

PHOTOGRAPHING AS
AN ANTHROPOLOGIST:
NOTES ON DEVELOPING A
PHOTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC PRACTICE
IN BASILICATA

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There are a number of reasons why photo-ethnography, understood as ‘the use of still photography as a means of ... presenting ethnographic information and insight’ (Wright 2018: 1), is not nearly as developed in both practice and theoretical reflection as ethnographic documentary (Edwards 1997: 53). As remarked by Wright, while most ethnographers carry and use a camera during fieldwork, the production of photo-ethnographies is very limited. A few ethnographers have, in the past, tried to develop arguments visually by making extensive use of photographs in their monographs – a pioneering but isolated example is *Balinese Character* (Bateson and Mead 1942), followed years later by *Gardens of War* (Gardner and Heider 1968). In recent times, it is still uncommon to find authors of ethnographic monographs who include in their books images that go beyond a merely illustrative role, offering instead an account that is parallel to the text. Examples include *A Space on the Side of the Road* (Stewart 1996) and more recently *Monrovia Modern* (Hoffman 2017). However, in 2016 the journal *Visual Anthropology Review* and the Society for Cultural Anthropology launched a platform for photo essays which has already created a significant corpus of work.¹ A somewhat more established practice has involved collaborations in which an anthropologist writes a text that is accompanied by images taken by a photographer – often on the basis of the anthropologist’s research and personal contacts (e.g. Blau et al. 2010; Bourgois and Schonberg 2009; Keil et al. 2002; Meintjes 2017). Indeed, this way of working has had an important role in the history of ethnographic research in Basilicata, as I will describe later.

Even though my list is far from exhaustive, it is apparent that since Collier’s now-dated book ([1967] 1986), not only practical examples of photo-ethnography but also academic reflections upon it have been much more limited than those on photographic archives (Edwards 1992; Morton and Edwards 2009; Pinney 2011) or on the study of local photographic cultures (Buckley 2000; Pinney 1997; Wright

2013). Reflecting on the reasons for this trend, two main aspects stand out for me: first, the association of photography with a problematic, objectifying gaze which links it with practices of power and the early history of anthropology and colonialism (Pinney 1992). This critique originates beyond anthropology and is exemplified by such well-known works as Sontag's *On Photography*, in which she compares the photographer to a voyeur who exploits the pain of others without intervening (1977: 11–12). Meanwhile, later analyses of the representation of non-Western cultures in mainstream publications have posited an association between photography and an exoticising gaze (Lutz and Collins 1991). The noble savage and other neo-colonial narratives are alive and well in some photographic practices that may be erroneously associated with the social sciences, as for example in the project *Before They Pass Away* by Jimmy Nelson (2013), who describes himself as an ethnographic photographer. With a legacy of primitivism that runs from Edward S. Curtis's work on native Americans to Sebastião Salgado's *Genesis* (2013), passing through Leni Riefenstahl's images of the Nuba (Franklin 2016: chapter 2), photography might seem too compromised to invest in as a form of ethnographic output. On the other hand, some recent contributions to the discussion on photo-ethnography have stressed the potential of photographic collaborations to break these associations (Graham 2016; Mjaaland 2017).

The other major point of contention is photography's ambiguity, especially in comparison with ethnographic text. Critics of ethnographic uses of photography accuse it of being too open to interpretation and 'an impoverished substitute for text, incapable of rendering the complex contexts, information, and arguments necessary for ethnographic understanding' (Wright 2018: 1). A well-known example of this line of thinking is Hastrup's characterisation of photographs as 'thin description', limited to appearances that text, on the other hand, can overcome thanks to its capacity for analysis (1992).

In this chapter I propose to add to these general challenges to the very idea of photo-ethnography by considering the particular history of documentary photography associated with ethnographic fieldwork in Basilicata. In this region, this history has resulted in very loose and problematic uses of the words 'ethnographic' and especially 'anthropological' as qualifiers of images that often follow a tradition that started with the photographers who accompanied Ernesto De Martino in his 1950s field trips to the region. I start by considering both the continuities and the discontinuities between these historical examples and my own photographic work, in order to outline how I developed a photo-ethnographic practice that is specific to my role as a visual anthropologist. This has revolved around three main principles: an awareness of ecosystems of circulation of images, the development of

dialogic photographic practices, and the exploration of relationships between images, text and other media – which is also an opportunity to provide a rationale for the design of this book in which a main focus on sound is paired with still images. In other words, the principles behind my practice have less to do with formal qualities to be retraced in the photographs than with relationships surrounding them – with other images, with people in the field, with texts and with sounds. The intention is to make a twofold contribution to the debate: on the one hand, to contextualise the production and circulation of images associated with ethnography in Basilicata in order to position my own practice, and on the other to help address the current need for methodological reflections on photo-ethnography.

