, in a manner that is similar to NCCP’s style. But what especially makes the song, and the album as a whole, an important contribution to the folk music revival is its explicit reference to current events and in particular to the contemporary music revival. The song’s opening underlines this interest quite explicitly through its direct reference to a “new music,” which also makes the song a sort of manifesto of Bennato’s group:

Io l’aggio sentuta e’ na musica nova,  
e io l’aggio sentuta e’ na musica nova,  
a la festa de nisciuno,  
senza sotto nè padrune,  
a la festa ’e tutte quante,  
senza diavule senza sante.

I have heard it, it’s a new music  
and I have heard it, it’s a new music  
at the party of nobodies’  
without subordinates or bosses,  
at the party thrown for everybody  
Without devils or saints.24

This musical project seeks to appeal to “everybody,” as a way to move not only beyond class hegemony but also beyond the religious aspects of the Southern Italian folk tradition. I believe that this element can be read as part of the 1970s larger cultural movement that rejected old class and social boundaries, as well as the claustrophobic rules of the Catholic religion.

As the work of NCCP, E Zezi, and Bennato in the 1970s illustrates, tensions between different understandings of what is the “authentic” folk music of the South, as well as of what is the “Southern folk,” were already at stake within the 1970s revival. As I will show in the second half of this chapter, these questions have come to the forefront

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of the scholarly debate over the current revival of Southern Italian folk music as it moves from folk to world music.

Song Spotlight: Redefining the *Tammurriata*

De Simone’s extensive work of transcription and analysis of Campania folk songs, as well as his and E Zezi’s composition of new folk songs based on traditional material, can be understood by looking at a few textual examples. When describing the Campania folk song tradition, De Simone focuses his attention mostly on those songs that accompany the rhythm of the *tammorra/tamburo* or drum, the main element in the *tammurriata* musical tradition. A common song template still performed today at the local festivals begins with the refrain “Bella figliola ca te chiamme Rosa” (“You pretty girl called Rosa”); here’s the incipit of the song as transcribed by De Simone:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Bella figliola ca te chiamme} & \quad \text{Rosa} \\
\text{che bellu nomme mammeta t'ha} & \quad \text{miso,} \\
\text{t'ha miso lu nomme de li} & \quad \text{rose,} \\
\text{lu meglio sciore ca sta 'mparaviso} & \quad \text{....}^{25} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Pretty girl called Rosa

What a pretty name your mother gave you

She gave you the name of the roses

The best flower in paradise

These two distiches introduce the audience to the love theme of the song, a courtship song often performed by peasants while they worked in the fields. Like all *tammurriata* songs, De Simone notes, this song presents a syllabic structure and a series of hendecasyllabic verses presented in rhyming couples or distiches; therefore, the basic structure of every song ends at the end of every distich, even though there are, of course, many geographical and personal variants. The binary rhythm of the songs derives from the fact that the number of syllables in every verse, eleven in theory, tends to be modified

\footnote{25 The rhyme is represented by the bold characters in the text.}
for several reasons. For example, since the vocal range of the singers, including the male ones, tend to be very high, each bar needs to start with a thetic (or strong) accent; as a result, when the first syllable of a verse anticipates the accented syllable (an example of anacrusis), the beginning of the verse goes through a series of variations (De Simone, *Canti e tradizioni* 23).

De Simone offers as an example the first verse, “Bellà figliòla cà tè chiàmme Ròsà”: as shown by the use of accents in this verse, the first syllable is not accented, which allows for more freedom on the part of the performers. In fact, this verse can be modified in several ways, such as, “ùh bellà figliòla cà tè chiàmme Ròsà” (“Uh” indicates an exclamation), or “Bèllà figliòla cà tè chiàmme Ròsà” (with the accent on the first syllable, which determines a slower tempo). Such variations ultimately allow for a great deal of improvisation on the part of the musicians, which involves both the rhythm and the singing style, while also allowing for greater freedom on the part of the singers/composers—a characteristic that, as will become clear throughout this study, makes the *tammurriata* available for various types of rearrangements. A first example of such rearrangement technique is the first distich discussed above, which is often sung as “Uh bella figliola ca te chiamme Rosa/ E che bellu nomme mamma toia t’ha miso (Oh you pretty girl called Rosa/ And what a pretty name your mum gave you); however, depending on the performer’s taste, singing style, and ability, this distich can be sung in several different ways, mainly by repeating one or both verses two or three times and with different vocal tones. In addition, the singer can decide to break the distich at any
moment with some words or phrases—commonly called barzellette—\(^{26}\) that add an ironic
tone to the scene or emphasize the singers’ main idea.

For example, the same distich can be also sung as:

`Uh bella figliola ca te chiamme Rosa`

`bella figliola ca te chiamme Rosa`

`e che bellu nomm’ e ccòre`

`fa nu càvero ca se more`  

`rint’ ‘a linea ‘e pummarole`  

`Ilà facimmo chi mòre amore`  

What a pretty name and heart  

It’s terribly hot\(^{27}\)  

in the furrow of tomatoes  

where we play at dying from love (26)

Verses three through six depart from the main theme of the song and provide an insight
into the everyday peasants’ life of both singers and audience. By including these verses,
the singer is also adding an ironic tone to the love theme in the song. As De Simone
notes, the quality of these variants on the main theme depends on the ability of the singer.

A good singer would be able to add impromptu comments like the ones above without
disrupting the general structure of the song or the melody of the verses. This technique
represents an important rhetorical device within the tammurriata tradition, one that such
contemporary folk groups as E Zezi have extensively drawn on. In addition, this sample
confirms the importance of the land theme in the tammurriata tradition, as illustrated in
the previous chapter. De Simone notes how the description of a sexual act in the fields of
tomatoes, olives, eggplants, etc. is a recurring theme in the tammurriata. Since the middle

\(^{26}\) Here the term “barzelletta” does not refer to the common Italian meaning of “joke,” but to the
Renaissance tradition of satiric poems in Italian; this type of poetry often presents puns and jokes (De
Simone 1979).

\(^{27}\) Literally, “It’s so hot I’m gonna die;” Neapolitan is a rather visual language, even more so than standard
Italian.
Ages peasants in Europe and elsewhere believed that the ritual making of love during a holiday would help them get a fuller harvest (De Simone 1979, 50).

Now, let’s compare this template with the song “Tammurriata,” performed by NCCP and first released on the album *Li Sarracini Adorano lu Sole* (1974). As the title suggests, this song bears a direct relation to the *tammurriata* song tradition studied by De Simone. As a matter of fact, the song makes use of the *tammurriata* rhythm and main instruments, while its lyrics employ phrases or whole verses from the traditional *tammurriata* songs analyzed by De Simone. Here’s the incipit:

Bella figliola ca te chiamme Rosa
che bellu nomine mammeta t'ha miso
t'ha miso lu nomine de li rose,
lu meglio sciore ca sta 'mparaviso....
Uh aiuto, aiuto lu munno sè perduto
li monache se vonno maritare.....
Ncopp"o pont'e Matalune
Ilà nce stanno 'e 'lampiune,
'e lampiune 'e lampetelle
'o tricchitracco int' 'a vunnella,
'o piglio mmano 'o poso 'nterra
'o faccio fà Pullecenella …

She gave you the name of the roses
The best flower in paradise
Help, help! The world is damned
the nuns want to get married....
Over the bridge of Maddaloni
There are the street lamps
Big lamps and small lamps
The tricchitracco inside the skirt
I pick it up and put in on the ground
I make it do “Pulcinella.”

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28 Maddaloni is a town near Caserta, one of the five provincial cities in Campania situated North of Naples.
29 The *tricchitracco* is a type of firework that makes a lot of noise but no visuals; the loud noise made by the *tricchitracco* is evoked by the onomatopoeic sounds of the name.
30 Pulcinella is a puppet character in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Italian Commedia dell’Arte, a form of popular theatre; funny, ridiculous, but also cunning and mischievous; Pulcinella is also a symbol of the city of Naples, where he is from.
The song reflects the tammurriata tradition through its use of the refrain as well as of the love theme. Beyond its first lines, “Over the bridge in Maddaloni” is an example of filastrocca or rhyme, another narrative device typical of the tammurriata (De Simone, Canti e tradizioni). At the same time, the title “Tammurriata,” which lacks any reference to a specific location or Madonna, reflects an attempt to introduce a “universal” template of the tammurriata, one that would probably be more easily “translated” for a national audience unfamiliar with the geography of Southern Italy and its place-specific religious customs. This strategy ultimately anticipates such examples of international translation of the tammurriata as Alessandra Belloni’s one for the U.S. audience, as illustrated in the following chapter. This “classical” effect is confirmed both by NCCP’s use of in-studio recording—which, of course, sounds very different from the tammurriata performances at the local festivals—and by the extremely polished sound, which reflects the group’s extensive musical education and technique.

E Zezi’s song “Tammurriata,” from their 1976 album, Tammurriata dell’Alfasud (“Alfasud’s Tammurriata”), equally invokes the tammurriata tradition through the use of the well-known distich “Bella figliola ca te chiamme rosa” in the incipit. But soon enough, this template vanishes into another well-known tammurriata narrative, that of Sanacore, a beautiful girl whose love is able to heal (“Sanacore” literally means “heart-healer”). Thus, the traditional “Bella figliola” trope described by De Simone is here remade by E Zezi:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bella figliola comme ve chiammate</th>
<th>Pretty girl what is your name?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bella figliola comme ve chiammate</td>
<td>Pretty girl what is your name?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ue mi chiamme Sanacore</td>
<td>Hey my name is Sanacore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The image of Sanacore and her ability to heal love pain recalls the mix of magical ritualism and popular religion indentified by De Simone in the folk song tradition of the Campania region; however, the impromptu quality of the narrative, typical of tammurriata, is here increased by E Zezi, who add a rather informal tone to the dialogue between the lover and the girl. More importantly, the theme of the song gradually moves from the rural culture of the tammurriata to the contemporary city culture with all its social problems: “Another tax we have to pay / the government wants to ruin us,” and also “We have to revolt and this government we have to change.” In this case, the barzelletta-filler linking these two parts of the song consists of the verse, “What a rustic tarantella / come here before tomorrow,” which does not have any specific meaning per se but introduces a self-referential quality to the song through its explicit reference to the tarantella. This type of device, which is often used by E Zezi, not only follows the tammurriata tradition, where the singers often mention their own role in the songs and acknowledge the presence of the audience within the text, but also indicates the group’s awareness of its own social role as a link between the world of the tarantella and tammurriata and that of the post-industrial South. So, the following verses, “And let’s talk about us compagni / That here the cholera is abundant / While we spend millions / for one shitty goal a year,” contain an explicit reference to the cholera disaster that devastated Naples’s population in 1973, highlighting the contrast between this image and that of Naples’ soccer club and its multi-million business (Vacca). The composite of these lyrics echoes the equally complex musical structure of the song: a very fast
tammurriata rhythm, mixed with tarantella napoletana melodies and references to well-known mainstream songs. The instruments employed here are those of the tradition—tammorra, triccheballacche, and the schiacciapensieri—but also the guitar and the mandolin. In addition, a series of phrases yelled as slogans by the chorus are reminiscent of both street protests and cabaret performances. Finally, the siscariello (whistle), an element that is very common not only in the tammurriata tradition from the Giugliano area but also in the street protests, confirms the influence of this specific geographical variant on the group’s stylistic choices. As a result, even as it bears the same title as NCCP’s song, E Zezi’s “Tammurriata” reflects a rather different musical project.

E Zezi’s commitment to make counter-hegemonic music has ultimately turned them into an important model for other countercultural musical projects coming from the South (Valentino). The song “Sanacore” by the 1990s Neapolitan hip hop group Almamegretta testifies to the profound impact of E Zezi on more recent music from the South, both folk and folk-inspired. Almamegretta’s “Sanacore” extends the remixing work of E Zezi in the song “Tammuriata” discussed above by cutting elements of E Zezi’s song and pasting them in a different order and in-between new narratives. Here’s an eloquent example:

Bella figliola comme ve chiammate ... Pretty girl what is your name …
nè me chiammo sanacore e che vulite I’m Sanacore and what do you want?
saname stu core oi nè stanotte voglio a te Heal this heart hey tonight it’s you I want
songo ‘nnammurato ‘e te I’m in love with you
saname stu core ca mo sta malato ‘e te heal this heart sick because of you
stanotte voglio a te ... tonight it’s you I want …
By capitalizing on the love theme, Almamegretta is able to rework the magical ritualism present within the *tammurriata* into a contemporary love story with highly dramatic tones that reminds the local audience of the “NeoMelodic” style—a genre of Neapolitan pop music in dialect that is becoming very popular not only in Naples but also in the rest of the peninsula. It is worth noting how the reggae sound employed by Almamegretta in this song complements the rhythmic pattern and the melodic structure of the *tammurriata*, and in particular of the *tammurriata giuglianesi*. The sound of the whistle, typical of the *giuglianesi*, for example, is here made to fit with the reggae rhythmic pattern.\(^{31}\)

E Zezi’s piece “Tammuriata dell’Alfasud” (“Alfasud’s Tammurriata”), instead, recuperates the classical *tammurriata* structure to illustrate a typical day in the Alfasud’s factory.\(^{32}\) Alternating between music and theatre scenes, in this song E Zezi condemns the whole system of Pomigliano’s factory, including poor safety measures and sanitary conditions, difficult manager-worker relations, the ineffectiveness of union organizations and meetings, as well as the generalized corruption of the higher managerial spheres. As Vacca justly notes, here the narrative of the Alfasud acquires mythical tones and reconnects the workers’ condition to ancestral fears, thus comparing the world of the factory to the ritual world of the *tammurriata* as described by De Simone:

\begin{align*}
\text{Na lotta aggi’avuta fa} & \quad \text{What a struggle I had to go through} \\
\text{Na lotta aggi’avuta fa} & \quad \text{What a struggle I had to go through} \\
\text{Na lotta aggi’avuta fa pè nce trasì} & \quad \text{What a struggle to get there} \\
\text{Ma quann’aggio trasuto} & \quad \text{But when I got hired}
\end{align*}


Mamm’ ‘e ll’Arco ch’imbressione Mamma dell’Arco\textsuperscript{33} I was afraid
Mamm’ ‘e ll’Arco ch’imbressione ch’aggio avuto Mamma dell’Arco I was afraid
Uè nu mostro je vediette Hey a monster I saw
Che paura ca faciette I was so scared
Uè pa vocca ogni minuto through his mouth every minute he
Cacciava na macchina fernuta. would spit a new car.

As clearly described in these lyrics, the factory becomes a haunted world full of monsters; the most haunting monster is however represented by the assembly line, out of which a newly-born creature comes out, a Fiat car. The song continues by explaining in detail the assembly’s horrifying mechanism, which “drinks human blood.”

This scene is not new, since the horror of the factory has been described in many ways and media since its inception: perhaps the most famous representation is the one offered by Charlie Chaplin in his 1936 film \textit{Modern Times}. Yet, E Zezi adds a very culturally specific quality to this well-known leitmotiv by invoking the protection of the Madonna dell’Arco, in the style typical of the \textit{tammurriata} singers. By doing so, E Zezi also recuperates the religious aspects of the \textit{tammurriata} away from the city culture its members are now part of. In this sense, it is important to note how the structure of the song—with the repetition of each verse several times—imitates the classical “Bella figliola ca te chiamme Rosa” template described by De Simone. Vacca also notes that the mythical aspects associated with the factory in this song are symptomatic of the high importance given to the factory job within the cultural scenario described by E Zezi. At the time, Vacca explains, this kind of job was considered the best way to reach economic

\textsuperscript{33} The Madonna dell’Arco is another famous Madonna in the coastal area between Naples city and Pompeii. Here the narrator replaces \textit{Madonna} with \textit{Mamma} to underlines her protective role.
stability, especially in the poorly educated South, and people would do anything possible to get it, including paying expensive bribes to local politicians: “I had to pay seven hundred thousand lire to get there.” But the most original scene in this song is offered, I believe, by the narrator’s description of a recent dream, where the managers and the workers have exchanged roles in a sort of carnivalesque scene: “…those who were the managers were working with the pistons too.” According to Vacca, this technique is already present in the Neapolitan folk tradition, which offers many examples of an upside-down world. In the songs discussed so far, it is evident that E Zezi is working to reconnect the world of the folk to the world of the factory, in a way that is reminiscent of the Marxist-derived, 1970s Italian folklore scholarship, which looks at folklore as a “culture of contestation” (Lombardi-Satriani).

**Counter-Narratives of the South**

NCCP and E Zezi’s political engagement also translates into a commitment to supply an alternative narrative of the South to the one provided by the national, and international, institutions. The very act of broadcasting the local folk music, written and performed in the Neapolitan dialect, to the entire Italian peninsula, as in NCCP’s case, represents a great achievement towards educating the national audience about the linguistic, musical, and cultural richness of the South. Furthermore, by presenting a product that was not immediately recognizable as pop culture, but employed the folk material and linguistic specificity of Naples, NCCP was trying to push a rather innovative image of Neapolitan music, and of Naples. In commenting on NCCP’s attitude on the stage—a self-presentation closer to that of classical musicians than to popular singers—
Fausta Vetere, one of the group’s veteran voices, explains: “We came from Naples, and about Naples people knew only the classical songs: a stereotypical and holographic image that was being exported abroad as well” (Manzotti); “[w]e wanted to avoid the usual cliché ‘pizza and mandolin,’” she adds. In this sense, NCCP’s project was explicitly challenging the stereotypical image of Naples, and of the South, usually conveyed through its pop music culture. On other hand, E Zezi’s devotion to narrating the poor working conditions in the South has worked as a brilliant example of a counter-history of the South, since it ultimately brought to light the difficult relation between the Turin-based national structure of Fiat and its Southern branches, as well as what the Southern workers felt was lack of interest in their own future on the part of the Fiat headquarters (Vacca).

Particularly relevant to this discussion is Eugenio Bennato’s Musicanova project, since it consciously enters the debate over the Southern Question and seeks to re-narrate the South from a Southern perspective, thus providing the Italian audience with an explicit counter-history of the South and of the Italian nation. De Simone’s historical research on the folk material of the Campania region provided a great starting point for this direction; on their first album, Cicerenella (1972), NCCP had gone as far as narrating the story of the pre-national South through the eyes of the followers of the Bourbon regime. Titled “Canto dei Sanfedisti,” the song is still one of NCCP’s most famous pieces today. Bennato’s 1980 album Brigante se More takes NCCP’s example to a further step by presenting new songs that focus on the history of brigands, groups of Southerners who in the 1860s rebelled against the power of the nationalist Northern troupes and fought for the restoration of the previous political situation in the South. The song “Brigante se
more” (“You Die Brigand”) perhaps remains Bennato’s most famous song. Several other songs are devoted to the brigand theme, from “Vulesse addeventare nu brigante” (“I want to Become a Brigand”) to “Il brigante Carmine Rocco” (“The Brigand Carmine Rocco,” the story of a well-known historical figure) to “Il cammino del brigante” (“The Brigand’s Path”).

The first song is particularly important to my analysis, since it not only represents one of the most well-known songs about Southern Italian culture, especially among the followers of the folk music revival, but also signals an important moment of awareness regarding the history of the South. Written in Neapolitan, the song was composed by Eugenio Bennato and Carlo D’angiò in 1979 for the 1980 TV series *L’Eredità della Priora* (*The Priory’s Inheritance*), which described the turbulent times of revolts following the Savoia’s conquest of the Southern regions in the 1860. A look at the incipit will give a sense of its powerful lyrics:

> Amme pusate chitarre e *tammure* We have left guitars and drums
> pecchè sta musica s’ha da *cagnà* Because this music has to change
> simme brigant’ e facimme *paura* We are brigands and we are scary
> e ca sch’uppetta vulimme *cantà* and with the rifle we want to sing
> e ca sch’uppetta vulimme *cantà* and with the rifle we want to sing

Narrated through the voice of the brigands, the song describes their fight with vivid colors. Bennato’s goal is to employ a language that is “free and impetuous like the guerilla men that it writes about, passionate and immediate” (*Brigante se more* 34). Here

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the rifle takes the place of the drums, because this new historical contingency requires “new music.”

