INTRODUCTION

Back to the Future

Paolo Heywood

RITES OF RETURN

This volume is intended to punctuate a shift in both the scale and the form of anthropological contributions to the study of Italy. It brings together some of the world's leading ethnographers of the region in order to showcase an array of diverse domains in contemporary Italy, as well as to demonstrate the contribution an ethnographic perspective on Italy can bring to a wider comparative anthropology of social and political life. Anthropologists working in Italy are at the forefront of scholarship on a number of the topics surveyed here, including migration, far-right populism, organized crime and heritage, and this is the first volume to bring this exciting new research together.

There has of course been an anthropology of Italy for a long time. Yet for almost as long as there has been an anthropology of Italy some have lamented that there has not been enough of it. Giving thanks for his election to an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1917, for example, Sicilian anthropologist Vincenzo Giuffrida-Ruggeri (1918) wrote a short 'sketch of the anthropology of Italy' for the institute's journal, the *JRAI*. It begins as a survey of an even older work in Italian, from 1888, the first such overview of the anthropology of Italy. 'The least developed part' of this work, Giuffrida-Ruggeri complains, 'is that on present-day anthropology, entitled "The Modern Italians"' (ibid.: 80).

When I began my own doctoral research on Italy nearly a hundred years later, I felt myself to be in a slightly different position to that of many in my cohort. Friends and colleagues working in Africa, South Asia, East Asia,

Amazonia and Mongolia had a seemingly vast catalogue of ethnographic literature to draw on, as well as the wisdom of a number of regionally specialist staff. At the same time, of course, my fieldwork destination was practically next door, and I had known it since birth. This somewhat contradictory sense of disquiet is the familiar dilemma of many a (European) anthropologist of Europe, and indeed I benefitted greatly from discussion of it with Europeanists in my department and beyond. Still, such conversations were usually about the shared methodological and epistemological problems of anthropology in Europe, rather than about, say, Italian religious rituals, the labour market in Tuscany and Umbria, northern Italian dialects or the present state of the mafia.

A student beginning their studies in the anthropology of Italy today, just a decade or so on, would hopefully have the feeling of a much larger pool of literature to dive into, and on a much wider array of topics. The last ten or fifteen years have seen an explosion of ethnographic work coming out of Italy. To take one anecdotal indicator, the American Anthropological Association's meeting programme for 2019 contains well over double the number of papers devoted to Italy than did the programme for 2002. Much, though by no means all, of this work has been driven by the authors contributing to this volume, including a wider renaissance of the anthropology of the Mediterranean (e.g. Ben-Yehoyada 2017; Ben-Yehoyada and Silverstein 2022; Ben-Yehoyada, Cabot and Silverstein 2020). The Anthropology of Italy Network, created by the late Anthony Galt and today curated by contributor Antonio Sorge, would give a newcomer to the field a wealth of contacts with like-minded scholars, as well as a lengthy list of bibliographic references.

Part of the reason for this shift lies in broader disciplinary developments over the last three decades. In lots of ways Italy has long existed – like Greece, as Michael Herzfeld (1987) has famously shown – as a sort of internal other within Europe, a place for anthropologists at the margins of 'home' and 'the field'. This helps to explain both the (very much only comparative) scarcity of classic work on the country, and the fact that what work there was sometimes gave the impression of focusing on 'problems', 'customs' or 'complexes' that resembled the sorts of social and cultural phenomena anthropologists found elsewhere in the Middle East, North Africa and the Mediterranean (and of course beyond). As the distinction between 'places anthropologists come from' and 'places anthropologists go' has gradually dissolved, newer generations of ethnographers have ventured into the same sorts of places in Italy that they had been to in Greece, France, Germany, the UK, the US and elsewhere, not in search of internal others but for the answers to crucial and pressing global political questions. Those generations of ethnographers have now trained their own cohorts of students, and so there has emerged a large

network of anthropologists for whom Italy's status in relation to the rest of Europe is another interesting question to ask, rather than an epistemological obstacle to ethnographic research.

That is the simple story of disciplinary development. This simple story is of course complicated by the fact that there has long been an anthropology *in* Italy, as well as an anthropology *of* Italy, and anthropology in Italy has historically followed a rather different trajectory to that of Anglo-American sociocultural anthropology. Furthermore, the concept of 'culture', the traditional framing analytic for ethnographic studies, has of course its own lengthy and complex history in Italy itself, as both classic and contemporary anthropological work has shown (e.g. Herzfeld 2009; Silverman 1975). Perhaps above all though, and as we will see throughout this introduction, much of the new work in the anthropology of Italy actually builds on classic scholarship on, for example, notions of political community, identity, crime and the mafia, authority and power, and religion, to name just a few.

So the idea for the present volume emerged from a strong sense that Giuffrida-Ruggeri's lament for the lack of an anthropology of modern Italy no longer reflects reality; that there is now, in other words, a new anthropology of Italy, a large, growing and vibrant field, a fact to which I hope the chapters in this book attest. At the same time, though, as long ago as 1917 there was an anthropology of Italy to complain about, and anthropologists, Italian and non-Italian, have long been producing a plethora of rich and varied contributions to both Italianist scholarship and anthropology.