Photography and anthropology in Basilicata

Even though the legacies of the work of De Martino and his associates come back time and again throughout this book and are very important also in the field of photography, it is important to remember that a large portion of the representation of Basilicata in the media of post-war Italy happened through the lens of foreign photographers. David Seymour, for example, visited southern Italy in 1948 during his trip documenting the post-war condition of children across Europe (Seymour 1949), and in Basilicata had Carlo Levi as a guide. Henri Cartier-Bresson initially visited Basilicata in 1951 and 1952, and was hosted in Tricarico by the poet and socialist mayor Rocco Scotellaro, much like De Martino in the same period (see Cartier-Bresson 1974). There are also local photographic practices that pre-date these experiences, including family and studio photography (Mirizzi 2010).

It was, however, with the work of Italian photographers such as Fosco Maraini, Federico Patellani and Mario Carbone that the photographic representation of Basilicata, and more broadly of the Italian South, became strongly characterised by a neorealist aesthetic, a movement that during the 1950s also spanned cinema, painting and literature (Haaland 2012; Konewko 2016; Shiel 2006). The photographers who worked with De Martino – sometimes with him during his research trips, sometimes on their own but developing themes of his work – were in different ways influenced by neorealism and their work had wide circulation in Italian printed media – especially newspapers and magazines. These outlets are in fact more substantial than the actual use of images in De Martino's books, which was limited. During the time of his research trips during the 1950s, De Martino often published write-ups in popular magazines – *Espresso Mese*, *Radio-corriere*, *Il Mondo* – in which the photographic component had a similar role to the photo essays published by American periodicals such as *Life*.

This was for him a way to contribute beyond academia to a public debate on the condition of the peasant classes of the Italian South, but also a clever way to give public resonance to his research and attract funding for further trips.

De Martino practised ethnographic research in a different way from the Anglo-American tradition of long-term, solitary participant observation. The way he planned and carried out his short – usually around a month – research trips is more reminiscent of the French tradition of Griaule and of his collaborators, in at least two ways. First, he concentrated a great deal of work into the limited time he stayed in a given community, often summoning informants and requesting performances of the phenomenon he wanted to study, if it did not happen spontaneously (cf. Clifford 1988). Secondly, he assembled interdisciplinary teams at times composed of a medical doctor, a psychiatrist, an ethnomusicologist, an anthropologist and a filmmaker in addition to a photographer. Whenever he had the resources, and often with the technical support of the national radio-television or the first Italian ethnomusicological archive, he employed the three media of film, sound recording and photography to support and document his research, an approach that was pioneering for the context of the Italian social sciences of the time. However, it is important to remember that De Martino saw writing as the only way to properly convey his findings, and mostly used photographs in an illustrative manner in some of his books. As much as he valued photographs in the research phase, he undervalued them as ways to present ethnographic knowledge in an academic context (Faeta 1999: 85–6). Still, thanks to the processes of institutionalisation of anthropological knowledge that we have seen at work in some of the previous chapters, the work of the photographers he took with him to Basilicata has acquired special significance for some of the communities where it was made. Additionally, the style of these photographers remains an important model for all sorts of image makers working in that part of Italy who want to claim to produce anthropological work.

The first photographer De Martino took with him to Basilicata was Arturo Zavattini, who accompanied the research team to Tricarico in June 1952. The stay was centred on investigating and documenting the peasants' general living conditions. Zavattini's photographs portray house interiors, the proximity of humans and animals, the wait of day labourers in the main square and a number of musical moments too, a feature that will recur in almost all subsequent trips. Zavattini's images are in 6×6 format, often formally very elegant and mindful of American social realist photography, which perhaps reached him through his father Cesare's collaboration with Paul Strand. In his photographs the peasants are poor but dignified, and often look straight into the lens.