As Bennato points out, this is a direct response to the colonial ideology of the Northern powers that viewed the Southerners as “those of the primitive tarantella ... of the love songs that can’t harm anybody ... and now as brigands, a biased and derogatory label” (Bennato, Brigante se more 70). Leaving aside the harmless musical instruments of the tarantella, now the brigands decide to become as scary as others portray them to be (Bennato). The following stanza further centers on the main issues at stake in brigandage:

the question of land ownership—“We don’t care about the Bourbon King / the land is ours and shouldn’t be touched”—as well as the peculiar position of the South in this time period, caught between the Bourbon regime and the Northern powers. Then, the following section vividly describes the North-South relationship at the time:

Chi ha vist' o lupo e s' è mise paur' Those who saw the wolf were scared
nun sapè buon qual' è 'a ver'tà but they don’t know the truth
o ver' lup' ca magn' e creatur' the real wolf who eats the babies
è o piemuntese c'avimm' 'a caccià is the Piemontese that we need to send away
è o piemuntese c'avimm' 'a caccià is the Piemontese that we need to send away.

The Savoia family from the Northern region of Piemonte represented a major political power at the time and was mainly responsible for the military occupation of the South in 1860. By comparing the Piemontese people to wolves, the song takes a very strong position on Italian nationalism and the North-South relation. By bringing back to light this peculiar period of Southern Italian history, Bennato also returns to the Southern Question and makes it an explicit object of discussion on the folk music stage. In this
way, he is able to not only enter the larger scene of politically engaged folklore at stake within the 1970s folk music revival, but also to support the Southern folk music model created by E Zezi through the use of historical argument.

The song’s structure, with its ballad-like narrative tone and the repetitions of the last distich twice at the end of every stanza, inserts this song within the larger corpus of 1970s political or social songs (Bermani). The final distich is particularly interesting in this sense, since it borrows the rhetoric of Italian nationalist activism—both during the anti-Austrian campaign of the 1850s and the partigiani’s fight against Fascism and Nazism in the 1940s— and adapts it to the Southern Italian perspective:

‘Omm’ se nasce brigante se more  Men we are born but brigands we die
ma fin’ all’ultim’ avimme a sparà and until the end we need to shoot
e se murimme menate nu fiore and if we die throw a flower [on our grave]
e ‘na bestemmia pe’ ‘sta libertà and a curse for this freedom
e ‘na bestemmia pe’ ‘sta libertà and a curse for this freedom.

While the heroism of the narrator reflects the nationalist fights of the Italian partigiani, the last verse, “and a curse for this freedom,” not only laments the immense loss caused by this fight, but also refuses the nationalist cause and its alleged fight for freedom. As Bennato points out, the curse is not directed at freedom in general, but to “this freedom that is announced and imposed on us by the winners, to this false freedom promised by Garibaldi, Cavour and the Savoia, to this freedom [...] in whose name other agendas are covered and the genocide takes place” (Brigante se more 36).

In 1999, the song appeared in the film Brigands (Original title, Li chiamarono...briganti!) by Italian director Pasquale Squitieri. The version of the song
used by Squitieri was however performed by the group Muscastoria and presented an important textual difference with Bennato’s version. The last line, “and a curse for this freedom” had been changed into “and a prayer for this freedom,” thus stressing the brigands’ honor and patriotic values rather than the controversial aspects of Italy’s nationalist campaign. The spirit of the film, released during the boom of the second folk music revival, confirms the existence of a growing revisionist movement among Southern Italian intellectuals. Such a movement has also affected the reception of the “Brigante Se More” song on the part of the current generation; as Bennato explains in his recent book, *Brigante Se More. Viaggio nella Musica del Sud* (Brigante Se more. An exploration of Southern Music, 2010), today’s main sources on brigandage treat “Brigante Se More” as a song from the Risorgimento period, later revised by Bennato. Yet, Bennato continues to claim that he himself composed the song in 1979. Such a revisionist approach ultimately confirms the continued importance of the Southern Question debate today, as well as the ideological framework within which the folk music revival has been taking place. The very publication of Bennato’s book in 2010 needs to be read in relation to the 150-year anniversary of the unification of Italy—occurring in 2011—which is spurring many debates on the Southern Question today, especially given evident discriminatory attitudes towards Southerners on the part of the Northern party.

Also featured in *Brigands* is another song composed in Neapolitan by Bennato, “Vulesse addeventare nu brigante,” (“I Would Like to Become a Brigand”), whose fast rhythm and easily-memorable melody have made it one of the most well-known songs within the revival. The structure, with its recurring phrase “Vulesse addeventare” (I would like to become), reveals the influence of the *villanella* structure on Bennato’s
style. Among the numerous villanelles recuperated by NCCP in the 1970s is the one called “Vurria addiventare,”—in Neapolitan the term “vurria” and “vulesse” are synonyms—where the speaker imagines taking the shape of different objects, such as a plant, a mirror, and a shoe, so that he is able to get closer to his beloved. While NCCP’s version of the villanella adopts the slow rhythm and harp melody typical of sixteenth-century villanelles, Bennato’s version turns the villanella structure into a fast and loud tarantella, thus creating a song that is both captivating for the contemporary audience and also suitable for addressing the heated Southern Question debate. The themes of rebellion and Southern patriotism already appear in the first stanza:

Vulesse addeventare suricillo I would like to become a little mouse
pé li rusecàre sti caténe to gnaw at these chains
cà m’astrigneno lu péde that squeeze my feet
e ca me fànno schiavo. and make me a slave.

While the first three stanzas follow an animal persona pattern—the protagonist is a mouse, a dove, and a swordfish respectively—in the fourth stanza, the narrating voice imagines himself to be a tammorra that can wake up the citizens (and probably the audience) to social-political awareness through the captivating rhythm of the instrument:

Vulesse addeventare na tamorra I would like to become a tammorra
pé scetare a tutta chella génte to wake up all those people
cà nun ha capito niénte who have not understood anything
e ce stà a guardàre. And that are here to watch us.

The mention of the *tammorra* in this song—and of the synonym *tamburo* in the previous song—creates a meta-textual reference that seems to suggest, once again, a direct connection between the stereotypical *tarantella* image associated with the South and the orientalist view of the colonizing North.

As the song continues, the listener gathers enough elements to visualize its context—the brigands’ war and its protagonists. The final stanza expresses the narrator’s wish to live his life as a brigand: lonely, rough, and honorable.

> Vulesse addeventare nu brigante I would like to become a brigand
> ca po’ sta sulo a là montagna scùra who can live alone in the dark mountain
> pe te fà sempe paùra so he can scare you
> fino a quànnò mòre. until he dies.

The heroic tone of this ending reiterates the celebration of brigandage and confirms Bennato’s counter-historical intent. His commitment toward recounting the history of the South and its injustices confirms the longstanding political involvement of Southern Italian musicians through folk music. Their explicit denouncing of the South’s conditions showcases the political role that Southern folk music has acquired in Italy since at least the 1970s. Following Italian scholar Luigi Lombardi-Satriani’s well-known 1968 article, “Folklore as Culture of Contestation,” written at the time of the first folk music revival, it is possible to conclude that the folk music culture of the South “marks the outer limit of the hegemonic culture, whose ideological tricks it reveals, contesting at times only with its own presence, the universality, which is only superficial, of the official culture’s concepts of the world and of life” (104). In studying the current production of Southern Italian folk songs, therefore, the first question that comes to mind is whether and to what
extent the 1970s political commitment of such artists as De Simone, and in particular E Zezi and Bennato’s attempts to narrate an alternative history of the South, can be identified in the current production of Southern Italian folk music. As shown in the previous chapters, this question is already at stake in the festival scene, as it transforms into a big touristic venue, spurring many debates in recent years. The following sections will attempt to answer this question.

**The 1990s Revival: from Southern Italian to World Music**

As the Italian festival scene has been progressively transforming into a huge tourist venue, Southern Italian folk music has become popular within an increasingly wider audience. This fact has in turn largely affected the way that Southern Italian folk music is now being produced, marketed, and perceived. The second wave of the Southern Italian folk music revival has moved the production and distribution of Southern Italian folk music onto the national scene, and rearranged it for an urban and secular audience. The chart below shows the main artists and groups involved in the current revival, as well as the way that their music is being marketed and labeled.
Table 2: Major Voices of the 1990s Revival

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist/Group</th>
<th>Album Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Record</th>
<th>Genre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NCCP</td>
<td>Medina</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>CGD (Global)</td>
<td>Folk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Zezi</td>
<td>Auciello romio, posa e sorde</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Tide Records</td>
<td>Folk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Released in U.S. as Pummarola Black</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Lyrichord</td>
<td>World Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Zezi</td>
<td>Zezi Vivi</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Il Manifesto (Italy)</td>
<td>Folk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officina Zoè</td>
<td>Terra</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Zoè/CNT (Rome)</td>
<td>Folk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennato/Taranta Power</td>
<td>Taranta Power</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Rai Trade (Italy)</td>
<td>Folk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCCP</td>
<td>Pesce D’ ‘O Mare</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>EMI (Global)</td>
<td>Folk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino</td>
<td>Ballati Tutti Quanti Ballati Forte</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Felmay (Italy)</td>
<td>Folk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaccanapoli</td>
<td>Aneme Perze – Lost Souls</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Real World Records (Peter Gabriel)</td>
<td>World Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Araknè</td>
<td>DANZIMANIA</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Araknè</td>
<td>Tarantella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennato/Taranta Power</td>
<td>Che il Mediterraneo Sia</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Rai Trade (Italy)</td>
<td>Folk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Released internationally</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>DiscMedi (Spain)</td>
<td>Folk/World Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennato/Taranta Power</td>
<td>Sponda Sud</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Taranta Power/Radio Fandango/Lucky Planets (Italy) and Edel (Germany)</td>
<td>Folk/Country/World Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Araknè</td>
<td>Legend of the Italian Tarantella</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Arc (Global)</td>
<td>World Music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The chart also illustrates how the passage from local to regional, national, and global musical scenes has happened for most protagonists of the revival. This shift is evident from several elements in the chart. The same album is often released both nationally and internationally. Several artists/albums are increasingly promoted by national and international labels, and some even by major labels such as EMI. Finally the world music label is increasingly present. The chart also shows how the albums’ titles often reflect the artists’ conscious attempt to publicize and participate in the current tarantella revival (Danzimania, Ballati Tuti Quanti Ballati Forte [Dance You All, Dance Strongly], Taranta Power), a choice likely to bring them a much larger audience and fame as part of the larger Mediterranean musical region (see also Medina). The increasing market value of the tarantella music internationally is also evident in all these artists’ official websites, which employ various languages and are designed for an international audience.

This audience shift, in turn, affects some of the artists’ musical orientation. Though NCCP’s name, for example, remains a crucial reference point for the revitalization of Southern Italian musical forms, their repertoire has largely changed after their re-entering the folk music scene in the 1990s. A quick look at their recent album titles shows a major interest in Mediterranean music and world music aesthetics, while at the same time keeping an interest in the folk aspects of this music, as well as in its rural context. The album Medina, released in 1992, was an important step in this direction: Medina is not only the name of a well-known Arabic holy city, but also the name of several cities in Spain, and one of older gates in the city of Naples. This name therefore promises a closer attention to the composite of Mediterranean sounds. The album also brought the group for the first time to the Sanremo Festival, a national competition for
Italian mainstream pop music. Here, the song “Pe’ Dispietto” (in Neapolitan, “Out of spite”) won the critics’ prize, the most prestigious prize of the festival usually awarded to those songs that move beyond the realm of pop music on account of their technical quality and style. At the same time, their participation in the Sanremo Festival signals NCCP’s closer involvement with mainstream Italian pop music. NCCP’s more recent albums, from 1992 onwards, have also contributed to increase the group’s popularity abroad. As a matter of fact, NCCP’s music is now more popular abroad than in Italy, which seems to be resulting from their recent interest in world music aesthetics. If these two factors are in fact connected, then one can make a case for the complex relationship between folk and world music, and discuss in particular the ways that world music aesthetics paradoxically create a distance between local artists and their local audiences. As I will illustrate throughout this chapter, this type of dynamics appears very often within the panorama of the contemporary musical revival.

An exemplary case in point is E Zezi’s recent musical production, and in particular, the song “Vesuvio,” released first on the 1994 album Auciello ro mio. Posa e sorde and then on the 1995 Pummarola Black album. This song represents an important shift in the career of E Zezi, while also raising questions regarding the ethics of marketing local folk music internationally. An example of tammurriata, the song depicts the ancestral fear of death through the overpowering figure of Mount Vesuvius, which dominates the city of Naples both physically and figuratively. Here E Zezi moves away from its main themes to describe the immense power of Vesuvius over the local population, and its deep effects on the minds of these people, who do not stop one single moment to feel the presence of the mountain and its dangers:
Si’ monte sì, ma monte e na iastemma si’ a morte sì …
Muntagna fatta e lava e ciente vie tu tiene mmano a te sta vita mia …
Quanno fa notte e o cielo se fa scuro sul o ricordo e te ce fa paura …
You are a mountain, you are, but a mountain and a damnation You are death, you are … Mountain made of lava and a hundred roads you keep in your hands this life of mine …
When it’s night and the sky is dark just the thought of you makes us scared …

Vesuvius is here personified as a gigantic living being whose decisions affect many people. The use of the invocative “you” in the beginning attributes both human and divine aspects to the mountain, in whose hands lies everyone’s destiny. Present in most rural cultures and especially in indigenous cultures, this personification or animation of the natural forces is also part of the rural culture of the tammurriata, which is characterized by a strong connection to the land. Furthermore, the mythical aspects of the Vesuvius are not only reminders of the strong religious dimension present within the tammurriata, but also symptoms of its peculiar sense of religiosity. The mountain, a synecdoche for the land as a whole, is here being prayed to in the same way the Madonna is. This attitude is also typical of a society where the most common form of religiosity is
popular religion, with its strong connection to mother Earth, rather than the one represented by the Catholic Church.  

Featured in the fourth season of the American soap *The Sopranos* (fall 2002), the song inaugurated the international fame of E Zezi. At the same time, being internationally known also spurred a big hiatus in the group, since it was being recruited by Peter Gabriel’s Real World label. The group members did not agree over the terms imposed by the recording label. These conditions included the label’s right to buy all the group’s copyrights, and also the exclusion of some pieces that sounded too political, traditional, and place-specific (Cestellini and Pizza). The result was the separation of some group members, who agreed to leave E Zezi for an international career in the global music market. These members included Marcello Colasurdo, whose artistic interests and popularity had already led him to create his own career path a few years earlier. The neo-formed group Spaccanapoli released the album *Lost Souls* (2000), which re-recorded several of E Zezi’s songs for an international audience. This “global” version of E Zezi’s music ultimately spurred an important debate within the group itself and the Italian folk-music scene at large. The basic terms of the debate were authenticity and tradition on the one hand, and international distribution via the world music label on the other. E Zezi felt that the global distribution of their music through Spaccanapoli risked creating an irreparable break with E Zezi’s longstanding rejection of “cultural commodification and the selling of stereotypes” (Cestellini and Pizza 51). As Cestellini and Pizza point out, both the rearrangement of existing E Zezi’s songs and the composition of new songs by Spaccanapoli illustrate a “reduction of the political ‘contamination’ to the advantage

37 See the video “Vesuvio – Spaccanapoli” (11 March, 2008. *YouTube*. 25 April, 2011), and compare it with the more “folk” and less polished version by E Zezi.
of an objectification of the ‘popular’” (53); in other words, E Zezi’s passionate and
demystifying political satire is replaced by a “a new exotic recipe” (53). A close analysis
of this debate goes beyond the scope of this chapter; however, it is important to note the
role of world music aesthetics in allowing not only for a global reception of E Zezi’s
music, but also for the creation of what ethnomusicologist Steven Feld calls the
“schismogenesis” process: the process of “sounds [being] split from [their] sources”
(“From Schizofonia to Schismogenesis” 259). In other words, the world music label has
encouraged, at least in E Zezi’s case, the “contrast between music as expression and
music as commodity” (Cestellini and Pizza 50).

While Spaccanapoli’s album was granted full entrance into the global world
music market and spurred a U.S. interest for Southern Italian folk music, the historical
contingent of E Zezi has preferred to remain consistent with their 1970s agenda, attached
to the values of the workers’ movement and of Italy’s extreme left wing. E Zezi’s target
audience and distribution, therefore, has never left the alternative space of anti-
mainstream Italian music and of subaltern consciousness. Today, their songs remain
known by a small group of folk music connoisseurs and left-wing intellectuals and by
those acquainted with the tarantella revival, while their unique political-artistic project
has never received the national and international attention granted to NCCP. E Zezi’s
performances accompany not only the voices of Southern workers on strike, but also
those of the No-global protesters, anti-camorra38 marches, anti-Iraq-war demonstrations
all over Italy, and Naples’ Gay Pride. An article appeared in the February 5, 2000 edition
of the Italian newspaper Repubblica celebrated this larger social commitment by
representing E Zezi as “the Other music of Naples.” But their main interest still lies in the

38 “Camorra” is the name given to the mafia system in Naples and in the Campania region.
workers’ conditions in the South, as shown by their involvement in the recent debate over the restructuring of Pomigliano D’Arco’s FIAT. I had the opportunity to watch their July 2nd 2010 performance at Carroponte, an old industrial building located in Sesto San Giovanni (in the outskirts of Milan) and now restored by Milan’s municipal government into a space for artistic and musical exhibitions. Throughout the performance, E Zezi repeatedly made explicit references to and comments on the current situation in Pomigliano, and reiterated their position in defense of the workers’ rights.

This is indeed a crucial aspect of the current revival. While the festival scene has increasingly turned into a tourist spectacle—which in turn drives the locals’ call for authenticity and tradition—at the level of musical production the revival allows for an often direct response to the larger Italian socio-political situation. Such a response can be noted not only in Eugenio Bennato’s socially engaged compositions, but also in his social commitment. It can also be noted in the work of other local artists who share with Bennato a commitment to the social and cultural conditions of the South. Neapolitan artist Daniele Sepe, whose musical interests range from ethnic sounds to jazz, chamber music and workers’ songs, deserves special mention here both for his interpretation of Southern folk songs and for his role as a “social agitator.” Debuting with E Zezi in the 1970s, Sepe has become known, both in Italy and abroad, because of his folk music albums, *Vite Perdite* (1994) and *Viaggi fuori dai paraggi* (1996). Released in the hot years of the folk music revival, these albums recuperate tarantella rhythms from several regions through a skillful and unique musical style, while also adding South American and other world music rhythms. The award-winning 1998 album, *Lavorare Stanca*, which discusses the nepotism of the Italian workplace through an eclectic musical style, helped
confirm Sepe’s role together with Italian rap groups in the larger subcultural scene. Renowned on the world music scene, Sepe represents one of the many faces of the current folk music revival, and especially one of the most politically engaged ones. Most of his albums are distributed by alternative labels, such as Il Manifesto, the historical paper of the Italian extreme left wing. Following a tradition initiated with the 1970s folk music revival, and in particular with the countercultural model represented by E Zezi, Bennato and Sepe have carried on this commitment into today’s musical scene.

