

SONIC DEVOTION AND
SONIC CONTROL:
STRUGGLES FOR POWER OVER
A FESTIVAL SOUNDSCAPE

Lorenzo Ferrarini

July 2014, inside the mountain sanctuary dedicated to a statue of the Virgin Mary called Madonna del Pollino. The evening mass has just finished, as part of the annual celebrations for the Madonna, and the priest has left. A small group of musicians slowly comes in from the main door, playing and singing. There are two *zampogna* players, two play *organetto*, one *tamburello* and one alternates singing with blowing into a *ciaramella*. They sing the Song of the Madonna del Pollino, slow and solemn:

We came a long way / to visit Mary
and Mary we found / all beautiful and crowned ...

They arrive at the statue, which is inside a glass and wood display case to the right of the altar. Around them some people take photographs and film with their phones, while some of the more elderly join in the singing. The musicians arrive directly underneath the statue, they are singing to it emphatically. Occasionally they raise their instruments against the glass, or touch the case and kiss their hands, doing the sign of the Cross. The statue holds the baby Jesus in one arm and a rose in the other hand. The song continues, repeating the same melody, verse after verse. Some more musicians join in, others drop out.

... crowned with lilies and roses / in this chapel Mary rests
crowned by the heart of Jesus / Madonna di Pollino help me ...

One after another the musicians touch the case and, while it seems that the piece is approaching its conclusion, the *zampogna* has never stopped its droning. Suddenly the drums change pace and the music becomes a *tarantella*. Two men briefly start dancing, then one of the *organetto* players dances a few steps in front of the statue, imitated by the *zampogna*. Abruptly a man and a woman, volunteers with the parish of San Severino Lucano who help with the organisation of the celebrations, leave the door of the sacristy, from which they had been watching the

scene, and ask the musicians to leave. For a moment it seems as if the musicians – who never stopped playing – are heading towards the door. But then the *organetto* player, with voice loud and clear, takes the melody of the *tarantella* and starts singing a devotional song over it. The musicians turn back towards the statue; the music finds new vigour:

Beautiful Virgin lend us your hand,
we are strangers who come from far away.
We came with sweet harmonies,
Madonna del Pollino pray to God for me ...

Less than three minutes later, no more music. Two *carabinieri* have intervened, and are asking the musicians to get out of the church. The moment is tense; people shout. ‘This is a prayer!’ shouts one of the *zampogna* players. ‘There’s nothing I can do about it!’ retorts the *carabiniere*. His voice is drowned by shouts of ‘*Viva la Madonna! Viva Maria!*’ and claps. The *zampogna* resumes the Song of the Madonna del Pollino. The two *carabinieri* try to discuss the matter further but without too much conviction, and slowly they leave, as if chased by the sounds. The song continues:

... look how beautiful she is / the queen of this chapel
she’s beautiful and she’s gracious / she is everyone’s mother
she’s beautiful and she’s divine / long live the Virgin of Pollino!

Some old ladies join in, singing with one hand open by the side of their face. The musicians finish the song on their knees, in front of the statue, eyes on her. They leave the church slowly, and re-gather on the steps in front, where the music continues with fast *tarantella* dances that involve both men and women.

This episode, as Scaldaferrì and I witnessed it during the festival of the Madonna del Pollino, was a particularly conflictual expression of tensions that can be identified in a number of religious situations with a mass participation, in Basilicata and beyond. The tensions are in large part over the legitimacy of certain forms of devotion, and specifically those that are expressed as sound. These are what we call *sonic devotion*: the production and listening experience of sounds dedicated to a sacred figure, which are most of the time music – playing an instrument, singing, but also by extension dancing (Scaldaferrì 2006: 16). Sonic devotion has a markedly embodied character and it is performed in ways that can sometimes be quite extreme, as was the case for the cult of the Madonna del Pollino. But it is also made up of the mundane soundscape created around pilgrimage campsites, with their cooking, singing, eating and drinking. As we will see, sonic devotion is also relational, or in other words it is part of very personal forms of establishing a direct rapport with the divinity. In some cases it becomes



a token of exchange as part of a vow, so that the faithful give their continued sounding presence at the festival in exchange for a *grazia* (divine favour) – often healing from serious illness or sometimes safe return from a migration experience.

