

Defining Italianness: Poetry, Music and the Construction of National Identity in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Accounts of the Medieval Italian Lyric Tradition

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The first poetic compositions, in all nations, were found to fit some relished melody. So it was at the beginning of the Italian poetic tradition, where musical names were given to all poetic compositions in the vernacular.¹

Francesco Trucchi (1846)

MUSIC, Francesco Trucchi suggests, is intrinsic to early Italian poetry, and the presence of melody offers him an essential means of connecting Italy's literary heritage to the broader tradition of European vernacular poetry. Even Dante Alighieri, he goes on to say, 'cultivated' music and composed musical works himself. Citing a poem attributed to Dante's son Pietro, *Lamento delle sette arti liberali*, Trucchi offers a bit more detail. Dante's best musical works, he reports, were sacred compositions, but they went unappreciated because the Florentine poet was believed to be neither religious nor Catholic, and was consequently considered unqualified to compose sacred music.²

Factual accuracy (or lack of it) aside, it is somewhat surprising that Trucchi, in 1846, should be at pains to illustrate Dante's musical ability, given that no one today would wish to claim the poet to have been a composer. Raffaello Monterosso, in an essay published in 1965 on music and poetry in Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*, for example, bids us to remember that Dante was 'not a musician by profession' and that his ideas about music

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¹ 'I primi saggi di poesia, presso tutte le nazioni, furono trovati per vestire qualche gradita melodia. Così accade nei primi principi della poesia italiana; onde ne vennero i nomi musicali a tutte le composizioni poetiche in lingua volgare.' Francesco Trucchi, *Poesie italiane inedite di dugento autori dall'origine della lingua infino al secolo decimosettimo*, 4 vols. (Prato, 1846–8), ii (1846), 139–40. All translations from Italian are mine unless otherwise noted.

² *Ibid.*, 140.

were 'rather general in character'.³ Moreover, turning on its head Trucchi's assertion that the earliest Italian lyric poetry, like all European lyric poetry, was intrinsically musical, Gianfranco Folena has famously asserted that the Sicilian school – the first school of poetry written in the Italian vernacular, which flourished during the early decades of the thirteenth century at the court of Federico II – was characterized instead by a 'fundamental divorce of poetry from music'.⁴ Freed from the limitations of melody and of performance, Folena implies, Italian poets were able to surpass their Provençal predecessors, bringing amplified verbal artistry and structural complexity to their work.

These authors may not agree on whether melody was integral to medieval Italian lyric poetry or on the extent of Dante's musical abilities, but their assessments nevertheless bespeak the extent to which music plays a crucial role in nineteenth- and twentieth-century accounts of Italy's early literary history – its presence essential in some instances, its absence essential in others. In what follows, I explore this phenomenon and its relation to the construction of Italian national identity not only during but also long after the Risorgimento. Tracing music's role in the writings of three Italian literary critics, Giosuè Carducci (1835–1907), Vincenzo De Bartholomaeis (1867–1953) and Aurelio Roncaglia (1917–2001), I shall argue that music paradoxically became entangled with Italy's literary identity even – and, in fact, especially – as scholars worked to extricate the peninsula's most renowned poetry from its grasp. Italianness, in the realm of *poesia popolare* ('folk' poetry) and *poesia popolareggiante* ('folk-like' poetry), depends upon music, which serves as a marker of that poetry's popular origins. The concept of *poesia per musica* (or poetry for music) thus offers for Carducci, in the years immediately following the birth of the Italian nation, a vital link to ancient Rome, which he saw as the cradle of Italy's national spirit. A century later, music's exclusion from the realm of *poesia aulica* ('high-art' poetry) would become essential to the construction of an Italian tradition that is independent of and superior to its French and Provençal predecessors. Italianness, in the eyes of De Bartholomaeis and Roncaglia, is thus found precisely in poetry's autonomy from, rather than marriage to, melody and musical performance.

Giosuè Carducci and the origins of *poesia per musica*

In 1870, nine years after the Regno d'Italia was established under the rule of Vittorio Emanuele II, Italian troops took Rome out of papal control, annexing it into the

³ 'Occorre innanzi tutto non dimenticare che Dante non è un musicista di professione. Della musica aveva cognizioni di carattere piuttosto generale.' Raffaello Monterosso, 'Musica e poesia nel *De vulgari eloquentia*', *Dante: Atti della giornata internazionale di studio per il VII centenario, Ravenna 6–7 marzo 1965*, ed. Giuseppe Plessi (Faenza, 1965), 83–100 (p. 84).

⁴ 'Fondamentale divorzio della poesia dalla musica'. Gianfranco Folena, 'Cultura e poesia dei Siciliani', *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. Emilio Cecchi and Natalino Sapegno (1965), 2nd edn, 9 vols. (Milan, 1987–8), i, 273–347 (p. 300).

growing peninsular nation. In the same year, Carducci – the first Italian author to win the Nobel Prize in literature and one of the founding fathers of modern Italian philology – planted the seed for renewed interest in Italy's early musical history, publishing his essay 'Musica e poesia nel mondo elegante italiano del secolo XIV'.⁵ The first study seriously to revisit the Italian *ars nova* repertory and its sources, Carducci's essay paved the way for modern trecento studies, both musicological and literary.⁶ Offering an overview of trecento song texts, the composers who set them and their manuscript sources, Carducci hoped to inspire interest in this repertory, about which very little was known, not just among scholars but among the general public as well.⁷

Carducci was writing at a time when Italian intellectuals and politicians were steeped in the project of building and promoting an illustrious and uniquely Italian cultural heritage for the newly united nation; he was deeply influenced by the patriotic atmosphere the Risorgimento engendered. Throughout all of his work – as poet and as literary critic – lies a stream of promoting Italian unity through inspiring in the new nation's citizens a sense of shared community and shared cultural memory.⁸ Nineteenth-century Italian intellectuals were, of course, well aware of the importance and the difficulty of constructing a national (as opposed to regional) identity for a country that had been divided politically, culturally and linguistically for centuries (and, indeed, in many respects still is). And Carducci, along with other Risorgimento-era writers, scholars and politicians, from Giuseppe Mazzini to Francesco De Sanctis, saw language and most especially literature as central to this task. 'When Prince

⁵ Giosuè Carducci, 'Musica e poesia nel mondo elegante italiano del secolo XIV', *Opere di Giosuè Carducci*, 20 vols. (Bologna, 1889–1909), viii (1893), 299–398. Republished several times, the article first appeared in the journal *Nuova antologia di scienze, lettere e arti*, 14 (May–August 1870), 463–82, and 15 (September–December 1870), 5–30.

⁶ Prior to Carducci's essay, trecento song texts were accessible to the nineteenth-century reader primarily through two printed anthologies of early Italian poetry: Lodovico Valeriani's *Poeti del primo secolo della lingua italiana*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1816), and Trucchi's *Poesie italiane inedite*. Although he consulted manuscripts directly himself, Carducci's work draws heavily on Trucchi's collection in particular, which contained an entire section dedicated to trecento song texts. His 1870 essay also owes a debt to Antonio Cappelli's *Poesie musicali dei secoli XIV, XV, e XVI. tratte da vari codici, con un saggio della musica dei tre secoli* (Bologna, 1868). See Guido Capovilla, 'Il saggio carducciano "Musica e poesia nel mondo elegante del secolo XIV": Alcuni presupposti', *Trent'anni di ricerca musicologica: Studi in onore di F. A. Gallo*, ed. Patrizia Dalla Vecchia and Donatella Restani (Rome, 1996), 339–52 (esp. pp. 339–40).

⁷ In a note appended to an 1874 republication, Carducci explains that his aim was to introduce even 'lettori non propriamente eruditi' ('not necessarily erudite readers') to 'la storia di una parte dell'antica poesia italiana che è pochissimo conosciuta o, meglio, molto disconosciuta' ('the history of a part of ancient Italian literature that is very little known, or rather, very much unknown'). Carducci, 'Musica e poesia', 395.