At the same time, the debate within E Zezi’s group over marketing choices illustrates how the risk of political and social disengagement is always lurking in the current revival on many different levels, starting from the reception of the festival music as a type of global tourist phenomenon. The renewed interest in Southern culture has in fact been celebrated by several scholars, musicians, and cultural brokers as a way to give a new dignity to the South. But it has also been criticized by others for being just a momentary craze, which does not deepen the visitors’ interest and knowledge of this culture. Just as the current tarantella festival scene attracts the criticism of local performers and scholars, the production of Southern Italian folk music is equally spurring debate. The main concern here is that global marketing risks disengaging this music from its socio-political and cultural scenario, and transforming it into another example of the neo-imperialist “ethnic music” label. As ethnomusicologist Steven Feld puts it, “world music participates in shaping a kind of consumer-friendly multiculturalism, one that follows the market logic of expansion and consolidation” (Feld, “A Sweet Lullaby” 168).

As the global circulation of local music intensifies, many scholars worldwide believe that it is time to come to terms with it. Rather than asking whether this
phenomenon should exist at all, they have been increasingly asking how world music operates, what cultural dynamics it spurs, and how it affects both local cultures and the global musical scene. As folklorist Deborah Kapchan puts it, “In the appropriation of sound and meaning it is not surprising that signs are emptied of some of their associations and infused with others. What is noteworthy is which meanings are repressed and which are taken up as metonyms of cultural identity” (*Traveling Spirit Masters* 150). I believe this is a crucial element to consider for a thorough analysis of the current revival, and in the next section, I discuss Eugenio Bennato’s current musical production to illustrate the complexities of the current revival scene as well as the main issues it raises.

**Tradition and Globalization in Eugenio Bennato’s Taranta Power**

Eugenio Bennato’s music is an important trait d’union between the first and the second wave of the folk music revival, and an example of the complex dynamics of global marketing and performing of local music. The Taranta Power movement inaugurated by Eugenio Bennato in 1998 represents a crucial step towards the global circulation of Southern Italian folk music. The movement’s explicit goal is in fact to promote internationally the second wave of the folk music revival developing all over the South at that time. It pursues this objective by producing its own albums as well as promoting music by other Southern Italian folk musicians; by organizing festivals and other events featuring the *tarantella* music (In Europe, the U.S., Canada, and South America), and by organizing schools, seminars, and workshops to teach this musical tradition both nationally and internationally—for example, in Australia and Tunisia—(Taranta Power). As for its name, Taranta Power, the idea was to “provide a vivid
contrast with the unfortunately inferior image that the ‘Tarantella’ has assumed in the collective imagination worldwide, perpetuated by bland folk groups and shallow musical expression, a very long way away from the heady reality of the Taranta ritual” (Taranta Power). As Bennato puts it on the introduction page of the Taranta Power’s website:

The Taranta Power project is propagating a new and vital image of Italian musical culture all over the world, and now in Italy it is a reality capable of drawing the public and fans together in concerts, workshops, schools, and festivals, in numbers and on a scale that until a short time ago was the preserve only of the world of rock and popular music. This course has developed spontaneously because of a real need to reclaim a musical standard in which we recognize our roots, outside any xenophile or massifying fashion.

As this passage makes clear, reconnecting to one’s own Southern Italian cultural roots is a large component of the Taranta Power agenda. In addition, Bennato suggests that this cultural reconnect springs from a need to think locally, in musical as in many other cultural spheres—a need very much felt within the contemporary globalized world, as suggested by numerous cultural and academic initiatives.

But thinking locally for Bennato does not mean to remain fixed in one’s own little village or region; rather, it is an alternative to the globalization of music, one that draws “parallels with other neighbouring cultures, and ... position[s] Italian popular music at the centre of the Mediterranean region, giving it a driving role and opening it to creative exchange with the rhythms and instruments of all Mediterranean countries, from Morocco to Algeria to Spain to Lebanon to Greece to Turkey” (Taranta Power). As a matter of fact, the huge success of the group, regionally, nationally, and internationally,
has contributed to opening up the Italian folk music revival to both Mediterranean and global perspectives. On the *Taranta Power* album, Bennato makes extensive use of *tarantella* rhythms and lyrics from several regions, as well as of Southern dialects, and intertwines them with other musical and linguistic traditions from the Mediterranean. In addition, Bennato’s 1999 international tour largely contributed to make Taranta Power into a world music phenomenon. In February 2001, Bennato took part in the Australia edition of the Womad Festival, originally founded by Peter Gabriel. As a result, Bennato’s song “Taranta Power” was included in the world music collection *Womad 2001* (*Taranta Power*). The *Taranta Power* album immediately became representative of the new *tarantella* music revival both in Italy and other European countries (Coscia), thus standing as a manifesto of this new way of doing Southern Italian music. The opening section of the song “Taranta Power” shows the importance of this moment for Southern Italian folk music:

- Nine-teen ninty-eight  | Taranta Power is up to date
- Mille neuf cent quatre vingt dix-neuf  | Nineteen Ninety Nine
- *Taranta Power est sortie de l’oeuf*  | *Taranta Power is born*
- La tarentule en l’an deux mille  | The tarantula in the year two thousand
- de la campagne est venue en ville  | from the country came to the city
- Two thousand-o-one
- *Tarantella Power all the world around*

The fact that this song starts off in English and French, and then continues in standard Italian and Apulian dialect, well represents the group’s intentional opening to the
international musical scene. As the author states, having travelled from its rural origins to contemporary urban musical scenes, now the tarantella is travelling around the world. By doing so, its power is able to remain “up to date.” The next section recounts the taranta’s myth and history by reminding the audience that “Taranta is deep south,” as well as by adding lyrics in the Apulian dialect, the language of the spider dance, in the last line:

La taranta è il profondo sud
è quella musica che tu
all’improvviso sentirai
è il ballo che non finisce mai
è il passo che dovrai imitare
per liberarti del male d’amore
cosi ballando meridionale
comme na taranta ca te pizzica lu core...


40 See the first chapter for more details.
*taranta* ritual with new desires and meanings. This is the meaning behind the current revival, Bennato seems to suggest. The musical structure of this song, as well as of several other songs contained on this album, also indicates this moment of revival: the basic rhythm of the *pizzica* is accompanied by contemporary sounds, ranging from pop to rock to various ethnic sounds; the vocals, instead, feature both Bennato’s solo singing, either in standard Italian or in dialect, and chorus singing in Apulian dialect and/or other European languages. Bennato’s recent albums, *Che il Mediterraneo Sia* (*Let the Mediterranean Be, 2002*) and *Sponda Sud* (*Southern Shore, 2006*) have not only further developed this celebratory image of *tarantella*, but they have also contributed to popularize the *tarantella* rhythms within the larger world music scene. Taranta Power’s 2002-2004 tour throughout the Mediterranean helped consolidate this project, and also spurred Bennato’s collaboration with other world music artists from the Mediterranean (Taranta Power).

Bennato’s musical experience with *tarantella* in the last twelve years is indeed complex, since it offers not only a great example of the dynamics of globalization and of world music marketing, but also a new direction for Southern Italian folk music. The mix of Southern Italian, Mediterranean, and Northern African rhythms and languages, as well as the emphasis on cultural pluralism and world peace, attach new values and meanings to the Southern Italian tradition—meanings that are different from those of the local musical scene, but equally valuable. In this sense, one can read Bennato’s example as an eloquent response to the scholars’ concern over the consumerist dynamics involved in the making of world music. And yet, as Bennato’s musical composition embraces world music aesthetics, his musical creativity and style seem to lack the spark that characterizes
his earlier works. His recent albums have in fact received severe criticism for their repetitiveness and lack of originality. As Antonio Rettura puts it in his review of the album *Che il Mediterraneo sia*,

Rich of melodies and motifs that are catchier even for the listener who is not necessarily into ethnic music, this last work [of Bennato] is a product for less selective consumption, almost “consumer,” one could add. But if this can be read as a positive note, it is also important to consider that all this has a big “cost”: [the album] almost completely lacks that research spirit that has characterized [Bennato’s] masterpieces, so much so that [Bennato’s] philological commitment, which used to make his songs into a spokesperson of musical cultures otherwise destined to a slow and inexorable death ...seems considerably weakened.

This transition in Bennato’s music is already visible in the *Taranta Power* album, where Bennato’s lyrics seem to lose the historical specificity and social message they contained in his previous albums—a message that was strictly connected to the situation of the Italian South—thus leaving room for some rather superficial compositions, such as the “Taranta Power” song discussed above. Of course, this shift may be just the sign of an artistic impasse, but I believe there is more to it. Following Kapchan’s suggestion to examine global performances of local music in light of “which meanings are repressed and which are taken up as metonyms of cultural identity” (*Traveling Spirit Masters* 150), it is possible to argue that Bennato’s global performance of the *tarantella* ends up “repressing,” or in translation terms “losing,” the historical, geographical, and social specificity of the *tarantella*, while at the same time “taking up,” or “gaining,” a pacifist perspective, which is not part of the Southern Italian context. The complexity of
Bennato’s musical enterprise—and some would argue of the whole world music enterprise—is such that it requires all these elements to be equally weighed. As a matter of fact, extending one’s audience to the international musical scene does not necessarily have to disengage artists from their commitment to make socially-involved music, whether it is about the conditions of the Italian South, or those of African and other poor populations in the world. Even in Italy, Bennato’s music is still very much listened to as socially-committed music—see his recent concerts supporting Amnesty International and other humanitarian organizations.

The song “Grande Sud,” for example, was recently featured within the program “Fabbriche in concerto” (Factories in concert) sponsored by the Province of Savona, in the Italian North East. At the same time, the economic benefits of an international audience via the world music labeling are obvious, and many fear that the appeal of commercialization risks disengaging the tarantella from its original socio-political and cultural context (Pizza). Based on my fieldwork research and personal experience with this music revival, I would rather say that the appeal of international marketing risks disengaging this music from its local audience, which raises the question: for whom is a musician like Bennato actually performing, as he performs internationally? And how can he still engage his local audience while discussing themes that are more general?

Some of the lyrics on Bennato’s recent albums show that he is very much aware of the complex dynamics and contradictions behind the current revival of Southern Italian folk music. The song, “Alla festa della taranta” (“At the Taranta Feast”), which follows the pizzica rhythm, is an insider’s reflection on the revival that throws some doubt on the current festival dynamics and its institutionalization of the tarantella. This “staged
“taranta,” Bennato suggests, can become a way to kill the taranta spirit rather than to keep it alive:

Quanta gente mieza via So many people in the streets
e il maestro sul piedistallo ... And the master on the stage ...
però attuorno nisciuno abballa but around nobody dances
E lorchestra che sta sunanno and the orchestra that is playing
è norchestra che nun va a tempo does not follow the tempo
alla festa della taranta at the taranta feast
la taranta nun se sente only the taranta can’t be heard
E sottallalbero dulive And by the olive tree
la taranta è ancora viva ... the taranta is still alive ...
e te pizzica e te morsica lu core and tickles and bites your heart ...

These words ultimately seem to suggest that there are different ways of globalizing local music, and that while some of them move towards an unaware consumption of local music, others—and arguably Bennato’s music—strive to carry social commitment into the global musical scene.

Re-Imagining the South as the Postcolonial Mediterranean

The current changes in the production and distribution of Southern Italian folk music are particularly relevant to this study, especially since they affect how the current revival represents the Italian South. Throughout the history of Southern Italian music, and especially since the invention and international export of the “canzone napoletana” genre, the South has always been thought of as a metaphor, rather than simply as a regional

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entity. Echoing the orientalist representation of the South as an exotic and wild Other according to post-unification nationalist discourse, the image of Southern Italy that travelled to the U.S. and abroad through canzone napoletana was a touristic, holographic one. Therefore, “many of the clichés on Italy and Italians—which include abundant references to the sun, the sea, unmistakably ‘Mediterranean’ food such as spaghetti or pizza—are tied to the Neapolitan song” (Fabbri). The first wave of the folk music revival in the 1970s has inspired several Neapolitan artists to critically respond to this image, often by appropriating and revaluing the stereotype in a sort of post-colonial reversal strategy. A brilliant example of this strategy is the song “Nuie simm d’o Sud” (“We Are from the South”) performed by Pietra Montecorvino (Eugenio Bennato’s professional partner since Musicanova) and featured in the 1980 comedy F.F.S.S: “... we are from the South ... / we are short and black / we are good at singing / but we work too / we come from the South and we walk / please give us time to get here / because we’re from the South / the sun / the sea / the blue sky / the mandolin and the putipù / the tomato for the ragù / pizza, mozzarella / a mother’s heart / and tarantella ... / a little voice for singing / it’s true or not true ...”.

Yet, even as it acknowledges the stereotype, the song fails to propose an alternative image for the South. Indeed, the longstanding and conservative tradition of canzone napoletana seems to have locked the image of Naples and the South into a holographic picture that even Southerners themselves don’t know how to disentangle (Fabbri). At the same time, the 1990s and 2000s have shown increasing signs of change. The song “Napoli” by Neapolitan hip hop group 99 Posse challenges the stereotypes

42 The putipù is a percussion instrument usually used together with the tammorra, while ragù is the name for the Italian meat sauce.
associated with this city through the use of rap sounds and political satire: “Napoli / children thrown in the streets … / Napoli / boys who do heroin / Napoli / I could never go to school… / Napoli / belonging to some [mafia] family / Napoli / the government gives us only the police / Napoli… / but in the streets they keep dying / Napoli / but we have sun pizza and mandolin / tarantella song sun and mandolin / in Napoli you die ‘a taralluce e vino.’” The politically-engaged Italian rap groups emerging in the 1990s have extensively drawn on the Southern Question debate to bring forth their protest against the political, cultural, and linguistic status quo. Almamegretta, for example, explicitly discusses the role of the South within contemporary Mediterranean culture in their 1993 album, Animamigrante (Migrant Soul). The song “Sudd” recounts in dark tones the history of the South since Italian unification—a history of exploitation of the Southern land and its people: “I want you to know who built this country / I want you to know who paid for it / Who was deported for a few pennies a month? Sicilian and Calabrian boys / hunger misery corruption disease this is the price that my land has had to pay / to be this little luxury of civilization / cars buildings heroin in large quantities / mafia ‘ndrangheta sacra corona unita” / that’s all they have left us.

At the same time, by mixing dub, Neapolitan dialect, and middle-eastern melodies, the song is also affirming the hybridism of Italian Southern culture, which shares many elements with other parts of the Mediterranean and whose conditions can be viewed as part of the larger postcolonial area (Chambers). With a similar rhetorical move,

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44 “99 Posse – Napoli” (7 July 2009. YouTube. 25 April, 2011). The common phrase “A taralluce e vino” (Literally “with cookies and wine”) refers to a tendency to solve/bypass problems through easy shortcuts.
45 The special orthography used in the title for the Italian term “sud” seeks to represent the Neapolitan and Southern pronunciation, thus creating a sort of alternative identity for the Italian South apart from the one imparted from nationalist discourse.
46 Different mafia names associated with different Southern regions.
the song, “Figli di Annibale,” (“Hannibal’s Children”), from the same album, highlights the African influence on Italian culture by recovering the history of Carthaginian general Hannibal and his invasion of the Italian peninsula in the second century B.C. As the narrating voice concludes, “[T]hat’s why many Italians have dark skin.” As William Anselmi points out, in this song Almamegretta “stresses the métissage that has been constitutive of Italian history”: “in a comparison of Hannibal’s troops with the American army of occupation certain Italian ‘racial’ factors such as dark skin and dark hair are highlighted” (42). In other words, by embracing Africanness as a positive identity marker for Southern Italians, Almamegretta is able to reverse the colonial binary linking North and South, centre and margins, citizen and immigrant. Fighting discrimination, both toward Southern Italian and international immigrants, is a major theme in Almamegretta’s music, as well as in other Italian rap groups.

Another well-known subcultural group, the Sud Sound System from the Apulia region, shares with Almamegretta not only the concern over the current conditions of the South, but, more importantly, the need to rediscover and protect one’s Southern folk and cultural roots. Their music has been labeled tarantamuffin for its mix of Jamaican ragamuffin (reggae and rap together) and tarantella (Plastino, Mappa delle voci). As William Anselmi puts it, “this particular form of hybridization conveys tradition and Otherness in terms of their similarity as a means to re-appropriate one’s anthropological culture embedded in a discourse of militancy against oppressive Power, whatever its globalized expression” (40). One of Sud Sound System’s most famous songs is “Le Radici Ca tieni,” which in the Apulian dialect means, “The roots you have.” The song opens with an invitation to celebrate the cultural hybridity and pluralism that has always

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characterized the Mediterranean: “We are from Salento, citizens of the world / established in Messapi, with the Greeks and the Bizantines / united in this style today with the Jamaicans / tell me now where you’re coming from.” By mixing reggae and *tarantella*, Sud Sound System is looking for “correspondences with other exploited, subjugated cultures expressed through one’s own local reality” (Anselmi 40). Thus, the song also reminds us that the only way to think regionally and globally is by retrieving one’s own local cultural roots: “if you never forget your roots / you will also respect those of the foreign countries. / If you never forget where you come from / you will give more value to your culture.” It is not by chance then that the song is written in a particular variety of the Apulian dialect typical of the Grecia Salentina, an area where the Greek cultural roots are still alive and their language now belongs to the world heritage.  

As these examples illustrate, understanding the conditions of the South today also means coming to terms with the extensive migration flux from the Mediterranean, and with the increasing plurality of languages and cultures that are in contact with each other within the already hybrid, cultural area of the South. As Claudio Fogu and Lucia Re point out in “Italy in the Mediterranean Today: A New Critical Topography,” “globalization has created a much more fertile ground for supplementary forms of belonging like Mediterranean-ness, which counteract narrow versions of identity linked to nation, religion, and class. Italy, Italian culture, and the Italians themselves have consequently been invested by, and become invested in, a complex process of self-identification with Mediterranean-ness” (1). But discussing the South in this context also means countering

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the increasingly discriminatory attitudes of several Northern groups both Southern and international migrants.

Doing Southern Italian folk music today means all these things. The current revival of Southern Italian folk music has come to explicitly define itself as part of this larger discourse on the Mediterranean, and as part of what some identify as “Mediterranean world music” (Plastino, *Mediterranean Mosaic* 282). This is especially thanks to Bennato and his Taranta Power group. Their recent albums, *Che il Mediterraneo Sia* and *Sponda Sud* in particular, announce a major change of scene for Southern Italian folk music by moving beyond the North-South binary and by embracing the multiplicity of languages and cultures stemming from the Mediterranean roots. Taking up world music aesthetics, these albums call for a deeper understanding and respect for all the cultures of the Mediterranean, who meet by the sea, where the South-North migration begins. The albums also provide a booklet with both English and French translations of the songs, which recognizes an international and world music audience. Peace in the Mediterranean is possible only if we treasure our common roots and are ready to share ideas and cultures with each other, as suggested in the song, “Che il Mediterraneo sia”: “We are all the equal / leaning over the shores of the same sea / and no one is a pirate / no one is a migrant / we are all sailors.” This is not only a clear reference to the increasingly discriminatory attitude toward immigrants from the Mediterranean, promoted by the Italian Northern League party since its inception in the early 1990s, but also a reminder that, being all sailors, our identities as people of the Mediterranean are in fact travelling identities.
As Ian Chambers points out, here “immediate identities” are “being referenced in an extraterritorial space where inherited traditions are breached to become the site of ongoing translations” (47). The title “Che il Mediterraneo Sia,” of the song and of its album, also indicates of Bennato’s agenda—to celebrate this new Mediterranean perspective by employing the tarantella rhythms, and by announcing the manifesto of what Franco Cassano calls “il pensiero meridiano” (meridian or Southern thought):

Che il Mediterraneo sia Let the Mediterranean be
quella nave che va da sola the boat that goes alone
tutta musica e tutta vele all music and all sails
su quell'onda dove si vola on the wave where you fly
tra la scienza e la leggenda between science and legend
del flamenco e della taranta of flamenco and taranta
e fra l'algebra e la magia and between algebra and magic
nella scia di quei marinai following those mariners
e quell'onda che non smette mai and that wave that never stops
che il Mediterraneo sia ... let the Mediterranean be ...

