

## Folk Songs: Spaces and Reasons. *Ruga*, Love, Marriage, Departures

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ABSTRACT. This essay sheds light on habits, behaviours, and social practices by focusing on Southern Italian youth and their songs; more specifically, it deals with Calabria in the years between 1850 and the 1900s. Such samples – relics to us – allow us to infer how men and women of that generation communicated within the archaic and highly hierarchical society in which they lived. Sometimes through singing the youth of Southern Italy found a way to bypass prohibitions and to say what could not be normally said in everyday life. Since it is clearly impossible to hear the performers' original voices, this essay relies on examples of poetry and songs as they were perceived, interpreted and published by philologists, folklorists and anthropologists during the second half of the 1800s. Literature draws on folk song collectors such as Achille Canale, Raffaele De Leonardis, and Francesco De Simone Brouwer. The songs and poems considered deal with the topics of love and disdain (*sdegno*), while a smaller group deals with the themes of *lontananza* and *spartenza*. A combined analysis of folk songs and local literature (Vincenzo Padula, Luigi Accattatis, Cesare Lombroso, Caterina Pigorini Beri et al.) allows us to better understand a context that was based on phenomena such as wooing strategies, kidnappings, ostentation of violence and other social events featured in folk songs, poetry and sayings.

KEYWORDS: folk songs, gender, migration, social phenomena, youth.

In the years preceding and following the Unification of Italy (1861), there was widespread collection and classification of folk songs in Southern Italy. Between 1850 and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this work was in the hands of local and national scholars who, pursuing a grid search of all folk poetry, built up a substantial corpus of texts. Through the examples included in the collections of Calabrian folk songs (Canale 1859; De Simone Brouwer 1895; Bruzzano 1888–1902) and the descriptions contained within regional literary production, it is possible to recover an expressive framework that traces the spaces and functions of those very same folk songs. In Italy, scholars focused on songs when contextualizing certain observed phenomena (declarations of love, bride abduction, ostentation of violence), all of which acquired their very own ritual and performative value.

Between 1850 and 1900, dramatic changes affected traditional habits as well as the “family unit”, due to major historical events – from economic crises to natural disasters – which inexorably led to forced migration and to the crumbling of entire family units, especially in the South. Scholars identified a category of songs – “songs of departure”, or “songs of distance” (*canti di partenza, canti di lontananza*) – delineating a tragic social fracture.

## SOCIETY

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Calabrian scholars and intellectuals began to study the mosaic of rural and folk society, and started to acquire an understanding of its shape, dynamics, structure and functions. In the periodical *La Calabria*, Carlo Giuranna carried out his own analysis in *Monografia topografica di Umbriatico*, from which he drew certain elements relating to the social structure of Calabria, starting from its smallest unit: the family. Such an account portrays the father as a reactionary figure anchored to the most archaic conventions (Giuranna 1902: 33–35):

Ancient mottos are the common code, and by constantly mentioning the maxims of the ancestors, father and mother gradually push the child towards the path of life <...>. The head of the old-fashioned family is an autocrat: his will is law. Principled and honest, he is the looking glass in which his offspring must reflect itself. When he speaks, he issues judgement. He never caresses his wife, and he seemingly treats her with certain superiority; but because of this, his soul does not feel in less powerful a manner. Unaware of adultery, he warms his body by the fire of the family Lares. He is frugal with food. He knows nothing, he thinks nothing. He has never gone outside the village, he has never seen a city, and when the steam locomotive, in the country, passes before him sounding and lively as an avalanche, he observes it with his mouth wide open, eyes wide open, silently and thoughtfully. <...> Socialist ideas have not yet latched themselves on his spirit, and he still shows respect to the lords of the place.<sup>1</sup>

.....  
 1 Original: “Il motto antico è il codice comune, e citando ad ogni passo le sentenze degli avi, il padre e la madre spingono gradatamente il figlio nel cammino della vita <...>. Il capo della famiglia *di stampo antico* è autocrate: la volontà sua è legge. Probo ed onesto, è lo specchio in cui hanno a mirarsi i figli. Quando parla, sentenzia. Non fa carezze alla moglie e la tratta apparentemente con un certo sussiego, ma non perciò la sua anima sente meno potentemente. Ignaro delle infedeltà coniugali, scalda le sue membra al fuoco dei domestici lari. È parco nei cibi. Non sa nulla, non pensa nulla. Non è mai uscito dal villaggio, non ha mai visto una città, e quando la vaporiera gli passa dinanzi, nelle campagne, sonante e vorticoso come una valanga, egli la guarda con la bocca spalancata, con gli occhi sbarrati, muto e pensieroso. <...> Le idee socialistiche ancor non hanno fatto presa nell’animo suo, ed egli si mantiene rispettoso con i signori del luogo.”

Hence, the roles and functions of women within the domestic sphere are implicitly sketched according to the desires of the head of the family. For instance, the young woman of the household is not allowed to expose her feminine beauty to masculine desire: *'un mintari l'isca a ra d'u focu* (lit.: 'don't bait beyond the house walls'). And then, *occhiu chi 'un vida, cori che 'un dola* ('what the eye does not see, the heart does not grieve over'): so long as female beauty is kept far from male desire, women are likely to remain untainted until marriage. Giuranna reconstructs the meaning of male behaviours as being geared towards the preservation of a united family. Indeed, a family is sure to remain united and preserved so long as it is a solid and compact one: the offspring must get along with one another (*lu sangu nun se po' far acqua*; 'blood cannot be turned into water'); and, when it comes to marriage, it is all condensed in the fatalistic vision of love expressed by the old saying *Matrimoni e Viscuati <...> su du cielu destinati* ('Marriages and bishoprics <...> are designs of the sky'): marriage is not necessarily an act of love, but it can be an act of convenience; each spouse earns the destiny he / she deserves, according to his / her financial possibilities and fairness. The father intervenes in his son's choice of a bride, advising him to take a young woman as his wife, not only because of her looks, but also because of her physical strength (useful in fulfilling her domestic duties) and greater fertility. Furthermore, according to Giuranna, the head of the family also advises not to choose a bride amongst family relatives (*Matrimonii 'ntra stritti parenti / O longhi guai o curti turmenti!* 'Marriages between close relatives / Either long troubles or short torments!'), but to select her within his *ruga*, or else his neighbourhood, the street where he was born (*Muggghieri di ruga / E cumpari di Ruma* 'Wives from the *ruga*, / And buddies from Rome').

As we will later see, the *ruga* directly or indirectly becomes part of solo songs as a spatial representation of the microcosm of social activities, bonds, relationships and communications. The *ruga* is inhabited by neighbours and not by relatives, that is by other family groups with which it is possible to share a certain level of intimacy despite the complete absence of blood relationships. In the *ruga* – and this was still the case not long ago – the elderly used to sit outside and tell stories in the shade during summer evenings, while the children played, under strict control of their own families, and got to know one another. In that physical space, one could encounter a future wife or husband, and this explains why the songs of the *ruga* (*canti di la ruga*) were often love songs expressing the essence of this microcosm that, in turn, represented both the time and space of that same social group within a strong hierarchical context.