There are many senses, then, in which this volume constitutes an example of what Andrew Shryock (2020) has referred to with regard to the Mediterranean more broadly as a 'rite of return' to an anthropology of Italy that has actually always been vibrant and dynamic. Shryock's response to those who might worry either that in such a return there would be nothing distinctively 'Mediterranean' about an anthropology of the Mediterranean, or that if there were it would return us to the bad old days of orientalizing our internal others, is worth quoting in full given its relevance to the project at issue here:

> [Spaces like the Mediterranean] cannot be dismissed as a kind of 'savage slot' (Trouillot 1991). They are of interest precisely because they do not fit easily in that slot and thus have immense critical potential when deployed against the imperializing modernity of the global north (and the forms of domination that come with it) and against anthropology's deep history of exoticism (and the bad analytical habits that come with it). (Shryock 2020: 151)

So this volume does not take an 'Italy', old or new, for granted; it is a study in part of what we might – somewhat improbably – call 'practical Italianism', to paraphrase Michael Herzfeld (2005), an examination of how a range of

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senses of *Italianità* emerge, are contested and collapse, and what they do to our understandings of broader social and political formations.

In the remainder of this introduction, I will attempt the task of tracing just a few of the links we might draw between classic anthropological scholarship on Italy and that contained in this volume. This is partly so that readers may gain some appreciation of the wider disciplinary and intellectual context from which the work herein emerges and within which it remains situated. But it is also so that readers do not take from talk of a 'new' anthropology of Italy the idea that novelty in scholarship must involve discarding everything that is 'old' (an impression sometimes given by talk of 'new kinship studies', for instance).

What follows is anything but an exhaustive excursus into connections between current and classic work on Italy, and clearly, given limitations of space, it could bear no resemblance to a broader survey of the anthropology of Italy in its entirety (for other attempts see Alliegro 2010; Clemente et al. 1985; Dei 2023; Filippucci 1996; Grottanelli 1977; Palumbo 2021; Saunders 1984; Viazzo 2017).

Indeed, there is a very great deal of work – older and newer – that I cannot dwell on in as much detail as I would wish, and other potential genealogies not traced here: for example, anthropological work in Italy has long focused on food (e.g. Black 2012; Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014; Cavanaugh 2016; Counihan 1999, 2021; Siniscalchi 2013, 2023) and, more recently, on fashion (e.g. Krause 2018; Yanagisako and Rofel 2019), and regrettably I lack the space to engage at length with these literatures here. Nor do I have the space to discuss sexuality, the subject of my own earlier work (Heywood 2015a, 2015b, 2018a, 2018b). This volume itself is of course only a sample of the range of scholarship currently ongoing in Italy.

But I hope the work I discuss below dispels any impression that the only topics of interest to classic Italianist ethnography were honour and shame complexes or the 'problem' of southern economic development. I hope also that it will give some indication at least of the richness of the scholarship upon which anthropologists of Italy today are building.

PRACTICAL ITALIANISM

It might seem odd to speak of a 'practical Italianism' in the sense of Herzfeld's (2005) 'practical Mediterraneanism', a pragmatic category of identity invoked for particular performative functions rather than an actually exiting entity; 'Italy', after all, does have an existence as a nation state that 'the Mediterranean' does not, along with associated trappings, and it was not Italy's existence that was put into question by famous anthropological critiques

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of Mediterraneanist literature, just as it was not Spain's or Greece's, but the idea, among others, that together they formed something more than themselves (a 'culture area', e.g. Gilmore 1982). Yet the problem scales: what it means to be Italian has been posed as a question since the earliest anthropological writing on the subject, and it persists as an underlying theme in many of the contributions to this volume. The history of special interest in this question helps to explain the distinct path that anthropology in Italy has taken, leading it to an unusual early focus on what we might anachronistically call 'anthropology at home'; as Italian anthropologist Tullio Tentori has put it, 'There are few anthropologies . . . that have dedicated such great attention and intellectual energy to the study of the cultures and social fabric within the national borders' (Tentori 1983: 180, cited in Saunders 1984: 449; and see also Palumbo 2021).

For example, both the first Italian anthropological society (which included Cesare Lombroso among its members) and the first professorial chair in anthropology in Italy were established with Italian unification in 1870. Both were focused on physical anthropology (as was Giuffrida-Ruggeri) but also in particular on 'the ancient and modern peoples of Italy' (Grottanelli 1977: 594) with the clear project of establishing a 'scientific' basis for distinguishing a particular Italian 'race' or *ethnos*. Already by this point, though, and foreshadowing a theme of later anthropological work, the issue of who qualified for membership in this group was central to the 'Southern Question', with Lombroso and others in the newly established society arguing that southerners constituted a different (and inferior) population (Cimino and Foschi 2014), a point explored at length, alongside the 'Southern Question' more broadly, by later anthropological and historical scholarship (e.g. Schneider 1998). Later, in the Fascist period, this version of the anthropological project in Italy would also go on to be weaponized in the service of Mussolini's African colonial projects and of his internal racial policies towards Jews and others (see Saunders 1984: 451, and e.g. Piccioni 2022), and racial understandings of belonging in Italy persist today, as several of the contributions to this volume demonstrate (see Mahmud, Tuckett and Peano, this volume).