Like several other songs featured in Bennato’s recent albums, this song offers many references to the sea culture of the Mediterranean: waves, boats, mariners, as well as navigating, sailing, travelling. This imagery helps construct the larger metaphor of the Mediterranean Sea both as a point of convergence among the many different cultures navigating through it, and as a source of power, a sort of positive energy sprung from these cultural encounters.

The celebration of the South is further announced by the song “Grande Sud,” presented by Bennato at the 2008 Sanremo Festival, the biggest venue for Italian pop musicians since 1949. The song—which inaugurated an international tour including the Fiesta Festival in Toronto (Canada) as well as several concerts in Africa—concludes Bennato’s discussion of the South by representing the Southern Italian folk music revival as an expression of “Southern thought”:

C’è una musica in quel treno
che si muove e va lontano
musica di terza classe
in partenza per Milano
c’è una musica che batte
come batte forte il cuore
di chi parte contadino
ed arriverà terrone ...

There is a music in that train
that moves towards distant lands
third-class music
leaving for Milan
t here is a music that beats
beats as strong as the heart
of those who leave peasants
and arrive terron
t...

It is possible to note many similarities between this text and two texts written by Bennato in the early 1980s, “Te Saluto Milano” (“Goodbye Milano”) and “Vento del Sud” (“Southern Wind”), which deal with South-North migration in Italy as part of the larger Southern Question. The first song, in particular, is inspired to Bennato’s failed attempt to find a music sponsor in the big Northern city, and his consequent decision to go back to the South. As Bennato recalls, the song thus represents a continuum with “Brigante Se more,” which focuses on the history of the South (Bennato). In this sense, the reference to Milan in his latest song, “Grande Sud,” seems to complete a full circle and bring the artist back to the early phase of this career, when the migrants were still mostly Southerners.

51 “Terrone” (singular) is a common derogatory term to describe migrants from the South of Italy.
moving to the big cities of Milan and Turin. By comparing their experience to that of the international migrants from Northern Africa, as described elsewhere in the album, Bennato is making, once again, a clear connection among different Souths, while also reminding us that the Southern Question has never been solved.\textsuperscript{52} This connection is evident in Bennato’s performance at the Sanremo Festival, which I will analyze in detail in the conclusion to this study.

The song, “Ritmo di Contrabbando” (“Bootleg Rhythm”) further links the current folk music revival directly to the Southern Question by highlighting the counter-culture aspects of this type of music. The title “Bootleg Rhythm” also reminds us that Southern Italian music is subaltern music, since the South of Italy is a subaltern place, or, in Bennato’s own words, an “Italia minore” (“A lesser Italy”). A look at the first few stanzas will give a sense of the writer’s intention:

Quando sona la taranta
è il mio sud che dal suo ghetto
sta sfidando tutto il mondo
col suo ritmo maledetto ...

Quando sona la tammorra
è il mio sud che sta partendo
come parte Don Chisciotte
contro i mulini a vento ...

Even though it speaks of the subaltern the song is written in both standard Italian and dialect. This choice shows how the current revival has reached the Italian national scene

and attracted audiences from everywhere in the peninsula. The following stanza, instead,
seeks an emotional and artistic connection with the other Souths of the world: “It’s my
heart that is migrating to all the souths in the world”—while also bringing linguistic
samples from Swahili, an African and in the European scene a subaltern language. Both
the counter-cultural and the subaltern aspects of the revival are then emphasized in the
next stanza, where Bennato celebrates his own Southern music as a music that challenges
both mainstream forms of communication and the big music production companies.
Significantly, the words are still in standard Italian.

Quando sona la battente
è il mio Sud che sta suonando
contro l’indice d’ascolto
contro il telecomando
e quel suono che si sente
è il mio Sud che va lontano
clandestino e dissidente
fino al sound di Manu Chao ...

When the battente\textsuperscript{54} plays
it’s my South that is playing
against the audience ratings
against the TV remote
and that sound you hear
it’s my South that goes far
clandestine and dissident
to meet the sound of Manu Chao...

The final reference to Manu Chao, a well-known world music artist who sings about
illegal migration and third-world poverty, also explicitly brings Bennato’s discourse into
the world music scene. Borrowing from the \textit{tammurriata} rhythm and from the Neapolitan
dialect, the song “Popolo e Tammurriata” (“Tammurriata People”) focuses, instead, on
the \textit{tammurriata} revival and its role in exposing a more realistic image of the city of
Naples—well-known worldwide for its exotic, postcard visuals and melodious singing—
while also reminding the traditionalists that the \textit{tammurriata} continues to renew itself

\textsuperscript{54} The \textit{battente} or “beating guitar” is another folk instrument common to several areas in the South.
through the generations: “And let’s talk about Naples where I was born / all the world
knows it but knows one thing for another / Naples sun sea and always-happy people / but
this postcard doesn’t tell you the other side / The other side is a tammorra that comes
from far / she is the daughter of the Vesuvius ... / The tradition is dead and what do I care
/ De Simone will get mad when he hears this song / This song that talks about another
city / which is a beating tammorra and it can’t be stopped.”

In his seminal 1996 volume, *Il pensiero meridiano*, Italian philosopher Franco
Cassano calls for a new way of imagining the South, which seeks to “give back to the
South its ancient dignity as a subject of thought, thus interrupting a long history of
subjugation to other subjects of thought” (5). “Pensiero meridiano,” Cassano continues,
means not “being thought of or imagined by others” (5). The meridian thought model
therefore represents an alternative not only to the longstanding marginalization of the
South within the Italian context, but also to the Think-Global ideology enforced in the
last fifteen years. More importantly, Cassano’s model seeks to bring the South back to the
center of modernization by recovering its Mediterranean roots. In other words, the idea of
a common Mediterranean identity is now being recovered as an alternative identity to the
one emerging from national discourse for the South of Italy.

Yet, as Bennato’s work moves from Southern Italy to the Mediterranean, the
geographical and historical specificity of his previous songs tends to be replaced by a
more generalized representation and celebration of the South; in this sense, the South,
and the Mediterranean, cease to represent purely spatial concepts and become examples
of what Italian scholar Francesca Saffioti calls “geosimboli”: “spatially determined
images exemplifying the revaluing of those historical and cultural characteristics that can
transform a marginalized space into a qualitatively emerging space” (2). In other words, the Italian South turns into a larger comparative Southern –also read No-global/postcolonial—perspective from which to look at modernity, globalization, and their agents. In this latter sense, Bennato’s position reflects a common view within contemporary scholarship on the Southern Italian folk music revival, especially those scholars writing from the Salento area, where the revival movement began in the 1990s. These scholars consider the liberating potential of the tarantella, the main folk music genre in the South, as crucial to the construction of anti-hegemonic identities that are shared by a large population throughout the Mediterranean, and that contrast the homogenizing effect of both globalization and nationalistic discourse (Lapassade). In the case of Salento, the need to understand, and celebrate, Southern Italian identity is also due to the growing role of this area as the centre for Mediterranean migration in the last twenty years, and therefore to the need to understand the changing identity of Salento. The importance of the tarantella consists therefore in its affirmation of a local identity that exists within a larger Mediterranean culture. However, while this image of the South celebrated by the current revival certainly challenges previous stereotypes offered by the nationalist discourse, tourism advertisement, and the popular music discourse, it also resembles in some ways nativism discourse in its assigning an absolute value to the South. Viewed in this light, I believe that this new representation of the South risks perpetuating the long-standing image of the South as a mythical figure, and thus taking distance, once again, from the reality of the South and of its problems. In this sense, E Zezi’s lesson, as well as their model of countercultural folk music of the South, risks getting lost in this generalized celebration of the South.
Even the Southern Thought model offered by Cassano has been criticized. Local ethnographer Gianni Pizza points out how the main risk embedded in Cassano’s model consists of essentializing the South, as well as the Mediterranean, and thus perpetuating the same ideological mechanisms involved in the creation of the Southern Question. According to Pizza, “Mediterraneo, as well as South and North, are material, intellectual and sentimental products that can be felt as pre-existing and natural only through the enforcement of ideological structures” (Pizza, “Lettera a Sergio Torsello” 53, my translation). Further insisting on the ambiguity of Cassano’s position, Pizza concludes: “It is for this reason that I don’t believe that ‘the Meridian thought’ represents the right critical answer to the strategies of hegemonic power … the stereotyping of certain practices should not be fought with the practice of stereotypes” (55). In addition, Cassano’s model has recently been developed by other scholars engaged with the Southern Question. Italian scholar Francesca Saffioti points out the need to avoid “attribu[ting] to the Mediterranean … a saving role” (1-2), since “the South is not an immutable substance, a generic element, or a form of geographic determinism. Becoming Mediterranean is possible if we accept the experience of mediation with the Other, without being able to exclude violence” (2). Saffioti’s words remind us that the Mediterranean encounters are not always simple and peaceful, and that celebrating Mediterraneanness does not necessarily help us understand it. In the last few months, for example, the increased immigration to the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa of people fleeing from the Libyan revolt has spurred much debate within the Italian government and public opinion, and it has often created friction between the refugees and the local population.
The celebration of a Mediterranean identity at stake within the current revival is therefore at risk of essentializing the South, and once again, of attributing a mythical value to it, one reminiscent of the mythical tropes popularized by canzone napoletana. The risks involved in the use of the taranta myth to advance an essentializing representation of the South have been explicitly denounced by the politically-engaged Apulia rapper Caparezza. In his 2008 single, “Vieni a Ballare in Puglia” (“Come and dance in Puglia”), Caparezza brilliantly invites reflection on the current revival and in particular on its often a-critical celebration on the part of local scholars. The song skilfully employs the rhythm of the tarantella, and uses it as a basis for a rap song of protest, in a way that is often common within contemporary Italian rap since the early 1990s. The Salento area, where the tarantella revival is now particularly strong, has one of the least developed shores in the South, and is also a main port for migrants from the Mediterranean. As both the song lyrics and the images featured in the video suggest, pollution, high rates of unemployment, mafia, poor working conditions, and illegal immigration are some of the main issues in this region that are covered up by the inviting and exotic image of Apulia offered by tourist marketing. Tourist development in these regions since the 1960s has failed to improve their economic conditions, since it lacked a stable, sustainable, and socially equitable project. The more recent calls for modernization have spurred the further development of tourist infrastructures, which has only made more evident the continued dependence of these regions on external factors and socio-economic powers. As Cassano puts it, “We have modernized by putting everything up for sale […] by prostituting our land and environment, public spaces and institutions” (6). The touristic image of the South offered by the tarantella revival is not
too different from the colonial image of the South: they both emphasize the Otherness, the exotic quality of Southern culture. The current revival of the *tarantella* in the Apulia region has attracted more capital to the region and helped younger generations of locals reconnect to their cultural roots; on the other hand, it has accelerated the touristic flux to the region, thus ironically perpetuating rather than challenging the outsider’s view of this region.

The narrator ironically concludes: “Oh Apulia, my Apulia / I always carry you in my heart when I leave / and then I think I could die without you / and then I think I could die with you as well.” By using the upbeat rhythm of the *tarantella*, and by juxtaposing it with images portraying the harsh reality of Apulia, the author seems to suggest how the celebratory version of *tarantella* that attracts tourists from other regions of Italy and from abroad can even become detrimental to the conditions of the region. The video of the song makes this aspect very clear by showing skeletons everywhere being photographed by tourists. From this perspective, the *tarantella* revival becomes a co-perpetrator of the agony of the locals. Therefore, the song also denounces the hypocrisy behind the tourist’s view of Puglia; as the author puts it, “[T]ourist, you dance and sing while I count the dead people of this land.” In addition, the song critiques the local politics of culture, which often use the *tarantella* revival as an excuse to draw funds from the European Union directly into the pockets’ of local political groups (Pizza, “Tarantism and the Politics of Tradition”).

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Chapter IV
The Tarantella Revival in the U.S.

In this chapter, I will discuss the ways in which Southern Italian folk music has been exported to the U.S. In conducting this study, I hope to shed light on the dynamics of recontextualization of the tarantella genre—originally a rural dance with a strong link to Catholic celebrations—as a type of global performance. As folklorist Deborah Kapchan observes in her study of Moroccan Gnawa trance music and its global reconfiguration, the circulation of folklore performance in a global context raises a number a questions, the main one for Kapchan being, “What travels?” (Kapchan, Traveling Spirit Masters 2). In other words, which aspects associated with the original performance get to circulate globally? How and why? This umbrella question, Kapchan points out, leads, in turn, to other questions that have been increasingly asked by folklorists, anthropologists, and ethnomusicologists alike in the last fifteen years: questions related to “cultural property, to style as an icon of identity, and to appropriation and power in the global music market” (2). The previous chapter showed that these questions are already at stake in the Italian context, within the current scenario of folk music revival. The present chapter asks, instead, how workshopping operates within the global circulation of the tarantella in places like New York and Hawai‘i, two settings for the “global tarantella” performance of Alessandra Belloni, the Italian performer who famously brought the tarantella rhythms to the United States in the 1970s. By following Belloni’s performances in these two sites, I intend to explore how performers, audiences, cultural brokers, and intellectuals are answering the questions posed above in places where the tarantella has been exported as a world music phenomenon.
I also ask what new aesthetic values, cultural meanings, and debates are being associated with the tarantella, and in particular with its tammurriata and pizzica subgenres, as they circulate internationally. And further, what is it about the target communities, specifically New York and Honolulu, that allows for such a transformation? While the Southern Italian folk music revival is now widely circulating in the USA, New York City remains one of the oldest sites for Italian culture, with one of the largest Italian American communities in the nation, making it a crucial site for studying the export of Southern Italian folk music in the U.S. The importance of NYC for the “global tarantella” is confirmed not only by the presence of Alessandra Belloni and other performers who work with Southern Italian folk music, such as dancer and choreographer Anabella Lenzu, but also by the number of local academic and cultural initiatives concerning Italian cultural heritage, and in particular Italian music. Situated in the middle of the Pacific and carrying a troubled history as an occupied nation, Hawai‘i, as a location for tarantella performances, is very different from NYC because its Italian community is very small, and access to Italian cultural venues and events is very limited. Moreover, because it is situated at the crossroads of very different cultures—Asian, Polynesian, and Anglo-American—Hawai‘i offers an image of Italy and Italian culture filtered through the perspectives of both Italian American groups and the many international groups or individuals transiting through it. Thus, Alessandra Belloni’s frequent trips to Hawai‘i raise questions about not only the cultural impact of her performances on Hawai‘i’s audiences, but also on the ways that such a far-off, “exotic” location affects Belloni’s own organization of the performance and her role as a cultural translator (Spivak, “The Politics of Translation” and “Translating into English”).
Since *tarantella*’s first export to the country, translation has played a crucial role in its recontextualizations within the U.S. musical and cultural scene. Borrowing from recent translation studies, this chapter assumes that whether in relation to literature or to other cultural artifacts, translation operates on several different levels simultaneously. On the one hand, it represents an important factor in the interaction between different linguistic and cultural groups—in this case, between Italy and the U.S., and between Italians, Italian Americans, and other ethnic/social groups living in the U.S.—since it “wields enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures” (Venuti, *Scandals of Translation* 67). In this sense, translation directly affects the ways that both Italians and Italian Americans are being represented or get to represent themselves within the U.S. cultural scenario. On the other hand, since the multicultural history of the U.S. has ultimately created a hybrid, translated culture by definition, following translation scholar Edwin Gentzler, it is possible to argue that “translation in the Americas is less something that happens between separate and distinct cultures and more something that is constitutive of those cultures” (5). In this light, Italian culture in the U.S. is also constantly translated for the larger U.S. audience. Italian American scholar Nancy Carnevale also points out in her recent study of Italian migration in the U.S. that it is important to look at immigrant narratives as providing a “more expansive definition of translation” (80). “In addition to the literal sense of translating from one language to another,” Carnevale clarifies, “this includes the translation of the self through the encounter with another language, raising the question of the relationship between language and identity” (80). But if Italian culture in the U.S. has already itself been translated for the mainstream culture starting at the turn of the twentieth century, what
happens whenever more recent and/or alternative representations of the same culture get translated through musical and other cultural venues? My work suggests that the accumulation of recurring and different representations of Italian culture within the U.S., and particularly in the Italian American context, in the last thirty years has created a complex “translation zone” (Apter) where different notions of what is Italian (folk) music and Italian culture, as well as of Italianness, constantly interact with each other in both concurrent and conflicting ways.

Viewed from a translation studies perspective, the modalities and effects of the translation of Southern Italian folk music within the U.S. cultural context are related not only to the larger U.S. target community, but also to the Italian American cultural heritage. As is often the case with ethnic communities all over the world, the Italian American community has shown a great deal of interest in rediscovering and preserving an Italian cultural heritage, including its musical aspects, and the Italian folk music revival is now being promoted and discussed within both its academic and cultural circles. As Italian Canadian folklorist Luisa Del Giudice points out in the introduction to her book, *Oral History, Oral Culture, and Italian Americans* (2009), “Italian immigrants abroad (the Italian diasporic ‘periphery’) have continued many cultural practices long transformed in Italy (‘the center’), making Italian American communities a focus of particular interest to folklorists” (4).

One of the main reasons for this cultural conservatism can be traced back to the dynamics of Italian migration to the U.S. From the late 19th century until the period immediately following WWII, Italian immigrants to the Americas were mostly peasants and laborers from the poorest areas of Italy, and especially from the rural South. With
little or no education, and a strong use of the dialect, they were “firmly rooted in regional oral cultures” (Del Giudice, “Speaking Memory” 4). When considering the cultural heritage of Italian Americans, therefore, it is important to keep in mind that, as Del Giudice continues, “Italian Americans descend largely from peasant oral cultures and [...] this ‘deep’ ethnographic background resonates within Italian American experience—even where it is neither acknowledged, known, nor understood” (4). These strong cultural roots in orality certainly place the Italian American scene in a privileged position for the study of the current Southern Italian folk music revival, since Southern Italian folk music is closely connected to Southern Italian peasant culture. Yet, as De Giudice’s latter comment suggests, the Italian oral cultural heritage is at the same time ignored, and even rejected, not only by many Italian Americans, but often also by Italian educational programs and other cultural organizations. Behind this rejection, Del Giudice explains, lies the official image that Italian culture usually projects of itself around the world: a highly polished, upper-class image resonating with early twentieth-century Italian scholar Benedetto Croce’s idealistic philosophy. According to this view, Italian culture consists of classical literary works, such as Dante’s, as well as of opera masterpieces, but certainly not the rural, unschooled tarantella. Therefore, the Italian American target community offers a rather complex location for the reception of Italian culture, and Italian music, through translation.

As I will show, this complex relationship between the official image of Italian culture abroad and the oral peasant culture of the Italian immigrants in the U.S. has ultimately affected the import and interpretation of Southern Italian folk music in very direct ways. In the following pages, I will first explore the dynamics of export and recontextualization
of Southern Italian folk music for a U.S. audience in the last thirty years. Studying these
dynamics will help contextualize Alessandra Belloni’s personal adaptation of the
tarantella tradition, as displayed through her tarantella workshop, which I will analyze in
detail in the second half of this chapter.

From Lomax to I Giullari di Piazza:

Intercultural Exchanges in Italian Ethnomusicology

The first step toward the international circulation of Southern Italian folk music had
already taken place in the mid 1950s; that is, at least two decades before Alessandra
Belloni made her first trip to NYC. Doing fieldwork in Italy in the 1950s, American
folklorist Alan Lomax travelled throughout the peninsula with Italian ethnomusicologist
Diego Carpitella to study Italian folk songs; the result was a collection of about three
thousand recordings from June 1954 to January 1955. Lomax’ work was first released by
Tradition Records in 1958 under the title Italian Treasury (Catalano). The collection
contains music samples from several Italian regions and from different genres, including
the tarantella in its various forms, such as the Apulian pizzica and the tammurriata from
the Campania region. In 1999, Rounder Records released a newly edited version of this
collection, which has received much scholarly attention within both Italian
ethnomusicology and Italian American scholarship, testifying to the recently growing
interest in Italian folk music both in Italy and in the U.S.