Some forms of sonic devotion are controversial practices for certain representatives of the Catholic Church, who see them as backward forms of folk religiosity that need to be eradicated from rituals such as the festival of the Madonna del Pollino. The latter is a particularly relevant case not just because of the important dynamics of sonic devotion, but also because of the role that some figures of the Demartinian school of anthropology, with its Marxist approach and marked anti-clericalism, played in separating folk religiosity from official Catholicism. Since the 1990s the festival has been the centre of attempts by the clergy to ‘purify’ it, removing devotional practices that they consider inappropriate, and some of these attempts are directly aimed at the acoustic domain.

This chapter starts from the conflict over practices of sonic devotion to examine how the Church is able to exert control over the way people enact their devotion by restricting and disciplining the production and circulation of sounds. It asks, what is at stake in the struggle for the control of the soundscape of a festival? I start from the assumption that this

3.1 Madonna del Pollino Sanctuary, June 2014. Devotional music in front of the statue.

struggle, even though it might not always be as visible as in the episode I narrate above, has important consequences for people's experience of religiosity, identity and social hierarchy. In other words, it is not just a theological debate on the proper modalities of relating to the sacred, but touches on larger questions of the relationship between sound and social control by considering the acoustic as a primary domain in which power struggles are played out, instead of being simply echoed.

Sonic devotion at the Madonna del Pollino pilgrimage

The July festival is the middle section of a three-part pilgrimage cycle. The statue of the Madonna del Pollino remains, for most of the year, in a church in the village of San Severino Lucano (877m in elevation). On the first Sunday of June, at sunrise, it leaves the village and is brought, on shoulders, in a procession up the mountain, to the sanctuary at 1537m above sea level. Along the way the procession stops in various hamlets and farmhouses, where the residents offer food and drink. A confraternity, called *Fraternita Madonna di Pollino* and based in San Severino, is charged with the organisational aspects of the transport of the statue, including its safety in case of extreme weather. Its membership is only open to men. In association with the

3.2 In front of the Madonna del Pollino sanctuary, June 2014. Procession with votive offerings.



parish priest, they make sure that there are no deviations from the plans and that everyone has a chance of joining in. The procession lasts for the whole day, and is constantly accompanied by songs, the music of *zampogna* and *organetto*, and dancing. The statue arrives at the sanctuary in the evening. The second phase of the pilgrimage sees devotees camp around the sanctuary for days leading to the Friday and Saturday before the first Sunday in July. Friday night, especially, is spent in a wake during which people play and dance, and until the early 2000s they would even play music, dance and sleep inside the church, in front of the statue. During the festival days there is a lot of eating and drinking, and the music practically never stops. There are market stalls near the sanctuary, selling images and souvenirs with the statue of the Madonna del Pollino or with the lyrics of the song dedicated to her. The official religious ceremonial includes several masses and processions around the mountain, plus recitations of the rosary, in church. The statue remains in the mountain sanctuary until the second weekend of September, when on Saturday evening there is mass and again music in church. At sunrise on Sunday a procession starts the descent towards San Severino with the statue, following the same modalities of the ascent, including the musical component.

The three phases of the pilgrimage cycle assume different significance in relationship to the surrounding territory. During its ascent and descent the statue visits the dispersed rural communities on the territory of San Severino, contributing to the creation of a sense of unity and common identity. The procession, which does not simply carry around the statue but also the sounds of the faithful, creates a connection with the area, which echoes the sonic devotion of its participants. The passage of the statue is an important ritual in itself, and brings blessings and protection wherever it passes. It is the role of the faithful also to visit the Madonna during the July festival. Hundreds of pilgrims come from the southern part of Basilicata and from the northern portion of the neighbouring region of Calabria to camp at the sanctuary. The role of San Severino and of the confraternity is much reduced in this phase. In July everything revolves around the sanctuary and a nearby cave. In this area, according to oral tradition, between 1725 and 1730 the Virgin appeared to a shepherd. Shortly following this apparition two women from San Severino, who had come to ask for recovery for a seriously ill relative, found an old and seemingly abandoned wooden statue inside the cave. The chapel that became the sanctuary was built by the relative, who was miraculously cured. During the July festival the sanctuary and the cave become the centre of ritual activity, often in the form of repeated circular processions. But for many pilgrims it is their simple presence that becomes a form of ritual participation, especially if we consider that many devotees