## TWO SMALL COLLECTIONS

*Canti popolari calabresi* is a collection of fifty songs published in 1859 in the city of Reggio Calabria and edited by Achille Canale. This brief but exhaustive compendium is amongst the first ones published in that period. Some years ago, I found myself searching for this small volume – which I retrieved in digital form – as I had seen it mentioned in *Canti popolari delle province meridionali* by Antonio Casetti and Vittorio Imbriani (1871–1872) and in *La poesia popolare italiana* by Alessandro D’Ancona (1878), two of the most important Italian collections of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. In the absence of further biographical data on its author, I shall attempt to gather some useful information from what he personally wrote in his brief preface (Canale 1859: iii):

While on vacation on the mounts of Sambatello, my homeland, and during the calm and silent spring or autumn evenings, I would often hear the long and melancholic notes of these songs accompanied by the sound of a bagpipe [*zampogna*]. At first, I took little notice or none at all; but then, the unconscious recollection of random sentences pushed me to listen with greater interest; and, at that moment, it seemed to me that one could find in them a totally unusual flair of poetry and affection, a richness of images almost of an oriental kind, and an exquisite delicacy of sentiment and expression <...> one can no longer doubt how interesting these types of songs are and how much they are worth in showing the true physiognomy of a community and its main trends; because there is not a single aspect that such a poetry does not include: homeland and religion, pleasure and devotion, fantasy and reality, generous senses and low-level superstitions; it takes inspiration from everything, it coats everything with a regally poetic form, although often irregular and unpredictable, given that it does not obey the rules of any school or any systematic trammel, but it is free, spontaneous, and erupts from the heart coated in virgin beauties <...>.<sup>3</sup>

- .....
- 2 Although in his acknowledgements Raffaele Lombardi Satriani explicitly mentions more or less renowned scholars such as Casetti and Imbriani, he fails to thank Canale for the help he had provided in constructing his own monumental work (*Canti popolari calabresi*, 1929: x–xii, ‘Calabrian Folk Songs’). And yet, Achille Canale, along with Rocco Tornatora, were amongst the Calabrian scholars noted by Casetti and Imbriani as a source originally from “Calabria Ulteriore” (that is to say, the most southern part of the Calabrian region, which includes the current province of Reggio Calabria).
  - 3 Original: “Trovandomi a villeggiare sui monti di Sambatello, mia terra natale, udiva spesso nel silenzio delle tranquille sere di primavera, o di autunno, accompagnarsi al suono della sampogna le lunghe e malinconiche note di questi canti. Poca o niuna attenzione dapprima vi feci, ma poi da qualche frase qua e là all’impensata raccolta, fui spinto ad ascoltarli con maggiore interesse, ed allora mi parve di scorgervi una vena di poesia e di affetto non del tutto ordinaria, una ricchezza di immagini quasi al modo orientale ed una squisita delicatezza di espressione e di sentimento <...> non è più a dubitarsi di quanto interesse siano queste specie di canti e quanto valgano per

Sambatello, Canale's homeland, is also known as "Motta rossa" ("red upland"), and at that time it was a residential settlement pertaining to a group of other "motte" (uplands) (such as Motta Anòmeri, Motta San Niceto – or Sant'Aniceto – and Motta Cirillo), located in the most southern part of South Calabria (once named "Calabria Ulteriore"). In his preface, Canale describes himself listening to some songs accompanied by the sound of the bagpipe (a musical instrument reserved exclusively to men) and to some "long and melancholic notes" (presumably serenades, love songs or some such). A similar description was offered in 1883 by Caterina Pigorini Beri, who had spent some time in Calabria, near the town of Cosenza (cf. Nuova antologia... 1883: 75):

And in the meantime, on a hilltop, a young Calabrian boy played the bagpipe: beside him, the devoted goats and naive sheep grazed: he sat on an upside-down olive tree trunk, and he stretched out his bare legs leaving them to dangle upon the vale. Nearby, another boy sang <...>. The long and melancholic melody reached me with unsure and confused dialect words: the rough and nasal bagpipe, its womb filled with air, accompanied the song: Whiter than the most delicate paper / Redder than the apple of winter / The mother who gave birth to you was a fairy / and she gave you a proper education: / She gave you such a graceful mouth / that it is seven apples of manna [in] summer or winter / If such a mouth would receive a kiss / it would free a soul from hell.<sup>4</sup>

Canale transcribed the fifty folk songs in Calabrian dialect, and translated them into Italian. A classification of these songs includes:

Love songs: nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 (male beauty), 25, 26 (song of the *ruga*), 27, 30, 36, 37, 38 (song of the *ruga*), 39, 40, 41, 44.

- .....
- mostrare la vera fisonomia di un popolo, e le sue principali tendenze; perocchè non v'è cosa che siffatta poesia non abbracci; patria e religione, voluttà e devozione, realtà e fantasia, generosi sensi e basse superstizioni; in tutto s'ispira, tutto riveste di una forma sovranamente poetica, sebbene sovente irregolare e capricciosa, perché non soggetta a regole di scuola, od a sistematiche pastoie, ma libera, spontanea, erompente dal cuore rivestita di vergini bellezze <...>."
- 4 Original: "E intanto sull'alto del colle un giovinetto calabrese sonava la zampogna: vicino a lui pascolavano le capre affettuose e le pecorelle ingenue: egli era seduto sopra un tronco d'ulivo rovesciato e stendeva le sue gambe nude penzoloni sul vallo. Vicino a lui un altro cantava <...>. La melodia mesta e lunga giungeva a me con le parole incerte e confuse del dialetto: la zampogna rauca e nasale con il suo ventre pieno d'aria accompagnava il dolcissimo canto: *Janca cchiu de la carta dilicata / Russa come lo milo de lu vierno: / La mamma che ti fice fu na fata / E ti mantenne de buono cuvierno: / Ti fice sta vuccuccia aggraziata / Ché sette mele e manna astate o vierno / Si sta vuccuzza tua forrie vaciata / N'anima caccerie de intra lu 'nfierno.*" The expression *sette mele e manna* is controversial, however this song is found in several variants all over the South of Italy, cf. Casetti, Imbriani 1871: 113, 176.

Songs of disdain, reproach, jealousies, challenges: nos. 7 (reproach), 10 (jealousy), 29 (to a jealous female lover), 31 (challenge), 42 (memory), 45 (misfortune), 47 (lamentation), 46, 48, 49, 50 (disdains).

Songs of distance: nos. 14, 24, 35.

Other: nos. 11, 12, 28, 32, 33, 34 (spectre), 43.

29 out of 50 are love songs and, more specifically, a song of “male beauty”, generic love songs, songs of the “angel-like woman” and of comparison, and songs of the *ruga*:

Love songs: nos. 1, 4, 5, 6, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 27, 36, 39, 40.

Songs of “male beauty”: no. 23.

Songs of the “angel-like woman”: nos. 2, 3 (comparison), 8, 9, 15, 20, 30, 37, 41, 44.

Songs of the *ruga*: nos. 26, 38.