In his review of the 1999 edition, Roberto Catalano points out how “the backgrounds
as well as the intentions of the two scholars were different in their ‘voyage of
discovery.’” “Lomax,” he explains, “was interested in comparative studies in the
Mediterranean region and specifically how and why distinctive folk song styles develop [...] while Carpitella was interested in how the music reflected the problems of the Italian south.” What the two scholars had in common, however, was a desire to record the “scarcely known music of peasants, fishermen, shepherds, street vendors, dockworkers, mountaineers, and suburban dwellers” (Catalano). In addition, having studied the more well-known urban folk songs, Lomax was interested in exploring and recording for the first time “Italian peasant music,” (Cohen 126) such as the tarantella, which, he writes in a later recollection, “has lived almost without contact with the great streams of Italian fine-art music. It has followed its own course, unknown and neglected, like a great underground river” (qtd. in Cohen 127). Lomax also points out how a “complete hiatus between folk art and fine art is one of the distinctive features of Italian cultural history” (127).

Lomax’s later comment confirms that the lack of interest in oral culture by the Italian American communities in the U.S. reflects an attitude already present in Italy. By recording this peasant music, therefore, Lomax was opening a space for dialogue between two cultural spheres, which according to Lomax could lead to the “growth of a new Italian culture” (128). Both Italian folklore scholarship and the first tarantella revival testify to a growing interest in the neglected folk culture of the rural areas during the 1960s and 1970s. Lomax’s ethnographic work in Southern Italy, as well his U.S. scholarship and methodology, therefore has played a crucial role in the re-discovering of Southern Italian folk music since the 1960s. In addition, Lomax’s work became a powerful incentive to the study of this music on the part of Italian scholars. As the Italian scholar of the tarantella revival Sergio Torsello points out, “the Italian experience of
Alan Lomax with Diego Carpitella is rightly famous, since their 1955-1956 re-discovery journey has in some way founded Italian ethnomusicology” (AA.VV. 7, my translation). Torsello’s comment also resonates with the idea that translation is central to the construction and transformation of a certain culture, further justifying an analysis of the Southern Italian folk music revival from a translation studies perspective.

Such a process of intercultural translation interwoven with Lomax’s legacy has allowed, over the last five decades, for a fruitful dialogue between U.S. and Italian ethnomusicology and folklore scholarship. Ethnomusicologist Diego Carpitella (1924-1990) played a crucial role in this intercultural exchange. Having worked extensively with Lomax, he was able to realize not only the importance of this work of documentation, but also the need to continue researching oral cultural material that had never been documented before and that was about to be covered over or inexorably changed by the increasing urbanization and industrialization of the 1950s (Carpitella 87). Carpitella’s later work in Italian ethnomusicology was largely based on the impressions and results gained on his trip with Lomax. His work also appeared in several American and international publications, which testifies to the fruitful scholarly exchange started with the 1954 Italian trip. Furthermore, Carpitella’s encounter with Italian ethnologist Ernesto De Martino later in the summers of 1959 and 1960, as they travelled together to the Apulia region to study the tarantism rituals, as well as Carpitella’s footage documentation of these rituals, greatly furthered the work of Lomax in Italy, while also opening up new possibilities for the study and revival of Southern Italian folk music.

Later, in the 1970s and in the 1990s, Anna Lomax Wood, American anthropologist and daughter of Alan Lomax, travelled to Italy, where she researched among other things
Calabrian *villanella*, also belonging to the *tarantella* genre (Association for Cultural Equity). Her work has not only preserved and furthered her father’s work from earlier decades, but has also deeply informed both the 1970s and the 1990s phases of the Italian folk music revival. Her attendance at the *tammurriata* festivals and her role in preserving the *tammurriata* musical tradition are confirmed by several local performers, such as Raffaele Inserra, with whom Anna Lomax came in contact on her 1990s research trips (Inserra).

When in the 1970s, musician and composer John La Barbera, a second-generation Italian who had grown up in New York City in the early 1950s, discovered his interest in Southern Italian music, his steps continued this cross-cultural path. La Barbera’s curiosity about Italian music, including traditional music, had started at an early age, thanks to his Italian family and neighbors (La Barbera). But after studying Italian Renaissance music in college and moving to Italy in 1973 on a music scholarship, Italian music, and Renaissance music in particular, became a real vocation for him. In the following years, La Barbera began to associate with other Italian students, and especially within the Italian student movement, which strongly encouraged the recovery of Italian traditional music as a way to move beyond the increasing industrialization and Americanization of Italian pop music. “The recordings made by Alan Lomax and Diego Carpitella earlier in the 1950s,” La Barbera states in a recent article, “inspired others to continue where the earlier ethnomusicologists had left off. This new enthusiasm motivated the younger generation to research its own roots and present this music to wider audiences in what has come to be called a folk revival” (104). A group of Southern Italian students living in Florence introduced La Barbera to Southern Italian folk music in 1975. Through them, he met the
well-known Sicilian drummer Alfio Antico. Called “Pupi e Fresedde” (lit. puppets and [a type of] bread), the group was inspired by the socially aware American-based 1960s Bread and Puppet Theatre, but its originality consisted in its loans from Italian Renaissance puppet theatre and the Commedia dell’Arte. As an official theatre company, the group soon came to participate in the Italian folk revival movement (La Barbera).

While for La Barbera this experience was also a way to reconnect to his “remote past” (104), the often negative reception of his work on the part of the Italian American communities in Boston and NYC in the summer tour of 1977 showed how unfamiliar the Italian American community was with Italian folk music. The audience’s immediate reaction simply was, “That’s not Italian music” (110). The only image of tarantella they had in mind was the 16th-century tarantella that was very far away from its folk origins, and that local musicians played at Italian American weddings. La Barbera defines this moment as “a first encounter […] between the Italian folk music and America” (110). Reestablished in New York in 1979, with “his suitcase full of traditional songs” he had diligently transcribed while in Italy and his chitarra battente (a type of folk guitar used in the tarantella folk genre), La Barbera intended to share his Italian experience within the New York musical scene. In NYC, La Barbera met Rome-based artist, singer, dancer, and actress Alessandra Belloni, who was equally ready to bring the Italian folk music phenomenon to New York, having made several trips to the Southern Italian festivals in the early 1970s. In 1979, Belloni and La Barbera founded I Giullari di Piazza (The Jesters of the Square), a performing troupe devoted to “recreate the type of street dance theatre done in the piazzas of Italy and present it to audiences in New York City” (La Barbera 112). “We were committed to bringing the lost Italian traditions of music and theatre
from southern Italy back to the United States,” La Barbera comments (112). “I also hoped,” he continues, “[this music] might inspire other Italian Americans in search for their own roots, just as I had mine [sic] years before” (112). While Lomax and La Barbera operated in different spheres and addressed different communities—Lomax in the scholarly sphere, La Barbera in a more commercial and/or public performance one—it is safe to say that La Barbera’s work has furthered the translation of Italian folk music inaugurated by Lomax’s work. In addition, his work has informed the Italian American immigrant experience since the 1970s, while also anticipating the work of contemporary Italian musicians and scholars committed to circulating the Southern Italian folk music revival both nationally and internationally.

In the last thirty years, I Giullari di Piazza has toured and performed nationally in important cultural venues, such as Carnegie Hall, the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Metropolitan Museum, and the Smithsonian Institute, while also touring to California, Florida, Hawai‘i, and Canada. Its members have also been invited to perform in academic settings, such as the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts, where they also teach Commedia dell’Arte (Belloni). As of 2011, I Giullari di Piazza is also artist-in-residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. Its repertoire includes concerts and folk operas, a mix of music, dance, and theatre narrated in both English and Italian. These operas include Stabat Mater: Donna de Paradiso, based on the 13th century Italian lamentation in honor of the Madonna, and La Cantata dei Pastori (The Shepherds’ Cantata), an adaptation of a 17th century Neapolitan Christmas play told in music and dance by masked characters and puppets and still performed in the Naples area today. Of special relevance to this study is The Voyage of the Black Madonna, a folk opera that
follows the encounter between the Roman poet Virgil and seven Black Madonnas, who help him save the world from self-destruction. The opera therefore “draws on pagan and Christian traditions to convey a New Age message” (Merkling 3). Conceived and written mostly by Belloni, this work reflects her strong drive for the Black Madonna cult, a cult very common throughout Southern Italy, in the Mediterranean, as well as in some regions of Africa and South America. In Belloni’s understanding, however, the “Black Virgin is a Christian phenomenon as well as a preservation of the ancient goddesses who represent the healing power of nature” (qtd. in Brooks 29).

As I will explore in detail later in this chapter, this understanding has ultimately shifted the framework for Belloni’s work beyond the musical tradition of Southern Italy and towards New Age spirituality. At the same time, the opera features several performances of Southern Italian folk music and dance, including several tammurriata samples; these are traditional versions, but the opera also contains original songs written by Belloni and put to music by La Barbera. The folk opera 1492-1992: Earth, Sun and Moon, was conceived by I Giullari as an adaptation of the Voyage from a multicultural perspective. Commissioned by the Lincoln Center on the occasion of the five-hundredth anniversary of Columbus’s trip to the Americas, this opera features the traditional trickster of Naples, Pulcinella, and his American Indian counterpart, Coyote, who get together to save the planet. Featuring a mix of both Southern Italian and American Indian songs, dances, and musical instruments, the show seeks to offer an alternative version of Columbus’s story, one that highlights the similarities between the two cultures. The similarity, according to Belloni, is reflected not only in the agricultural societies both these musical traditions originated from, but also in a similar history of domination under
the Spanish rule (Staten Island Advance). While Belloni’s comparison seems to overlook
the gravity of the American Indian genocide, which is incomparable to the Italian
situation, this work as a whole reflects an explicit political commitment of I Giullari,
especially in the early stage of its career. (As I will show, this commitment seems to be
lost in Belloni’s one-woman show in favor of the New Age framework). Finally, I
Giullari’s most recent show, *The Dance of the Ancient Spider*, goes back to the Southern
Italian tradition by focusing on the tarantula myth and its musical rituals, while also
reframing them within a pre-Christian and shamanistic context. *The Rhythm Is the Cure*
Workshop analyzed later in this chapter has largely developed out of this show.

1990s-2000s: Southern Italian Folk Music Returns to the U.S.

While I Giullari’s performances continue to inform the contemporary U.S.
musical and theatrical scenes, the second, or current, wave of the Southern Italian folk
music revival has also sparked a renewed interest in Southern Italian music on the part of
U.S. academic and cultural circles, especially in NYC. Largely sponsored by Italian
American organizations, such as the Queen’s College affiliated Calandra Italian
American Institute in Manhattan, this attention to Southern Italian folk music is
confirmed by the increasing number of concerts, performances, conferences, workshops,
and other educational resources on the subject. Thirty years after La Barbera’s first tour
to U.S., and partly thanks to his and Belloni’s work in the last thirty years, Southern
Italian folk music has acquired a much more positive connotation for Italian American
audiences. Alessandra Belloni has inspired a new generation of Italian American women
and artists to recover their own Southern Italian folk heritage through both her shows and
her dance workshops (Biagi). Several of these women are now actively contributing to understanding and circulating the Southern Italian folk music tradition; for example, Italian American Mary Ciuffitelli, who participated in Belloni’s workshop in 1996 (Biagi), declares on her website, *Incantata* (2003), that she has “become incantata” [enchanted] by the music and dance of Southern Italy,” and that her “passionate exploration” for this music has “led to projects of cultural exchanges between there and the U.S.” Unlike Belloni, however, she is interested in building a closer relationship with Southern Italian folk music groups. In the last ten years, Ciuffitelli has been actively engaged in promoting the work and performances in the U.S. of such Southern Italian groups as the Salentine Aramirè. Thus, a first important difference between the importing of Southern Italian folk music to U.S. in the 1970s and the current revival is the greater access to Southern Italian voices, thanks also to the acceleration of international travel. This direct access has in turn provided an alternative representation of Southern Italian folk music to the one presented by Belloni and I Giullari’s work.

The group Aramirè, a leading voice in the current *pizzica* revival in Italy, has widely performed in Europe and the U.S. over the last fifteen years, largely contributing to the current craze for the Salentine *pizzica*. They were first invited to the U.S. by folklorist Luisa Del Giudice, who at the time worked as the director of the Italian Oral History Institute in Los Angeles, to participate in the international conference Performing Ecstasies: Music, Dance, and Ritual of the Mediterranean, held in Los Angeles in October of 2000. As Del Giudice puts it, the conference “sparked a wider diffusion of this music to other U.S. cities, largely on the East Coast” (Del Giudice xv). Beside scholarly work, the Performing Ecstasies conference featured several cultural exhibits, as
well as music and dance performances. Among the artists invited to perform were not only Luigi Chiriatti with his group Aramirè, but also Belloni and I Giullari di Piazza, who performed the *Tarantata: Dance of the Ancient Spiders* show. The conference also inaugurated a successful collaboration between Del Giudice and Aramirè: since then they have worked together in writing and translating field recordings from Chiriatti’s archive. After Los Angeles, Aramirè performed at the World Music Institute in NYC, as well as in Philadelphia and New Jersey in September 2002, and then again in NYC at Carnegie Hall in January 2007. Roberto Raheli, lead vocalist and violinist, has also conducted workshops on Salentine music and drumming in New York City. Edizioni Aramirè, the group’s publishing arm, has further contributed to circulate Salentine music in the U.S. through the release of Aramirè’s recordings, which feature booklets of commentary and lyrics in Italian, Apulian dialect, and English.

The renewed attention to the Southern Italian folk music revival in the U.S. is also largely promoted by the increasing number of Italian expatriates now conducting scholarly and academic work in the U.S., contributing to the Italian brain drain. Several of these expatriates are now actively contributing to the understanding and the circulation of Southern Italian folk music in the U.S. Some of them have decided to work permanently in the U.S., such as Apulian Flavia Laviosa, a scholar of Italian Studies who has written about Salentine women directors and their relation with *tarantism* culture (Laviosa), while others have brought back to Italy their scholarly and personal experience in the U.S., such as Neapolitan anthropologist Augusto Ferraiuolo, who has written about

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56 The result was the publication of two albums: *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 Aramire’ compact disk (Lecce, 2000), and *Bonasera a quista casa: Antonio Aloisi, Antonio Bandello “Gli Ucci”: Pizziche, stornelli, canti salentini*, by Luigi Chiriatti, trans. Luisa del Giudice, Edizioni Aramire’ compact disk (Lecce, 1999). [qtd. in Del Giudice, *Performing Ecstasies* xv]
the *tammurriata* tradition in the Boston North End (Ferraiuolo), and is now organizing *tammurriata* workshops and seminars at Università of Cassino, Naples, where he teaches cultural anthropology (Ciuffitelli). In this sense, Southern Italian folk music both in the 1970s and today can be read within the larger context of Italian migration, and the process of cultural translation that such migrations entail.

Partly because it was spurred by the current revival in Italy, the interest in Southern Italian folk music in NYC and elsewhere in the U.S. has focused mostly on the Apulian *pizzica* and on the musical rituals connected to the *tarantism* phenomenon, except for a few cases, such Ferraiuolo’s research on the *tammurriata*. Stimulated by the many Apulian *pizzica*-related events, as well as by the intensive cinematic production now occurring in the Puglia (Apulia) region, in July 2009, the Calandra Institute organized the first Puglia Film Festival in NYC, partly geared towards the large Apulian population living in the NYC metropolitan area (Melchionda). This climate of general enthusiasm over things Southern Italian, however, has also slowly brought the *tammurriata* musical tradition of the Campania region to the attention of NYC audiences. In particular, the work of Neapolitan *tammurriata* artist Marcello Colasurdo, co-founder of the *tammurriata* group E Zezi and later of the Spaccanapoli group, has recently reached the U.S. scene. In September 2007, “A Global Dionysus in Napoli: The (Un)real story of Marcello Colasurdo” was presented at Manhattan’s La Mama Experimental Theatre. Based on the life of Colasurdo, the original version of “A Global Dionysus in Napoli” (produced by OPS, a Naples-based cultural association) is an “interdisciplinary cultural project blending music, theatre, art, and video, that takes place on an imaginary television show dedicated to contemporary incarnations of Dionysius” (Calandra). On
this occasion, Colasurdo himself participated in the symposium “Folk Music and Modernity in Southern Italy,” organized by the Calandra Institute and featuring the authors of the U.S. theatrical adaptation, as well as Marco Messina, the founder of the Neapolitan hip hop group 99 Posse, who had participated in the making of the original project.

Colasurdo’s presence in NYC represents an important step towards the circulation of Southern Italian folk music, and of the tammurriata in particular, in the U.S. But Colasurdo’s growing popularity in this context is also possible as a result of the labeling of his music as world music. His album Ludos - E Manco ‘O Sole Ce ‘A Sponte (1997), available for purchase from CD Roots and other websites sponsoring world music, was in fact produced and distributed by the Italian world music label Compagnia Nuove Indye. Therefore, the reception of Colasurdo’s work and of the Neapolitan tammurriata has been filtered by the world music label, a label whose values and aesthetics are quite different from the ones connected with the tammurriata festivals in Naples. This filter is ultimately a filter of translation, and is also responsible for deciding which versions or artists of tammurriata get represented internationally and which ones do not. As discussed in the previous chapter, the release of the world-music labeled album Lost Souls - Anime Perze, which features Colasurdo’s voice, created a big debate within E Zezi’s historical group and ultimately led to the creation of a new group, Spaccanapoli. The latter has been granted international access via the world music label, while the other albums by E Zezi have remained anchored to the local contexts of Naples and its subcultural music.
At the same time, by entering the Italian American context, Colasurdo’s work is also providing the Italian American communities in the U.S. with direct access to an important voice of the Southern Italian folk music revival, as well as with a renewed understanding of the *tammurriata* tradition. The 2008 World Festival of Sacred Music hosted by the Getty Museum, co-sponsored by the Italian Cultural Institute in Los Angeles, featured Neapolitan saxophonist and vocalist Enzo Avitabile, one of the leading voices in the Neapolitan musical scene for the last thirty years. Avitabile’s recent collaboration with Bottari, a percussion-based group devoted to the *tammurriata* rhythms of the Campania region, gave rise to the internationally successful Sacro Sud Project, “an imaginary journey from Nazareth to Naples, exploring the spiritual vitality of the many ‘souths’ of the world and featuring songs from a variety of epochs” (The J. Paul Getty Trust). As these examples suggest, the key to the U.S. success of these artists ultimately lies in their ability to adapt and “translate” their work for a world music audience.

Finally, with regard to dance performances, several artists are now engaging with both *pizzica* and *tammurriata* in the U.S.—some following Belloni’s example, others moving in new directions. Natalia Marrone, an Italian American from Columbus, Ohio, is the artistic director of the Dance Cure company, an all female modern dance company established in 1998 and based in Raleigh, North Carolina. As the name suggests, the company takes its inspiration from the *tarantism* dance rituals, and “fuses the athleticism of contemporary dance with folk dances, myths and rituals of [Marrone’s] southern Italian background” (Natalie Marrone and the Dance Cure). Marrone first came in contact with Southern Italian folk dance while in NYC in the 1990s, where she also met vocalist Michela Musolino, who had attended Belloni’s workshop in 1997. Since then, Marrone’s
work has been to choreograph, perform, and teach Southern Italian folk dances, including *pizzica* and *tammurriata*. Her work has appeared in dance festivals and at Italian American cultural venues. Her latest show is called Chant Dances, a type of fusion dance that juxtaposes Southern Italian dance and modern dance. Focusing on women’s role in Southern Italian folk dance, Marrone has further developed Belloni’s workshop by “performing and teaching an accessible yet diverse body of dances that explore the many rites of passage woven through the fabric of human experience” (Natalia Marrone and The Dance Cure). “The all female company,” the Dance Cure website also states, “can be seen throughout the state of North Carolina inspiring a broad participation in dance which nurtures individual expression, celebrates diversity, and passionately pursues community unity.” As for Marrone’s Italian American background, “she feels her work is a bridge that links our past to [our] present Italian American lives.” As the March 2004 issue of *La Gazzetta Italiana* magazine puts it, “she is a passionate voice for the Italian culture, and is proud that Chant Dances embraces the old world in a contemporary context, revealing new images of what it means to be Italian-American.” (qtd. in Natalie Marrone and The Dance Cure).