This collaboration did not last, though, and later in 1952 De Martino travelled back to Basilicata with Franco Pinna, then a young, politically engaged photojournalist who would also collaborate with him in Apulia and Sardinia over a period of seven years – until they broke up over issues related to the use of Pinna's images in De Martino's books and the lack of image credits in *La terra del rimorso* (see Caruso 2016: 104–7; De Martino [1961] 2005). From this time on, the research focus and methods became more established: the researchers would move from village to village, record songs and interviews thanks to ethnomusicologist Diego Carpitella, concentrate their research on magic and develop what later would become a specific focus on moments of crisis and transformation: ritual, illness, healing, death. Pinna received some general instructions from De Martino at the beginning of the trip, then was left to develop his own visual language. His work presents similarities with Zavattini's, especially in the realist style of his pictures of daily life, but also developed an independent approach with a marked focus on dramatic moments, often within ritual. We know that Pinna was juggling the needs of the research for which he was

7.1 Pietrapertosa, January 2020. A photograph by Henri Cartier-Bresson is on permanent exhibition next to the place where it was shot in 1973.

hired and a desire to use his images in the left-wing periodicals that at the time represented his main income. He certainly adapted his praxis to the demands of the research, for example systematically adopting the tactic of portraying events in sequences of photographs rather than looking for single images that could tell the whole story – as would have been more common in a publishing context. This is a way of working that was shared by Zavattini, who probably derived it from his training as a cinematographer, by Pinna and by Gilardi – the third photographer to follow De Martino as a temporary replacement for Pinna on a research trip on Lucanian magic in 1957.

The body of work produced by these three photographers during their work with De Martino (see Gallini and Faeta 1999), despite individual differences, developed in a realist tradition that is markedly different from the later work of other photographers of the Italian South who worked in teams with ethnographers. Despite the common use of black and white film, Scianna (1965) and Jodice (in De Simone 1974), for example, perhaps freer to think of their images as independent artistic outputs and less framed in a role of supporting research, made use of motion blur and close-up perspectives to suggest emotion (Vaja 2006: 45). The realist photographic work developed with De Martino has been interpreted critically as a well-intentioned form of orientalism, inspired by a desire to improve the condition of the peasant classes of the Italian South but at the same time portraying them as an example of radical and exotic alterity, cut off from the rest of the nation (Faeta 2003). The agrarian ways of life, the harshness of the landscape that echoes the marks of a hard life on elderly people's faces, the omnipresence of death and its manifestations, the mystical take on Christianity, are all visual themes that underline the South's marginality and exoticism, and in many ways the incapacity of left-wing intellectuals to adequately represent it (also compare the case of the documentary *La Madonna del Pollino* examined in chapter 3).

Many of these themes are developed through images of women. Represented as mourners, hard-working peasants, custodians of occult knowledge and sometimes enchantresses, these female figures were approached by the male photographers through the mediation of Vittoria De Palma, De Martino's partner in life and research assistant (Gallini 1999). In few images is the constructed nature of these depictions more evident than in the photograph of the 'enchantress of Colobrarò' shot by Pinna in 1952 and published in *Magic: A Theory from the South* (De Martino [1959] 2015). The bearded, skinny and wrinkled old lady, all dressed in black, stands with her hands joined and a severe expression. The caption of enchantress and the name of Maddalena La Rocca, as with various biographical details given by Pinna in later publications of the image, have been revealed to have been made up

(Imbriani 2016). The combination of the captioning and the removal of surrounding details such as some children and an overhead power line, through cropping and darkroom techniques, made this woman the icon of the ominous fame of the village of Colobraro that De Martino had contributed to amplifying on a national scale through his writing.

This photograph can be encountered time and again across a variety of cultural initiatives throughout Basilicata, from institutional posters to theatre pieces (image 7.2) to works of artists, where it seems to represent an ancestral identity to promote proudly. In the current processes of heritagisation that occur in many parts of the region, if the written work of anthropologists plays a crucial role for the validation of cultural heritage, the historical images of those practices represent an even more valuable asset. They allow the provision of a visible component to the aura of authenticity of these cultural practices, validated by their realist style and use of a technology – analogue photography, in black and white – that is associated with the past. It is not a surprise, then, to see local administrations make liberal use – more or less

7.2 Colobraro, August 2018. Part of the set design for the street theatre piece *'Notte a quel paese'* juxtaposing images from Italy's unification/annexation of the South with Franco Pinna's 1952 photograph of the 'enchantress' of Colobraro.