It is most likely that only one of them was performed by a woman with the purpose of praising “male beauty” (no. 23)<sup>5</sup>. All the others, instead, are sung from a male perspective and intend to declaim the virtues of a beloved woman and to express a desire of possession. The song *Standardu di li giuvini vu siti* (‘You are the flag of the youth’), has a variant collected and published as “Canto di Melicuccà” (song from Melicuccà, near Sambatello) by C. Buccisani (1899: 48): *O Diu! Chi bellu giuvani chi siti!* (‘Oh God! What a lovely young man you are!’).

Thirty-five years later, the small anthology *Alcuni canti popolari di Rossano e Corigliano*, edited by De Simone Brouwer, provides another thirty examples, many of which are love songs, but also songs of departure (*canti di partenza*) and of distance (*canti di lontananza*, cf. nos. 1, 4, 7, 18), songs of matrimony (no. 7), as well as songs of the *ruga* (nos. 6, 25, 27). Again, there is only one song of male beauty (no. 3). In less than forty years, the content of local folk songs substantially changed because the very reasons for singing changed: motifs of nostalgia, distance, and forced departures began to emerge alongside the already existing pure and simple lyricism of love songs (Dattilo 2019: 330–333).

Love songs: nos. 2, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 22, 24, 26.

Songs of departure: nos. 1, 4, 18, 28, 29.

Songs related to matrimony: no. 7.

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5 Definition provided by Salvatore Salomone-Marino, cf. *Lodi delle bellezze dell'uomo e della donna* ‘Praise to male and female beauty’, 1867: 17–56, and Lionardo Vigo, cf. *Bellezza dell'uomo* ‘Male beauty’, 1870: 163–167, and here referred to *Standardu di li giuvini vu siti* ‘You are the banner of all young men’ (Canale 1859, no. 23).

Songs of the *ruga*: nos. 6, 25, 27.

Children songs: no. 30.

Songs of male beauty: no. 3.

Serenades: nos. 8, 23.

Songs of misfortunes: no. 13.

Other: no. 5 (Spectre), no. 9 (Joke on tobacco), no. 14 (community motto).

## THE *RUGA*

In the Southern Italian structure of social space, there were physical places that represented an opportunity for contact between young men and women, and a way to establish much broader forms of socially acceptable intimacy. Unlike the square – the place of public meeting, of cultural and social exchange, and the area where one could find the main institutional sites and places of power (noble residences, Town Hall, Church) – the alleys and private courtyards within them (the place of birth, growth and cultural exchange between the family nuclei living in small towns) were true focal spots for both folk expression and feelings of love amongst youths. The archaic term *ruga* is still used today to identify not just an alley or a dead-end, but also a microcosm of relationships experienced by the families inhabiting it. Beyond the contemporary idea of neighbourhood, in the *ruga* one experienced the intertwining of activities pertaining to adults and children, men and women and, in this case, to youths living under the control of the *ruga* dwellers. The *Ruga* is an “edge-space” located between the public place and the domestic environment<sup>6</sup>.

Unfortunately, I have failed to come across studies, historical or otherwise, that discuss or research the *ruga* as a cultural place, or examine its expressive systems. In common sayings, the *ruga* was and still remains a physical entity especially when it comes to depopulated villages. The term survives in the Calabrian, Sardinian and Tuscan dialects. Nowadays, it is mainly used in aggregative and community settings, to revive, in the minds of those who have experienced it (the elder generations), the memory of a vanished social context. Therefore, the *ruga* represented an integral part of the urban structure of small centres, while also being an idealized object of discussion in the symbolic constructions of its residents, through songs. In major collections, such as those of Casetti and Imbriani (1872), the *ruga* appears to be specially mentioned in the love songs from Paracorio (currently Delianuova, in the province of Reggio Calabria) which, in turn, are variants of other Apulian songs (mainly from Lecce and Caballino). Such songs revolve around the idea of

6 I here offer two definitions that include the etymology of the term *ruga*: ‘Street, Road [Ancient entry still used in certain dialects and also in some places in Tuscany]’, found in Pianigiani 1907: 1175, and: ‘alley, street (gr. *ροῦγα*, fr. *Rue*)’, found in Marzano 1928: 358.

neighbourhood, district and street, and stage the life and romantic relationships between the young people of the time.

Such a symbolic place thus becomes an actual means of classification in the work of De Simone Brouwer and in various mentions included in Luigi Bruzzano's periodical – although two of the most famous examples had already been included by Canale in his work.

Casetti and Imbriani's collection (1872) devotes one of its sections to the songs from Latronico (in the Italian region of Basilicata); this section also includes the Calabrian and Campanian variants of Latronico's songs of the *ruga*. The term *ruga*, however, is only used in the Calabrian-language versions, while in regions such as Basilicata, Apulia and Campania other terms identify the street (*strata*), the alley (*vicu*), the yard or courtyard (*curte*). *Quista è la strata di li belli fiuri* ('This is the street with beautiful flowers') is a song from Latronico, and it is also a variant of song no. 9 included in Canale's collection *Oh! Quantu è bellu l'occhju di lu suli* ('Oh! How lovely the eye of the sun is'). The collectors clarified: "since life, in the southern provinces, was mainly spent on the street and in the courtyards, many songs mention them in the very first lines" (Casetti, Imbriani 1872 2: 155). Precise directions are also given in the very incipits of these folk songs:

- *Intr'a 'sta curte nc'è* ('In this courtyard there is'), from Lecce and Caballino;
- *Dint'a 'stu vico nc'è* ('In this alley there is'), from Naples.

Therefore, in Paracorio one has *Chista è la ruga di li 'janchi panni* (ibid.: 157; 'This is the *ruga* with white laundry'); in Rossano, *Chissa è la ruga re lu curtu passu* (De Simone Brouwer 1895, no. 27; 'This is the *ruga* of the short step'):

*Chissa è la ruga re lu curtu passu / Pocu chiù avanti nun ci pozzu iri. / Ccà jettu nu suspiru e ccà lu lassu, / Ccà c'è la bedda chi mi fa moriri. / Affaccia a sa fenestra ch'iu trapassu, / L'arma mi sentu re lu pettu esciri. / Si moru, o bedda, testamentu fazzu: / Tu s' la causa re lu miu perire!*

This is the *ruga* of the short step / I cannot go any further. / Here I sigh, and here my sigh remains. / Here lives the beauty I die for. / Look out of this window so that I can die. / I feel the soul coming out from my body. / If I die, oh beauty, I leave this will: / You are the cause of my death!

The table below shows three songs connected in terms of form and semantics: the first and third examples belong to Canale's collection (no. 26, *Eu vinni apposta a stu locu a cantari* 'I purposely came to this place to sing'; no. 38, *Affaccia si vo' sèntiri cantari* 'Look out of the window if you want to hear singing'), the second



one is a song collected by De Simone Brouwer in Rossano (no. 6, *Sugnu venutu a su locu a cantari* ‘I came to this place to sing’). All three songs express: (a) the motif of the male lover attracted towards the house of the woman he loves (*locu* means place, and refers to the house); (b) the display of a sign (*signali*) the man offers to his loved one, so that she may look out of the window and trace his “sound physiognomy” just by listening to the singing voice; (c) the iconography of the window as an object / symbol that has the function of connecting the male universe (public, outdoors) with the female one (private, domestic), or else, the meeting place and the point of visual / sound contact between individuals of the opposite sex. Folk songs often refer to such a situation: a young man on the street and a young girl looking out of the window, both experiencing the moment of greater contact allowed between them, during which *eros* and desire could have been unleashed through songs.