Another means by which the early anthropology of and in Italy was engaged in the business of practical Italianism was folklore studies. In advance of the Risorgimento the collation of popular tales and poetry from across the country served to establish a sense of shared culture (Grottanelli 1977: 596; Filippucci 1996: 59). This branch of the discipline too, though, soon began to concentrate on the south, partly on the basis that it was there that a 'purer', more authentic version of popular culture could be found, one less tainted by modernity (Clemente et al. 1985: 97). In fact, one of the first prominent Italian folklorist ethnographers, Lamberto Loria, had actually travelled around the Trobriand Islands long before Malinowski, but decided

that the variety and diversity of 'culture' in Italy was such that his time was better spent doing an early – and heavily exoticized – version of 'anthropology at home' (Grottanelli 1977: 595). Like physical anthropology in Italy, folklore studies also sought to put itself at the service of government, with Loria declaring that ethnography could be an instrument of both 'Internal and Colonial Policy' (ibid.: 596). Later Fascist folklorists would find in folklore studies evidence for the benefits of a 'return to tradition' (Filippucci 1996: 60; and see Cammelli, this volume; Dei 2023: 160), and Fascism would see the very diversity of Italian popular culture as the basis of claims for a national capacity for versatility (as Herzfeld 1987: 30 notes). A number of contributors to this volume address contemporary objectifications of 'traditional culture' in Italy, whether in service of new forms of practical Italianism or of more local ends (see Course, Palumbo, Pizza and Sorge, this volume), and later in this introduction I discuss the work of Ernesto De Martino on this question and his ongoing influence.

The question of 'traditional culture' in Italy and its implications for what it means to be Italian has of course not been of interest only to Italians. In the post-war period American government aid to Italy through the Marshall Plan and other programmes was substantial and aimed at a development agenda designed to keep Western states – especially Italy, with Western Europe's largest communist party – out of the orbit of the USSR. The question of what exactly was hindering such 'development' in the Italian south provided the first spur to work of foreign (largely American) ethnographers in Italy in the 1950s, and it was for the most part 'culture' that gave them their answer.

Working almost exclusively in the south, scholars such as Frederick Friedmann (e.g. 1960), Donald Pitkin (e.g. 1959), Leonard Moss (e.g. Moss and Thompson 1959), Joseph Lopreato (e.g. 1967), Anne Talcott Parsons (e.g. 1969), Frank Cancian (e.g. 1961) and Edward Banfield (e.g. 1958) found a sort of 'impractical Italianism', versions of culture that, to their broadly functionalist mindset, inhibited socio-economic progress. Friedmann's (1953, 1960) depiction of what he called *la miseria*, and Banfield's (1958) 'amoral familism', both in Basilicata, were intended as diagnoses of how certain cultural traits and attitudes – such as a generalized 'resignation' or 'despair', an unhealthy attachment to honour or a short-sighted and narrow focus on the nuclear family – were barriers to 'modernization' in the south (see Solvetti 2022 for a thorough survey).

This work was influential outside of Italy in the post-war period, but the response of the Italian left and intellectuals was almost immediately hostile (see Ferragina 2009; Solvetti 2022: 9), particularly to Banfield (who conceded in his book's preface that he only ever learned at best 'rudimentary' Italian – Banfield 1958: 10; see also Palumbo 2021 for wider critical reflections on the relation between anglophone and italophone scholarship on

Italy, as a well as a response from commentators including other contributors to this volume). Though an echo of Banfield's 'amoral familism' hypothesis can be found in Robert Putnam's (1993) well-known later work on civic traditions in Italy, anglophone anthropologists also soon found much to critique in the functionalist and developmental approach that Banfield and other early Italianists took (e.g. Cancian 1961; Miller 1974; Silverman 1968). Yet in many ways their focus on the family and on the relation of culture to understandings of public life set the agenda for Anglo-American scholarship in Italy for some time (Filippucci 1996: 54), even as the explicit question of what, if anything, made Italy or Italians distinct fell by the wayside as much more granular and complex questions emerged.

A great many contributions to this volume show how this question continues to be posed, or how particular answers to it continue to be assumed, in various domains of Italian social and political life. Part I (and see Ben-Yehoyada 2017; Grotti and Brightman 2021; Krause and Bresson 2020; Mahmud 2014; Tuckett 2018; Peano, this volume) showcases the ways in which Italy's status at the forefront of global political struggles around migration puts issues of race, ethnicity and belonging at the centre of public discourse and everyday life, in ways that both imbricate and challenge dominant contemporary ideas about what it means to be Italian. The populist nationalism that is the focus of Part II is of course often built around its own heavily racialized and ethnicized answers to that question, and Part IV explores the ways in which art, heritage and other objectified forms of culture play a number of roles in such arguments, including in ways that tie back into debates over race and migration (see Course, this volume). And in Part V the history of regionality and its relation to language complicates, among other things, the picture of two Italies, north and south, that underpinned much of this earlier scholarship (see Blim, this volume).

A PEOPLE WITH HISTORY

The idea, introduced above, that studying Italian popular tradition was simply a way to unearth or recover an equivalent of the 'archaic' or timeless cultures anthropologists took themselves to be studying elsewhere in the world was complicated by the influence of Gramsci's views on the subject, which were published in his prison notebooks in Italy in 1948–51. Gramsci saw popular culture in Italy as linked to historically specific political struggles, with folklore thus emerging as a form of embryonic class consciousness, both a mystification of fundamentally economic and political struggles and an instrument of expression within those struggles (cf. Dei 2018; 2023: 165). Gramsci's views, as well as those of the other towering Italian intellectual

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figure of the early twentieth century, Benedetto Croce, were a significant influence on Ernesto De Martino (see Clemente et al. 1985: 211; Saunders 1993; Solvetti 2022), in many ways the founding father of the sociocultural tradition of anthropology in Italy.