⁸ Much has been written on the nationalistic ideology undergirding Carducci's scholarship and poetry. See especially Capovilla, 'Il saggio carducciano'; Anna Storti Abate, 'Carducci e l'identità nazionale', *Transalpina: Études italiennes*, 10 (2007), 37–49; and Antonella Braidà, 'Dante and the Creation of the Poeta vate in Nineteenth-Century Italy', *Dante in the Long Nineteenth Century: Nationality, Identity, and Appropriation*, ed. Aida Audeh and Nick Havely (Oxford, 2012), 51–69.

Metternich said that Italy was a mere geographical expression, he did not understand the issue,' Carducci once declared; 'it was a literary expression, a poetic tradition.'⁹

The cornerstones of this poetic tradition were, of course, Dante and Francesco Petrarca. And it was in front of the tomb of the latter that the above statement was made, in a speech given in 1874 during official festivities celebrating the 500th anniversary of the poet's death. Both this celebration and the 1865 celebrations in honour of the anniversary of Dante's birth, in which Carducci also participated, suggest the importance of these poets not only in the eyes of Italian writers and literary historians but also in those of Italian politicians during the Risorgimento and the post-unification period. Indeed, the presence of Dante's portrait today on the Italian side of the two-euro coin illustrates the poet's continued status as national icon as well as the particularly prominent role literature still plays in defining 'Italianness'.¹⁰ Much of Carducci's activity as a literary critic and a public intellectual was, not surprisingly, focused on these two poets. Editing Petrarca's *Canzoniere*, publishing essays on Dante's *rime* and lecturing on both poets' works at government-sponsored festivities and at the University of Bologna (where he served as the chair of rhetoric), he worked to promote an illustrious Italian tradition of high-art poetry.

For Carducci, though, the true seat of *italianità*, that is to say the peninsula's national spirit, was not *poesia aulica* (a tradition tainted by foreign influences), but rather *poesia popolare*. As Antonella Braida points out, he saw Italian literary history 'as the interweaving of three principles: the ecclesiastical, the chivalric, and the national'.¹¹ Identifying the first as a negative influence and the second as foreign in its origins, Carducci focuses much of his energy on veneration of the third. He was particularly concerned with framing Italy's heritage as Roman rather than northern European (in other words, with freeing the peninsula from the yoke of Austrian rule), and sought to find features in the nation's literary tradition that survived the influence of northern barbaric invasions and of the church during the early Middle Ages. Stating these intentions explicitly, Carducci declared in 1860 that he wished to show that Italian literature 'owed nothing to the literature of other nations in its origins', and that it was 'the fruit of the Latin tradition'.¹² He thus aimed to identify a 'popular' or 'folk' tradition with more prominent Roman roots through the study of less refined literature. Although the title of his essay, 'Musica e poesia nel mondo elegante italiano del secolo XIV' ('Music and Poetry in the Italian

⁹ 'Quando il Principe di Metternich disse l'Italia essere un'espressione geografica, non aveva capito la cosa; essa era un'espressione letteraria, una tradizione poetica.' Cited and translated in Stefano Jossa, 'Politics vs. Literature: The Myth of Dante and the Italian National Identity', *Dante in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Audeh and Havely, 30–50 (p. 35).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33–4. Emphasizing the exceptional extent to which literature is intertwined with Italian national identity, Jossa notes: 'Italy is the sole country within the European Union to feature an ancient literary icon on its most valuable coin.'

¹¹ Braida, 'Dante and the Creation of the *Poeta vate*', 58.

¹² 'Mostrare che la letteratura nelle sue origini nulla deve a quelle di altri popoli, che ella è un frutto della tradizione latina.' Quoted in Capovilla, 'Il saggio carducciano', 342–3.

Refined World of the Fourteenth Century’), emphasizes upfront that the repertory with which it will be concerned is patently not poetry of, by or for ‘the people’,¹³ it nevertheless is squarely within this agenda that this 1870 work on the Italian *ars nova* tradition fits.¹⁴

In the poems selected for musical treatment by trecento composers, all but forgotten since the fifteenth century, Carducci found what he believed to be the ‘authentic depository’ of the spirit of the Italian *popolo*.¹⁵ The ballata’s connection with music and dance, Carducci believed, identified it as a genre whose origins were without doubt popular in nature. For him, the ballata was filled with traces of ancient Roman folk traditions, true expressions of a ‘lively and natural sentiment’.¹⁶ What is more, Carducci proposed that early written examples of the genre, discovered around 1860 in the pages of the Memoriali Bolognesi (thirteenth- and fourteenth-century notarial records), bore witness to an Italian oral tradition that not only was intimately bound to Latin civilization but also predated Provençal poetry (generally accepted as the earliest vernacular lyric tradition).¹⁷

It is the madrigal, however, that holds the greatest interest for Carducci in ‘Musica e poesia’. At pains to emphasize the genre’s popular origins, he focuses on the etymology of its name as explained by Antonio da Tempo, now considered untenable. According to Antonio, the word *mandriale* (madrigal) descends from the word *mandra* (flock) and is thereby inherently bucolic and natural.¹⁸ Although Carducci stressed that the madrigal

¹³ I shall return below to the paradox between Carducci’s aims and the materials with which he worked.

¹⁴ Capovilla, ‘Il saggio carducciano’, 342–4. Capovilla links many of Carducci’s other projects to this agenda as well, especially the series of lectures collected in the volume *Dello svolgimento della letteratura nazionale* (Bologna, 1911), his edition of poems by Cino da Pistoia and other fourteenth-century poets (Florence, 1862), his edition of works by Poliziano (Florence, 1863) and his collection *Cantilene e ballate, strambotti e madrigal dei secoli XIII e XIV* (Pisa, 1871).

¹⁵ Capovilla, ‘Il saggio carducciano’, 342. Fabio Finotti and Antonella Braida have both made similar claims. See Finotti, ‘Il metodo storico: Scienza e letteratura’, *Musica e storia*, 13 (2005), 231–49, and Braida, ‘Dante and the Creation of the *Poeta vate*’.

¹⁶ ‘Espressione di un sentimento vivo e naturale’. Giosuè Carducci, ‘Della lirica popolare italiana del secolo xiii e xiv’, *Opere di Giosuè Carducci*, xviii (1908), 63–90 (p. 86). Quoted in Capovilla, ‘Il saggio carducciano’, 344.

¹⁷ Capovilla, ‘Il saggio carducciano’, 345 note 28.

¹⁸ Carducci, ‘Musica e poesia’, 328–9. While there has been much scholarly debate over the years regarding the origins and early history of the madrigal as a genre, the etymology of the word ‘madrigal’ remains uncertain. Two hypotheses are currently considered plausible: the word may be derived from *materialis*, implying a poem without rules or specific form; or it may be derived from *matrix/matrice* either in the sense of *cantus matricalis* (song in the mother tongue) or *matrix ecclesia* (a clausula-like piece for organ, from which the madrigal may possibly have originated). See Kurt von Fischer *et al.*, ‘Madrigal’, *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed 23 July 2015). Also see Nino Pirrotta, ‘Una arcaica descrizione trecentesca del madrigale’, *Festschrift Heinrich Besseler zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Institut für Musikwissenschaft der Karl-Marx-Universität (Leipzig, 1961), 155–61. On the history of the madrigal as a genre, see especially Nino Pirrotta, ‘Per l’origine e storia della “caccia” e del “madrigale” trecentesco’, *Rivista musicale italiana*, 48 (1946), 305–23, and 49 (1947), 121–42, and Guido Capovilla, ‘Materiali per la morfologia e la storia del madrigale “antico”, dal ms. Vaticano Rossi 215 al novecento’, *Metrica*, 3 (1982), 159–252.

was a refined genre intended for the elegant world of wealthy, mercantile Florence, he simultaneously associated it with a desire to return to the idyllic world of Arcadia and to the simple pleasures of pastoral life, a desire he saw as inherent in all elevated societies.