7.3 A design based on one of Franco Pinna's photographs from San Giorgio Lucano, titled *Radici* (roots), by Kalura Meridionalismo.



authorised – of images made in their territories for the promotion of their cultural events or to attract tourists. This has happened with Cartier-Bresson's images in Tricarico (published in Cartier-Bresson 1990) or in Pietrapertosa, where they have been enlarged and hung in the locations where they were made (image 7.1).

Part of the regional funds in support of the intangible heritage of these localities is used to create billboards and booklets on the traditional culture of a particular place, for the most part richly illustrated by archival and contemporary documentary photography. An example

is San Giorgio Lucano, where Pinna photographed a re-enactment of the 'game of the sickle' in 1959 (published in De Martino 1960). The images, this time mostly shot in 35mm format – Pinna shot some colour medium format but these are rarely seen – are present in cultural initiatives, conferences and publications that took place during the 2010s in the village. Here, the ritual that marked the end of the reaping of wheat was abandoned in the early 1950s, only recently to become the centre of the local administration's efforts to promote local cultural heritage. They also appear in commissioned mural paintings in San Giorgio (some of which, remarkably, were painted monochrome) and even on the t-shirt designs of activist collective Kalura, for which they become symbols of counterhegemonic resistance (image 7.3). If the images were originally produced as part of an orientalist discourse, then today they have been re-appropriated – often reproducing essentialist depictions – and sometimes turned on their head by exploiting the positive components often present in discourses of exoticism (Kalantzis 2019).

Developing a relational photographic practice

Thanks to the histories outlined above, many amateur and professional photographers working in Basilicata claim an ethnographic, and sometimes even anthropological, status for their images. In a sense, we face the opposite problem to the one I described at the beginning of this chapter: instead of having too many anthropologists who have withdrawn from photography, we have too many photographers who have appropriated anthropology. Sometimes these claims are based on continuities of style with the classic examples of the 1950s, but more often it is a matter of subject: religious festivals, portraits of elderly men and especially women, musicians playing traditional music, elements of the agricultural world. As a visual anthropologist, I find very problematic that the choice of subject might determine the anthropological value of a representation, first of all because it is a way to perpetuate the worst associations between anthropology and colonialism. Furthermore, it downplays the role of the approach that constitutes the expertise of the anthropologist and allows layers of complexity to be added to the images. These principles are by now well established within ethnographic documentary, which struggled to get rid of an association with exotic cultures and black and brown peoples as subject (Ruby 1996).

It makes more sense, then, to consider what constitutes photographing as an anthropologist rather than an anthropological photograph. A focus on the approach also has the benefit of avoiding scholasticism and keeping open a multitude of genres and styles that each situation

and research question might call for, including those outside of realism and even outside documentary photography. Patrick Sutherland expresses himself along similar lines when considering the key aspect of photo-ethnography to be

the conceptual framework within which the practice is situated rather than what the specific individual images taken by a visual anthropologist actually look like. I suspect that the anthropological nature of still photographic practice is to be found less within the individual imagery and more within the interrelationships between groups of images and with their relationship to accompanying text. (Sutherland 2016c)

I would extend the awareness of the relationships between images to the histories and economies of circulation of images (Poole 1997), which constitute an ecosystem that influences the perception of new photographs. This is less the visual culture competence that a photographer develops by getting acquainted with other colleagues' work and creating a personal style, than it is an anthropological attention to the social uses of photography, be it for personal use or published in professional contexts. Histories of image-making such as those of the earlier paragraph, together with the episodes of re-appropriation of more recent years, can constitute a powerful orientation for an anthropologist photographer. They can be developed visually through framing, by which I mean the creation of images that show relationships with other images, either as references to styles and works of the past, or more broadly as looking for ways in which people try to re-enact images of the past.