"Returning" to De Martino's work is in some respects an unlikely endeavour as – though largely unknown outside of Italy during his lifetime – he in many ways anticipates a number of anthropological themes that would only later emerge in the broader discipline: popular culture as a means of resistance; illness as a culturally coherent response to material socio-economic conditions; and the ways in which what he often called 'magic' or magical thinking challenges our own conceptions of reality (see e.g. De Martino 1941, 1948, 1959, 1961). Perhaps his most significant contribution, though, was to bring a historical perspective to bear on Italianist ethnography, inspired in particular by Crocean historical idealism. At the same time as his American colleagues in Italy – whom he largely ignored and who largely ignored him (Solvetti 2022: 2) – were producing the functionalist and largely synchronic and ahistorical analyses of the south discussed above, and forty years before, say, *Time and the Other* (Fabian 1983), or *Europe and the People without History* (Wolf 1982), De Martino was writing of the plight of the Apulian peasantry as akin to that of 'primitives', both reduced to a 'forgotten ahistorical humanity', with whom an ethnographer must try to '*be* together in the same history' (cited in Saunders 1993: 879).

In a career spanning nearly four decades and a substantial number of monographs, De Martino sought to produce a 'religious history of the south' by examining a range of beliefs and practices marginal to official Catholicism – such as the 'evil eye', ritualized funeral weeping and, most famously, *tarantismo* – through archival and field-based research. Inspired by Gramsci and Croce he saw such practices as the products of specific histories, cultural responses to conditions of material poverty and to dominant or 'official' beliefs and practices. His best-known account is *The Land of Remorse*, a report of the work he and a team of associated researchers carried out on the phenomenon of *tarantismo*, wherein an individual is afflicted (often by extreme agitation) following the (real or imagined) bite of a tarantula and can only be cured through ritualized music and dance. De Martino (1961) accounted for this as a symbolic response to a range of personal and social circumstances, especially those surrounding the regulation of sexuality in the rural south, while also historicizing it by showing how orthodox explanations and treatments of tarantism tended to oscillate between cultural and medical forms.

While De Martino tended to focus his historicization on the cultural dimensions of peasant life, some of his successors, such as Luigi Lombardi Satriani, were more interested in the history of the ways in which cultural

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forms born from agrarian and rural socio-economic contexts survived and transformed in urban ones. Writing in the 1970s, Lombardi Satriani (1979), for example, described the use of 'peasant themes' in student protests in Rome and Naples, as well as pointing out that enormous amounts of out-migration from the south was carrying such themes to immigrant centres across Europe. Indeed in some ways it is striking, as Antonio Sorge points out, that despite huge contemporary interest in migration to Italy, comparatively little in the anthropology of the country has focused on the millions of Italians who left Italy over the last century and a half (pers. comm., though see Signorelli 1977).

Other successors to De Martino would continue to complexify the historical dimensions of folklore and 'folk' culture in an Italy increasingly riven by class conflict and ideological struggle. A. M. Cirese, while continuing to insist on the importance of historicizing Italian popular culture, saw its connections to particular social and cultural strata as more important than its origins (see e.g. Cirese 1978). As Filippucci (1996: 64) notes, Vittorio Lantenari's work is an excellent illustration of this point, as it describes the appropriation of so-called 'archaic' peasant cultural forms by the urban bourgeoisie, among others (e.g. Lantenari 1976; and see also Saunders 1984: 459), in a manner echoed by later scholarship on heritage in Italy, including some in this volume that actually returns to the topics and places first examined by De Martino (see Pizza, this volume).

History, then, due in no small part to the twin and interrelated influence of the towering figures of Croce and Gramsci in Italian intellectual life, has long played a significant role in Italian anthropology (see also Palumbo 2021). While early anglophone anthropology in Italy may have been dominated by a largely ahistorical functionalism of the Banfield variety, it too soon began to take a more diachronic approach, though remaining for the most part focused on the rural south and on the relationship between kinship, political economy, and cultural values.

Banfield's ahistoricism was subject to a number of anglophone as well as Italian critiques, with authors such as Silverman and Cancian pointing out that the cultural attitudes he claimed to have identified in the south of Italy were more likely to be consequences, not causes, of economic deprivation (Cancian 1961; Silverman 1968). This critique was given ethnographic and historical substantiation by John Davis's work in Pisticci, Basilicata, on the relationship between land tenure, inheritance regulation and family structure (Davis 1969, 1975; and see Brogger 1971; Belmonte 1979). Davis (1969) also described the importance of honour (*onore*) as a value in Pisticci, but again situated it in historical perspective by examining the role it played in the distribution of material resources through successive generations, a point that would shortly after be echoed and significantly expanded on in a

landmark work by two of our contributors, Jane and Peter Schneider, which I discuss later in this introduction.

By the 1980s the place of history in the ethnography of Italy was firmly established. Indeed, the wider emergence of a concern for history in anthropology more broadly around this time was perhaps in part due to the emergence of interdisciplinary trends coming out of the work of Italian scholars, such as the *microstoria* of Carlo Ginzburg and others (see Ginzburg 1976). In one of the first anglophone ethnographies to focus on the north, George Saunders (1979) took a historical approach to understanding changing patterns of family organization as a consequence of industrialization in Piedmont, and, appropriately, Saunders would go on to be instrumental in bringing the work of De Martino to a wider anglophone audience (Saunders 1984, 1993; and see Zinn 2015). Donald Pitkin, who had been one of the first generation of American anthropologists to study Italy, and whose work had always exhibited a historical bent (e.g. Pitkin 1959), produced both a masterly historical account of and a documentary film based around the lives of a single family in a hilltop village in the province of Latina, and discussed the ways in which the economic development that his fellow pioneering Italianists prescribed for the south had impacted on family organization and aspiration (Pitkin 1985; and see Galt 1991). Also treating issues of economic transformation, but, like Saunders, in the north, Douglas Holmes (1989) described the emergent hybrid category of the 'worker-peasant', and the ways in which the increasing 'rationalization' of daily life was gradually destroying the popular folk ideologies with which this section began, leading to a process of Weberian 'cultural disenchantment'.