For Carducci, the madrigal's 'popular' overtones were to be found in more than its name, though. The genre's frequent use of 'light' subject matter and its strophic form also served as proof of its 'popular' or non-literary nature, as did its pervasive anonymity.¹⁹ His interpretation of the literary changes sparked by this yearning for idyllic simplicity, and in fact his vision of the Italian poetic tradition as a whole, therefore hinges on an opposition between the (overly) intellectual lyrics of Dante and Guido Cavalcanti and the more 'natural' works written by subsequent generations, which is cast at least in part as an opposition between *poesia aulica* and folk-influenced *poesia per musica*. Carducci explained,

When the generation of poets to which Dante and Cavalcanti belonged died out, a generation that felt and expressed the great lyric ideal with excessive ardour [...]; and when Petrarch began to put into verse the place of enraptured contemplation of beauty, the dissonance between emotion and analysis, reducing love to more human proportions; then the madrigal was born, or better, entered into the realm of art.²⁰

Nevertheless, while Carducci worked to distinguish the madrigal, and the ballata too, from *poesia aulica*, both remained, in his view, connected to that tradition. The madrigal and the ballata he positioned in a middle ground between what he describes as the two main branches of Italian lyric – popular poetry (typified by the *strambotto*) and high-art poetry (typified by the sonnet and the canzone).²¹ In so doing, Carducci finesses what is for us today a contradiction too bold to be ignored, identifying as the heart of Italy's 'national spirit' poetry transmitted in luxurious manuscripts and adorned with learned polyphony – poetry, in other words, destined to be enjoyed not by the common man but by the economic and cultural elite.²²

¹⁹ Carducci, 'Musica e poesia', 341. Carducci seems not to have been bothered by (or perhaps he was determined wilfully to ignore) the obvious contradiction inherent in his classification of the madrigal as both elite pastoral and popular voice, which goes unremarked in the essay.

²⁰ 'Sepolta la generazione di cui facean parte Dante e il Cavalcanti, i quali aveano con troppo d'ardenza sentito ed espresso la gran lirica ideale [...]; sepolta cotesta generazione, quando Francesco Petrarca cominciò a poeteggiare, il luogo della contemplazione estatica della bellezza, la discordia del sentimento e l'analisi, riducendo l'amore a proporzioni più umane; allora nacque il madrigale, o meglio, entrò nell'educazione dell'arte.' *Ibid.*, 333.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 336–7.

²² Not all sources of trecento polyphony, of course, are aptly described as luxurious. London, British Library, Add. MS 29987, for example, is a notoriously sloppy manuscript almost certainly not created by or for an elite reader (at least not in its final form). As I discuss in more detail below, however, Carducci had only the three most visually sumptuous of the trecento sources at his disposal – the Squarcialupi Codex (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Mediceo Palatino 87); Modena, Biblioteca Estense, α .M.5 (ModA); and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fonds italien 568 (Pit).

Carducci was, of course, hardly the only nineteenth-century intellectual who sought to recover 'native' popular song through the polyphonic repertoires housed in deluxe chansonniers whose medieval readers were among Europe's most powerful and wealthy citizens, nor was he the only one to wed the study of medieval literature and history to the construction of national identity. During the final decades of the nineteenth century, French scholars involved in the Comité de la Langue, de l'Histoire et des Arts de la France co-opted the newly discovered Laborde and Dijon chansonniers in their efforts to construct French national identity, portraying these elegant manuscripts – despite their physical appearance – as collections of French popular song for similar reasons.²³ Founded in 1834 (under the title 'Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques') as part of a government-sponsored initiative to collect, publish and study ancient French literature, the Comité underwent reform in 1852 in response to a decree issued by Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte which ordered all 'French popular poetry' to be collected and published.²⁴ Like Carducci, the scholars who worked for the Comité – following in the footsteps of Johann Gottfried von Herder – saw 'popular poetry' as a window through which to access a society's (or, rather, a nation's) 'collective soul' and, by extension, its unique national spirit.

Troubadour and trouvère poetry, too, played an important role in nineteenth-century efforts to locate the French national spirit in medieval French literature. In particular, scholars saw in refrain forms and the rondeau crucial traces of early popular-song traditions that were otherwise entirely hidden from view because of their dependence on oral transmission. Writing in 1896, for example, the French philologist Alfred Jeanroy described the thirteenth-century refrain as 'the last echo of a monophonic poetic folk tradition permanently lost to us'.²⁵ Adam de la Halle's *Jeu de Robin et de Marion*, widely admired for its lyrical simplicity and folk-like purity, was seen as an especially important witness to the French national spirit.²⁶ Not only did its melodies strongly resemble folk tunes still sung by northern French peasants, scholars argued, but they may even have been folk tunes from the very beginning, borrowed rather than composed by Adam. Thus, as Katharine Ellis has argued, the *Jeu* was considered an anthology 'of the oldest French folk songs to have come down to the nineteenth century', and as such it stood proudly as the beginning of French music.²⁷

²³ On the role of fifteenth-century chansonniers in the construction of a unified French national identity during the nineteenth century, see Jane Alden, 'Excavating Chansonniers: Musical Archaeology and the Search for Popular Song', *Journal of Musicology*, 25 (2008), 46–87, and *Songs, Scribes, and Society: The History and Reception of the Loire Valley Chansonniers* (Oxford, 2010).

²⁴ Alden, 'Excavating Chansonniers', 51–2.

²⁵ 'Le dernier écho d'une poésie naïve et simple, perdue sans retour'. Quoted and translated in Jennifer Saltzstein, *The Refrain and the Rise of the Vernacular in Medieval French Music and Poetry* (Cambridge, 2013), 8.

²⁶ Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past: Early Music in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 2008), 164–70.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 169. As Ellis has noted, however, the rest of Adam de la Halle's output was rather less well received. Criticized for their artifice and lack of natural purity, his polyphonic works were seen as learned music for the upper classes and thus troublesomely incongruous with the *Jeu*. *Ibid.*, 165–7.

In aiming to access ancient ‘folk’ traditions through the written record, all of these scholars needed, in one way or another, to deal with the dissonance between the ideal which they sought – poetry ‘of the people’ – and the material realities with which they worked – largely objects of luxury. One possibility was to define popular song broadly, as did Julien Tiersot and Gaston Paris, both of whom believed that society was not yet stratified in the Middle Ages and that, consequently, everyone, from princes to peasants, enjoyed the same poetry.²⁸ The other was to overlook the provenance (when known) and the physical characteristics of the manuscripts they studied. Carducci, like many of his contemporaries, did both. Medieval Italian literature, he suggested, belonged as much to ‘the people’ as it did to elite society, and at that time Italian literature ‘was not yet in decline nor was there a divorce between it and the popular sentiment’.²⁹ At the same time, he had nothing to say about the contradiction between his characterization of the madrigal as both popular voice and elite pastoral or about the parallel contradiction between his argument and the manuscripts on which it was based. And yet, although he seems not to have been troubled by it (perhaps because he was happy to recognize the fourteenth-century madrigal as elite even if he saw the genre’s origins as decidedly popular), Carducci must have recognized the latter incongruity at least on some level, for he was well aware of the manuscripts’ sumptuous nature. Identifying the three sources with which he worked (the Squarcialupi Codex; Modena, Biblioteca Estense, α .M.5; and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fonds italien 568) as books intended for ‘compagnie élégante’ (elegant society), he describes their tidy script and handsome decoration in some detail in the essay’s second section.³⁰

²⁸ Alden, ‘Excavating Chansonniers’, 79.

²⁹ ‘Non era ancora dinaturata né compiuto il divorzio tra lei e il sentimento popolare’. Carducci, ‘Musica e poesia’, 360.