Throughout this book there are images inside images, and sometimes images of people making images, as a product of this attention. My choice of working entirely in colour, since the very beginning, was initially a partly unconscious desire to mark a distinction from the classic work of the 1950s and 1960s, and later a more conscious desire to avoid the associations of authenticity that such work brings with it. As simple as it might sound, colour – especially in the context of Basilicata, with its photographic histories – can mean a statement on the contemporary nature of the subjects, to discourage any association with timelessness that some subjects might suggest. Similarly, I made a point of showing the active involvement of younger generations in the phenomena we examine in the book, because even though the region – and to a lesser degree Italy as a whole – is going through progressive demographic ageing and emigration of its youth, the role in the revival of many of these practices of those who remain – or return – is key.

A researcher's photographs too can become part of local ecosystems of images and in so doing create new opportunities for research.

Photographic prints make for excellent gifts – especially for the older generations – and allow the creation or consolidation of relationships that start with the making of an image at a public event (image 7.4). More recently I have sent digital versions of my photographs that people will later use on social media – sometimes on the spot where the shot was taken, thanks to wireless connection between the camera and a smartphone. Over the years I have given photographs to local museums, where they appear next to archival images, and to institutional publications. This is not just a way of cultivating existing relationships in the field but also a means of expanding the scope of our research by creating new opportunities.

There is a danger, though, of interpreting these relationships as a facilitator for an ‘extractive’ practice, thereby reproducing the associations between photography and objectification with which I opened this chapter. This danger is all the more present in the case of event photography, where it is easy to limit all relationships to the duration of the festival or ritual. I prefer to steer the cultivation of relationships towards dialogic practices. The term ‘dialogic’ has its origins in

7.4 San Paolo Albanese, January 2020. Pietro Ragone looks at prints of photographs of himself dancing the sickle for the festival of St Roch, which I shot between 2005 and 2017.



Bakhtin's writings (1981), where it refers to the reciprocal interdependence between representations, and was an important keyword in the literature of the reflexive turn in anthropology (especially Tedlock 1979), where it designates practices of representation that preserve the polyphonic and intersubjective origins of ethnographic knowledge (see also Feld 1987).

Ever since I started reflecting on my photographic practice and how to develop it in a dialogic direction, I have found inspiration in the work of Magnum photographer Susan Meiselas. In her first book *Carnival Strippers* (1976) she extensively used collaborative portraiture and collaborative photo-editing, avoiding reproducing photographically the visual consumption that her subjects underwent in their occupation. She followed up her reporting on the 1979 Sandinista insurrection in Nicaragua with a film, *Pictures from a Revolution* (Meiselas et al. 1991), in which she visited the protagonists of the revolution, retracing the afterlife of her pictures and the biographies of the people who appeared in them. In 2004, twenty-five years after the overthrow of Somoza, she installed poster-sized versions of her images in the places where they were shot, a form of repatriation and a way to promote a public debate on the legacy of the revolution. Other works, that juxtapose the curation of archival bodies of work with original reporting, deal in different ways with the creation of representations of the other and the parallel process of their political subjugation in Kurdistan (Meiselas 1997) and Irian Jaya (2003). In short, Meiselas's practice 'hinges on a transformation of the charged relationship between the person photographing and the person photographed from one of power to one of exchange' (Keller 2018: 139). I take from her work an inspiration to develop photography through long-term engagement, in which images travel in both senses – they are 'taken' and 'given back', to then generate new perspectives and new images.

The potential of photographs to propel conversations and help people reveal information had already been noticed by Collier (1957). Even though I do not share the positivistic interrogation framework through which Collier approaches photo elicitation, for the research behind this book we made use of conversations propelled by photographs I had taken. The aim in gifting prints and starting conversations on them was not so much one of extracting 'data' from our 'informants', but in general to give reciprocity to the act of photography as research. Thus, photo elicitation has the potential to become a 'postmodern dialogue based on the authority of the subject rather than the researched' (Harper 2002: 15), which for a researcher can sometimes mean radically changing their interpretations. It can also be the starting point for processes of collaboration in which photographic subjects, made more aware of their appearance, try to gain more control on their

representation, potentially opening up the possibility of working with enactments and collaborative portraits. Encouraging dialogic practices around the production of photo-ethnographic work is a good starting point in response to the criticism of the objectifying, distanced and unidirectional photographic gaze. It can restore the centrality of collaboration between photographer and subject (Gallop 2003) that is the foundation of ethical practices of image-making.