In many ways Holmes's work anticipates what would soon become a central feature of both anglophone and italophone anthropological scholarship in Italy, namely contested ethnographic understandings of history, tradition and heritage, a theme reflected in core contributions to this volume (see especially Heywood, Pizza and Palumbo, this volume).

In an early example of this work Paola Filippucci (1997) describes the strategic uses of the past in a town in Veneto as a nostalgically moralized counterpoint to perceptions of problems in the present, a political football in struggles between people and institutions, and a source of economic value. Filippucci draws partly for her arguments from Michael Herzfeld's (1991) work on the place of the past Crete and Greece, and of course Herzfeld himself would go on to produce a masterly ethnography of how past and present cohabited in Rome at the turn of the millennium (Herzfeld 2009; and see Guano 2017; Palumbo 2004). *Evicted from Eternity* treats the *rione* of Monti, long subject to gentrification and subsequently also to 'heritagization' by local, national and international authorities concerned to preserve and instrumentalize Italian 'culture'. Here Herzfeld also resurrects

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ethnographic interest in the notion of *civiltà*, the subject of earlier work by Sydel Silverman, described below, through which local understandings of 'civility' combine a moralized view of 'high culture' with an ethic of personalized relationships rooted in "traditionalizing (and sometimes underworld) interests" (Herzfeld 2015: 13; and see also Pipyrou 2016), raising issues of political authority to which I return in the section below.

The contributions to this volume are suffused with a concern for history and the past, as is a great deal of ordinary Italian life. This might be the 'folkloric' past with which early Italophone anthropology concerned itself, now often monetized and commercialized, as we see in Giovanni Pizza's return to De Martino's original field site (Pizza, this volume); or 'heritage' as decided upon but not determined by UNESCO, as Berardino Palumbo (see e.g. 1998, 2003, 2010, this volume) has long been cataloguing; but it is also the past of disputed histories of the Fascist regime, as I describe in my own chapter (Heywood, this volume), or of even more recent tragedies such as the Morandi Bridge collapse on which Emanuela Guano's chapter is focused (Guano, this volume).

CULTURES OF AUTHORITY

The nature of authority and power is another striking theme of literature in the anthropology of Italy, as well as of a range of contributions to this volume. As noted above, questions of political structure and organization preoccupied a number of early anglophone anthropologists concerned about issues of development in the south, and the work of Italian scholars such as De Martino and others was rooted in a Gramscian understanding of the place of culture in wider political struggles.

There was significant interest in class and status conflict on the part of Italian sociocultural anthropologists after De Martino, who by this point had emerged as a group distinct from both the ethnological and the folklorist tradition, partly under the influence of the Americans who had come to southern Italy (see Clemente et al. 1985: 264; Filippucci 1996: 64; Saunders 1984: 454). Tullio Tentori, for instance, worked with Frederick Friedmann in the *sassi* of Matera before going on to study gender, class consciousness and political attitudes in urban northern Italy (see e.g. Tentori 1970a, 1970b), while Amalia Signorelli was first a student of De Martino's, before working on the aspirations of returned migrants (Signorelli 1977) and cultures of clientelism in Calabria, noting the ways in which local people objectify such a 'culture' or 'mentality' as a problem, rather than connecting it to underlying political and economic injustice (Signorelli 1983; see also Gribaudi 1987).

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The relationship between culture, clientelism and political authority preoccupied many of those we might think of as the second wave of anglophone ethnographers in Italy, sometimes in the form of an interest in the mafia, though they were not alone in this interest: as the Schneiders note in this volume, one of the earliest and best-known folklorists of Sicily, Giuseppe Pitrè, wrote of the mafia as heroic remainders of an earlier age and of their code of *omertà* as akin to one of chivalry (Pitrè 1889; see also Puccio-Den 2021: 45; Greene 2012: 304 n. 10; Triolo 1993; and see Schneiders, this volume). Though in part perhaps reacting against northern orientalist portrayals of Sicily as rife with endemic criminality, Pitrè himself was also enmeshed in the island's networks of patronage and clientelism, as Nancy Triolo (1993) makes clear.

In Anton Blok's classic historico-ethnographic study of mafia in western Sicily, we find mafiosi playing the role of middlemen and power-brokers between absentee landlords and a weak state on the one hand and rural landless peasants on the other, emerging historically as muscle and overseers for the former and extortive protectors for the latter (Blok 1974; and see 2001). Meanwhile Sydel Silverman (1975), working in the same period but in an Umbrian hill town, finds the notion of *civiltà* and associated qualities to be an expression of the historical value placed on the ability of certain local classes to act as mediators between rural peasants and urban elites, and local people and state officials. Both Blok and Silverman anticipated the disappearance of the need for their respective forms of mediation as the gap between rural and urban Italian worlds narrowed and the state's reach increased; present-day work in Italy, including much in this volume, demonstrates its apparent persistence (and see e.g. Zinn 2019).