³⁰ Carducci, ‘Musica e poesia’, 303–7. Most of the key Italian *ars nova* sources with which we are now familiar had not yet been rediscovered at the time Carducci published his 1870 essay. He was thus unaware of the several more modest manuscripts that offer links to middle-class readers, even if not to the true ‘folk’ culture Carducci and his contemporaries idealized. The existence of Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Panciatichi 26, and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fonds nouvelles acquisitions françaises 6771 (the Reina Codex), both of which are paper rather than parchment and devoid of illumination, was first noted in Johannes Wolf, *Geschichte der Mensural-Notation von 1250–1460*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1904). Meanwhile, the notoriously non-deluxe London, British Library, Add. MS 29987 – almost certainly copied by an amateur (and not terribly well-educated) scribe for his own personal use – was not uncovered until 1877. Michael Cuthbert, ‘Trecento Fragments and Polyphony beyond the Codex’ (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2006), 11–12. Much has been written about Add. MS 29987 especially and the probable social, cultural and economic status of its scribe. See Giuliano Di Bacco, ‘Alcune nuove osservazioni sul codice di Londra (London, British Library, Additional 29987)’, *Studi musicali*, 20 (1991), 181–234; Marco Gozzi, ‘Alcune postille sul codice Add. 29987 della British Library’, *Studi musicali*, 22 (1993), 249–77; Giuseppe Carsaniga, ‘An Additional Look at London Additional 29987’, *Musica disciplina*, 48 (1994), 283–97; Michael Long, ‘Singing through the Looking Glass: Child’s Play and Learning in Medieval Italy’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 61 (2008), 253–306; and Lauren McGuire Jennings, *Senza vestimenta: The Literary Tradition of Trecento Song* (Farnham, 2014), Chapter 6 (‘Scribes, Owner and Material Cultures’, pp. 159–98).

So-called popular literature's potential to serve as a conduit for national spirit was but one facet of the nineteenth century's fascination with all things medieval. The construction of national identity entailed both pinpointing (or recovering) an inherent 'national spirit' and reconstructing a national history, a sense of shared past and shared cultural heritage. The Middle Ages, touted as a cultural heyday, thus loomed large in nineteenth-century Italy – just as in France, Germany and England – as one potential seat of the nation's origins (ancient Rome being the other).³¹ Interest in Europe's medieval pasts manifested itself in, among other areas, new artistic production as much as in the academic study of political, cultural and literary history. Duccio Balestracci notes, for example, the popularity of neo-Gothic architecture in England and throughout Europe (as well as the United States and Australia) in the second half of the nineteenth century. During this same period, many Italian cities also worked to restore, or complete, the façades of their most prominent medieval architectural monuments, such as that of San Petronio in Bologna.³² Medievalism, of course, permeated nineteenth-century literature, painting and music as well. Carducci himself took up medieval themes in a number of his poetic works (*Il comune rustico*, *Il Parlamento*, *Faida di Comune* and *Sui campi di Marengo la notte di Sabato Santo 1175*),³³ as did opera composers – Verdi, Bellini, Rossini and Puccini, to name only the most prominent.³⁴

Meanwhile, Carducci's scholarly work evinces the extent to which the nineteenth century's curiosity with the Middle Ages exhibited itself in Italian academic endeavours. Like their French colleagues, Italian literary scholars sought to recover the earliest poetry and prose written in the Italian vernacular, publishing editions of newly unearthed manuscripts, and to study the origins and early development of the Italian literary tradition in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. A political as well as an academic interest, much of this scholarly activity was conducted under the auspices of local and national government-sponsored organizations established during the latter half of the nineteenth century with explicitly nationalistic aims. The Commissione per i Testi di Lingua, Italy's equivalent of the Comité de la Langue, de l'Histoire et des

³¹ Much has been written in recent years on the nineteenth-century fascination with the Middle Ages and on medievalism in Italy and throughout Europe. On the relationship between the nineteenth-century reception of the Middle Ages and the construction of national identity in Italy, see Ilaria Porciani, 'Il medioevo nella costruzione dell'Italia unita: La proposta di un mito', *Italia e Germania: Immagini, modelli, miti fra due popoli nell'ottocento: Il medioevo*, ed. Reinhard Elze and Pierangelo Schiera (Bologna, 1988), 163–92; Alberto Mario Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento: Parentela, sanità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita* (Turin, 2000); Adrian Lyttelton, 'Creating a National Past: History, Myth and Image in the Risorgimento', *Making and Remaking Italy: The Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna von Henneberg (Oxford, 2001), 27–76; and Duccio Balestracci, *Medioevo e Risorgimento: L'invenzione dell'identità italiana nell'ottocento* (Bologna, 2015).

³² Balestracci, *Medioevo e Risorgimento*, 113–17.

³³ *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 101–9.

Arts de la France, for example, was founded in Bologna in 1860 to recover, edit and disseminate medieval Italian poetry. Still active today, it has published hundreds of editions of Italian literary works by medieval and early-modern authors, from the most famous (including Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio) to the relatively obscure. Many continue to be essential resources, including Giuseppe Corsi's 1970 publication *Poesie musicali del trecento*,³⁵ which is still the chief edition of trecento song texts. Carducci, significantly, served as the Commissione's second president from 1888 to 1907.

In a similar vein, the nineteenth century saw the establishment of organizations dedicated to regional history (*storia patria*) throughout the peninsula: the Deputazione Subalpina (1833), the Società Ligure di Storia Patria (1857), three *deputazioni* related to Reggio Emilia (1860), the Deputazione Toscana (1862), the Società Storica Lombarda (1873), the Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Venezie (1873), the Società Napoletana di Storia Patria (1875) and the Società Romana di Storia Patria (1876).³⁶ As the localized orientation of these organizations demonstrates, regional pride and identity remained strong throughout the unification period, and after it as well. To be successful, any attempt to construct a national identity would therefore have to find a way to harness regional identity to the broader cause – no doubt a difficult balancing act. The *deputazioni di storia patria*, while focused on the study of local history, were thus also instrumental in building for the new Italian nation a sense of shared past. Medieval history was vital to this effort, for nearly every Italian town and city had some moment of glory to venerate.³⁷ Particularly significant in the context of the peninsula's nineteenth-century struggle for unification and, along with that, liberty, were northern Italy's independent city states, ruled not by foreign despots but by republican governments run by local (Italian) citizens. The autonomy, the prosperity and the democratic nature of the medieval *comuni* offered nineteenth-century politicians and intellectuals something to idealize, as well as much-needed evidence that the Italian people could achieve greatness when not hindered by foreign oppression.³⁸ Italy's medieval history was of interest on the national level as well. The Istituto Storico Italiano founded in Rome in 1883, for example, worked to edit and publish important historical documents from the Middle Ages through its series *Rerum italicarum scriptores*, a project in which, again, Carducci was involved.³⁹

³⁵ *Poesie musicali del trecento*, ed. Giuseppe Corsi (Bologna, 1970).

³⁶ Balestracci, *Medioevo e Risorgimento*, 79. On the history of these institutions and their relationship to the birth of the Italian nation, also see *La storia della storia patria: Società, deputazioni e istituti storici nazionali nella costruzione dell'Italia*, ed. Agostino Bistarelli (Rome, 2012).

³⁷ Balestracci, *Medioevo e Risorgimento*, 79.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Also see Porciani, 'Il medioevo'; Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento*, 77–8; and Lyttelton, 'Creating a National Past' (esp. p. 30).

³⁹ Balestracci, *Medioevo e Risorgimento*, 82. The series *Rerum italicarum scriptores*, however, long predates both the Istituto Storico Italiano and the Risorgimento. Originally envisioned by Ludovico Antonio Muratori (an eighteenth-century intellectual, considered today to be the father of Italian historiography), the 25 publications that constitute the first sequence (Serie I) date from the first half of the eighteenth century.