promise to keep coming to the pilgrimage year after year for as long as they live in exchange for divine favour. During the times when the sanctuary could only be reached on foot or muleback, before the road and other infrastructure were built, climbing and camping on the mountain was no easy stroll. For some elders it was a real physical test and at the same time a proof that they were still in good health, thanks to the Virgin's intercession. Before the year 2000 it was still possible to see spectacular forms of penitence, such as ascending up the mountain barefoot or crawling to the sanctuary on hands and knees. Pilgrims would offer a variety of *ex voto* objects when asking for divine favour, including live animals, bridal gowns and long offcuts of women's hair. These practices would take place especially at night, after the official phases of the ceremonial were finished and the clergy had retired.

Some of the main forms of pilgrim participation are sonorous – especially dancing or at least singing in front of the statue. During the July festival there is a large presence of musicians, who create informal, temporary aggregations of people coming from distant communities. These episodes are distinct from the official, prescribed sounds of the festival, which include the liturgy and the music of a walking wind band. Though some know each other from frequenting a circuit of festivals, some of which are religious and others connected to the folk music scene, most musicians come together in a temporary community centred around musical practice, which also contributes to the circulation of skills, repertoires and styles (Scaldeferri 2006: 21–24). These are jam sessions where people join in with the instrument they can play or by singing and improvising sonic objects out of bottles, keys or cowbells. Already in 1915 Norman Douglas, a British writer who travelled through southern Italy between 1907 and 1911, noticed the rich soundscape of the festival: 'Two thousand persons are encamped about the chapel, amid a formidable army of donkeys and mules whose braying mingles with the pastoral music of reeds and bagpipes' ([1915] 1993: 149). Music in fact goes on day and night under the tents where people set up camp, right behind the sanctuary. The sense of community is enhanced by the sharing of food and wine with strangers.

Despite the formation of these temporary communities there is also a strong sense of individual relationship with the object of devotion. Most of the time this is evident in the lyrics of the songs addressed to the Virgin, which insistently request divine favour, or in people's moments of quiet conversation with the statue. But it also leads to cases of individual exposure that border on showing off, and can sometimes even result in rivalries between devotees. Though they are officially acts of devotion to the Madonna, carrying the statue for long stretches, singing, playing and dancing for hours, or eating and drinking in large quantities are also opportunities to become the centre of attention.



Scaldaferri observed a variety of modes of devotion during several years of attendance, starting in 1989. One in particular played out as a particularly telling form of rivalry between two *zampogna* players. Emilio, from Rotondella, is playing his *zampogna* – measuring 4.5 palms, large and loud – on the doorstep of the sanctuary. It is a strategic position, because he can be heard by the many pilgrims who pass in and out of the church. Carmine, another *zampogna* player from San Severino, stands nearby listening and waiting for a moment that allows him to play, since his smaller 3.5 palm instrument is tuned differently from Emilio's. As soon as Emilio takes a break, Carmine addresses him: 'I wish you a thousand years, mate. Stop for a little while, please!' He then starts playing his own slow piece. After a few moments Emilio gets back to his louder *zampogna*, creating a jarring dissonance effect that forces Carmine further away, looking to create his own sonic space. Not satisfied with the temporary departure of his rival, Emilio goes after him and chases him further with the sound of his instrument. But this offers Carmine the chance to outflank Emilio and go through the church door. He stops near the statue of the Virgin, another strategic point where he can be heard by all the pilgrims who go to touch and kiss the Madonna. Emilio stands at the opposite side of the sanctuary, near the door and, thanks to the acoustics of the

3.3 At the campsite behind the Madonna del Pollino sanctuary, June 2014. Extemporaneous jam session with bottle, *ciaramella*, *zampogna*, *tamburello* and *organetto*.

building and to his louder instrument, almost entirely drowns Carmine's playing. In desperation, Carmine climbs on the altar steps and plays in a visually central spot, trying to compensate for Emilio's sonic advantage. It is only when the latter musician finally gives up and leaves, after about two hours, that Carmine can dominate his favourite spot in front of the church. The entire duel took the form of a test of endurance over slow *zampogna* pieces, with no words exchanged except for Carmine's initial address.