Two of our contributors, Jane and Peter Schneider, were carrying out fieldwork in Sicily at the same time as Blok (and as Davis in Pisticci) and their work – as historically thorough in its approach as Blok's – returns us to the theme of honour, first raised above (Schneider and Schneider 1976; and see Davis 1969; Giovannini 1981; Goddard 1987; Schneider 1971). In *Culture and Political Economy in Western Sicily* they identify honour as a cultural code – among other such codes – employed by broker classes and entrepreneurs without state protection (like the mafia) who rely largely on extensive social networks for their success, and who emerge as a historically and culturally rational response to centuries of status as a peripheral colony of successive empires. This work – and nearly a half-century of subsequent scholarship (see e.g. Schneider and Schneider 2003; Schneider 2018) – is notable for the ways in which it shows the mafia to be a symptom, not a cause, of politico-economic conditions in Sicily, and makes particularly clear the Mafia's place in wider global networks, an argument that takes to task both culturalist accounts old and new (Banfield 1958; see also Putnam 1993)

as well as those that refuse culturalism but take a more narrowly focused view on the role or absence of the state (e.g. Gambetta 1993).

As in the Schneiders' focus in their chapter herein, other work on the mafia in Sicily (and other criminal organizations) has explored ideas around *omertà*, codes of silence and other forms of communicative action (e.g. Jacquemet 1996; di Bella 2008), with Deborah Puccio-Den (2021; and see 2013) arguing that recent crackdowns on the part of the state against the mafia constitute a sort of ontological shift, in which the logic of *omertà* – a vision of shared and collective responsibility underpinned by silence – is confronted by the modern state's need to individualize responsibility and obligate confessional speech. She sees the mafia as the political equivalent of witchcraft, a local alternative to global universalist understandings of accountability and justice. Meanwhile, across the Tyrrhenian Sea, Jason Pine's exploration of *neomelodica* musicians and their ambiguous relationships with the Camorra finds the latter to be a similarly spectral, indeterminate and amorphous phenomenon, casting an affective and atmospheric pall over the city regardless of where and when it is actually present (Pine 2012; and see also Pipyrou 2016 on the 'Ndrangheta in Calabria, and Sorge 2015a on legacies of Sardinian banditry).

In addition to the Schneiders' chapter on *omertà* we are also fortunate to have contributions from two other prominent contemporary ethnographers of the mafia (and anti-mafia) in Italy: Naor Ben-Yehoyada (and see Ben-Yehoyada 2018), whose earlier work (e.g. 2017) on migration and transnational networks in and through Sicily set the tone for burgeoning conversations around the regionality of the Mediterranean, and Theodoros Rakopoulos, who has published extensively on his research with agricultural cooperatives based on land confiscated from the mafia (e.g. Rakopoulos 2014, 2017a, 2017b, 2018, 2020); both focus on the discursive logics of the Sicilian anti-mafia in the various forms it takes, building in part on themes developed in the Schneiders' (2003) later work.

Not all work on power and authority in Italy has focused on the mafia, of course, with the themes of brokerage and mediation returning in Pratt's work on local politics in Tuscany and the ways in which *comune*, province and region emerge as distinct scales of governance (Pratt 1986; and see also Blim, this volume). The value of 'locality' in Italy is a broader theme here, explored also by Filippucci (1997) and in John Cole and Eric Wolf's (1974) classic ethnography of culture, ethnicity and locality in the Tyrol, and it is a theme that would return in darker form in later work by Douglas Holmes (see below) and also in Jaro Stacul's study of village life in Trentino (Stacul 2004; and see also Sorge 2015b).

David Kertzer, who has gone on to write highly successful historical and biographical studies (e.g. Kertzer 2014, 2018, 2022), wrote his first book on

the interplay of religion and politics in the city of Bologna (Kertzer 1980), focusing in particular on the ways in which much of the structure and ritual of the local communist party mirrored that of the Church, with ordinary people making more or less pragmatic rather than ideological choices between the two (and see Heywood 2015c). That religious forms and idioms remain important modes of political expression in Italy is testified to by Magnus Course's chapter in this volume, which explores a similar imbrication of the political and the religious in art and migrant activism in present-day Naples (and see Palumbo 2004).

Meanwhile, however, by the turn of the millennium Italian politics had moved dramatically beyond the traditional rivalry of communist PCI and Catholic Christian Democracy, and so had scholarship on the subject. In a book that now looks in many ways very prescient indeed, Douglas Holmes (2000) returned to Friuli and northern Italy – along with other European sites – to examine the growth of what he referred to as 'integralism': a set of ideas common to a number of European political movements of the time (including what was then called the Lega Nord), originating in romantic and counter-enlightenment notions of cultural and ethnic particularity and a fervent belief in the need to safeguard traditional ways of life from an advancing European federalism, as well as from the same globalizing economic logics that largely destroyed the dwindling peasant economy Holmes described in his first ethnography (Holmes 1989; and see also Cavanaugh 2009, this volume on language). *Integral Europe* was a groundbreaking ethnographic exposition of the growth of a then still nascent European far right that put Italy at the centre of work on the topic, and recent years have seen Holmes (see e.g. 2016, 2019) return to these themes, as national Italian politics lurches further and further to the right, alongside a growing body of work by anglophone and italophone scholars including contributor Maddalena Gretel Cammelli and myself (see e.g. Gretel Cammelli 2015, 2017, 2018; Heywood 2022, 2023, 2024; Loperfido 2014; Pasieka 2022). Part II of this book focuses squarely on contemporary manifestations of populism in Italy, from Giorgia Meloni's media strategies to the activism of Forza Nuova and CasaPound, and many of the chapters pursue the question of how these contemporary movements draw on ideas from the same historical genealogy Holmes outlined.