Text and photographs

Besides relationships between images and between images and people, photo-ethnographies can find a specificity in relationships between images and other media. Of these, text deserves special attention because of an established tendency in anthropology to use photographs in a subordinated, in most cases illustrative, role to text. However, this is not the only reason and is just a starting point. In fact, there are a number of ways of putting into relationship text and photographic images that have been developed in illustrated magazines, newspapers and photobooks. Strategies such as proposing parallel visual and written essays, captioning, using quotes from the subjects or doing away entirely with textual information have all been tested in the varieties of formats a photo essay can adopt (Sutherland 2016b). In the conception of this book we maintain the parallel and complementary roles of text, images and sounds as a central tenet of our project. We cannot call this a photobook in Parr and Badger's definition as a book 'where the work's primary message is carried by the photographs' (2004: 6), but we do see images and text working 'within a dialectical relationship' in which 'the photograph is integral and essential, and not merely supplemental, to the work's meanings' (Di Bello and Zamir 2012: 4).

I develop the relationship of the photographs with text in three different ways, the first of which is a photographic sequence that follows the written essay. As in the case of chapters 1 and 2, this is separate from the text and does not use captions or other forms of verbal description of the content of the images. The aim is to allow the photographer to develop an independent narrative made of images that can be experienced in parallel to the orientation provided by the text. In selecting the sequence on the *Maggio* festival in Accettura, for example, I did not look for correspondences with the text that precedes it. Instead, I aimed first of all at rendering a general sense of the development of the central days of the festival. Then I chose visual themes that created a unique angle: the rendition of movement, for example, or masculinity and collective labour, combined with stark vertical lines and horizontal motion blur. The sequence also has an internal structure that makes photographs work with each other across a page spread, so that they

are paired in contrasting movement and stasis, or comparing similar actions in different contexts. On the other hand, the text that precedes the sequence has the advantage of clarifying in a general way what is happening in the images, so that it is possible to do without the captions. The strategy of the independent sequence allows the photographer to develop a visual narrative that is not reliant on words; its pairing with an essay allows the reader of the book to be aware of the contexts and specificities of the situation with a depth that the photographs alone would never allow. Separating words from images on the page is always a partial strategy, because I am aware that text in other parts of the book still interacts with a photographic sequence in some measure. A common strategy in photobooks, then, is to put the captions of a photographic sequence at the end, in a separate section. The key point here is separation, which makes it clear that the images should be experienced on their own – even if this can sometimes be disorienting.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the use this book makes of photographs as directly integrated in the text. In chapters 3 and 5, for example, I have placed the images roughly in the area of the text they relate to, but not so closely that they have to be looked at directly after a paragraph about them. This would make them hopelessly illustrative, whereas in the format I adopt the captions allow readers to view them when they find it most appropriate. In fact, these images could be ignored during reading and then looked at as a separate narrative, similarly to the previous example. However, my advice and intended mode of fruition for these chapters is that readers alternate between the text and the photographs, letting the two media build up their understanding of the piece as a whole through reciprocal influences.

The mainly sound-centred descriptive portions of the text on the festival of the Madonna del Pollino, for example, can usefully be given a visual complement by my photographs of that event in which sonic devotion is relevant. The images in chapter 5 build a more complex and suggestive relationship with the text, showing a series of objects that represent the legacy of Giuseppe Chiaffitella's work, and a sample of his archival production. The relationship to the text here is less immediate and lends itself more to being experienced as a separate essay. Elsewhere, as in the introduction or in the two methodological chapters – this and number 6 – the photographs are simply meant to illustrate those texts that, not by chance, are not ethnographic in nature.