Situations such as this are very representative of the way personal rivalries can use the channels of devotional practice and speak strongly of the role that sound plays in them. More commonly, one can observe displays of stamina in dancing, playing or carrying the statue, which in addition to being acts of personal devotion have consequences for one's social prestige within the confraternity, or within the temporary community of the pilgrimage. Some people's campsite can become a point of reference for its uninterrupted musical performances that attract the best players of the region. Others simply create a name for themselves by dancing for hours, as if in a trance, on the steep ascent to the sanctuary. While these public displays of individual devotion are almost exclusively performed by men, in the past women would use the protected space of the church to enact dramatic forms of devotion,

3.4 Festival of the Madonna di Conserva, San Costantino Albanese, August 2016. Serving the *pastorale*, a meat and vegetable stew cooked at the camp.



such as crawling, beating their chest and even licking the floor from the door to the statue.

These practices are visible in Luigi Di Gianni's documentary *La Madonna del Pollino* (1971), which had a role in their restriction in subsequent years. The short film, shot early in 1971 and with a voice-over by anthropologist Annabella Rossi, generated a polemic with the local clergy for its reading of the pilgrimage. Talking over the images and the post-synched music, Rossi's text describes the practices of the pilgrims as an effect of the misery of their living conditions. They are described as marginals cut off from modernity, with its circulation of knowledge, goods and services, excluded by logics of class exploitation. The voiceover builds up a sense of distance, explicitly opposing 'us', bourgeois representatives of a hegemonic culture, and 'them', members of a subaltern class we cannot comprehend. By the same token, 'they' ask the Virgin for miracles because they don't know the real – social, economic – causes of their misery. The expository commentary prevents any alternative reading of the images and concludes by stating the necessity of denouncing the conditions of peasants who live 'as if 100–200 years ago'. The feeling of estrangement and exoticism is enhanced by the electronic soundtrack by Egisto Macchi. The film is the last Di Gianni made in collaboration with anthropologists influenced by Ernesto De Martino, which brought him to be classified as the main exponent of the Demartinian current of Italian documentary (Gallini 1981; Schäuble 2018: 8–10).

In her text, Rossi sacrificed accuracy in describing the conditions of the people of the Pollino communities in order to make what she considered a militant account of the condition of the subaltern southern peasantry. In so doing, though, she not only misrepresented and caricatured people who were, though historically marginalised, already to a point integrated in the still booming Italian economy, but also created a sense of distance and made much harder any sense of identification and shared humanity in the audience. She also underrepresented, or nearly ignored, the component of institutional Catholicism of the festival (see also Rossi 1969: 19–23). This is even more extreme a position than what De Martino wrote, for example, of Lucanian magic and Catholicism, which he considered in syncretic relationship ([1959] 2015: chapter 12). Often, though, this tradition of studies on the Italian South considered the Church a hegemonic system of oppression which laid its structures over a layer of peasant civilisation, whose rich heritage had to be unearthed in the spirit of a Gramscian history of the subaltern classes (Berrocal 2009). Similar readings were made of the Apulian Tarantism, of the *Maggio* festival in Accettura as we have seen in chapter 1 and, as we will see in the next chapter, of wheat festivals. Judging the Christian element as a later addition – often with

historical accuracy – De Martino and his associates would nonetheless downplay the role of devotion to the saints and the Virgin Mary in people's experience of these phenomena, preferring instead connections with pre-Christian practices.

Surprisingly though, the polemic that followed the release of Di Gianni's film created a convergence between these readings inspired by Gramsci and the policies with which the Catholic Church imposed a stricter control over the Madonna del Pollino festival. The film was shown at a conference of sanctuary rectors in Rome in 1976, and aired on national television the following year. Reactions of the local communities were mostly rejections of their portrayal as backward, while the Church pointed out the misrepresentation of the religious aspects of the festival. While criticising Rossi's ability as an atheist, Marxist scholar to understand folk religiosity, members of the clergy involved in the Pollino pilgrimage acknowledged the need to 'purify' and 'evangelise' the practices of the pilgrims (examples in Perrone 1983). In other words, though from an opposite perspective, the Church maintained a similar division between folk religiosity and official Catholicism as the most radical version of Demartinian ethnology. Instead of peeling away the layers of hegemonic religiosity, as the scholars did, it worked in the opposite direction at channelling 'popular piety' in forms approved by the Vatican. Yet, in so doing, it upheld a fundamental contrast between two original forms of religiosity, one oriented towards exteriority and practical returns, lived in an embodied way, and the other spiritual, focussed on the afterlife. Thus, in unpredicted ways, the circulation of Di Gianni's documentary likely played a role in the gradual enforcement of restrictions over the forms of devotion at the Pollino festival.