Like historians, Italian literary scholars mythologized the autonomy and the democratic nature of the peninsula's medieval *comuni*, valorizing the literature associated with them as uniquely and distinctly Italian. With its origins rooted firmly in Provençal courtly love poetry (a point to which I shall return later), Italian literature needed, from the start, to free itself from subject matter and style that ran contrary to the Italian 'spirit'. Francesco De Sanctis, for example, saw the Sicilian school as distinctly non-native, too dependent upon the troubadour tradition and feudal social codes. 'The Sicilian culture', he explained, 'had an original sin. Coming from outside, the chivalric world, mixed with oriental colours and reminiscences, had no connection with Italian life [*la vita nazionale*].'⁴⁰ The true cradle of the Italian literary tradition for De Sanctis was instead Bologna during the second half of the duecento and the work of Guido Guinizelli, which he defines as scientific and philosophical, rather than courtly, in orientation.⁴¹ Carducci, we have seen, was equally concerned with liberating Italian literature from the negative effects of foreign influence. But while De Sanctis sought an Italian 'spirit' in the academic culture of thirteenth-century Bologna, Carducci worked to forge ties between medieval literary culture and ancient Roman civilization. In so doing, he was also tapping into another myth well established in nineteenth-century Italian historical writing, what Antonino De Francesco terms the myth of Italian antiquity – that is, the idea that the Italian nation and its peoples were descendants of, and in a sense heirs to, the great Etruscan and Roman civilizations that once controlled the peninsula.⁴²

Carducci's 'Musica e poesia' is therefore very much a product of its time. The concerns which shape the essay's account of musical poetry in fourteenth-century Italy – the desire to access a national 'spirit' through folk traditions, the need to free Italy's cultural patrimony from foreign influence, and the hope that uncovering and disseminating information about the nation's great medieval and Roman pasts could enhance the long-term viability of political unity – mirror broader nineteenth-century interests in medieval society and literature bound to the construction of national identity both in Italy and throughout Europe. *Poesia per musica* – that is, an autonomous category of poetry created explicitly for music – is essential to his assessment of the ballata and the madrigal, for it stands as a remnant of ancient traditions predating the Italian peninsula's invasion by foreign powers. For Carducci, then, only through music could the true 'spirit' of the Italian *popolo* be recovered.

⁴⁰ 'La coltura siciliana avea un peccato originale. Venuta dal di fuori, quella vita cavalleresca, mescolata di colori e rimembranze orientali, non avearis contro nella vita nazionale.' Francesco De Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura italiana* (1870–1), ed. Benedetto Croce, 2 vols. (Bari, 1954), i, 11. Quoted and discussed in Scott Sims Millspaugh, 'Sermo absentium: Rhetoric, Epistolary, and the Emergence of Italian Literary Culture' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2013), 3, 96–107.

⁴¹ De Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. Croce, 27. Discussed in Millspaugh, 'Sermo absentium', 3.

⁴² Antonino De Francesco, *The Antiquity of the Italian Nation: The Cultural Origins of a Political Myth in Modern Italy, 1796–1943* (Oxford, 2013).

Vincenzo De Bartholomaeis, Aurelio Roncaglia and the 'divorce' between music and poetry

Carducci's search for *italianità* thus led him away from the peninsula's literary canon, away from the tradition of *poesia aulica* ('high-art' poetry) and towards the world of 'popular' poetry – a world whose claims to natural simplicity depended upon the presence of music. Implicit in his argument is music's exclusion from the realm of *poesia aulica*. While Carducci leaves this idea unexplored, it becomes a salient point in later scholarship on medieval Italian literature, especially scholarship pertaining to the origins of Italian 'high-art' poetry at the court of Federico II in Sicily during the first half of the thirteenth century. Like Carducci, the scholars to whom we now turn – De Bartholomaeis and Roncaglia – work to extricate the nation's literary heritage from the grasps of foreign influence and identify uniquely Italian characteristics in the repertory on which they focus. Centred not on 'popular' traditions but on the origins of the Italian literary canon, their search for *italianità* prizes writing over performance, artifice over naturalness and words over melody. Consequently, Italianness becomes bound not to music's presence but instead to its absence.

De Bartholomaeis was born in Abruzzo in 1867, during the Risorgimento's final stages, as Garibaldi struggled to capture Rome. He studied Italian literature at the University of Rome (La Sapienza) during the final years of the nineteenth century under the tutelage of Ernesto Monaci (1844–1918), one of Italy's most influential early Romance philologists. Monaci (a contemporary of Carducci) was very much influenced by the patriotic fervour the Risorgimento inspired, and worked to trace Italy's cultural heritage all the way back to ancient Rome.⁴³ Like his mentor, De Bartholomaeis would himself become a leader in the burgeoning field of Italian philology. One of the founders of the Società Filologica Romana in 1901, he was appointed professor of romance philology (Storia Comparata delle Letterature Neolatine) at the University of Genoa in 1904 and subsequently followed in Carducci's footsteps as professor at the University of Bologna in 1908.⁴⁴ He was active as a scholar until his death in 1953, and published widely on medieval Italian and Provençal literature and its manuscript traditions. His seminal monographs – *Origini della poesia drammatica italiana* (1924), *Poesie provenzali storiche relative all'Italia* (1931) and *Primordi della lirica d'arte in Italia* (1943) – remain even today important points of reference for the study of medieval Italian literary culture.⁴⁵ *Primordi della lirica d'arte in Italia*, which I shall discuss in detail below, stands as the first extensive monograph study of the

⁴³ Finotti, 'Il metodo storico', 242.

⁴⁴ Francesco Zimei, introduction to Vincenzo De Bartholomaeis, *Origini della poesia drammatica italiana* (Lucca, 2009), vii–xii (pp. ix–x). For biographical information on De Bartholomaeis, also see Carlo De Matteis, 'Vincenzo De Bartholomaeis filologo e storico della letteratura', *Critica letteraria*, 33 (2005), 137–52.

⁴⁵ Indeed, the recent reprinting (in 2009) by Libreria Musicale Italiana of De Bartholomaeis's *Origini della poesia drammatica italiana* shows the continued import of the philologist's work.

earliest vernacular literature to be read, recited, copied and written in Italy. In it, De Bartholomaeis explores not only the origins of Italian-language poetry in the Sicilian school but also the vast production and circulation of troubadour lyric in Italy during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Seeking to set Italian lyric poetry apart from the Provençal tradition out of which it grew, De Bartholomaeis locates the Sicilian school's novelty and its *italianità* in what he perceives to be an unprecedented divorce between music and poetry.

Published in 1943, *Primordi della lirica d'arte in Italia* was written during a time when the new Italian nation – whose birth Carducci had witnessed less than 100 years before – saw its unity, independence and cultural identity tested and threatened. In July 1943, when the Allied forces landed in Sicily and Mussolini was expelled from office, the country was ravaged with violence, torn apart by what essentially became a civil war. There can be no doubt that the impact of the war and of Italy's Fascist regime was felt acutely by De Bartholomaeis and his colleagues. Indeed, Carlo Calcaterra, who directed the series in which two of De Bartholomaeis's monographs – *Primordi della lirica d'arte in Italia* and *Origini della poesia drammatica italiana* – were published, dedicated two vivid paragraphs of a letter sent to the philologist in 1945 to the violence and destruction that plagued Italy during the final years of the war:

We passed a very difficult winter, between hidden dangers and poverty, for in September and October of 1944 I took part in the effort to liberate Ossola and, after, with my children I participated in the preparation of the spring rebellion. Suffice it to say: at least we are still alive.

I have been to Bologna. The city is half-destroyed, especially the periphery. But even in the centre the damage is enormous. The stupendous loggia in the courtyard of the Archiginnasio, the church of Santa Maria dei Bulgari, the Teatro Anatomico are gone. So too are other less significant buildings. Walking in the streets, one has a sense of desolation.⁴⁶

De Bartholomaeis himself, meanwhile, was an anti-Fascist and one of the 41 Italian writers and scholars to sign Benedetto Croce's famous response to Giovanni Gentile's 1925 *Manifesto of Fascist Intellectuals*.⁴⁷

Born in 1917, Roncaglia graduated with a degree in philology from the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa in 1939, where pride in Carducci – one of the school's most

⁴⁶ 'Noi abbiamo passato un inverno durissimo, tra insidie e strettezze, perché nel settembre e nell'ottobre del 1944 avevo preso parte al moto per la liberazione dell'Ossola e poi con le mie figliuole partecipai alla preparazione della riscossa primaverile. Ci basta dire: siamo vivi.