Finally, there has also long been a rich seam of literature on gender in Italy, one that made significant and substantive contributions to the anthropology of gender more widely (see especially Counihan 1985; Giovannini 1981; Goddard 1987, 1996; Krause 2001, 2005, 2007, 2009; Krause and Marchesi 2007; Yanagisako 2002); Yanagisako's recent contributions in particular (e.g. Yanagisako 2002, 2018; Yanagisako and Rofel 2019) have famously linked questions of gender in Italy – and beyond – with wider issues of kinship,

as well as with race and migration (in a manner that dovetails with Krause's contribution here), and also with political economy. Indeed, both her work and Michael Blim's (e.g. Blim 1990, this volume) make evident the distinctiveness of Italian political economy more broadly, and their insights – as well as other earlier work on ethics and economics (e.g. Pardo 1996) – have carried forward in more recent influential scholarship on the neoliberal turn in Italian governance and its effects on everyday life in a range of spheres (see e.g. Guano 2011; Molé Liston 2008, 2010, 2012, 2013; Muehlebach 2011, 2012).

THE CHAPTERS

The book is divided into five parts, though the divisions are of course intended to be heuristic rather than to signal sharp breaks, and several chapters touch on the theme of more than one part (for example, Peano's connects populism and migration, and my own deals with both populism and heritage).

Part I of this volume showcases some of the world-leading work on migration to emerge from recent scholarship on a country that is at the heart of a Europe-wide crisis. In our opening chapter, Lilith Mahmud interrogates the performance of incompetence on the part of Italian authorities as they cope with EU migration rules that put the country in an absurd situation, showing that the victims of the arbitrariness that ensues from such performances are often refugees of colour. Anna Tuckett describes similarly racialized understandings of citizenship and identity in Italy, which, when coupled with exclusionary bureaucratic processes, present formidable obstacles to migrants' sense of belonging, even as 1.5 and second-generation arrivals actively challenge such norms. Vanessa Grotti and Marc Brightman explore the ways in which the symbolic themes of death and a subsequent return to life are invoked by migrant survivors in Sicilian reception centres, but also by socially marginal locals and those looking to regenerate a region at the periphery of the state and suffering from long-term structural neglect. Finally, Elizabeth Krause shows how an emergent biopolitical regime of inspection and regulation imposed on Chinese workers in Tuscany allowed the state to displace some classic anxieties about Italian labour and determined its refusal to see anti-inspection protests as legitimate political discourse.

Authors in Part II examine the status of far-right populism in Italy, writing during the year in which elections saw the victory of an avowedly post-Fascist political party for the first time in the country's post-war history. In my contribution I explore the ways in which 'forgetting Fascism' emerges as an ethical and political imperative in the small town of Predappio, the

birthplace and burial site of Benito Mussolini, and one of Italy's premier neo-Fascist tourist destinations. Far from being a passive or accidental process, I show how the urban landscape of the town has been actively shaped to encourage such forgetting, in the face of its visitors who insist on celebrating the memory of Predappio's most infamous son. Maddalena Gretel Cammelli describes a prime example of a group who cherish the memory of historical Fascism and draw directly on it for models of political action, namely CasaPound, an association and political party that makes use of 'mediatic squadrism', a form of politics that links new technologies and communicative forms back to historically rooted understandings of Fascist violence. In her chapter Irene Peano also examines connections between old and new forms of Fascism as she shows how the plain of the Tavoliere delle Puglie is haunted both by Fascist ruins and by Fascist visions of reclamation and redemption, visions that play out in and are mobilized by attempts on the part of the contemporary far right to set locals against migrants and refugees. Widening the thematic lens in this part's concluding chapter, Noelle Molé Liston explores the ways in which 'fake news' has recently become a topic of overwhelming concern in Italian politics, despite the long entrenchment of political instrumentalization of the media in the country, in ways that have actually made the simple and explicit communicative strategies of populists like Meloni more appealing to a public exhausted by the need to constantly scrutinize the media it imbibes.

In Part III we turn to the mafia and the anti-mafia, and the complex interrelationship between the two in the public sphere. Drawing on decades of ethnographic and historical research, Jane and Peter Schneider chart changing practices and understandings of *omertà*, the mafia code of silence, and the ways in which it has been challenged by but has also evolved in response to the Italian state's increasing determination to subvert it. In the next chapter Theodoros Rakopoulos examines the often contradictory and conflicting ways in which 'the mafia' is given form in the anti-mafia public sphere, itself often subject to contestation and conflict, whether through institutional competition, gossip and rumour, or simply unscripted and unexpected events. Similarly, in the last chapter of this part, Naor Ben-Yehoyada shows how journalists covering (or attempting to cover) mafia-related events often deal in the grey area between facts and accusations that are sayable because they are criminal and a matter of legal record and those that are not sayable – at least not in explicit language – because they are not (yet) legally describable, even though they are knowable both to writers and their readership.