Another example of contemporary redefinitions of Southern Italian folk dances is the work of Italian-Argentinean dancer and choreographer Anabella Lenzu. Lenzu’s work departs from other Belloni-inspired performances, as it is essentially for a theatrical audience; her “dance dramas” in fact offer a unique mix of theatre and modern dance performances, while also borrowing from both Southern Italian and Argentinean folk music and cultures, in particular *tarantella* and tango. Among Lenzu’s dance dramas, the most relevant to this study is *Entroterra*, first premiered in October 2004 in Caserta,
Southern Italy, where Lenzu has studied Southern Italian folk dances and come in contact with local artists and performers. Performed both in U.S. and Argentina, the show has received many positive reviews on account of both the quality of its dance performances and its cultural content. *Entroterra* in fact reenacts the history of Italian mass migrations to U.S. in the late 1800s and early 1900s, while also featuring a mix of Southern Italian folk songs and dances, as well as Italian and Argentinean folklore. The central moment of this narrative is represented by the immigrants’ stay at Ellis Island and the clash of languages, cultures, and perspectives sprung by their first encounter with the U.S. migration laws and mainstream culture. Part of the charm of this particular scene is due to the actors’ *tammurriata* performance, an adaptation of the *tammurriata* for modern dance theatre choreographed to Enzo Avitabile’s folk-inspired music. Having attended the show’s rehearsal in Williamsburg in May 2010, I can personally testify to the powerful artistic result. A first-generation Italian Argentinean immigrant to U.S., Lenzu is particularly interested in the immigrant experience in NYC and the U.S., and is committed to explore it through theatre and dance, thus taking the current revival of Southern Italian folk music a step further. In the last three years, Lenzu has also organized the Ciao Italy Performing Arts Festival in Williamsburg, Brooklyn; in Lenzu’s words, the festival features “traditionally-based and Italian-inspired work by contemporary performers and scholars,” to “create a bridge between the historic Italian community in Williamsburg and the more recent community of artists who are living and/or working in the neighborhood” (Lenzu).

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Alessandra Belloni’s *Tarantella* Performance

In the rest of this chapter, I will introduce and explore in more detail Alessandra Belloni’s performance of Southern Italian rhythms. Belloni’s style, as well as her eccentric artistic persona, is receiving increasing attention among cultural and academic circles both in Italy and the U.S. More importantly, Belloni’s unique reinterpretation of Southern Italian folk music for an international audience is particularly significant for this study, as it illustrates the artist’s established roles of tradition bearer and cultural broker, as well as her effort as a “translator” of Southern Italian culture into linguistically and culturally different contexts. Having been in contact with Belloni since the spring of 2006—when I was employed as a lecturer of Italian at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa—I am personally familiar with her performance style, her personal story and artistic persona, and her involvement with Southern Italian music and dance. As I illustrate specifically through my analysis of her Southern Italian Drum and Dance workshop (held at UH Mānoa in the springs of 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2010), Belloni’s act of exporting this musical tradition to U.S. and international scenes represents an act of translation, in its both etymological and figurative senses. It transports the Southern Italian tradition into a new linguistic and cultural context, and assigns it a new role within the target cultural community. Well-known in the U.S. world music scene, the workshop not only projects Southern Italian folk music tradition onto a New Age scenario, but also provides a unique woman’s and woman-centered reinterpretation of this tradition.

Born and raised in Rome, Italy, Alessandra Belloni first moved to New York City in 1971, at the age of seventeen, to find a venue where she could express herself in music (Del Giudice, “Alessandra Belloni”). Belloni’s debut on New York’s theatrical scene
took place in 1976, a few years before her collaboration with I Giullari started. Together with I Giullari, Belloni has helped popularize Southern Italian folk music in New York first, where she resides, and then in other states and internationally through her concerts and workshops. In her recent work, Belloni has developed a one woman show, *Rhythm Is the Cure*, and worked on several cross-cultural productions featuring Thunderbird American Indian Dancers and African and Latin American artists. Her most popular shows are *Rhythm Is the Cure* and *TARANTATA: Dance of the Ancient Spider*, while her latest collaboration with I Giullari di Piazza includes the *Tarantella—Spider Dance* show, which combines Mediterranean rhythms with New Age spirituality through the invocation of ancient rites of fertility. This professional and personal experience has ultimately allowed Belloni to emerge on the international musical scene as an exceptionally gifted and eclectic artist, and a spiritual woman. Belloni’s various honors include the New York State Council on the Arts award, the Italian American Woman of the Year 1996 award, and the Carnahan Jackson Humanities Fund in Women Studies award. A talented singer and dancer, Belloni is an exceptional percussionist. Employing the Southern Italian tambourine style, she rearranges it to create original pieces, or combines it with African and Brazilian percussion rhythms. *Rhythm Is the Cure*, Belloni’s music therapy workshop inspired by the *tarantella* rhythms, has toured worldwide, each time attracting both newcomers and a steady group of followers and friends. In the last few years, Belloni has taught special healing workshops at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, and she has also collaborated with healing specialist Dr. Jose Bittar, both in Italy and in Brazil, to employ dance and percussion for healing purposes (Belloni, *The Alessandra Belloni Website*).
In *Spider Dreams: Ritual and Performance in Apulian Tarantismo and Tarantella* (2004), Italian American scholar Laura Biagi assesses Belloni’s use of *tarantism* myth and symbols in her musical productions and performance. According to Biagi, Belloni has “re-created the ritual of tarantismo to make it suitable to the social context of contemporary New York City. Belloni takes the ritual of tarantismo overseas and adds to its practice the worship of other saint figures that were not present in the ritual as it was practiced in Salento (particularly the cult of the Black Madonna in her many forms, from Southern Italian Madonna de’ Poveri to Brasilian Yemanja)” (276-277). I find Biagi’s reading of Belloni’s appeal to *tarantism* not only appropriate, but also illuminating for Belloni’s work as a whole, and especially her work as a cultural translator. Biagi illustrates the complexity of Belloni’s cultural translation, an act of weaving together such different cultural contexts as Southern Italy, Northern Africa, and Brasil. More importantly, such a composite blend of diverse cultural and spiritual practices ultimately makes Belloni’s performing art into a successful artistic and commercial endeavor. It successfully responds to the current revival of indigenous spirituality in North America, and Western society more in general; to the increasing popularity of world music, and to the current touristicization of Southern Italian folk music both nationally and globally. To measure the extent of this successful enterprise, it is enough to look at Belloni’s yearly, one-week-long *Rhythm Is the Cure* workshop in a Tuscan villa near Florence. Attendees purchase a comprehensive packet including meals, accommodation, and participation in the workshop and other healing practices (Belloni, *The Alessandra Belloni Website*). The Tuscan setting also attracts U.S. and international tourists in search of an exotic, and healing, getaway.
Expanding Biagi’s analysis beyond Belloni’s use of tarantism rituals, here I analyze the ways that Belloni’s tarantella workshop rearranges Southern Italian folk performances—and their cultural contexts—including the tammurriata from the Naples area, re-adapts them for American and international audiences, and reinterprets them according to a New Age perspective. I also argue that Belloni’s work of “cultural translation” offers a privileged perspective for understanding her work as a whole, as well as her experience as an Italian immigrant in the U.S. The dynamics of “culturally translating” between Italy and the U.S. (and vice versa) that are embedded in Belloni’s work raise a number of questions about both Italian and Italian American cultural identities in relation to second-wave feminisms as well as performance and globalization. Therefore, following Gayatri Spivak, I also seek to draw explicit connections between the act of translating and the politics of culture in which the translator (Belloni) and the text (Southern Italian folk music and dances) are inscribed. My focus is on the tensions that inform Belloni’s discursive frameworks, performance practices, and ethnic identification.

Belloni’s performance of Southern Italian folk music contains several elements that can only be loosely defined as translation in the proper sense; such terms as “interpretation” and “adaptation” will be thus employed in this context. Taken as a whole, however, her work represents a complex instance of cultural translation: for one thing, it brings to the fore issues of cultural change related to the Italian scenario and exports them to various linguistically and culturally different scenarios. Moreover, Belloni’s cultural translation is made possible by a much longer historical process of exporting and translating Italian, and in particular Neapolitan, musical culture in the U.S. As Neapolitan folk musician Eugenio Bennato reminds us in “Le leggi musicali della
“tarantella,” the internationally renowned *tarantella*, the only version of *tarantella* known within the Italian American context, represents an already adapted version of Southern Italian folk music. A study of Belloni’s reinterpretation of these Southern Italian rhythms therefore enables us to reflect on the relation between cultural performance, cultural brokerage, and cultural translation. The composite nature of Belloni’s workshop, and of the kind of analysis that is required to understand it, ultimately shows the need for, and encourages a more open and fruitful dialogue among the fields of folklore, performance, and translation.

I also argue that Belloni’s act of cultural translation is embedded in her own bodily enactment of the Southern Italian traditions that occurs in her dance and percussion performances, for the benefit of the American and international audiences. This performance is, in turn, strictly connected to Belloni’s self-definition as both an Italian woman and an Italian artist. Throughout her performance, Belloni constantly combines and negotiates her personal beliefs in the healing power of the *tarantella*, her experience at Southern Italian music festivals, and her own artistic interpretation of Southern Italian folk music and dance. An accurate analysis of Belloni’s work therefore requires also an understanding of Belloni’s *image* as both an artist and a woman.

Several critics have emphasized the many intersections between life writing genres and performance studies theory and practice. Following Judith Butler’s famous notion of “performativity”—the idea that gender, and identity, are historically and culturally constructed, and thus discursive—these critics have shown how in recounting one’s (own) life, the narrator is also actively constructing his/her (own) identity. The “I” narrated through life writing is thus created by an individual who “poses” as that “I” in
front of an audience (Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*). Further developing this connection between life narrative and performance, Sherrill Grace recuperates the performative value of performance and applies it to the analysis of actual theatre events. According to Grace, by investigating the performativity of performance, whose boundaries are vague and whose truth-value is questionable by definition, we can then better grasp the notion of performativity per se. “When the subject of the play is (auto) biographical,” continues Grace, “then it is identity that is being performed. This thing—the self, […] only exists in performance and is new each time a performance is mounted” (76). This intersection between the artist’s agenda and his/her performed identity is crucial, I believe, in understanding Belloni’s self-definition as a representative of Italian culture abroad. By presenting herself as an international carrier of the Italian folk tradition, and by performing samples of that tradition, Alessandra Belloni physically “embodies” (Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*) the many moments of translation and intercultural communication occurring in her workshop, in her concerts and shows, as well as in her life. By constructing her own image as a spiritual woman who helps other women through the spider dance therapy, she also presents herself as a vehicle of both cultural and social change. The process of cultural translation embedded in Belloni’s *tarantella* workshop is therefore enacted through the figure of Belloni, both the artist and the woman.

My analysis of Belloni’s performance is largely based on my work as a coordinator of Belloni’s visits to the UH Mānoa campus between 2006 and 2008, and on my participation in both her workshops and her concert held in Honolulu on April 29, 2006. On all these occasions, like Biagi, I had the opportunity to dance with Belloni
since, as Belloni put it, I was the only one there who knew Southern Italian folk music in its “authentic” form and had familiarity with its cultural tradition. Unlike Biagi, I was not a dancer in 2006. While I was quite familiar with tammurriata festivals when I first met Alessandra Belloni, I first started to dance with her. Therefore, Belloni’s workshops have taken on a very special meaning through these years for me, not only as a folklore and cultural studies scholar, but also as a Southern Italian woman. My active participation in Belloni’s workshops, as well as my personal rediscovery of the healing power of this music, need to be acknowledged in my analysis. As is the case of the Italian American women interviewed by Biagi, my participating in these workshops has also worked as a way to reconnect to my own cultural roots, to cope with my constant home-sickness, and, ironically, to prepare myself to dance at the Italian festivals. Ultimately, this experience has not only sparked my interest in the export of Southern Italian folk music in the U.S., but also significantly shaped my larger project on the current transformation of this musical tradition into a global musical phenomenon.

Equally complex is Belloni’s relationship with the Italian American cultural heritage, even as Italian American communities especially in NYC represent a privileged space for her performance still today. In her analysis of Belloni’s performance, Biagi underlines the importance of the Italian American communities to Belloni’s work, and even defines Belloni as “part of what Italian American folklorist Sabina Magliocco calls folklore reclamation,” that is, a “desire to re-claim and sometimes re-create spiritual practices that were beforehand considered superstitious, emotional, and did not fit the norm of North American Catholicism” (Biagi 275). After interviewing several Italian American women who have participated in Belloni’s tarantella workshops, Biagi
concludes that “Belloni helped restore a link to Italian traditions that most of their families had left behind when they emigrated” (287); more importantly, Biagi notes how “exposure to Southern Italian traditions (through Belloni’s work) gave some of these women a key to reinterpret their past and their present” (290). The bigger lesson for these women therefore consisted in learning about their mothers and grandmothers’ stories, and about their often difficult roles within the Southern Italian patriarchal system, which had in turn led to the rise of the tarantism myth and to its musical tradition.

But to what extent is Belloni’s work to be interpreted within an ethnic framework, so to speak? As Biagi herself points out, Belloni has often underlined her belief in a universal bond among women that resembles more traditional feminist philosophy than an ethnic sense of belonging. This attempt to reach a universal dimension bears an element of translation in itself; a common concern among translation studies scholarship since its inception has been the search for those elements of the language that bear a universal similarity with other languages (Venuti, The Translation Studies Reader). In a very similar move, Belloni tries to move beyond the Italian and the Italian American cultural contexts and toward a more general sense of reciprocal understanding among women all over the world. In addition, both in her concerts and workshops, Belloni constantly underlines her performances to be “authentically Italian,” (as opposed to, say, Italian American) as a way to legitimize the cultural, and commercial, validity of her performances. This co-existing effort toward the authentically Italian and the “universally feminine” ultimately places Belloni’s work in a complex and at times ambiguous position regarding the Italian American cultural heritage.
Reading Belloni’s Workshop as Cultural Translation in Action

When the UH Mānoa French and Italian Division first hosted Belloni’s workshop on April 26, 2006, I did not know what a “tarantella workshop” might look like. As a Southern Italian, my previous knowledge of Southern Italian folk music derived mainly from my participation in the local festivals; therefore in my view, these dances were something to be learned within the space and time of the festival, rather than in a workshop. I also wondered how the local audience might respond to this event, considering its lack of familiarity with Italy’s historical background, and cultural and musical heritage, and given the complex history of the tarantella genre, as illustrated in the first chapter. The only image of tarantella familiar to U.S. audiences is likely to be the commercialized version of seventeenth-century tarantella napoletana still circulating in U.S. Italian American communities. As a Southern Italian from the Naples area and an enthusiastic festival attendee, I was committed to challenge this stereotype by providing the participants with a different image of (Southern) Italian culture, one that reflected its cultural and linguistic diversity.

As Belloni started playing her Southern Italian tambourine and singing Southern Italian folk songs for the workshop participants—a total of about fifty attendees, mostly college students—I was struck by the “exotic,” and yet “realistic,” quality of her performance. Her seductive voice and dancing steps, her provocative looks and laughter, her whole figure was there to create, or confirm, her image as an extremely energetic and passionate woman as well as a seductive “Mediterranean gypsy.” Would such an image challenge the stereotype of exoticism often associated with Italian culture within the U.S. context, or would it only make it stronger? Would Italy remain a far-off, “sensual
paradise” in my students’ eyes after this event? To answer these questions, I believe it is useful to discuss Belloni’s workshop as an act of cultural translation.

The UH Mānoa Southern Italian Drum and Dance Workshop—hosted by the Italian program in the springs of 2006, 2007, and 2008—represented a shortened version of Belloni’s Rhythm Is the Cure workshop; having participated in the full-length version in February 2007 and 2010, I can however testify to the similarities between the two events. Although the UH Mānoa workshop did not feature extensive breathing and relaxation exercise, it surely did involve an overall therapeutic effect through extended group dancing, as suggested by later remarks of many participants. In response to my question, “Can you describe your experience as a workshop participant?” one participant in the 2010 workshop wrote, “Very fun, energetic, positive, joyful, memorable. I shared so many laughs with my four friends and also connected with a few total strangers. I moved all my body, emptied my mind, danced with the beat, listed to Alessandra’s words, and did not care about anybody or anything.” In this sense, the main effect of the workshop on the local audience seems to confirm the audience response in NYC and elsewhere. More importantly, on both occasions Belloni introduced the audience to the historical and cultural significance of the Southern Italian folk music tradition by providing key concepts and historical information. “Can you recall any particular concept or fact related to the history of the tarantella?” I also asked 2010 participants; several of them were able to remember that it originated in agricultural areas and was closely tied to the land.

From both translation and cultural studies perspectives, Belloni’s effort to familiarize the audience with the Southern Italian tradition places her in the role of
cultural translator, someone who introduces a foreign text into a new cultural community, thus explicitly operating at the level of cultural production. Texts written in several Southern Italian dialects would have to be linguistically translated and adapted for a local, continental, and international audience. Belloni’s attempts to adapt Southern Italian myths and symbols to her performance context was evident in her (often odd) comparative use of mythology—the Mediterranean Black Madonna compared to the Hawaiian goddess Pele, for example.

These moments of cultural brokerage in the workshops illustrated Belloni’s role as an official bearer of Southern Italian traditions both in the U.S. and internationally. While Belloni’s public shows extensively feature her own original work as a percussionist and a singer, her workshop includes only songs and rhythms that are part of the Southern Italian tradition and are commonly performed at the festivals in Italy. This attention to what is “traditional,” and her presentation of tradition as something pure and fixed in time, strikingly contrasts with her own perspective on the Italian revival and her declared preference for those cultural expressions that show an effort to continually transform and adapt to changing tastes and times (Del Giudice “Alessandra Belloni”). Belloni herself is now approaching a new phase of experimentation with the tarantella rhythm and dancing through her Tarantella—Spider Dance show, which features what Belloni calls the “techno Tarantella Ecstasy” (Belloni, The Alessandra Belloni Website). Since it does not concur with Belloni’s art philosophy, her focus on tradition in the workshops seemed designed to legitimize her position as an authentic Italian performer in the eyes of a foreign audience.
At this point the engagement between Belloni’s focus on tradition and authenticity and the search for authenticity in the world music discourse comes into play. As Veit Erlmann puts it, “[t]he global musical pastiche is […] an attempt at coating the sounds of the fully commodified present with the patina of use value in some other time and place” (483). Personal anecdotes illustrating Belloni’s experience at Southern Italian festivals and her acquaintance with the local performers work to define her as a genuine representative of this folk tradition and to establish her authority on the matter, thus shifting her role from the artist to the tradition bearer, to the Italian, and to the woman. As is the case for many other cultural performances dealing with traditional knowledge, authenticity seems to be working here more as a slogan. As Smith and Watson discuss in relation to women’s self-representation in performance, “authenticity has become commodified as a cultural capital in the age of confession” (Smith and Watson, Interfaces 3). In discussing autobiographical narratives, Smith and Watson also explain how personal experience, as narrated through one’s (auto) biography, “is anything but merely personal. Mediated through memory and language, ‘experience’ is already an interpretation of the past and of our place in a culturally and historically specific present” (Smith and Watson, Reading Autobiography 24). Because Belloni’s experience is narrated within a performance framework, its performative quality is doubly enhanced, and it becomes difficult to understand where the personal anecdotes end and the performance begins. While it is not my wish to sort out the “authenticity” of Belloni’s experience, it is important to keep in mind the constructed nature of her presentation, and to think of her moments of self-introduction as one of the many layers of translation that occur in her workshop. Following Smith and Watson, we can conclude that it is exactly
the “discursive” nature of experience that allows Belloni to construct herself as an Italian woman knowledgeable in the Southern Italian tradition, and therefore to legitimize her own position both artistically and ethically. Following folklorist Deborah Kapchan, I will call these moments in Belloni’s performance “narratives of epiphany,” that is, “those narratives that translate [...] musical performances into discourses of identity” (Kapchan, Traveling Spirit Masters 180).