<p><i>Eu vinni apposta a stu locu a cantari (Il sole di notte)</i>  <b>I purposely came to this place to sing (The sun at night)</b>          (Canale 1859, no. 26)</p>	<p><i>Sugnu venuto a su locu a cantari</i>  <b>I came to this place to sing</b>          (De Simone Brouwer 1895, no. 6)</p>	<p><i>Affaccia si vo' sèntiri cantari (Per cercare aiuto)</i>  <b>Look out [of the window] if you want to hear singing (To seek help)</b>          (Canale 1859, no. 38)</p>
<p><i>Eu vinni apposta a stu locu a cantari</i>  <i>E mi purtau lo cori e lu me' amuri,</i>  <i>Dill' accettuddhu vitti luscìari,</i>  <i>Pari chi intra ci stava lu Suli,</i>  <i>Mi ndebbi a forza da maravigghiari</i>  <i>Chi la notti non ncè tantu sblenduri,</i>  <i>Eri tu, bella, chi ti po' vantari</i>  <i>Chi teni la bellezza di lu Suli.</i></p>	<p><i>Sugnu venuto a su locu a cantari,</i>  <i>Nun me piace de te fa' durmiri,</i>  <i>'Mmezu lu letto te farrò assettari,</i>  <i>Cumzumari te fazzu de suspìri.</i>  <i>Tutta la casa te farrò gerari,</i>  <i>Bidi li 'sseggi e nun te po' sediri.</i>  <i>De la finestra te farrò affacciari.</i>  <i>– Vattinni, ninnu mio, famme durmiri.</i></p>	<p><i>Affaccia si vo' sèntiri cantari,</i>  <i>Si tu a la vuci non m' ha' conosciutu</i>  <i>Affaccia, ch'eu ti dugnu nu signali,</i>  <i>Vardami 'n pettu comu su' frutu;</i>  <i>Sugnu comu un vascellu a menzu mari</i>  <i>Quand' è custrittu di chiamari aiutu,</i>  <i>Iutami, bella, chi mi po' jutari</i>  <i>E si tu non m'aiuti eu su' pirdutu.</i></p>
<p>I purposely came to this place to sing,          And I was led by the heart and by my love,          From the window, brightness appeared          As if the Sun were indoors.          I was staggered, since the night never shines with such radiance.</p>	<p>I came to this place to sing,          I do not like making you sleep,          In the middle of the bed I shall let you sit,          I shall exhaust you with sighs.          All your house will spin because of me          You shall see chairs but will not be able to sit.</p>	<p>Look out [of the window] if you want to hear singing,          If you have not recognised me from my voice          Look out [of the window] so that I can give you a sign          Look at my chest how wounded I am;          I am like a ship in the middle of the sea</p>

<p>Yet it was none other than you, my sweet object, [you] who hold the beauty of the sun in your vague feature. For the night possesses no such splendour, It was you, o beauty, who can boast That she possesses the beauty of the Sun.</p>	<p>Out of the <u>window</u> I shall let you look. – Go away, my dear, let me sleep.</p>	<p>When it is forced to ask for help, Help me, o beauty, because you are capable of helping me And if you do not help me, I am lost.</p>
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### MARRIAGE

According to a census dated 10 February 1901, Calabria was the Italian region with the highest number of marriages between individuals aged from 15 to 19 (almost 3,000 over a sample population of 10,000), or else between individuals “married when in legal age” (Mortara 1907: 315). Such a phenomenon is generally associated with the economic situation of the South which differed not only from that of Northern Italy (characterised by a sharecropping agricultural economy), but also from that of other Mediterranean areas, due to the strong presence of day labourers working for landlords who wanted to preserve a social system based on their dependence. Therefore, the impossibility of recreating a completely autonomous family nucleus led to precocious marriages (Cocchi [et al.] 1996: 125), and, even in this case, folk songs offer an image of such a context, as the following lyrics from a Calabrian variant of *Chista è la ruga di li ‘janchi panni* show (cf. Casetti, Imbriani 1872: 157):

*Intra ‘ssu liettu e ricamati panni, / Ci sta ‘na varca cu’ tricieentu ‘ntinni! / È ‘na figliola di quattordici anni, / Calata da lu cielu, ‘nterra vinni. / Sia beneditta chi ti fozi mamma, / E beneditta chi ti dezi minna! / Nun mi guardari cu’ du’ occhi tiranni! / Spogliati, bella mia, e jamunninni.*

In this bed of embroidered laundry, / There is a load with three hundred coins! / She is a young girl of fourteen, / Who came down on earth from the sky. / Blessed be whoever was mother to you, / And blessed be who nursed you! / Do not look at me with two tyrant eyes! / Undress yourself, my beauty, and let us go away.

The fourteen-year-old girl is the subject of other Calabrian, Sicilian, and Apulian variants<sup>7</sup>. In relation to wedding ceremonies, Vincenzo Padula provides us with a

7 *C’è ‘na figghiola di quattordici anni* (‘there is a young girl of fourteen’) from Paracorio (Calabria); *‘na picciuttedda di quattordici anni* (‘a young girl of fourteen’) from Termini Imerese, Acitrezza

description of more or less legitimate ways of courting, starting from how men, by the rules, declared their love through song. The scholar defines the symbolic actions that constitute a marriage proposal (Padula 1950: 8–9):

She was looking outside the window with her sister, eating a pear, and I stopped to look at them. Young brown-haired man, she said to me, who are you looking at? – I am looking at the most beautiful, and I winked at her with my left eye. In that moment, she threw at me the pear she had in her mouth, a pear as rosy as her gums, that retained the print of her teeth; and from her mouth, the pear reached into my hands, and from my chest my heart reached into her mouth. Eat my heart, oh woman, and I shall eat your pear. After many months of singing under the woman’s window, the young man declares his intentions, and asks her family for her to be his wife. In many villages, the proposal of marriage is carried out in a symbolic manner: at night the man puts on the girl’s doorstep a large wooden log that he has previously split with an axe and in that split he has put a wedge. If, in the morning, the girl’s mother takes that log inside the house, it signals an acceptance of the match, and the girl is thus defined as “logged”<sup>8</sup>. Yet, generally the young man expresses his intentions to the father, or another close relative; if the proposal is accepted, he may continue singing as before, but he is not allowed to enter the young girl’s house. In order to enter it, he must be accompanied by the notary. Calabrian honour is an extremely delicate matter, and, in case the marriage bond fails to be struck, the young girl will find it difficult to meet a second match if it becomes known that she had let the first fiancé inside her house. Yet, if the proposal is rejected, the man must swear never to sing beneath the girl’s windows and must never loiter around her house. If he fails to be judicious and dares to act as a sweetheart and continues to sing, he is to be sent first a friendly warning, the second time he is to be hurled and his guitar is to be broken, and the third time he is to receive a blow as if it were a lightning coming from a bush (*lampo di siepe* ‘bush lightning’). The Italian *lampo di siepe* is an energetic expression, which identifies a good old musket shot coming from a man lying within a bush and aimed at another person’s chest while the latter is walking on the street.<sup>9</sup>

.....  
 (Sicily); *na carusella de quattordici anni* (‘a young girl of fourteen’) from Caballino (Apulia), cf. Casetti, Imbriani 1872: 157–159.