A third format does not conform to either the first or the second relationship between images and text. In the photo essay that constitutes chapter 4, the narrative is led by the photographs, each accompanied by a basic caption and periodically interspersed by text. The latter is used to give context, to develop a theme or expand on the

backstory of an image – yet it is not a type of text that is meant to be experienced without the photographs. There is no preferred way of reading this chapter; one can alternate the images with the text or experience them separately. But in terms of their conception, this strategy is unique among the three I adopted to present images and text, because of the way the selection of images and the writing of the text was done at the same time and in close relationship. For example, out of the vast corpus I shot on wheat festivals, some images were selected also because they could bring up a theme in writing, and the text had to conform to the pace of the images within the essay. In the case of the separate sequence following the text, on the other hand, the selection of images was independent of the text, while in the case of photographs interspersed inside a textual chapter the images were chosen after the text had been completed and on the basis of it. These temporal shifts in the making of each chapter are revelatory of the different rapports of power between the verbal and the iconic in each format. The mode adopted in chapter 4 seems to me to represent a particularly fertile and stimulating opportunity for photo-ethnography, for the way it puts text and images on a level of parity and allows a reciprocal contamination of the two narratives, typical of the photographic essay (Mitchell 1994: chapter 9), in which the photographs are not subservient to the verbal content.

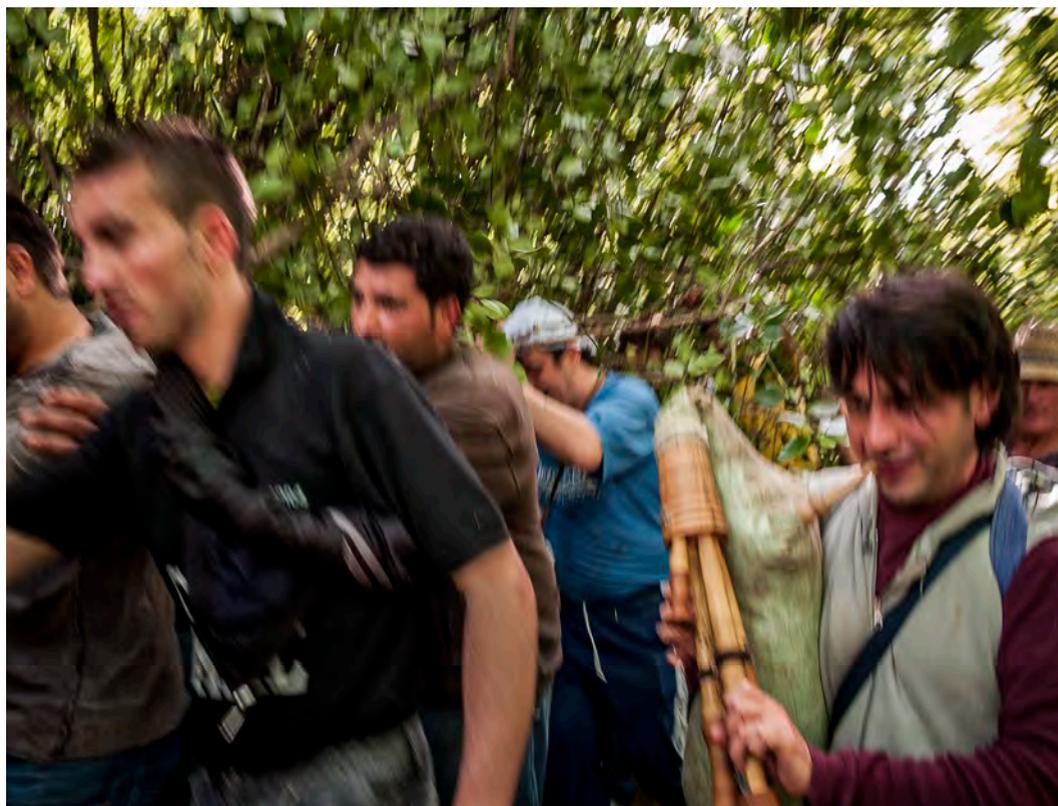
Listening to images

The final type of relationship that I will examine is that between photographs and sounds. This is worthy of special attention in the first place because the core characteristic of this book is to propose ethnographies developed through text, still images and sounds, explicitly meant to be working together as different layers of knowledge. It also offers an opportunity to discuss how the evocative potential of photography – with or without a pairing with sounds – can be used as a form of sensory ethnography (Cox et al. 2016).