Some of these restrictions took the form of limiting night-time access to the sanctuary, the privileged time when the most unorthodox practices took place. But, as I started to realise during the episode that I narrate at the start of this chapter, a number of interventions were made on the acoustic space of the sanctuary. An important point of rupture was the fencing of the area facing the church, which confined the encampment of the pilgrims to the area behind the church and down the side of the mountain. In front of the sanctuary is a strip of upland that ends in a majestic view of the mountains all around and of the valley hamlet of Mezzana below. This fencing removed the clamour of the campsites, with their mundane activities of cooking, drinking, eating and especially music and dancing, from the spiritual space of the sanctuary, with its visual scenery. A further way of appropriating the sonic space of the sanctuary was to put up a fixed PA system, which from the walls of the church and adjacent buildings spreads the audio of the mass, sermon and liturgic songs. We witnessed the musicians



outside be silenced by the PA, at the same time as the priest addressed directly the ‘proper’ forms of devotion in his homily. What’s more, all around the grounds of the sanctuary are signs that intimate ‘This is a sacred place. Observe silence.’ Right next to them, CCTV cameras point at various areas of the sanctuary. They remind us that changing people’s behaviour is not as simple as prohibiting, but requires more subtle interventions that bring them to discipline themselves.

3.5 Festival of the Madonna di Conserva, San Costantino Albanese, August 2016. Playing *morra* at the campsite.

Control of sound and strategies of power

The Church’s attempts to control the soundscape of European festivals date back to at least medieval times. Attali mentions a series of decrees from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century ecumenical councils forbidding musical processions from circling churches, and anyone from singing and dancing in them (1977: 22). The mid-sixteenth-century Council of Trent rigorously defined the characteristics of sacred music in the context of counter-reformation, prohibiting profane music in church and drastically reducing the use of liturgical music (Fellerer and Hadas 1953). Another key moment was the Second Vatican Council, which abolished the use of Latin for the celebration of mass, in the interest of making the liturgy more accessible to the people, but in so

doing weakened a tradition of liturgical singing in Latin and paraliturgical repertoires often managed by confraternities.

I believe that it would be incorrect to approach the situation of the Pollino festival from an opposition between sacred and profane ways of participation. The opposition, already criticised in studies of religion (Arnal and McCutcheon 2012), is not suited to giving justice to the pilgrims' sense of devotion. It is not so much my interest to get into a theological discussion of the role of sound in Catholic liturgy, especially since the parish priests managing these types of festivals do not receive explicit directions from their bishops on how to deal with local forms of devotional music and are left to develop their own interpretations. I am more interested here in interpreting the struggles over the soundscape of the Pollino festival through the insights of recent perspectives from sound studies. I also believe that the thought of Michel Foucault is pertinent to issues of discipline and governmentality of and through sound, despite his association with vision and technologies of making visible. Specifically, I highlight three strategies or micropractices of power that the clergy are using to take control of the soundscape of the Pollino sanctuary: first, they are using demarcations of space to identify certain sounds as noise; secondly, they are encouraging a passive experience of sound to create ethical

3.6 At the campsite behind the Madonna del Pollino sanctuary, June 2014. Night-time jam session with accordion and *tamburello*.



listeners; and finally, they are using technologies of amplification to establish an asymmetry in the production of sounds.

It is important to be aware that, despite the signs on the walls of the sanctuary, the clergy are not trying to make silence. In a sense, they are doing the opposite; they are trying to 'make noise', though in the sense of creating spaces to define what is noisy sound production and what is appropriate (compare Rowlands 2007). Specifically, they are trying to make noise of the music of the pilgrims and of the rest of their sonic devotion, and replace it with the sounds of praying voices and, in designated moments, the 'official' music of symphonic wind bands. This approach takes us into the realm of noise, a fascinating and multifaceted concept that has been defined in multiple ways. For our purposes I find useful an understanding of noise as 'sound out of place' (Bailey 1996; Pickering and Rice 2017), because it highlights its relative nature, its relationship with spatiality and its capacity to enact power. For Attali, because 'any organisation of sounds is ... a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community' (1977: 6), noise becomes an essential tool of power for its ability to divide and demarcate space.