- 8 *Translator’s note*: The Italian term used in the source text is *acceppata*, which resembles the word *ceppo* ‘a wooden log’, also included in the excerpt; thus, in order to preserve the reference to the tree trunk and the act of cutting trees – part of the ceremonial here described – the English translation opts for a more literal “logged”.
- 9 Original: “Ell’era dalla finestra con sua sorella, e mangiavasi una pera, ed io mi fermai a guardarle. Gentil brunetto, mi disse, chi di noi guardi tu? – Guardo la piú bella di voi due, e l’ammiccai con l’occhio sinistro. Allora mi lanciò la pera, che aveva in bocca, pera rubiconda come le sue gengive, e che serbava l’impronta dei suoi denti; e la pera dalla sua bocca passò nelle mie mani, e il cuore dal mio petto passò nella sua bocca. Mangiati, o donna, il mio cuore, ché io mi mangerò

Padula pushes himself beyond such a phenomenon by describing a second, braver act – bride abduction (Padula 1950: 9):

Nevertheless, if the young man is stubborn and cannot banish that girl from his fantasy, if she agrees, and if the family's refusal is weakly justified, he recalls to be a good Calabrian and resorts to primitive laws: to occupation as our Roman fathers intended it, that is to say, to force. Amongst the children of Romulus, nuptial rites were depicted as abductions; the girl was abducted from her mother's arms who, with feigned fear, had to hold her tight to her chest; she was assaulted by the paranymphs and, at night, lowered down from the window, escorted with torches, gagged with a veil (*flammeum*), [and] gently pushed by her arms inside the house of the groom who discerned her hair with a knife.<sup>10, 11</sup>

Synthetically, he concludes by mentioning the *scapigliatura* ('ruffling') and the *fujitina* ('elopement') (Padula 1950: 9–10):

All these customs, slightly modified, are still enacted in Calabria and persist in towns near Naples, where women still carry a little sword in their braids. The law of the Quirites was the law of the strong, and our Roman father plunged the sword in his woman's hair, as if

.....  
la pera tua". Dopo aver così cantato parecchi mesi sotto le finestre della donna, il giovine deve in fine domandarla alla famiglia di lei, e dichiarare la sua intenzione. In molti paesi la dimanda di matrimonio si fa in modo simbolico: l'uomo colloca di notte innanzi all'uscio della ragazza un grosso ceppo, a cui fa con la scure uno spacco, e mette nello spacco una bietta. Se la madre della fanciulla si tira al mattino quel ceppo nella casa, dà segno di aver accettato il partito, e la fanciulla dicesi *acceppata*. Ma comunemente l'uomo la domanda mercé del padre, o d'altro stretto congiunto; e se la dimanda è gradita, egli può continuare a cantar come prima, ma non mettere però piede nella casa della fanciulla. Per giungere a tanto è mestieri che il notaro l'accompagni. L'onore calabrese è delicatissimo: e se il patto nuziale non si conchiude, la giovinetta difficilmente troverebbe un secondo partito, ove fosse risaputo ch'ella avesse ricevuto a casa il primo fidanzato. Ma se la dimanda è respinta, l'uomo deve giurare di non cantare più sotto le finestre della donna, né di recarsi più a zonzo attorno la casa di lei. Se gli manca questa prudenza, ed osa far lo spasimato e cantar tuttavia, la prima volta gli si manda un avviso amichevole, la seconda gli si corre sopra, e gli si rompe la chitarra, e la terza gli si dà un *lampo di siepe*. Lampo di siepe è una espressione energica, e significa un bel colpo di moschetto che un uomo appiattato dietro una siepe manda ad altri nel petto, nel passare che fa giù per la via."

10 Original: "Nondimeno se il giovine è ostinato e non può torsi quella donna dalla fantasia, e se costei acconsente, ed il rifiuto dei parenti deriva da ragioni debolissime, ei si ricorda di esser bravo calabrese, e ricorre al dritto primitivo, all'occupazione come la intendevano i nostri padri romani, cioè alla forza. I riti infatti nuziali presso i figliuoli di Romolo ritraevano di un ratto; la fidanzata era rapita dal seno della madre, che con simulata paura doveva stringersela al seno; era assalita dai paraninfi, e, di notte, calata per la finestra, accompagnata con le fiaccole, imbavagliata con un velo (*flammeum*) sospinta sulle braccia entro la casa dello sposo, che col coltello le discriminava i capelli."

11 Caterina Pigorini describes a Calabrian-Albanian bride abduction rite, including the choirs (Nuova antologia... 1883: 709–713).

it meant: She is my exclusive property; my sword conquered her, and my sword can help me keep her. The Calabrian man – who recalls being a compatriot of Augustus at school, and a brother of the wolves in the fields – uses the law of wolves, and grabs the woman as he would a sheep. When she goes to mass on Sundays, and the church porch is cramped with people, and the organs play, and the bells ring, the man – in the Sun’s face, in God’s face and in the people’s face – barges into the women as a Kite (as the songs says) above a crowd of doves, and he seizes the one he loves; and either he whitens her, or ruffles her hair, or takes her *muschere* off. Let us now clarify the meaning of these expressions. The unmarried Calabrian girl lives a devoted life, and covers her head with a dark veil: thus, the man takes that veil off and replaces it with one that is of pure white colour, and the girl is then said to be whitened. The unmarried girl always keeps her hair covered: since such a beautiful vegetation of the head, such a little forest where love stretches its *paniuzze*<sup>12</sup> is a sacred thing in Calabria. Hence, the man driven by jealousy, takes her veil away, and the girl is then said to be ruffled. The unmarried girl wears a sleeveless dress and corset; the skirt bears three holes at the top, in the middle one she puts her head, and in the two at the sides her arms, and these latter two are called “*muschere*”. Now, the man cuts the dangling *muschere* with a knife, and the girl is said to be marked. Here one sees the entire primitive Roman laws. <...> the Calabrian man takes the girl’s veil away, rips the *muschera* and places a handkerchief on her head. At this moment, it is all done: the family must surrender and call the notary; after such a solemn declaration, who else would ask for the hand of a whitened, ruffled girl [who has been] marked by another man? Those heroic Roman manners of dealing with marriage were common to all social classes in Calabria, to peasants as well as noblemen; yet, rejecting the first three that I have so far mentioned, Calabrian men now follow the fourth type, which is the following one. After having agreed with the young man, the girl awaits behind the door: her lover passes by, she coughs, he grabs her by the arm, walks with her two or three times through the village, and leaves her with another family. And this, that, and the other. Rosina has flown away; the old fathers puff away, the lover feigns ignorance, the fugitive girl is locked up, and people gossip! Thus, a notary is sent for, the pact is stipulated, and here is to sons and good health! What truly honours Calabria is that love is a serious matter. It is in the nature of Calabrian people to deliberate for a long time before choosing a match; but once it has been chosen, he is pig-headed. For instance, he does not fall in love at first sight or at first smile: it takes a lot more than that; he undertakes an extremely strict inquisition on the girl’s matters; and if he were to find any little fault, the project fails. He would then normally marry a neighbour whom he had seen grow from a child to a young woman, and about whom no ill can be said.<sup>13</sup>

.....  
 12 *Translator’s note:* A *paniuzza* is an impregnated net which is used to catch birds, cf. <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/pania1/>.