It is interesting to note that during their research trips, De Martino's team were striving as much as possible to create a correspondence of time and place between photographic documentation and sound recordings, to the point that it is possible, by going through the archives, to create pairings between Pinna's images and Carpitella's recordings (Ricci 2007: 21–9). While their pioneering multimedia approach is still an inspiration for ethnographers in southern Italy, our approach is substantially different. While in general, correspondences between the audio and the photographs that make up this book could be traced, we are more interested in what the gaps between the two can evoke in reader-listeners. We are interested in the connections that

they will make between text, photographs and the sound recordings as a space for synaesthetic montage that can go beyond the sum of what the three media provide. In comparison with documentary film – the other more established form of pairing of images and sounds in ethnographic practices – our presentation of still images and sound recordings is more open and fragmentary. Open, because it does not provide synchronicity in the way a film – in which images and soundtrack are in a fixed relationship – would do. Fragmentary, because the time dimension of the photographs – a few slices in time – is markedly different from that of the sound recordings, which extend themselves over longer durations – at times they are also composed out of sounds coming from distant decades. In fact, we are aware that some people might decide not to experience the photographs and the recordings at the same time, something that is fine precisely because they were conceived as related but independent narratives. However, if after listening to the sounds one can look at the photographs with different eyes, or vice versa the photographs can create a different experience of the audio tracks, then the gaps between the two forms of recording

7.5 Accettura, May 2005.
Transport of the *cima* during
the *Maggio* festival.



created by openness and fragmentarity will have made space for evoking experiences beyond the audible and visible – perhaps synaesthetic, not unlike what happens for experimental montage (Suhr and Willerslev 2012).

Image 7.5, for example, is a photograph that I had initially excluded from my selection of shots from *Accettura*, due to its lack of clarity and poor composition. It was shot in the rush of the transport of the tree, walking backwards and shortly before I slipped on the mud. However, after listening to Feld's soundscape composition I decided to include it among the sixteen images that were printed in *When the Trees Resound* (Scaldeferri and Feld 2019), because its blur felt like a visual analogy for the incoming rustle of the leaves of the *cima* launched at full speed, accompanied by the droning sound of the *zampogna* that can be heard on the CD. It is a photograph that works well in conjunction with the recording, and evokes the sense of rush and confusion experienced by the participants of that situation.

Photographs do not come with sounds attached, unless they are part of photofilms (Schneider 2014). Historically, this has been a component of their ambiguity – for example, people represented in them cannot speak through their own voice. However, photography's ambiguity can also be harnessed as a strength when it is embraced as a form of complexity that can open up 'alternative readings' and space for 'the audience's imagination' (Sutherland 2016a: 38). Such was the position of John Berger and Jean Mohr, who celebrated and used photography's ambiguity to particularly good effect in *Another Way of Telling* (1982). Some reflections on the potential uses of photography in anthropology refer to 'lyrical expressiveness' (Edwards 1997: 58) and 'poetic forms' (Orrantia 2012: 54) to describe how still imagery can make visible metaphors and local aesthetic conceptions or how it can evoke feeling and sensation. A classic example is Feld's discussion of two photographs he took during the research that led to the publication of *Sound and Sentiment* ([1982] 2012: 233–38; see Cox and Wright 2012: 120–22; Pinney 2011: 112–15). The first portrays a dancer in his costume according to a realist aesthetics, and is rich in visual information – clear, sharp and detailed. The second, on the other hand, is an attempt to render the trope of the dancer becoming a bird in Kaluli culture through extreme motion blur – much further from a traditional documentary aesthetics but closer to local understandings. In going beyond illustration, it makes sense for visual anthropologists to look at photography as an art practice in order to develop interpretive, expressive and evocative styles that make the most of its fundamental ambiguity.

I have come full circle. The challenges that in some views stand in the way of a photo-ethnographic practice – lack of reciprocity,

dependence from text, partiality and ambiguity – can be overcome by focussing anthropologically on the relationships that surround the images. This means engaging with ecosystems of circulation of images through awareness of histories of image-making, practising photography as dialogic relationships with those who appear in the images, and putting photographs in critical relationship with other media and ways of knowing. We see this book as an experimental ethnography whose contribution lies in the way it combines established modes of representation with each other in innovative ways, a ‘single ethnography’ (Werbner 2011: 209) for the way text, sounds and images interact organically.

Note

- 1 <http://societyforvisualanthropology.org/writing-with-light/> (accessed 31 March 2020).