Sono stato a Bologna. La città è semidistrutta, specialmente alla periferia. Ma anche nel centro i danni sono stati ingenti. Il loggiato stupendo nel cortile dell'Archiginnasio, la chiesetta dei Bulgari, il Teatro Anatomico sono scoparsi. Così altri edifici insigni. Chi va per le vie ha un senso di desolazione.' Quoted in Giovanni Brescia, 'L'ultimo "rifugio" di Vincenzo De Bartholomaeis', *Archivio storico pugliese*, 29 (1976), 335–42 (p. 339), and Zimei, introduction to De Bartholomaeis, *Origini della poesia drammatica italiana*, viii.

⁴⁷ Zimei, introduction to De Bartholomaeis, *Origini della poesia drammatica italiana*, ix. Also see Brescia, 'L'ultimo "rifugio"', 336.

famous pupils – was, and still is, great. He went on to receive a graduate certificate from the University of Rome's Istituto di Filologia Romanza in 1940. Although unable for financial reasons to pursue further graduate study formally, Roncaglia continued to foster his interest in philology, receiving guidance from Giulio Bertoni, for whom he worked at the office of the Vocabolario della Lingua Italiana in Rome, and from Michele Barbi.⁴⁸ Bertoni, in particular, made a lasting impact on Roncaglia and his career. Roncaglia was still at high school when he was introduced to the scholar at the Biblioteca Estense by his father, Giulio (a musicologist who studied Verdi, Rossini and musical life in Modena). He would later recall that his early interactions with Bertoni marked the beginning of his scholarly training.⁴⁹ Roncaglia ultimately went on to become a leader in the field of Romance philology, teaching at the University of Pavia from 1954 to 1956 and at La Sapienza in Rome from 1956 to 1987.⁵⁰ Although he is primarily known for his work on the troubadour tradition, the dissertation he completed at the Scuola Normale was on Boccaccio's *Fiammetta*. Roncaglia remained interested throughout his career in medieval Italian literature, especially in the Sicilian school and the origins of the Italian lyric tradition, an interest that, as for De Bartholomaeis, emerged as a natural outgrowth of his work on Provençal poetry.

Having graduated from the Scuola Normale in November 1939, Roncaglia embarked on his career just months after Germany had invaded Poland, leaving a reluctant Italy on the brink of war. And when he accepted the post at the University of Pavia in 1954, only nine years had passed since the end of the Second World War, and Italy was still struggling to recover – physically, economically and psychologically – from both the war itself and the damage wrought by Fascism. The social and political climate in Italy during Roncaglia's formative years – the same period during which De Bartholomaeis was at work on his *Primordi della lirica d'arte in Italia* – was thus drastically different from what it had been during Carducci's life (and, indeed, was constantly in flux). Yet although Fascism left the country weary of nationalist rhetoric, the question of national identity remains palpable in De Bartholomaeis's and Roncaglia's work on the Sicilian school.⁵¹ In fact, I shall argue that it is central to their conception of that tradition and its relationship (or rather lack thereof) to music.

That the construction of Italian national identity lies at the heart of *Primordi della lirica d'arte in Italia* is clear from the outset. De Bartholomaeis not only identifies

⁴⁸ Alfredo Stussi, 'La filologia italiana di Aurelio Roncaglia', *Aurelio Roncaglia e la filologia romanza: Convegno internazionale (Roma, 8 marzo 2012)*, Atti dei Convegni Lincei, 273 (Rome, 2013), 61–74 (pp. 65–6).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 62–6.

⁵¹ On the continued relevance of the question of national identity in Italy during the second half of the twentieth century, especially in the public sphere, see Silvana Patriarca, 'National Identity or National Character? New Vocabularies and Old Paradigms', *Making and Remaking Italy*, ed. Ascoli and von Henneberg, 299–320, and Patriarca, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic* (Cambridge, 2010).

the Sicilian school as the foundation of Italy's literary canon, he also recognizes the Italian lyric tradition (embodied by the canzone) as stylistically unique and artistically brilliant. The last decades of the twelfth century and the whole of the thirteenth, De Bartholomaeis explains, marked the beginning of a tradition of 'art poetry, aristocratic and subjective, in *our country*' (i.e. Italy) – a time

during which the structure of the canzone, which Dante would later recognize as standard, was definitively fixed, in which *the brilliant Italian lyric* found the form suited to its own expression, and in which it would reach its zenith with the poets of the *stil nuovo* and with Francesco Petrarca.⁵²

De Bartholomaeis's use of the first person plural in this passage is particularly significant, for it bespeaks his personal investment in the communal identity his work constructs: the study's subject is not merely Italy, it is *his* country and that of his readers as well. It is worth noting, too, that De Bartholomaeis is far from the only Italian philologist to make the peninsula's literary heritage a matter of personal as well as national identity by employing the first person possessive in this manner. *Our* tradition, *our* language, *our* poetry and *our* country are all explicitly the subject of Gianfranco Contini's, Folena's and Roncaglia's writing on the Sicilian school as well.⁵³ And it is from this personalized realm of *our* tradition and *our* literature that music becomes overtly excluded.

In the second section of *Primordi della lirica d'arte in Italia*, which discusses poetic production at the court of Federico II, De Bartholomaeis again emphasizes the centrality of the Sicilian school to his view of the Italian literary canon.⁵⁴ With this tradition, he explains, 'We are at the gates of Italy's Parnassus: at the origins of her great national art.'⁵⁵ Carrying on to discuss how the Italian canzone is both different

⁵² 'Il periodo iniziale questo dell'arte lirica, aristocratica e soggettiva, nel *nostro paese*, quello durante il quale venne definitivamente fissata la struttura della canzone che Dante chiamerà regolare, nella *quale il genio lirico italiano* trovò la forma adatta alla propria espressione, e in cui attingerà le mete supreme co' poeti dello stil novo e con Francesco Petrarca.' Vincenzo De Bartholomaeis, *Primordi della lirica d'arte in Italia* (Turin, 1943), vii (emphasis added).

⁵³ See Folena, 'Cultura e poesia dei Siciliani', 293 ('nostra letteratura poetica'); Gianfranco Contini, 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca', *Varianti e altra linguistica* (Turin, 1970), 169–92 (p. 170; 'nostra tradizione'); and Aurelio Roncaglia, 'Per il 750° anniversario della scuola poetica siciliana', *Atti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei: Rendiconti della classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, ser. 8, 38 (1983), 321–33 (p. 322; 'la tradizione canonica della nostra lirica d'arte').

⁵⁴ The idea that the Sicilian school stands as the foundation of the Italian lyric tradition was and still is widely accepted. See, for example, Folena, 'Cultura e poesia dei Siciliani'; Furio Brugnolo, 'La scuola poetica siciliana', *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. Enrico Malato, 14 vols. (Rome, 1995–2004), i, 265–338; Jonathan Usher, 'Origins and Duecento', *Cambridge History of Italian Literature* (Cambridge, 1997), 1–36.