13 Original: “Tutti questi costumi lievemente modificati continuano in Calabria e son rimasti ancora nei paesi vicini a Napoli, in cui le donne portano tuttavia una spadetta dentro le trecce. Il dritto

The metaphor of the “Kite above a crowd of doves”, used by Padula in reference to a folk song, can also be found in Pigorini Beri’s description of the ostentation rituals, which take place prior to a Calabrian-Albanian marriage, when “the morning of the wedding the young men, who are to help the groom in abducting the bride <...>, go to his house and get all things organised while joyfully singing” (Nuova antologia... 1883: 710)<sup>14</sup>. The entire bride abduction rite takes place through a cut and thrust between two female choirs and one male choir, until the moment when the groom pretends to violently enter into the house of the bride, which is in turn followed by the girl’s tears for having to leave her home. At this point, the female choir declares: “leave the customs you possess, and welcome those you will [now] meet.” Such a declaration is followed by a male response: “Up there, on the

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quiritario era il dritto dei forti, e il romano nostro padre conficcava la spada nelle chiome della sua donna, quasi dicesse: Ella è mia proprietà ottima; la mia spada la conquistò, e la mia spada saprà conservarmela. Il calabrese dunque che nelle scuole si ricorda di essere concittadino di Augusto, e nei campi d’essere fratello dei lupi, adopera il dritto lupino, e afferra la donna come una pecora. Quand’ella va di domenica alla messa, e il sacro è gremito di gente, e gli organi suonano, e le campane squillano, egli in faccia al Sole, in faccia a Dio, in faccia al popolo irrompe tra le donne come *Nibbio* (dice la canzone) *sopra stuolo di colombe*, abbranca quella, ch’egli ama; e o la *imbianca*, o la *scapiglia*, o le *toglie la maschera*. Spieghiamo questi vocaboli. La fanciulla nubile mena in Calabria vita devota, e reca in capo un velo di colore scuro: l’uomo dunque le toglie quel velo, gliene sciorina sopra un altro bianchissimo, e la donna dicesi *imbiancata*. La fanciulla nubile porta la chioma coperta; perché questa bella vegetazione della testa, questa selvetta dove amore tende le sue paniuzze, è cosa sacra in Calabria. L’uomo dunque le strappa il velo geloso, e la donna dicesi *scapigliata*. La fanciulla nubile ha veste e corpetto senza maniche; la gonna ha nella parte superiore tre buchi, in quel di mezzo ella ficca la testa, nei due laterali le braccia, e questi due si chiamano *muschere*. Ora l’uomo le taglia col coltello queste benedette *muschere*, e la donna dicesi *segnata*. Ed ecco qui tutto il dritto romano primitivo. <...> il calabrese *strappa* il velo alla donna, e *spezza* la muschera, e le *conficca* un fazzoletto sulla testa. Allora tutto è fatto: i parenti, devono piegare la testa e chiamare il notaio; ché dopo una dichiarazione così solenne qual uomo vuoi tu che domandi la mano d’una donna *imbiancata*, *scapigliata*, e *segnata* da un altro? Questi modi eroici e romulei di trattar le nozze erano comuni in Calabria a tutte le classi, si’ ai contadini, e si’ ai signori; ma ora costoro ripudiando i tre primi da me ricordati, si attengono al quarto che è il seguente. Indettatasi coll’uomo, la donna l’attende dietro l’uscio di via: l’amante passa, ella tosse, quei se la toglie sotto il braccio, va con lei due o tre volte pel paese, e la lascia in deposito in un’altra famiglia. Ch’è? che non è? Rosina è volata; i vecchi padri soffiano, l’amante fa lo gnorri, la fuggitiva è reclusa, e il paese parla! Si chiama dunque il notaio, si roga l’atto, e figli maschi. Ciò che veramente onora la Calabria è che l’amore vi si fa seriamente. È nell’indole del calabrese il deliberare atesamente pria di pigliare un partito; ma preso ch’ei l’abbia, ha la testa più dura d’una catapulte. Ei, per esempio, non s’innamora al primo sguardo, e al primo riso: ci vuole ben altra pania per tanto merlo; ma imprende una severissima inquisizione sul fatto della fanciulla; e un pelo che si trovi torto nel panno, il mercato va a monte. Sposa ordinariamente la sua vicina, quella, che s’è veduta nascere e pascere, e gli è cresciuta sotto gli occhi, e cui nessuna bocca ha potuto dir *Ma*.”

14 Original: “Al mattino delle nozze i giovani che debbono accompagnare lo sposo a rapire la fanciulla <...> vanno in casa sua e lo acconciano essi stessi cantando lietamente <...>.”

mountain, there on a wide plain where [female] partridges grazed; an [male] eagle threw itself upon them, chose the most beautiful one and took it high in the skies” and then, after the wedding ceremony: “Mountain, open yourself up and make way for this partridge and this silver-winged eagle” (ibid.: 712)<sup>15</sup>.

The female condition in Southern Italy is described by Cesare Lombroso in the pages relating his Calabrian journey; and, as far as marriages are concerned, he offers a heavy judgement on the custom of child brides, or else (Lombroso 1898: 83–84):

<...> of marrying young girls between 9 and 12 years of age, regardless the deficient development of those poor creatures, which produces an offspring that is atrophic and sad, and of very brief life and weak existence; extremely immoral is also the custom of betrothing them while still babies, preventing them – for a useless family reason – from following their heart and nature. Indeed, the age during which marriages take place is a precocious one compared to that of the Kingdom.<sup>16</sup>

And again, Lombroso resorts to poetry and folk songs in order to describe the phenomenon of “arranged marriages”. It was extremely rare to get married for love. The following song from Bova (Reggio Calabria), collected by Astorre Pellegrini in *Il Dialetto Greco-Calabro* (1880) and included in its full version inside the volume *In Calabria*, clearly shows what has been said up to now: the sorrow of a young male lover who is well aware of the destiny of his beloved, betrothed to a man she does not love or, as in this case, to a much older man than her:

*Giovinetta, non ti sta bene cotesto sposo / Che ti mandò la sorte tua bruciata; / Tu sei come una perla nella ghirlanda / Ed egli è come una scarpa aggrinzata. / Io ti dico di cambiar vivanda / Qui v'è uno che per te muore; / Quello che t'ho detto te lo dico sempre: / Viva vai all'inferno, infelice!*

Young girl, no good for you is this betrothed man / Sent to you by your burnt fate; / You are like a pearl in the wreath, / And he is like a wrinkled shoe. / I advise you to change your dish, / Here you have someone who dies for you; / What I have told you I will always tell you: / Alive you go to hell, in misery!