In fact, the definition of what is noise and who produces it has also been used to demarcate boundaries of social class and race (Cruz 1999: chapter 2; Picker 2003: chapter 2; Sakakeeny 2010). Noise has a long-time association with insubordination and revolt (Attali 1977: 122; Foucault 2009: 267), whose repression can be seen to continue in the policies of noise abatement in urban spaces. However, it is important to remark how noise also has a history of being used to repress deviance, for example in rituals of charivari, when noise or rough music is used to target 'wrong marriages'. A striking example is described by Pitt-Rivers in his ethnography of a Spanish Sierra village, where a man who had left his wife and children for a woman much younger than him was tormented every night by two hundred people armed with bells and horns, until after three months he died (Pitt-Rivers 1954: 171–72). It is interesting to note that the couple had moved outside of the village and in response to the racket they had tried to move further away – without success. Noise or music 'out of place' has been used in military operations to end siege situations, as in the case of the capture of president Noriega during the US invasion of Panama (Stocker 2013: 59). The power over acoustic space is the power to demarcate space by 'making noise' – which can mean both categorising the sounds of the other as noise and actually producing noise. This is particularly evident in the case of military aircraft noise in Okinawa studied by Cox (2013), where the noise of fighter jets is both the 'sound of freedom' for the Americans and a painful reminder of the war and consequent occupation for the Japanese (see also Goodman 2010).



3.7 Sanctuary of the Madonna del Pollino, June 2014. Loudspeakers, security cameras and signs demanding silence.

The second strategy of the clergy consists of replacing the sounds inside the sanctuary and of providing a frame for their perception within that space. The relationship between sound and the control of space has also been highlighted by studies of functional music or muzak, which serves both as a form of sonic branding of space, and as an attempt to influence the behaviour of those within it. According to Jones and Schumacher, functional music can be seen as a disciplining technology in a Foucaultian sense, which was first used to enhance worker production, and then to encourage customer consumption (1992). More recently, functional music has been connected to the repurposing of public places into private spaces oriented to consumption, where certain behaviours and social identities are more welcome than others (Atkinson 2007). The idea of using sound to influence

the dispositions of a community of listeners can already be found in Plato's thinking, where music, working affectively on body and soul through resonance, is a tool in the education of the ideal citizens of the polis (Siisiäinen 2010: 159). Ethical listening is a common practice in the contemporary Muslim world, where recordings of sermons are played on a variety of media for personal use. Hirschkind has described such practices in Egypt as disciplinary practices through which Muslims 'hone an ethically responsive sensorium: the requisite sensibilities that they see as enabling them to live as devout Muslims in a world increasingly ordered by secular rationalities' (2001: 624). However, the moulding power of sound, deriving for Plato from its pre-reflective nature, was also what made it dangerous, so that it had to be under strict control to prevent deviations from the ideal Athenian virtues (Hirschkind 2006: 102–3).

This double aspect of sound's impact on listeners recalls the myth of the musical duel between the god Apollo and the satyr Marsyas. The latter challenged the god and his lyre with his aulos, a double-reed wind instrument whose tone was probably not so different from the *ciaramella* of the pilgrims. While Apollo was able to make the judges cry with his melodies, the wild sounds of the satyr's oboe moved them to dance. It was only through adding his voice to his music that Apollo was able to overcome Marsyas, who on the other hand could not do the same as he was blowing in his instrument. I find it fascinating that in the myth the oboe-playing satyr is able to move the audience to dance, thus creating bodily involvement, while the god wins thanks to voice, which is logos and by extension rationality (see Siisiäinen 2010: 6.3). I understand the strategies of sound management in the sanctuary to be oriented towards creating devout listeners, whose experiences of sound are disconnected from the materiality of the body. The prohibition of dancing goes in this direction, as do the more extreme forms of involvement, but it is especially the repression of forms of music-making that creates passive subjects whose experience of devotion is markedly less embodied.