One possible explanation for Belloni’s invocation of authenticity is her need to legitimize her own position as a person from Rome who specializes in folk music traditions belonging to different geographical and cultural areas. This is, of course, another marketing issue, since most international workshop participants would not know the difference. But Belloni clearly feels the need to underline the many years she has spent in the South researching, practicing, and contacting the old timers. And indeed, issues of authenticity are in the forefront in the Italian scene, since the current revival has brought several transformations that create numerous debates among practitioners, cultural brokers, and tradition bearers (see Chapter 2). As indicated by Luisa Del Giudice’s oral history, Belloni’s frequent contacts with Italian practitioners and with the Italian festival scene has made her aware of these issues (Del Giudice, “Alessandra Belloni”).

Strictly connected to the image of tradition bearer she seeks to project is Belloni’s use of clothing and accessories—key elements for any performing artist. In both her shows and workshops, Belloni presents herself as what I would call the “imagined Mediterranean gypsy”—her long, pitch-black hair down, her long, flowing skirts, and eccentric jewelry—thus emulating the style of current festival goers throughout Italy,
while also physically embodying the process of cultural translation occurring during her performance. As a matter of fact, the Italian “festival style” that has become popular within the current revival is not so much a traditional style, but rather the product of the current transformations of Southern Italian folk culture. The gypsy clothing, for example, is an adaptation of a wide range of elements, including the American hippie, the Italian underground style, and the dress of Romani people and other Eastern European groups who live at the margins of legality within Italian political borders. It also speaks to the ideal of a Mediterranean culture, and to the need for Southern Italians to construct their identity against the nationalist Italian model and in harmony with the minority groups migrating from the whole Mediterranean area (Cassano). Embedded in Belloni’s gypsy image is thus the complexity of the transformations of Southern Italian culture that are occurring within the Italian revival context.

Her image also performs another act of cultural translation that incorporates American hippie culture into Italian underground culture. The originality of Belloni’s performance, as well as of her act of translation, lies in her ability to transform the current Italian festival style into an essential component of ancient Southern Italian traditions. To the gypsy outfit Belloni adds the colors of the spider dance: white, symbolizing virginal purity, and red, symbolizing the menstrual blood, passion, love, and ritual death. As Belloni states in her workshop, this outfit allows her to pay her respects to the mythological tradition connected to tarantism. Less clear, however, is the reason for the Hawaiian hibiscus that appears on her dark hair to highlight the exotic beauty of the artist and to accentuate the deep colors of her attire. Coming from Waikīkī’s ABC Stores (Belloni has been collecting these Hawaiian flowers for years, ordering bags of them
every time she comes back to Hawai‘i), the artificial flower seems to suggest not only the pervasive globalization of culture, but also a bizarre intercultural fusion between two famously exotic places in the eyes of both American and international audiences—Hawai‘i and Italy.

But while capitalizing on an exotic image of herself, Belloni also conveys what is in the eyes of her international audience all the exoticism of Southern Italian culture, as it often appears to the American imagination. Belloni’s representation of Italy as exotic is confirmed by her summer workshop. Set in a luxurious Renaissance Tuscan villa near the Chianti vineyard area, the workshop promises to fully deliver a luscious experience of Italy—the one most often portrayed in films and TV shows about Italy, like the comedy *Under the Tuscan Sun*—where Tuscany as a synecdoche equals Italy, and where everybody is rich, happy, and owns a gorgeous balcony from which to observe the lush countryside while sipping a high-quality wine. This metonymic image of Italy—which excludes Naples, Sicily, and so many other less touristic places—is problematic since it not only portrays a “staged” version of Southern Italy (McCannell), but also ends up silencing the reality behind the myth, which has to do with the difficult living situation for people in Italy, and especially in the South, today. In this sense, Belloni mis-translates Southern Italy to the eyes of her U.S. audiences. This exotic image ultimately seems to work well within the world music scene, and especially within the New Age culture of the U.S. This is confirmed by the wide participation of New Age followers in her Honolulu workshop, and especially in her Modern Renaissance Show, held in downtown Honolulu on April 29, 2006. Here Belloni is consciously mediating, and culturally translating, between different codes, spiritualities, and frameworks. To successfully
“translate” Southern Italian folk music into world music codes, Belloni’s *tarantella* performance projects an exotic, and thus problematic, image of (Southern) Italy—the land of wine, passion, and erotic dance practices (Belloni, “Workshop”)—while at the same time claiming this particular version of *tarantella* to be “truly” authentic. As one 2010 workshop participant from Japan put it, “I think if I had just seen Belloni alone somewhere and didn't have the input that her dance was indeed ‘Southern Italian’ I would have just thrown it into one of the many ‘exotic-ethnic-feminine’ styles of dance like the Brazilian samba, Turkish belly dance, etc.”

But in employing a performative, discursive image of Italian culture and of the artist, Belloni’s performance also ends up silencing the artist’s own history as an Italian immigrant to the U.S. An inconvenient midway stage between her country of origin and her acceptance as an American citizen, Belloni’s immigrant history—which in turn echoes the longer history of Italians in the U.S.—would not only undermine her knowledge of Italian culture, but also the uniqueness of her performance. As stated on the Artist Page of her official website, Belloni defines herself as “the only woman in the U.S. and in Italy who specializes in Southern Italian percussion combined with ritual dances and singing.” While the examples I illustrated earlier in this chapter clearly contradict or at least date this statement, Belloni’s focus on the uniqueness of her own *tarantella* performance ultimately distances her not only from other Italian American women who also work with Southern Italian rhythms, but also from Italian artists who operate within the current folk music revival.

As Laura Biagi puts it, “[t]he artist does not seem to locate her work as part of neo-tarantism. The way she markets her ritual interpretation is as an ‘original practice’
which nevertheless, she modifies to suit the needs of contemporary women in New York City, the United States, and other countries around the world” (261-262). Furthermore, from a translation studies perspective, Belloni’s need to prove her own work to be authentic and unique ends up fixing the multiple translations and interpretations of Southern Italian folk music that are occurring both in Italy and in the U.S. into a single, “official translation,” just as it works with the canonization of foreign texts once their translation is accepted as the official one (Venuti, “Translation”).

The workshop format itself represents an adaptation of the Italian festival scene—where participants learn to play the tambourine, to sing, and to dance from expert practitioners—into the Anglo-American cultural environment, where professionalism and specialization are key concerns. In the meantime, however, workshops are getting popular in Italy as well, so Belloni’s work is indeed part of the larger context of neotarantism. Through the workshop format Belloni is able to communicate a Southern Italian tradition to American and international markets, at the same time (and in the same way) that Italian practitioners are importing the workshop format into the Italian context as a way to popularize, educate, and often commercialize the Southern folk music tradition. This is to say that translation here works both ways: not only are Americans embracing the exoticism of Southern Italian music and dances, but festival goers in Italy are now adapting cultural models that are foreign to the Southern Italian tradition in order to make sure that this tradition can live today in a new, “modernized” form. This example demonstrates what several translation studies and cultural studies critics are now emphasizing: that translation should be intended not just as a transfer of cultural meanings from one language and culture to another, but also as a contribution to the
production and transformation of cultural forms. But if translation is a form of cultural production, then the study of the dynamics of cultural transformation, crucial to folklore scholarship, is also a study of translation.

A particularly interesting aspect of Belloni’s interpretation of the Southern Italian tradition relates to her dance choreographies. Choreography takes a central role in the workshops: by learning and practicing dance steps, participants are able to immerse themselves in the *tarantella* rhythm and its healing power. They are also able to actively engage with and experience the Southern Italian cultural traditions. Furthermore, it is especially through her choreographies that Belloni presents her own body as a vehicle of intercultural communication, thus creating an image of herself as a cultural translator. In her workshops, Belloni makes sure to illustrate the various styles included in the Southern Italian tradition; here the *tarantella* appears in all its complexity and geographical specificity together with other styles that are now popular within the Italian festival scene, such as the *pizzica* from the Salento area and the *tammurriata* from Naples. As one 2010 workshop participant from Northern Italy also put it, “Italy is a diverse country, where each region, each city, even each village has distinct dialect, traditions, instruments, music, dances, sense of aesthetic. The workshop confirmed that internal diversity.” But as a matter of fact, the actual choreographies employed in the workshops are the result of a complex process of rearrangement, and are only loosely based on their “original” versions.

I will now briefly analyze Belloni’s reinterpretation of the *tammurriata*. More than a single set of dance movements, the *tammurriata* includes a range of choreographies, even when the rhythm and melodies are the same. The *tammurriata* is in
fact danced differently in different towns and villages in the Naples area, each style
taking the name of the place it originates from: the Giuglianesi, from the town of
Giugliano, the Pimontese, from the small town of Pimonte, and the Avvocata, from the
Maiori area on the Amalfi coast, are only some of the most popular dancing styles. This
variety in turn reflects the extremely local quality of this dance, and the place-specific
knowledge it carries with it. The \textit{tammurriata} featured in Belloni’s workshops, on the
contrary, combines a whole range of steps that belong to different styles, and to different
areas, into a single choreography. This change can be partly explained by logistics; at the
same time, Belloni’s unacknowledged rearrangement of the \textit{tammurriata} steps is
problematic, since it creates a new dance, a translated text in the proper sense, which has
no direct connection with the Neapolitan context, and therefore has lost some of its
cultural significance. From a translation studies perspective, it is possible to conclude that
what is lost in Belloni’s workshop is what Spivak calls the “rhetoricity”: in other words,
the richness and specificity—linguistic, cultural, and historical—of the source text
(Spivak, “The Politics of Translation”). The richness consists, in this case, in the geo-
cultural dimension of the \textit{tammurriata} dance; that is, the local knowledge inscribed in it.
The artist’s silence about these changes also reminds us that “[w]orld music labels are
highly informative about the musical source of their releases, about local musical
traditions, genres, and practices, but they are highly uninformative about their own
activities” (Frith 321). Because the main marketing strategy of world music lies in the
notion of authenticity, it is better not to mention the role of any intermediate passages
between the way that this music is produced in its original context and the way it is
presented to the global market. Being able to market her own version of \textit{tarantella} as the
“authentic” one thus inevitably leads Belloni to leave out her own work as a reinterpreter of this dance genre for an international audience.

Furthermore, some of the steps featured in the *tammurriata* choreography seem to have been created from scratch by Belloni. These steps have been arranged to appear toward the end of the choreography to form its special finale, and include several close interaction movements between the two dancers. By inserting these steps, Belloni is able to increase the erotic quality of the dance, and therefore to confirm the stereotype of Italy as an exotic land of passion, where people are able to leisurely spend their time engaged in pleasurable activities. My students’ reactions to the dance testify to the resilience of this stereotype—and the role of Belloni’s workshop in confirming it. An article appearing in the UH student paper *Ka Leo*, soon after the 2007 workshop, was entitled “Pagan-Catholic Dance takes a Spin” (Sherreitt). This focus on the sensual exoticism of Southern Italy was particularly evident in Belloni’s workshop held on the UH campus on February 13, 2010 near Valentine’s Day. Focusing her attention mostly on the *tammurriata*, Belloni made sure to highlight the particularly erotic quality of the dance and invited the workshop participants to picture it this way. In response to my questionnaire on the participants’ experience in Belloni’s 2010 workshop, several participants confirmed the success of this marketing strategy. Answering my question, “What did you learn about Southern Italian folk music in this workshop?” A male graduate student from England stated: “That sexuality and its expression is a large part of the dance.”

In his study of Southern Italian folk music, Roberto De Simone argues that the couple dance format should not by any means be associated with a graphical representation of a man-woman relationship (*Canti e tradizioni*). For De Simone, this
element is not part of this folk dance tradition. Following De Simone, Italian ethnomusicologist Giuseppe Gala points out how the current sexualized choreographies of the tarantella genre, which are occurring even in the Italian context, are ultimately the echo of an “interpretation of tourist origin,” and how reducing the tarantella to an erotic dance takes away from other important aspects of these dances, such as the ritual and symbolic aspects. Therefore, Belloni’s reductive representation of the tammurriata as a particularly exotic dance echoes the contemporary reduction of the tammurriata image that is often visible in the context of the Italian revival. Moments like this one help make Belloni’s act of translation a very complex one.

**Drawing Some (Tentative) Conclusions**

As confirmed by my role as participant-observant in Belloni’s tarantella workshop, as well as by some workshop participants, Belloni’s endeavor is in some ways problematic, since, as Biagi puts it, here “Southern Italy becomes another flag to put on the map of world music sites, another place of ‘otherness’” (284). Indeed, several elements confirm the artist’s effort to transform Southern Italy into another “ethnic” place. In her instructional book, titled *Rhythm Is the Cure. Southern Italian Tambourine* (2007), Belloni not only provides current and future students with musical notations and even an instructional DVD on the Southern Italian tambourine styles, but also establishes herself as a healer by recounting her own life journey in contact with the tarantella rhythms. Belloni’s reinterpretation of Southern Italian culture according to New Age codes is evident already in the first chapter, where the artist describes Southern Italians as people with a “rich folklore directly connected to their agricultural life and to the Earth”
(Rhythm Is the Cure 9), or the major drummers as having “knowledge of the […] Earth” (9). It is true that knowledge of the land is a central element to the Southern Italian folk music tradition, including the *tammurriata*; moreover, as Roberto De Simone suggests, the *tammurriata* cultural tradition that has survived until today bears within it several elements of popular religion, even as it officially links these magic-ritualistic aspects to the cult of the Catholic Madonna figure. However, while embracing these “magic-ritualistic origins” in her work (11), Belloni takes a further step; in particular, by using the term “earth” with a capital “e” she transforms the Southern Italian land into a sacred space sharing similarities with that of Native Hawaiians and other indigenous cultures. This semantic shift ultimately indicates a cultural shift from a local knowledge of the peasant world to its nostalgic reclamation. It is safe to argue that not many Southern Italians would ever refer to the land as the (sacred) “Earth.” Even granted that nostalgia is a natural feeling happening in any process of cultural transformation, a big lesson we have learned from indigenous cultures, and from studying Native Hawaiian culture in my case, is that this sense of nostalgia for a pristine, indigenous culture is suspicious, as it often ends up perpetuating a colonial attitude consisting of the commodification of indigenous ways of looking at the world.

As part of this New Age reframing, Belloni also revitalizes the pre-Christian aspects of Southern Italian folk music. This process of reinterpretation is equally complex and problematic. On the one hand, as a self-professed New Age healer, Belloni is uncovering some cultural aspects that have been occluded by centuries of Catholic and patriarchal cultural domination, and especially women’s knowledge and histories. The very first page of Belloni’s book presents images of ancient female drummers from
several parts of the Mediterranean, as a way to send the reader back in time to an age when women performed a rather strong political and social role. Belloni’s “Historical Background” helps set the leitmotiv of the book: “lifting” the veil of patriarchal repression. As already suggested by Biagi, this element also confirms Belloni’s participation in the Neo-Paganism ideas currently holding sway among several liberal Italian American scholars. As Italian folklorist Sabina Magliocco states in her study of Italian American witchcraft reclamation, “[w]hat distinguishes folklore reclamation from similar forms of cultural revival is its focus on forms, elements, and even words formerly marginalized, silenced, and discredited by the dominant culture” (198).

On the other hand, in describing Southern Italian dances from a pre-Christian perspective, Belloni is also erasing a rich cultural heritage that is strongly connected to both peasant and Catholic cultures. As a matter of fact, Belloni’s description of this music, while briefly acknowledging the current way of doing folk music in Italy, underscores those aspects that make it more interesting from a popular religious perspective. For example, in both her book and her workshops she discusses the ancient Greek origins of this music as well its healing power. In her workshop, she talks about the sensual aspects of these dances. She also highlights the ancient role of women drummers. Belloni is not alone in this; New Age spirituality cuts and pastes, often randomly, from several cultures, often without properly contextualizing each borrowed element (Ho’omanawanui). For example, in her Valentine’s-Day-inspired 2010 workshop, Belloni connected the image of the Black Madonna directly with the Greek myth of Cybele, but did not pay much attention to the importance of the Madonna figure in contemporary Italian Catholic culture. Thus, even as it recuperates the woman
perspective of this musical tradition, this reinterpretation of Southern Italian folk music erases important cultural layers from the land of *tarantella*. Because the culture that Belloni is trying to revitalize is strictly connected to the land, the erasure of the peasant culture embedded in the *pizzica* and especially in the *tammurriata* becomes even more problematic.

However, it is also important to keep in mind that the transformation of these rhythms occurs at the same time as the Italian music scene is going through a strong revival, and consequent transformation of the Southern Italian folk music and dance traditions. As a result, on the one hand, these international performances present a version of the *tarantella* genre that is very different from its “traditional” versions; on the other hand, they echo the current transformations of the *tarantella* tradition in the Italian context, such as the increasingly active participation of women drummers. As Laura Biagi points out in relation to Belloni’s use of *tarantism* rituals:

> Despite “feeling like a tarantata,” Belloni is not Salentine nor does she have a Salentine family. However, not unlike some Salentine artists in the second wave of revival, what attracts Belloni to both *tarantella* and *tarantism* is its reclamation, re-creation, re-invention, re-establishment and transformation to fit the new needs of local (New York City) and/or global communities (world music or […] the community of women at large). (282)

In other words, Belloni’s personal interpretation of the *tammurriata* dance occurs at the same time as festival goers and young practitioners in Italy are adapting the *tammurriata* tradition to the current cultural framework by introducing slight variations and especially a much more explicit sensuality of looks and movements.
This original twist on Belloni’s dance performance resembles other aspects of her workshop, such as her skilled use of the tammorra drum to accompany her performance of tammurriata songs. Over the last thirty years, Belloni has developed her own tambourine style and applied it to several Southern Italian musical styles. By constructing her own image as a female drum performer, Belloni has consciously recuperated the pre-Christian aspects of the Southern Italian tradition, where the drummers were mostly women (Belloni, Rhythm Is the Cure), while also showing her indebtedness to recent Italian and Italian American feminist scholarship (Magrini, Music and Gender). In reflecting on Southern Italian tarantism, for example, Italian ethnomusicologist Tullia Magrini shared her desire to recuperate the pizzica or “spider dance” as a moment of liberation for Italian women today (“The Contribution”).

Borrowing from postmodern translation theory, it is therefore possible to conclude that Belloni’s tammurriata performance and her workshop as a whole encourage the transformation of the source text—the Southern Italian folk music tradition—on a sociopolitical level (Bhabha), and that this transformation is achieved by choosing a feminist reading of it (Simon). Borrowing from folklore studies scholarship, we can conclude that Belloni’s performance embodies the ongoing transformations of Southern Italian culture as well as the dynamic nature of folklore texts, which are constantly available for new cultural, social and political meanings, rather than being fixed in one, authentic past.