.....  
15 Original: “Là sopra, là sulla montagna, là era un piano spazioso ove pascolavano le pernici; slanciòsi ivi un’aquila, la più bella si scelse e portossela in alto pei cieli”; “Apriti, monte e fa in te strada onde passi questa pernice, e cotest’aquila dalle ali d’argento <...>.”

16 Original: “<...> il costume di impalmare le ragazze a 9–12 anni, senza riguardo all’imperfetto sviluppo di quelle povere creature, che danno origine, poi, ad una prole atrofica, intristita, incapace di lunga e forte esistenza; immoralissimo poi è l’uso di prometterle fino dalle fascie in matrimonio, precludendo, per una vana ragione di famiglia, le voci del cuore e della natura. L’età, infatti, in cui i matrimoni sono contratti, è molto precoce in confronto a quella del Regno.”

## DEPARTURES

Another song collected by Cesare Lombroso in the most southern areas of Calabria describes the theme of forced departures and permanent detachment, in which the sea that separates the lover from his beloved becomes a metaphor of the young lover's tears when saying farewell to his girl:

*O bella è fattu juorno, e l'arba è chiara; / Di la partenza mia venuta è l'ura. / Mo su benutu a mi licenziare / Pi fari sta spartenza amara e crura. / A varca di lu portu si pripara / Chi sa stasira, o Diu, duvi mi scura! / Si la nigura morte nun mi spara / A mia venuta è tarda ma sicura. / Si l'acqua di lu mari vidi esciri / Su li lacrimi mie jumi currenti, / Si senti ncuna vuci all'aria jiri / Sugnu io bella chi chiamu e nun mi senti* (ibid.: 68–69).

Oh beautiful (girl) it is now day, and the (light of) dawn is pale; / The time has come for me to leave. / I have now come to bid you farewell / Because I'm to go on this bitter and coarse journey. / The ship at the port is ready / I wonder, Oh God, where I shall see the sky turn dark tonight! / If the dark death does not hit me. / My arrival is late but sure. / If you see the water of the sea overflowing / it is because of my tears that are flowing rivers. / If you hear any voice proceeding in the air / It is I who is calling, oh beautiful (girl), but you cannot hear me.

Here we find the theme of the *spartenza*<sup>17</sup> as the centre of communication. It is sung from the point of view of the departing man; and since songs allow people to say things or promise to do things that generally cannot be said in everyday-life circumstances, the young man can allow himself to cry through the song: *Se parto con dolore, lo saccio iu; / Lo sanno li occhi miei, l'pianto che fanno* (ibid.: 71; 'If I leave with sorrow, I'm the one who knows; / My eyes do know the tears they cry').

De Simone Brouwer includes in his collection three songs around the themes of departure and farewell addressed to young men (no. 1 and 4) and a young woman (no. 2): *Si parti e si partiu lu dilicatu* (De Simone Brouwer 1895, no. 1, 'The young man left'), alongside the two octaves *Si parti e si partiu l'appartenente* (ibid., no. 4, 'The belonger left') and *Mamma, me parto e su core te lasso* (ibid., no. 7; 'Mother, I am leaving, and I leave you my heart'), respectively constitute a song of departure (*canto di partenza*), a song of distance (*canto di lontananza*) and a "song of marriage that the young bride pronounces in order to show her sorrow when leaving her mother", as the collector has remarked. The absence of variants in Canale's texts allows the following possibilities: (a) it comes from the areas of Basilicata or Campania; (b) it may have developed and spread after the first big migratory wave in Calabria (1876) (cf. Dattilo 2019: 331). As for no. 4, the *appartenente* ('the

17 Archaic term for *partenza* (departure).



belonger’) was identified as s/he “who belongs to, dwells in the same house”. The addressee of the song remains unclear and I have not found any other version; yet, I am aware of the phenomenon of shared dwellings in Calabria thanks to Pigorini Beri’s writings on the *comunanti* (‘sharers’, cf. Nuova antologia... 1883: 68–70):

Unsure, I was standing before the little open door of the two sharers who stared at me with a mixture of curiosity and respect <...>. One was on the threshold of the little open door and span the cotton with a peculiar spindle [that was] fast and heavy <...>; the other was already on the steps that lead to the cellar pretentiously defined as home and she carded the wool to spin <...>. They told me their story: one was the widow of a labourer who had died in America; the *happy memory* of her husband had left her with a son who shared the bed with her <...> the other had never been married; of Albanian origins, she had moved near Cosenza to serve a great baron, in the time of her youth, [and] in the end, she left his house as poor as she had initially entered it.<sup>18</sup>

Her stay in Cosenza opened a window on the condition of “white widows”, women who were alone but with children, and who had remained behind in their country of origin while their husbands were away searching for jobs or simply in prison. Besides performing their motherly duties, these women were forced to work in order to support their children, since it was not always possible to count on the economic resources provided by men. Living together with other women, who were also mothers, probably allowed them to spend less on rent<sup>19</sup>. As Rosario Manco

18 Original: “Stavo lì sui due piedi incerta davanti alla porticina aperta delle due *comunanti* che mi guardavano con curiosità mista di rispetto <...>. Una era sulla soglia della porticina aperta e filava del cotone con un fuso particolare pesane e velocissimo <...>; l’altra era già dalla scaletta da cui si scendeva in una cantina a cui si dà il titolo ampolloso di casa e cardava la lana per filare <...>. Mi raccontarono la loro storia: una era vedova di un *faticante* (bracciante) che morì nell’America: la *felice memoria* del marito le aveva lasciato un figlio che dormiva con lei nel letto <...> l’altra non era mai stata maritata; d’origine albanese, venuta nei pressi di Cosenza a servire un gran barone, nei tempi della sua gioventù, ne era all’ultimo uscita poverella come vi era entrata.”