In the setting of a Scottish hospital, Rice observes similar processes of disciplining through acoustic means. These in many ways revolve around creating 'passive soundselves' whose experience of sound reinforces the partition between mind and body that underpins the condition of the patient in biomedicine (Rice 2003: 7). In mentioning Foucault's paradigm of disciplining surveillance, the panopticon, Rice remarks that the disciplining power of sound does not so much operate as forms of acoustic surveillance as through the subtle, omnipresent perception of sonic manifestations of power – a principle he terms 'panaudicism' (2013: 33). It is interesting to note that Bentham, the creator of the panopticon principle, had also devised a system of tubes

to allow acoustic surveillance of the inmates and at the same time delivery of orders by their guardians. However, Foucault writes, he abandoned the project later on because he perhaps realised that 'he could not introduce into it the principle of dissymmetry and prevent the prisoners from hearing the inspector as well as the inspector hearing them' (1995: 317 note 3).

Whether or not this is an early instance of what Sterne calls the 'audiovisual litany', which is the recurrent scholarly position whereby 'sound draws us into the world while vision separates us from it' (2003: 15), Foucault's remark brings me to consider the third strategy, that is, the use of technologies of acoustic projection to restore dissymmetry. The invention of the loudspeaker allowed a use of sound in space that before had only been possible thanks to the elevation of bells on top of a tower. Corbin, writing on church bells in nineteenth-century rural France, provides another example of sound governance enforced through dissymmetrical sound production (1998). Village bells mark time and put the acoustic space they cover under the spiritual and political authority of the powers that ring them. They impose a structure on the days of the peasants, calling them to activities determined by those powers. The way bells contribute to building an acoustic community also applies to the Islamic call to prayer (Eisenberg 2013; Khan 2011), which like bells these days is most of the time amplified or pre-recorded. The call to prayer creates an Islamic space and synchronises the faithful, who are supposed to respond to the sound with prayer (Eisenlohr 2018; Lee 1999). The open-air diffusion of amplified religious sounds is a powerful means of creating communities, but it can also amplify tensions in areas where conflicts are present (Hirschkind 2015: 170–71; Moore 2003). The capacity of the loudspeaker to bring sounds to large groups of people beyond the physical location of the original source, though, in its unidirectionality also affords silencing. The person behind the microphone has the certainty to be heard, and only when they choose to (Cluett 2010).

At the Pollino festival, loudspeakers carry the voice of the priest out of the church building, into the perimeter area, and amplify it on a procession, thanks to a portable PA system and radiomicrophone. Without them, the priest would be confined to the church as the only place in which he would be able to dominate the soundscape. The loudspeakers, on the other hand, confine the musicians and in general the whole festive soundscape of the Pollino sonic devotion to the area outside the perimeter of the sanctuary. I am not suggesting here that the Church can keep its authority at the pilgrimage only thanks to these three strategies of sonic control, especially since the episode I narrate at the beginning of the chapter demonstrates that at times it needs the help of secular institutions – and even then it

might fail. However, I have realised how strategies of control of the soundscape have changed significantly the modes of sonic devotion at the Madonna del Pollino festival since the late 1990s, when Scaldaferrri started his observations, in ways that are more subtle than the intervention of the police.

Conclusion

Finally, I want to present another case of use of sound for the management of a festival. This example has both continuities and marked differences with the pilgrimage of the Madonna del Pollino. Since 2013, Don Serafino La Sala has been parish priest in Episcopia, a village of about 1400 inhabitants in the Sinni river valley, 20 kilometres from San Severino Lucano. In his role, he is a central figure in the festival of the Madonna del Piano, a mid-fifteenth-century wooden statue of the Virgin that, according to oral tradition, was found inside a hollow oak tree by some peasants (see chapter 4). Don Serafino, a young priest now in his thirties, is very familiar with the Madonna del Pollino festival, having served as an altar boy there since he was a child. In 2017 we could observe the way he managed the soundscape of the procession that, every 5 August, takes the statue of the Madonna from a countryside sanctuary to Episcopia's main church.