Viewed in this light, Belloni’s interpretation of the tammurriata operates on multiple levels: it reduces the cultural significance of the dance by simplifying the richness of its place-specific knowledge; it reflects, and extends to another continent, the
current transformations of the *tammurriata* tradition that are operating within the Italian festival scene; and at the same time it capitalizes on the often exotic image of Italian culture present in the U.S. and other international communities. The complexity of Belloni’s workshop ultimately precludes a unified reading of its cultural significance. Because it mediates between different cultures, and because it reflects the deep changes ongoing in the Italian folk music scenario, Belloni’s performance effectively translates this musical tradition; at the same time it commercializes Southern Italian folk music and dances for the benefit of an international market.

To complete the picture of Belloni’s workshop, it is also important to add a few words on the social value of Belloni’s overall project, as well as on her art philosophy and personal beliefs. Having been in contact with Belloni for five years, and having participated in her workshops and attended her concert, I can testify to her incredible energy, and to her strong dedication to making this musical tradition known to people all over the world. Having attended her workshops during difficult personal times, I can also testify to the healing power of the *tarantella*, and to Belloni’s genuine effort to help other women through musical therapy sessions. On a strictly methodological level, when it comes to the *tarantella* one cannot separate the study of this tradition from its effect on the body and the spirit—following Donna Haraway’s idea, knowledge is always bodily and culturally situated. For the same reason, one cannot separate Belloni’s workshop from Alessandra Belloni, the woman and the artist. In both formal and informal interviews, Belloni narrates her self-healing experience following a cancer diagnosis, and declares her commitment to help other women cope with disease through group healing sessions featuring extensive singing and dancing. She also narrates how devotion to the
Mediterranean Black Madonna guides both her work and life philosophy. And following Smith and Watson’s discussion of the role of experience in life writing, we need to remember that, although experience is discursive and culturally inscribed, “there are human experiences outside discursive narratives—feelings of the body, feelings of spirituality, powerful sensory memories of events and images” (Smith and Watson, *Interfaces* 26). It is by making meaning out of these events and feelings, by making them into experience, Smith and Watson continue, that we make them into discourse. The act of translation, an act of communicating between two or more cultures, is a natural trigger for such a mechanism. In translating we inevitably reflect and make judgments about the meaning that our experiences have for us and can have for our audience.

What is more, Belloni’s *tarantella* project has developed a woman’s perspective on the Southern Italian tradition that is only starting to emerge in the Italian festival scene. As confirmed by my participant observation of the *tammurriata* festivals in Italy and my interviews with Southern Italian performers and participants, throughout my grandmother’s generation, women would rarely attend the festivals and even when they learned to sing, dance, and play the tambourine, they would rarely show their ability in public—except, as my grandma puts it, if you were one of those “loose” women.\(^58\) Thus, even if these women participated in this musical culture in the private spaces of their houses or courtyards, their presence was officially ignored or denigrated by the patriarchal culture of both their husbands and male performers. As a result, my grandmother and mother’s generations have lost familiarity with the image of women drummers, and have learned to identify chanters and drummers as male. While this scenario in now changing, and more and more women can be spotted singing and playing

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\(^{58}\) Informal conversation, summer 2007.
at the festivals, the tradition bearers are still identified as male (see Chapter 2). Belloni’s feminist perspective, therefore, is achieved not only through the workshop format, which enables her to restore the therapeutic function of the spider dance for women, but also through her own percussion performance. By capitalizing on the healing power of the tarantella, and by developing her own style of percussion, Belloni ultimately seeks to reach women of different ages, languages, and cultures, both in Italy and internationally. As one female participant in the 2010 workshop puts it,

I love dancing and I think there’s something common underlying all dances across cultures that women, especially, are more capable of tapping into. […] I think it’s great to be able to share that ‘universal’ experience and the ‘particular’ style of femininity of dancing, not to mention the bond I share with other women who are equally passionate about expressing themselves through the medium of dance!

While striving to reach women worldwide, Belloni ultimately performs a complex act of cultural translation combining cultural brokerage, commercialization, and social change.
Conclusion

In the last chapter I analyzed Alessandra Belloni's tarantella performance from a translation perspective and also suggested the complexity of such a translation project, as Belloni attempts to negotiate among several and conflicting representations of Southern Italian folk music and culture. Given the challenges inherent to Belloni's translation project, I am left with the following questions: how do you represent tarantella outside (Southern) Italy? In other words, how do you translate tarantella for a global audience?

I also illustrated how the complexity of Belloni's project derives in part from her own artistic persona, and from her own performance as a Southern Italian woman and artist. In so far as her role as a cultural translator affects the representation of Southern Italy offered by her tarantella workshop, Belloni's positionality and ethics play an equally important role as De Martino and De Simone’s, given their role as recorders and scholars of Southern Italian folk music for a national audience, and as my own, since I study the revival and translate it, both linguistically and culturally, for a U.S. academic audience. In representing the musical and cultural world of the tarantella for national and/or global audiences, the performer, the folklorist, the popularizer, the cultural critic, and the intellectual are not only structurally affected by our positionalities in relation to the topic of our study, but should reflect on it and our agency. In the study of folk cultures, a major risk lurking behind our projects is that of romanticizing and/or exoticizing the folk, and as I have illustrated throughout this study, neither the folklorist, the performer, or the intellectual can easily keep away from such a romanticizing attitude.

Problems of representation have consistently been central to both folklore studies and cultural studies scholarship, given the attention paid in both fields to the cultural
expressions of the marginalized groups of society. This focus on the marginal reached Italian scholarship in the earlier part of the twentieth century through the work of Antonio Gramsci, whose main concern, as expressed in the *Prison Notebooks*, was over what he saw as a “split between the people and the intellectuals” (*Selections* 168). This reflection ultimately led him to a new conception of the intellectual, which was based on the assumption that “the intellectual function cannot be separated from productive work in general” (275). But reflecting on the role of the intellectual also led Gramsci to consider the role of folklore within both cultural and political spheres. According to Gramsci, the intellectual’s role was in fact crucial in helping the people “regain importance” (168), and this placing of the people (also to be understood as groups or communities) at the center of the intellectual endeavor meant giving new importance to the marginal, the repressed, the local. Gramsci’s attention to folklore, conceived as the culture of the lower classes, therefore developed out of his Marxist political orientation, while at the same time inaugurating the study of folklore within Italian Marxist scholarship.

This concern about giving voice to the culture of the marginalized groups, which has characterized folklore studies scholarship since its inception, still remains central to folklore studies today. Yet, the history of this discipline offers many examples of folklore studies that declared to give voice to the people, but in the actual practice often constructed these voices according to the folklorist’s perspective. A case in point is the Brothers Grimm’s nineteenth-century folklore scholarship. As documented by German scholar Heinz Rölleke in the 1970s and further analyzed by Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs, the Grimms were constantly concerned with authenticity when they transcribed oral texts and transformed them into collections of folktales; however, they did make
many stylistic changes and revisions. It was exactly these stylistic additions, such as
direct discourse, that helped to make the texts “authentic” in the eyes of the collectors and
their readers, when in reality no real peasant had been interviewed by the Grimms, but
only middle-class families that often knew the story from previous publications (212-
214). This practice ultimately reveals the Grimms’ central concern with building an
idealized image of what “the folk” said or what they felt.

This paradox, inherent in the early formulation of folklore studies in nineteenth-
century Europe, is confirmed by Gramsci’s view of folklore. While capitalizing on the
crucial role of the marginal classes within Italy’s society and advocating a renewed
interest in these classes’ “conception of the world,” he also reminds us that “this
conception of the world is not elaborated and systematic because, by definition, the
people […] cannot possess conceptions which are elaborated, systematic and politically
organized and centralized in their albeit contradictory development” (Selections 189).
This contradiction is explained away in Gramsci’s view by the need to understand the
people’s conception of the world in order to help them move beyond it, to educate them,
and in this way contribute to the construction of a national consciousness, while
maintaining a cosmopolitan dialogue with other nations. In doing so he also constructs a
rather negative and limited conception of the folk, which deeply influenced several
generations of Italian folklorists. My brief examination of De Martino’s 1961 study of
tarantism in the first chapter asserted both De Martino’s indebtedness to Gramsci’s
thought and his belief that the “backward” Southern folk culture was a sign of the lack of
social and cultural development in the region.
Both 1970s and 1990s tarantella scholarship, which are deeply influenced by Italian Marxism and by Gramsci’s thought, certainly moved beyond Gramsci’s conception of folklore only to embrace an overly positive image of the South and of tarantella. This leads me to ask how their understanding of Southern Italian folklore takes into consideration questions of agency and appropriation. De Simone’s 1979 study of the tammurriata, which first made available the folk culture of the Campania region to a national and middle-class audience, was informed by a much more positive notion of the folk than De Martino’s one. And yet, local performers and old timers were and are very aware of the distance separating them from De Simone’s intellectual position, as he translated the tammurriata song lyrics from Neapolitan dialect into standard Italian, and interpreted the peasant world of the tammurriata for the Italian urban middle-class. As I illustrated throughout my analysis of the current festival scene, a nostalgic return to the land and to the peasant culture of the South is embedded in the extensive participation in the current festivals of young urbanites from the upper/middle classes, in the same way as it was in the 1970s revival. These elements raise important questions regarding not only the role of folklore within Italy’s social formation but also the roles of both the intellectual and local communities and interest groups within the current socio-political structure of Italy. Looking at Italian folklore scholarship thus confirms that the representation of the Southern folk and their cultural expressions has constantly gone hand in hand with its romanticization. Even as contemporary scholars of tarantella recount the history of the Italian South as a post-colonial location, they confirm such an attitude in their embracing an often mystified Mediterranean identity.
In the last forty years, in both folklore and cultural studies European and U.S scholars have consciously moved away from such a romanticizing notion of the folk not only by deconstructing the notions of the folk and of the popular these disciplines constructed and relied on, but also by exposing the ideological filter through which we perceive these two groups. As a result, folklorists have come to replace the word folk with either “small groups,” “communities,” or “networks,” focusing on the communicative, linguistic, and performative aspects of folklore (Bronner) as “expressive culture.” From a cultural studies perspective, Stuart Hall states that “there is no whole, authentic, autonomous 'popular culture' which lies outside the field of force of the relations of cultural power and domination” (Notes 232). His observation reminds us not only that we should not attribute a truth-value to the popular, but also that, once again, the different representations of the popular have historically been produced within different ideological frameworks, and thus none of them has a truly “authentic” value.

Argentinean anthropologist Garcia Canclini also speaks of the need to “deconstruct the scientific and political operations that staged the popular” (146). For Canclini, the problem with the representation of the popular is that it is always “staged.” He also explains that “three currents play roles in this theatricalization: folklore, the culture industry, and political populism. In the three cases we will see the popular as something constructed rather than as preexistent” (146). Canclini’s words are important because they remind us of the importance of folklore practices for cultural studies scholarship. They also suggest that, although local and marginal knowledges are now given renewed attention within globalization, they are actually staged versions of those knowledges. The romanticization of the folk that often comes with the revival is thus
only another face of staging the folk. As I have suggested throughout this study, I agree with Canclini’s analysis, and I also agree that the staging of the folk and its dynamics need to be taken fully into account in order to uncover and understand their ideological mechanism; that is, who is staging the folk, for whom, and to what ends. However, I don’t believe that the act of staging is always negative per se. I argue that these practices become problematic when they create a mystified image of the local culture that either paves the way for or confirms common stereotypes about that given culture.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the world music scene. A much discussed aspect of world music concerns the claims of authenticity that usually come with the world music package, and that advertizes this music’s special value within the contemporary globalized market as a more “truthful” and “organic” musical expression. As Timothy Taylor puts it, among the discursive strategies of world music is “the use of language that emphasizes the diversity of the music, its freshness” as well as “new sounds, musics and musicians unpolluted by the market system of the late capitalist west” (19). “Consumers at the traditional metropoles,” he explains, “look toward the former margins for anything real, rather than the produced” (22). But as Frith reminds us, “the authentic” work[s] in retail terms as a redescription of the exotic” (320), and “in the context of the denunciation of Western pop artifice and decadence . . . the authentic itself becomes the exotic (and vice versa)” (320). In other words, by exhibiting and marketing previously marginalized sounds as authentic, the world music label also inevitably reinforces stereotypical images of exoticism associated with those sounds. In the case of Southern Italian folk music, it ends up reinforcing the image of the South as the Italian Other. Of course, this is not to say that local traditions should not be globally displayed.
Rather, it reminds us to ask who gets to narrate the folk and/or the South, and, more importantly, how should he/she do it.

I will now return to Eugenio Bennato’s performance of the song “Grande Sud” at the Sanremo Festival on February 2008, which represents an important example of the national and global display of the tarantella as supported by a local musician. As I illustrated in the previous chapter, Bennato's increasing popularity within the national and global music scenes can be looked at as a point of departure from the local and a move toward the “ethnic” marketed by the world music label. I have also illustrated, however, how the powerful rhetoric embedded in his songs about the South still makes his music crucial to narrating the South today.

When Neapolitan folk musician Eugenio Bennato, the biggest name of the current tarantella revival, participated in the Sanremo Festival, a national venue for Italian pop songs since the 1950s, his participation was widely noted by the media. Bennato had in fact finally managed to “bring the taranta” to the Sanremo Festival. Watching the tarantella music and dances performed on the Sanremo stage was definitely a first, and it also meant that the popularity of the tarantella revival had now reached the larger, mainstream stage of Italian music. A live show with millions of audience, the Sanremo Festival continues to be one of the most watched and discussed shows on Italian TV. Thus, for musicians and singers, performing at Sanremo means that their music acquires nation-wide resonance; it means that their songs are going to be part of the larger imaginary of Italian song. In terms of performance, this carries great responsibility but also professional opportunities for a musician associated with a more local scene, along with the possibility for the local folk musician to become nationally visible. While
confined by the TV and national fest protocols, Bennato’s staged and televised performance thus also enabled the representation as presence or visibility within the culture industry of both Southern Italian and Mediterranean musicians.

What makes this appearance especially important to this study is Bennato’s choice to perform a song titled “Grande Sud,” which is written and sung by a Southern musician and explicitly narrates the South for a national audience. Thus the performance of this song on the Sanremo stage becomes an important site to visualize the tarantella revival and analyze what happens to the tarantella when it is transformed for national consumption. Looking on YouTube, I found two different videos of this performance, one by Bennato and his choir and another one, mainly performed by him and his wife-musical partner, Pietra Montecorvino. In the first version, Bennato plays his acoustic guitar and sings, accompanied by a pizzica tambourine player; a choir of African and Southern Italian voices sing in their respective languages—the Italian ones both in Italian and dialect—while one of the Italian singers also dances pizzica on the stage. The second performance, instead, features Bennato and Montecorvino singing together at the center stage, but they are soon joined by a Mediterranean-looking musician singing in his local language and performing a sort of rap at the center stage. Bennato’s choices in both performances, featured on different nights of the Festival, reveals not only the many connections between narrating the South and narrating the Mediterranean, but also that, at the center stage of an Italian music festival, Southern Italians and other peoples from the Mediterranean can in fact perform together. This means not only that they both get represented on the national and world music scenes, but also that the Southern and the

Mediterranean are in dialogue with one another in performance, and that at least in that show this dialogue was not flattened into the myth of them being the same. Contrary to the homogenizing notion of the “ethnic” offered by the world music label, this performance also reminds us that “ethnicity […] is located in a place, in specific history. It could not speak except out of a place, out of those histories” (Hall, “The Local and the Global” 21-22). By sharing the stage with other Mediterranean voices who tell their own story, as Southern Italians narrate their own story, and by showing respect for linguistic and cultural differences, Bennato’s use of the world music stage remains a very powerful and critical one.

Even as we stage the *tarantella* (or “the popular,” “the folk,” and “the local”) through global performances, therefore, we can still exercise agency in narrating its history, and in striving to convey its linguistic and cultural specificity. The result will always be a translated and transformed version of the local *tarantella*, but it can also become a valuable new socio-cultural project with an important social impact, especially given the troubled conditions of Mediterranean immigrants living in Italy today.

Another point to reflect on in this discussion is that, even when these romanticized ideas of the folk, the popular, and the local are deconstructed in scholarship, as I illustrated in the case of the *tammurriata* revival, local performers and audiences often still cling themselves to notions of the folk, place, and tradition as something fixed in time. While for performers and cultural brokers the claim to authenticity works both as a marketing strategy (as in Belloni’s case) and as a political move aimed at receiving funds from the local and national authorities, for many Southern locals who have grown up with the traditional *tammurriata* festivals these festivals tend to be the only way to
celebrate the *tammurriata*. How should the folklorist and intellectual deal with such a complex network of experiences, interests, and values?

A scholarly answer comes from folklorist Dorothy Noyes’s analysis of the Italian Market Festival in downtown Philadelphia. Here she shows how folk groups are often extremely heterogeneous unities, where different members have different ideas about what the group is about, what connects group members together, and who belongs or doesn’t belong to it. Noyes concludes that groups are, in fact, an “invention” as much as communities and nations are, and that, although we (folklorists) may, in theory, believe in their integrity, “working ethnographically, we are aware of the fragility of the group concept put to the test” (449). Foregrounding this fragility of a constructed “whole” and mapping the overlapping networks in which people are implicated thus becomes a significant part of the ethnographic project.

Another way in which this problem of representation has been dealt with in the scholarly sphere is by moving towards more auto-ethnographic types of research, that is, towards an either personal and/or situated perspective that allows for a deeper understanding of the topic studied. However, as shown in the last chapter, being Italian or having spent many years in the South does not solve the problem of representation in Belloni's case, nor do my participation in her workshop and familiarity with the *tarantella* dancing. Even as I employ an auto-ethnographic approach, I am not able to *fully* discern, and make sense of, my double roles as an outsider-scholar and a local woman. As a local, I cannot but cling to the genuine quality of the local festivals. How can I speak about my South without clinging to its authenticity?
Yet, as I translate Southern cultural traditions for foreign/global audiences, I am aware and hopeful of, not only the social implications but also the social impact of my work, how it contributes to comparative—Italian and American—folklore and cultural studies. As I suggest in the introduction, several factors motivated me to conduct this study; first, the need to provide U.S. academic and cultural audiences with a local perspective on the *tammurriata*, one that takes into consideration the place-specific knowledge and community values embedded in this folk dance tradition. By illustrating this perspective, I hoped to provide a deeper, more historically and culturally layered, understanding of the *tammurriata* than the one displayed by world music, while at the same time reminding myself and my Southern Italian readers that our local perspectives, far from being the only valuable and authentic ones, are in fact multiple, dynamic, and as ideologically-driven as national and global perspectives. Furthermore, as a Southern Italian writing for a U.S. audience, I am committed to challenging the idealized image of Italian culture constantly reiterated by U.S. popular culture generally, and by centuries of Italian music in particular, and to highlight the historical, cultural, and linguistic complexity of Italy. While I am aware of how other scholars and myself have limitations as both linguistic and cultural translators, our social, cultural or aesthetic, and political investment is an inherent part of our work, and it does play an important role in the struggle that any affirmation or translation of cultural tradition is going to entail.

As cultural translators work at the conjuncture of local specificity and global reception, we should especially reflect on and treasure Gramsci’s lesson about the important task of the intellectual in the larger cultural and political spheres. This task, I suggested in relation to the current *tammurriata* festival scene in Italy, is ultimately one
entailing responsibility, towards both the local communities we are translating from and the international/global audiences we are writing for. Drawing on Noyes’ working definition of “tradition” as the “transfer of responsibility for a valued practice or performance” (“Tradition” 234), I would say that as we translate cultural traditions we need to constantly “assum[e] our responsibility to our own past and our own hoped-for future” and remind ourselves that, even as it is “[u]navoidably constrained by its own dispersed and often stigmatized tradition, our accumulated disciplinary knowledge offers some insight into the nature of hand-to-hand transfers” (249). Here I have tried to fulfill this responsibility by addressing the multivocality of the tarantella traditions, by providing examples of different ways of translating the tarantella for a global audience, and by addressing the risks of flattening these diverse representations of tarantella into one, canonic translation.
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