19 Cf. C. Pigorini Beri in Nuova antologia... 1883: 67: *In alcuni luoghi della Basilicata, per esempio, le case sono affittate a muro; vale a dire addossata ad un muro abita una famiglia, al muro rimpetto un’altra famiglia: qualche fittolo piantato in mezzo alla camera segna i confini naturali, la linea di demarcazione dei due potentati, né v’ha mai ragione di liti per turbato possesso, da quel che ne ho sentito dire; in Cosenza invece si associano, per esempio, due donne, lavorano insieme, cuociono le loro vivande allo stesso fornello: qualche volta c’è un figlio o una figlia dell’una o dell’altra o di tutte e due, ma la pace non è mai turbata: e questa associazione quasi sempre vitalizia, tradizionale e spontanea fa chiamare lo consocie le comunanti, dal canto riportato si evince come pure queste convivenze potessero rivelarsi ostili e mal sopportate* (‘In some places of Basilicata, for instance, houses are wall-rented; that is to say, a family lives against one wall, while the other family lives against the opposite wall: some stick placed in the middle of the room signals the natural borders, the demarcation line of the two potentates and, according to what I have learnt, there is never any reason to fight over a troubled possession; in Cosenza, instead, two women get together, work together, cook their

stated in 1988, such a phenomenon had a profound influence on Calabrian life and customs. The consequences of white widowhood were various, and amongst them was the change in the urban structure of entire villages; therefore, if on the one hand it is true that, in the lonely condition of women, the marital authority had been “replaced by other members of the family” (Palazzi 1994: 184) – for instance, a brother-in-law or a father-in-law – on the other hand, it is also true that living far away from one’s own husband led to changes in sexual habits, as shown by these two songs retrieved in Paola (Cosenza) (Manco 2006: 47):

*I muglieri r’americani / Vanu alla missa cu sette sottani / Vanu prigannu Domineddio: / Mannami sordi, marituma mia. / Mo ca li sordi sunu arrivati / Si li mangianu cu i nnamurati.*

The wives of Americans / Go to church with seven petticoats / They pray the Lord God: / Send me money, o husband of mine. / Now that the money has arrived / They [spend it] eat[ing] in the company of their lovers.

*Marittima è jutu all’America e nun mi scrive / Nun sacciu cchi mancanza ci haju fatti... / Ca ri nu figliu n’ha trovati quatti? / Cittu maritu mmia, ca nun è nenti / Ca li mannamu a Napuli pi sturenti?*

My husband has gone to America and never writes to me / I have no idea how I did him wrong / That he has found four sons instead of one? / Hush, o husband, that is not a problem / Shall we send them to Naples to be students?

From 1880 to 1906, the province of Cosenza, above all others, experienced a conspicuous migratory wave towards Argentina, Brazil and the United States. According to the statistics of those years, the majority of those who left the Calabrian territory returned to it after some time; 25 per cent of Calabrian migrants, however, chose to settle elsewhere, never to return. Such a percentage equals the number of women who, at the time, left Italy. This means that those men who had left with their entire family rarely chose to return. Interviews with mayors, carried out in 1884, further elucidate that poverty was the main reason for migration (Caputo 1907).

Nowadays, various towns located in the inner part of Calabria are completely depopulated or are experiencing ongoing depopulation due to economic pressures. Such a process of desertion began many years ago and affected the entire region, spreading rapidly and widely. The reasons behind it were many, though always linked to subsistence, and consequently to the economy and social structure of

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meals at the same stove: sometimes one has a son or a daughter, or both have a child, but peace is never disturbed: and this association, which almost always lasts for a lifetime and is traditional and spontaneous, gives the two partners the name of “sharers”; from the song quoted here, instead, one can learn that living together could sometimes turn out to be hostile and not easy to bear’).

a former kingdom. In the newly born republic, Calabria always retained a marginal role compared to the more elaborate social environment in Northern regions.

In the post-war period, scholars focused their attention on certain aspects of social life which seemed more resilient than others – in particular, those revolving around collective rites and religious celebrations. Social spaces and context, such as the *ruga* microcosm, gradually disappeared leading to the dispersal of those “soundful”<sup>20</sup> individuals playing in the *locu, ruga, strata, and vicu*. The *ruga* has lost both its inhabitants and its networks made up of interpersonal relations that take more than a lifetime or generation to build. As a consequence, the space for singing (especially, but not only, love songs) ends up losing its primary role as a theatre of life, and its function as a place to display the deepest of feelings in a semi-public way.

Folk songs give voice to different behaviours and displays of rebellion to social norms and conventions that could not be said in everyday life contexts: *Quanto è bello ro sape' canta'!* / *Ma pe' lo canto vai addo' tu vuoi;* / *Viri la bella e non li puo' parlare;* / *Rinto a lo canto li rici che buoi* (cf. Casetti, Imbriani 1872 2: 307; ‘How lovely being able to sing is! / Thanks to songs you can go where you want; / You see your love and cannot speak to her, / But in songs you can tell her what you want’). Songs condensed the actions, feelings and habits of both urban societies and hinterland villages. When courtship dynamics started to change and when neighbourhood and family social relations underwent a series of transformations over the few last decades, the role of the solo song vanished. Nevertheless, contemporary musicians and audiences learn, study, listen and search for direct or indirect sources of performative musical practices that characterised the older peasant society, exalting the idea (and, thus, the image) of this “endangered” art form.

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 20 The term “soundful bodies” is found in Macchiarella 2016; cf. Davidson 2002; Turino 2008.

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This essay has been translated into English by *Francesca Spina*

## Liaudies dainos: erdvė ir motyvacija. *Ruga*<sup>21</sup>, meilė, vedybos, išvykimas

DELIA DATTILO

*S a n t r a u k a*

Raktažodžiai: liaudies dainos, lytis, migracija, socialiniai reiškiniai, jaunimas.

Straipsnio pradžioje solinės dainos apibūdinamos kaip aplinkos vaizdavimo priemonė, kuri ne tik yra labai ekspresyvi, bet ir skiriasi priklausomai nuo regiono ir provincijos. Šitokio pobūdžio aplinka, pasižyminti reikšmingu, plačiu ir gausiu repertuaru, leidžia iš dalies nusakyti tiek socialinį Pietų Italijos kontekstą, tiek santykius tarp vaikinių ir merginų. Dauguma tekste minimų pavyzdžių yra variantai dainų, kurios kadaise buvo gerai žinomos visoje pietinėje Apeninų pusiasalio dalyje, Sicilijos ir Lipario salose. Viena vertus, tai liudija gyvą muzikinę apyvartą, kita vertus, padeda geriau suvokti Pietų Italijos gyventojų istoriją. Šiuo požiūriu labai pasitarnauja ir XIX a. pabaigos rašytiniai – daugiausia etnografiniai – šaltiniai; juose susitelkiama į kultūrinės ir socialinės struktūros tyrimą tose gyventojų bendruomenėse, kurios neretai būdavo laikomos primityviomis vien dėl to, kad buvo neraštingos. Šis tyrimas, nors daugeliu požiūrių dar neišsamus, turi tikslą bent kiek nušviesti dainų repertuarą, kuris jau nebevertojamas dėl didelių pokyčių žmonių tarpusavio santykiuose (ypač šeimos ir kaimynystės), kuriuos savo ruožtu nulėmė dramatiški socialiniai lūžiai. Sykiu straipsnyje išryškinama keletas esminių elementų (jie dainose kartais aiškiai įvardijami, o kartais tik probėgšmais paminimi), apibrėžiančių svarbiausias erdves, kur žmonės turėdavo galimybę susipažinti ir kur tiek vyrams, tiek moterims būdavo leidžiama imtis iniciatyvos užmezgant santykius. Galiausiai analizė atskleidžia ir tam tikrus svarbius to meto šeimos struktūros bruožus.

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 21 *Vertėjos pastaba*: Žodis *ruġa*, etimologiškai reiškiantis *gatvė, kelias, alėja*, italų dainose suprantamas kaip erdvė, esanti tarp viešosios ir privačios, t. y. namų, aplinkos.