Episcopia, like many of the similar-sized villages of the region, has seen strong and still ongoing emigratory waves during the past century and is constantly shrinking in population. During the Madonna del Piano festival, however, many of those who moved abroad or to other parts of Italy return to their village of origin to take part in the celebrations. Episcopia's population is temporarily rejuvenated, and many youths take part in the main events on 4th and 5th of August. There is a definitely lively and sometimes wild atmosphere, with lots of wine-drinking and dancing, which contrasts with the greater reserve of other patron saint festivals in nearby villages, where youth participation is markedly smaller. On the 5th there is a morning mass at the sanctuary and people have a communal lunch nearby. Music plays for most of the day, especially *tarantelle* for *organetto* and drums, plus occasionally some *zampogna*. A walking wind band is also present, marking as usual the key ceremonial moments. The festival is markedly heterogeneous, mixing liturgical moments, wild partying, religious songs and dancing music, and its attendance brings together young and elderly people, institutional figures, clergy and folk music lovers. I was struck by Don Serafino's capacity to keep all these components together in fairly harmonious coexistence. While this is certainly due to efficient organisation and dialogue with the community, the priest's management of the festive soundscape stood out and was markedly different

from what happens at the Pollino pilgrimage. Throughout the over two-hour-long procession that brought the statue of the Madonna del Piano to Episcopia's main church, he used a radiomicrophone and a portable PA system to alternately amplify different sound sources. He would start a series of prayer songs, with which a group of mainly female devotees would join in. Then he would give space to the walking band, who played symphonic marches. After a couple of pieces he would turn the microphone to the *zampogna* or *organetto* players who played devotional songs.

In an interview with Scaldaferrì, he remembers his first experience as parish priest at the Episcopia festival, which he describes as 'chaos' (La Sala 2019). He spent most of the time listening carefully, and could not help drawing connections with his memories of the Pollino festival. Commenting on a photograph of himself taken by Ferrarini in 2017, he states how he sees his role as one of managing and organising. He prefers to speak of sharing and negotiating between different ways of living the celebration, rather than taking a stance of banning and prohibiting. In the absence of explicit guidelines from the upper levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy he prefers to run the paraliturgy in an inclusive manner, instead of applying repressive authority. Significantly, the parish priest often presides over the festival committee and can

3.8 Episcopia, August 2017. Don Serafino La Sala at the Madonna del Piano procession.



have a strong influence on the use of funds, so that his authority is not only spiritual.

The procession is a complex microcosm, made up of different participants who have very different experiences and expectations. Don Serafino is no orchestra leader and his loudspeakers cannot reach every participant. His actual control is limited, but the message he sends is powerful and goes beyond the range of the PA system. In lending the institutional amplification of his microphone he is making it clear that all those forms of sonic devotion are legitimate participants in the festival. In so doing he manages to obtain a non-conflictual sonic space around the statue of the Madonna, in which band, singers and players alternate and do not overlap. He also obtains that the drunken dancing keeps out of earshot and out of potential conflict. Despite the tolerant and inclusive approach, this use of the PA system is also a disciplining technique that allows control of the development of the festival. For example, the centrality of the priest's role as soundscape manager makes it clear that the monopoly of the festival belongs to the Church. As the performers enter a pact of mutual non-aggression that avoids duels similar to that between the *zampogna* players at the Pollino sanctuary, their sounds become institutionalised. It is not by chance that in Episcopia forms of sonic devotion are present side by side with the heritagisation of cultural performances, evident for example in the 'peasant' uniforms of folkloric dancers with wooden sickles – an aspect totally absent in the Madonna del Pollino pilgrimage.

Comparing the soundscapes of the Pollino festival and Episcopia also allows one to reflect on the future of the forms of sonic devotion that I have described in these pages, especially considering that these areas are facing depopulation and increasing demographic ageing of their permanent residents. Our ethnography has shown that the power of sound to order and structure space makes it a formidable tool to either exclude or include forms of devotion. A new generation of priests, more open and respectful of the practices that their predecessors labelled as ignorance and sought to eradicate, is perhaps showing a way in which these festivals can adapt and involve younger generations.

Sound-chapter 3 – *'We came a long way ...'*

This sound-chapter includes recordings of musical performances, religious songs and soundscapes from different moments of the festival of the Madonna del Pollino, as well as from other Marian festivals in Basilicata, made between 1989 and 2016. It provides different examples of sonic devotion and of ways in which sound can be used to mark an event and take control of space.