⁵⁵ 'Siamo alle porte del Parnaso italiano: alle fonti della grande arte nazionale.' De Bartholomaeis, *Primordi della lirica d'arte in Italia*, 120.

from and superior to the Provençal canso (a point to which I shall return shortly), he concludes:

The appearance of the standard Italian canzone signals, in any case, the beginning of our cult of form, of the search for subtlety, of expressive discipline, of the use of the most studied techniques and stylistic devices, resulting from a new aspiration in this nascent art to move towards something more elevated in the ideals of its customs and life. This is chiefly the merit of our earliest versifiers. It is they who created *an aristocratic art, a national art*, they who gave a concrete form to *Italian* poetic thought.⁵⁶

In short, De Bartholomaeis's concern for the issue of national identity is overt here. Not only does he identify the poets active in the court of Federico II as the progenitors of the Italian lyric canon, he detects in their poetry the source of its greatness – that is, the kernels of the stylistic refinement and high degree of expressivity achieved by the likes of Dante and Petrarch. Making such linguistic refinement and expressivity possible, we shall soon see, was this poetry's new liberation from music.

Positioning the Sicilian school as the foundation of Italy's national literary heritage was not without its problems, however. Given its heavy reliance upon the troubadour tradition and its association with a court in which foreign influence – from northern Europe (via the House of Hohenstaufen) and from the Arabic world – abounded, the Sicilian school's *italianità* was far from self-evident. Indeed, as we have already seen, Francesco De Sanctis, who authored the first comprehensive history of Italian literature, treated the Sicilian school as something of a false start, instead locating the seeds of Italy's literary canon in the work of Guinizelli. Like De Sanctis and Carducci too, De Bartholomaeis was very much concerned with the issue of foreign influence and worked to liberate the nation's literary heritage from its grasp. While De Sanctis sought to write off the Sicilian school as not truly Italian, De Bartholomaeis aimed to elucidate the ways in which that tradition both departed from and surpassed the poetry of the troubadours that served as its inspiration, describing Provençal lyric tradition as a *tramonto* (sunset) and the work of the Sicilian poets as an *alba* (sunrise).⁵⁷ It is on the idea of a 'divorce' between music and poetry that his argument hinges.

For De Bartholomaeis, the crucial difference between early Italian lyric and the poetry of the troubadours lay in their respective relationships with music, which engendered different approaches to form and metre. 'If the Italians, on the one hand,

⁵⁶ 'L'apparizione della canzone regolare italiana segna, comunque, l'inizio del culto della forma fra noi, della ricerca della finezza, della castigatezza espressiva, dell'impiego de' più studiati artifizi ed accorgimenti stilistici, dovuti ad una nuova aspirazione dell'arte incipiente verso qualcosa di più elevato nell'ideale del costume e della vita. Questo principalmente il merito de' nostri più antichi versificatori. Sono essi che han creato *l'arte aristocratica, l'arte Nazionale*, che han dato una forma concreta al pensiero lirico *italiano*.' De Bartholomaeis, *Primordi della lirica d'arte in Italia*, 146 (emphasis added).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, vii.

were compelled to accept words, formulae and the virtuosity of each genre from the Provençal [poets],’ he writes,

they did not, on the other hand, feel the need also to adopt their metric scheme; and that for the simple fact that this [metric scheme] corresponded to a melodic scheme to which they were indifferent, given that their poetry – solemn poetry – was not destined for singing.⁵⁸

In other words, no longer hindered by melody, which had constrained their Provençal predecessors, Italian poets were free to explore new avenues in terms of poetic form and structure. In particular, De Bartholomaeis notes the canzone’s formal departure from the Provençal canso in its new bipartite (rather than tripartite) division of the stanza. In its new symmetry, the stanza of the Italian canzone is, he states, ‘a perfect organism, a complete, harmonious, and inalterable architecture’,⁵⁹ whose beauty, solemnity and Italianness stem directly from poetry’s new-found freedom from melody.

Taking De Bartholomaeis’s monograph as a point of departure, Roncaglia explored in greater detail the idea of a ‘divorce’ between music and poetry in two conference presentations (later published) during the late 1970s and early 1980s.⁶⁰ As Agostino Ziino and Maria Sofia Lannutti have emphasized, Roncaglia does not advocate a full divorce between the world of poetry and the world of music in the Italian tradition.⁶¹ Rather, he describes a separation in terms of creation but not necessarily in terms of performance or presentation, explaining that unlike the troubadours, the poets of the Sicilian school were purely literary authors who left the composition of song and its performance to specialized musicians. This new division of labour, Roncaglia suggests, resulted from a change in the prevailing social class of poets that brought with it new modes of education. Troubadour poetry, he says, was primarily composed and sung by nobles, who received a church-based education involving music as well

⁵⁸ ‘Gli Italiani se, da un lato, eran condotti ad accettare da’ Provenzali parole, formule e virtuosità di ogni genere, non sentivano, dall’altro, la necessità di adottarne anche lo schema metrico, e ciò per il semplice fatto che questo corrispondeva ad uno schema melodico ad essi del tutto indifferente, dato che la poesia loro, poesia togata, non era destinata al canto.’ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁵⁹ ‘La stanza di canzone italiana è un organismo perfetto, una architettura compiuta, armonica, inalterabile.’ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ The first and better-known essay was presented in 1975 at the third international congress hosted by the Centro di Studi sull’Ars Nova Italiana del Trecento in Certaldo: Aurelio Roncaglia, ‘Sul “divorzio tra musica e poesia” nel duecento italiano’, *L’Ars nova italiana del trecento* 4, ed. Agostino Ziino (Certaldo, 1978), 365–97. The second was presented at a meeting of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei in November 1983: ‘Per il 750° anniversario della scuola poetica siciliana’.

⁶¹ Agostino Ziino, ‘Rime per musica e danza’, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. Malato, ii (1995), 455–529 (p. 456), and Maria Sofia Lannutti, ‘Poesia cantata, musica scritta: Generi e registri di ascendenza francese alle origini della lirica italiana (con una nuova edizione di RS 409)’, *Tracce di una tradizione sommersa: I primi testi lirici italiani tra poesia e musica*, ed. Maria Sofia Lannutti and Massimiliano Locanto (Florence, 2005), 157–97 (p. 161).

as grammar. In contrast, the poets of the Sicilian school were notaries and chancellors educated through lay institutions where grammatical instruction dominated and musical instruction (he claims) was nearly if not entirely absent.⁶²

By arguing that a new relationship between music and text defines the Italian lyric tradition, Roncaglia – like De Bartholomaeis – portrays his national literature as innovative, unique and artistically superior to earlier, foreign traditions.⁶³ ‘In the place of melodic-verbal complexity,’ he states, ‘the Sicilians substitute an intensity of pure verbal invention where everything is concentrated on the words’ merit.’⁶⁴ Poetic artistry, that is to say, would be restricted by the presence of melody. Elsewhere he elaborates further:

On the part of the Notary [i.e. Giacomo da Lentini] (who disregarded music, with the goal of a purely literary composition), we are dealing with an extremely remarkable attempt at verbal virtuosity, a true technical *tour de force*, which – by creating an entirely new lattice, much tighter in terms of relationships and structural links between words – leads to a luminous victory over the habitual entropy of traditions. The structure of the canzone is radically reinvented: its semantic essence and its expressive values are recomposed and crystallized into a new form, equipped with superior symmetry.⁶⁵

The ingenuity, and superior beauty, of form that Giacomo da Lentini’s poetry displays, in other words, is a direct result of the poet’s choice to abandon music. Explicitly

⁶² Roncaglia, ‘Sul “divorzio tra musica e poesia”’, esp. pp. 383–4. As Nino Pirrotta has pointed out, Roncaglia’s discussion of the role of music in medieval education is insufficiently nuanced. In particular, it overlooks the fact that the study of music in medieval universities throughout Europe, as part of the quadrivium, was essentially an academic (mathematical and philosophical) endeavour rather than a practical one. See Pirrotta, ‘I poeti della scuola siciliana e la musica’, *Yearbook of Italian Studies*, 4 (1980), 5–12 (esp. pp. 8–9).