Part IV brings us to the topic of heritage, broadly defined, long an area of concern for Italianist scholarship. Emanuela Guano's initial chapter takes us to Genoa and an attempt on the part of the state to deploy a form of aesthetic governance through sanctioned street art in the wake of the Morandi

Bridge collapse in order to undermine political opposition born of neglect of the local community both before and after the disaster. In Magnus Course's chapter we move to Naples, where a variety of artists and activists draw on religious iconography in their engagements in debates over migration by depicting migrants as saints (who were also, of course, often migrants themselves); Course shows how the place of religion in Italian public space, art and heritage leaves it available to co-optation in a number of different ways and to a range of ends. Antonio Sorge brings us to the Sicilian interior, a region Italians have been leaving in large numbers since the nineteenth century, an outflux that correlates with the degradation and decay of a number of small towns and villages where significant proportions of property stand unused and abandoned; in response the *comune* of Mussomeli has begun selling houses for €1, commoditizing a feeling of place and locality for expatriates seeking to escape the anonymity of American or European city life. Returning to De Martino's original field site, Giovanni Pizza explores some of the ways in which *tarantismo* – once sanctioned by the church and seen to epitomize an orientalized image of the south – has also become commoditized, gradually absorbed into Italy's growing heritage industry, though not always, as he shows, without contestation or comment. Finally, Berardino Palumbo surveys a prolific career of anthropological research in Militello in Val di Catania, tracing the ways in which for some time it seemed to resist (or be uninterested in) the processes of patrimonialization that come with the UNESCO World Heritage listing it has possessed since 2002, only in recent years for it too to succumb to depopulation and economic decline and thus feel the need to appeal to an outside audience as 'the most beautiful village in Sicily'.

The last part of the book treats issues of language and regionality. Michael Blim dismantles the idea of an Italy divided neatly into north and south, showing how the central north successfully positioned itself after the Second World War as a unique and thriving economic powerhouse of small and medium businesses, even as this branding obscured growing problems that today result in a political shift rightwards as the region competes with the south while refusing to identify with it. Meanwhile Jillian Cavanaugh examines three particular moments in the recent history of the dialect of Bergamo (Bergamasco), showing how linguistic ideologies behind dialect politics encode chronotopic understandings of time and place, scaling various forms of connection, whether to ancestors, folk history or a separatist vision of the north.

Michael Herzfeld caps the volume by drawing out of some of its synoptic themes, focusing in particular on the ways in which it brings to light certain culturally intimate aspects of *Italianità* in its various guises, and highlighting the fact that *cultura* itself is a term replete with meaning and significance in

Italian. As anthropology as a discipline seeks to rid itself of 'the distorting lens of an essentially colonial epistemology' (Herzfeld, this volume), it has much to learn, he argues, from both Italian anthropology and the anthropology of Italy.

PLURAL FUTURES

The chapters included here are certainly not meant to represent an exhaustive catalogue of contemporary anthropological work on Italy, which, happily, continues to grow apace. What they do give is a sample of the kind of ethnographic and theoretical scholarship ongoing today that puts Italy at the heart of a number of vital global debates for anthropology and beyond.

Migration is a critical contemporary issue in a great many contexts across the world, but the central Mediterranean that divides North Africa and Italy represents one of the most well-travelled and most dangerous routes. Recent work on the subject has sought to locate migration in the Mediterranean in a broader historical context of racism and colonialism (e.g. Proglio et al. 2021), in a manner that chimes with some of the contributions here and with the wider resurrection of interest in the Mediterranean as a region (e.g. Ben-Yehoyada 2017). Such a focus also centres Italy and its specific colonial histories (see e.g. Ben-Ghiat and Fuller 2005), as well as the experience of migrants in a country that, as several chapters herein make clear, racializes citizenship and belonging to such a significant extent. Understanding the cultural and historical dynamics underpinning the Italian context, as well as the ways in which they are changing in response to social and political challenges, should make a substantial contribution to how anthropologists and other scholars think about and imagine the topics of race, ethnicity, identity and nationhood.

One response to a perceived crisis of migration in Italy has been the steady electoral growth of the populist right in the country over the last two decades, with the election of Giorgia Meloni as Prime Minister the most recent milestone. Yet a resurgent far right is obviously far from being a peculiarly Italian phenomenon, and here again scholars of populism and nationalism across the world will find much of interest in the contemporary anthropology of Italy, not least because of the country's singular historical relationship with Fascism.

Less perhaps need be said to explain the interest of the anthropology of Italy when it comes to scholarship on organized crime, or on issues of heritage and history, to both of which it has long been making key contributions, some of which I have discussed above. As the chapters herein demonstrate,

such contributions continue to develop understanding on these issues both within and beyond anthropology.

Italianists have long demonstrated an appropriately catholic appreciation of insights deriving from ethnographic work from around the world – from Africa, for instance, and from Asia – and as I have noted here Italian anthropology has historically been significantly influenced by both American and British contributions, despite the fact that attempts to make this relationship more reciprocal (e.g. Saunders 1984) have not met with much success. As I hope this introduction shows, there has always been a very great deal for anthropologists to learn from the study of Italy – and that is only more true today, as the contributions to this volume showcase.

Of course, there are a great many other directions in which the anthropology of Italy is growing and developing. This book is called 'New Anthropologies of Italy', rather than '*The* New Anthropology of Italy', because it is of course not intended to be the final and definitive word on the subject. One of the marks of a successful genre of anthropological writing is internal variety and debate, and it is my hope that this book both stimulates and informs those new to and familiar with the subject, while also generating more new anthropologies of Italy to come.

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