⁶³ Similar observations have been made by both Nino Pirrotta and Maria Sofia Lannutti. See Pirrotta, ‘I poeti della scuola siciliana’, 6, and Lannutti, ‘Poesia cantata, musica scritta’, 161. Pirrotta, for example, writes that the opinion of Roncaglia and others working on the poetry of the Sicilian school is dominated by ‘the consideration of the subsequent path of Italian poetry, which over the course of only a few decades would lead to the poetry of Dante and Petrarch, and by a philological impulse to distinguish and separate that poetry from any intrusion of non-poetic values’ (‘dalla considerazione del successivo corso della poesia italiana che avrebbe portato nel giro di pochi decenni alla poesia di Dante e di Petrarca, e da un filologico impulso a distinguere e separare tale poesia da ogni intrusione di valori che non siano quelli poetici’).

⁶⁴ ‘Alla complessità dell’invenzione melodico-verbale, i siciliani sostituiscono l’intensità d’un’invenzione puramente verbale, tutta concentrata sui valori della parola.’ Roncaglia, ‘Sul “divorzio tra musica e poesia”’, 391.

⁶⁵ ‘Da parte del Notaro (che prescindeva dalla musica, avendo mira a una composizione puramente letteraria) si tratta d’una prova notevolissima di virtuosità verbale, d’un vero “tour de force” tecnico, che – creando un reticolo del tutto nuovo e assai più stretto di rapporti e legami strutturali tra le parole – consegue una luminosa vittoria sull’entropia abituale alle traduzioni. L’impianto formale della canzone è radicalmente reinventato; la sua sostanza semantica e i suoi valori espressivi sono ricomposti e cristallizzati in una forma nuova, dotata d’un ordine superiore di simmetria.’ Roncaglia, ‘Per il 750° anniversario della scuola poetica siciliana’, 323.

acknowledging the link between the idea of divorce and a teleological, evolutionary view of Italian literary history, Roncaglia goes on to state:

The new characteristics introduced by the Sicilian School – in particular the fracturing of the innate unity between poetry and music (of *motz and sons*), with the reward of a formal creativity fully concentrated on the verbal aspect of the composition – are the foundation of the entire tradition developed after, from the Sicilians to the *Stilnovisti*, and from them to Petrarch and Petrarchism (which restored the poetry of troubadours to all of Europe). *The new tradition is wholly literary*, we might even say ‘bookish’. And this term ‘bookish’, assumed without any negative connotation, in its etymological and objective sense, seems all the more appropriate, when one proves that (as seems inevitable) the first impulse for this change came precisely from a book: a *canzoniere*.⁶⁶

Roncaglia and De Bartholomaeis thus tie the *italianità* of the entire Italian literary canon to the absence of music. Moreover, for both scholars the Sicilian school’s claims to both novelty and literary greatness hinge not only on its autonomy from music but also on its marriage to writing – its ‘bookishness’. Indeed, Giacomo’s *Madonna, dirvo voglio*, which Roncaglia describes as an artful reworking (rather than merely a translation) of Folquet de Romans’s *A vos, midonz, voill retair’encantan*, would be ‘inconceivable’, Roncaglia writes, if he ‘had not had a written text under his eyes as a model. Simply listening to the song of a *giullare* would not be enough.’⁶⁷ What is more, this written model cannot have been an isolated transcription on a loose folio. Giacomo, Roncaglia concludes, must have had a full manuscript – a *canzoniere* – at his disposal. Both Roncaglia and De Bartholomaeis, as philologists whose research focused primarily on the troubadour tradition, were of course well aware that the *canzoniere* was by no means a purely Italian invention – the physical instantiation of Folquet’s *canso* is as essential here as that of Giacomo’s *canzone*. And yet the ‘bookishness’ of the Sicilian school is nevertheless intimately bound up with the issue of national identity. Italianness for both scholars is dependent on the idea of artistic progress that could be achieved only through recourse to the written medium, on a teleology that portrays the celebrated work of Dante and Petrarch as a logical culmination of an exclusively Italian tradition rather than an isolated instance of poetic virtuosity.

⁶⁶ ‘I caratteri nuovi introdotti dalla Scuola Siciliana – in particolare la rottura dell’unità nativa di poesia e musica (di *motz e sons*), con il compenso d’una creatività formale tutta concentrata sull’aspetto verbale della composizione – sono alla base di tutta la tradizione sviluppasti poi, dai Siciliani agli *Stilnovisti*, e da questi a Petrarca e al Petrarchismo (che restituisce la lezione dei trovatori a tutta l’Europa). *La nuova tradizione è tutta letteraria*, diciamo pure “libresca”. E questo termine “libresca”, assunto senz’alcuna connotazione negativa, nel suo senso etimologico ed oggettivo, parrà tanto più giusto, quando si constati (come sembra inevitabile) che il primo impulse alla svoltavenne appunto da un libro: un *canzoniere*.’ *Ibid.*, 333 (emphasis added).

⁶⁷ ‘Il lavoro di traduzione-rielaborazione che Giacomo da Lentino ha compiuto sulla canzone di Folchetto sarebbe tecnicamente inconcepibile se Giacomo non avesse avuto sotto gli occhi un testo scritto de suo modello. Una semplice audizione dal canto d’un *giullare* non sarebbe bastata.’ *Ibid.*, 323–4.

Straddling the divide between two partially conflicting agendas (that of uniting disparate communities through a shared ‘national spirit’ and that of constructing for Italy an illustrious literary heritage), music thus comes to assume a vital role in defining that which is Italian about Italian literature. The existence of an autonomous category of ‘musical’ poetry is essential to Carducci’s vision of a uniquely Italian literary and cultural heritage, a heritage whose national identity is tied up in its association with ancient Rome and with the Italian *popolo*. As I argued above, the lofty, artfully crafted lyrics of poets like Dante and Petrarch were, for Carducci, too heavily influenced by other high-art traditions from north of the Alps to represent a direct connection to Italy’s great Roman past. Needing to turn elsewhere for true Italianness, therefore, he employed instead the corpus of trecento song texts as the primary protagonist in his mission to define and promote a native literary tradition for the young Italian nation, precisely because the musicality of these poems marked them and their literary ancestors as being ‘of the people’. Even though he could not ignore the clear intersections between song texts and the tradition of *poesia aulica*, Carducci was ideologically invested in the idea of *poesia per musica* as a distinct and fundamentally musical genre. Somewhat paradoxically, part of this poetry’s value is also found in its ability to mediate between ‘high’ and ‘low’ traditions. With a foot in both camps, madrigals and ballate are able to assist in uniting the whole of Italian literary production into a single tradition whose authority, cultural prestige and ‘nativeness’ lie in its verifiable and direct bond with ancient Rome. The poets of the Sicilian school were, in the words of De Bartholomaeis, ‘people of superior culture’ (‘persone di cultura superiore’) who produced ‘aristocratic poetry’ destined for reading not singing or recitation, ‘poetry offered to the judgment of culturally refined, exacting men, in short, poetry belonging to men of the pen, not [men] of the lute’.⁶⁸ Their work thus shines as Romance vernacular lyric’s first true written tradition, a tradition whose artistic merit depends on its new-found freedom from the realm of performance, oral transmission and thus music.

ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of music in nineteenth- and twentieth-century accounts of medieval Italian literature and its relation to the construction of Italian national identity both during and long after the Risorgimento. Tracing music’s role in the writings of Giosuè Carducci, Vincenzo De Bartholomaeis and Aurelio Roncaglia, it argues that music somewhat paradoxically became entangled with Italy’s literary identity even as scholars worked to extricate the peninsula’s most renowned poetry from its grasp. In the realm of ‘popular’ poetry, Italianness depends on the presence of music, which serves as a marker of that poetry’s popular origins. In contrast, music’s absence from the realm of ‘high-art’ poetry was essential to the construction of an Italian tradition independent of and superior to its French and Provençal predecessors.

⁶⁸ ‘Persone di cultura superiore, la loro è poesia aristocratica: poesia offerta al giudizio di gente di cultura raffinata, esigente: opera, in una parola, di uomini da penna, non da liuto.’ De Bartholomaeis, *Primordi della lirica d’arte in Italia*, 121.