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Gender Stereotypes and Interpretative Paradigms in the Neapolitan Song. Two Case Studies

Abstract: The Neapolitan song is a music repertoire symbolising a large community throughout the centuries, and at the same time, a very interesting field of investigation for analytical studies going beyond musical elements and involving questions of cultural practices. This essay takes into consideration the Neapolitan song, in the early 20th century, to highlight two analytical categories, on one side sociological and on the other side aesthetic, that concern gender stereotypes and interpretative paradigms. Discussing two case studies, this reflection examines two songs composed by Evemero Nardella (1878-1950), *Surdate* (1910) “soldier”, lyrics by Libero Bovio, and *Mmiez’ o ggrano* (1909), lyrics by Eduardo Nicolardi, dealing with a scene taking place “in the middle of the wheat”. The focus on gender stereotypes is based on the texts of these songs, to underline both male and female preconceived ideas, as well as the interpretative paradigms, considering the recordings of the same songs, with a wide range of interpretations available online. Methodologically, this analysis promotes an epistemic-aesthetic reconstruction of the Neapolitan song as a cultural object, including both lyrics and performances, and tries to answer the following questions: *In the lyrics, which kind of elements point out gender stereotypes? Which kind of rhetorical strategy allows fluidity in interpretative practices? What relates gender to stereotypes and interpretative paradigms?*

Keywords: Neapolitan song, early 20th century, gender stereotypes, interpretative paradigms, performativity.

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Introduction

This paper, which focuses on the Neapolitan song in the early 20th century, aims to create a dialogue between two analytical categories, one of a sociological orientation (Hentschel et al., 2019; Lindsey, 2016; Shibley Hyde, 2013; Gilligan, 1982) and the other of an aesthetic one (Krinms, 2003; McCormic, 1990; Narmour, 1988), in order to address gender stereotypes and interpretative paradigms, and to articulate an epistemic-aesthetic reconstruction of the song within the framework of Cultural Studies. Born in Great Britain, Cultural Studies engages with popular culture (Moore, 2003, 2012; Prasad, 2018; Storey, 2021) as an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach capable of challenging the Western canon questioning the rigid division between fields of knowledge and moving beyond traditional disciplines by incorporating other discourses, to analyse and evaluate the hierarchies that separate the so-called high culture from the Culture of Others (Fabian, 1983; Clifford, 1988; Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1997).

Within this conceptual framework, focusing on gender stereotypes and interpretative paradigms allows us to consider the Neapolitan song as a cultural object composed of an organised set of signs, to which variable meanings (Conti, 2013b) are attributed depending on history, context, and modes of reception. This approach opens the song to both a sociological reading and a performance-based analysis, since, as a performative act, the Neapolitan song always involves interpretation, which constitutes not only its essence but also the foundation of most of the processes in which it is embedded. Like other cultural objects, especially those within popular music (Middleton, 1990, 1993; Tagg, 2000), Neapolitan song serves as a field of questioning, re-articulating and verifying identity, both individual and collective (Moore, 2005).

Background

The Neapolitan song, based on published sources from the first twenty years of the 19th century, can be divided into three periods. The first (1824–1860) begins with the collections of songs published by Guillaume Cottrau (Conti, 2013c), which were strongly influenced by the oral music tradition. The second corresponds to the so-called Neapolitan classical song – more accurately described as “authorial” – since both the composers and lyricists were well known. This period features a variety of forms inherited from the 19th-century repertoire and a broad range of themes (Conti, 2013a; 2014), primarily love stories and depictions of the Neapolitan landscape. The third period, beginning after the Second World War, is characterised by increasing connections between the Neapolitan song and various international repertoires, due to the economic dynamics of production, recording, and distribution (Fulcher, 2003; Santoro, 2009; Di

Mauro, 2010; Pistelli, 2013; Vacca, 2013). In such a complex landscape, though not systematically explored in cultural discourse across the 19th and 20th centuries, the juxtaposition of communal characteristics and musical elements already appears in some contemporary accounts, such as that of Matilde Serao, who wrote that in a song:

(...) one finds the multifaceted spirit of a people; it is joyful, lively, with a cheerful refrain, with hasty and rapid jokes; and melancholic, with long and cadenced notes, with a sad thought that reappears every now and then; sometimes it is burlesque, one hears the crackling of sarcasm and the whistle of irony, and finally, with deep and unconscious philosophy, it often combines sorrowful words with a brilliant motif. a lament, a laugh, a sneer, a kiss; the expression of a moment, the lasting representation of a very rapid feeling [...] It almost always speaks of love [...] love that donates equally a carnation flower and a razor stroke.

(Matilde Serao, *Dal vero*, Milano: Perussia e Quadrio, 1879: 14–15)

The observations made by Matilde Serao resonated at the time, as the work in which they are included, *Dal vero*, was first published in 1879 and subsequently revised with modifications in 1883 and 1890. The work was widely distributed, also thanks to her fame as the first woman to found a newspaper in Italy.

Although her view did not contribute to exposing gender stereotypes in contemporary culture, where one could “donate equally a carnation flower and a razor stroke”, this is partly because Matilde Serao did not participate in the debate on collective female action (De Nunzio Schilardi, 1983; Abbondante, 2017). In fact, she opposed the participation of women in Italian political life and, with the onset of the First World War, openly criticised women. In fact, in her *Les florifères*, she tells of some French women who had given up becoming mothers because they had failed “in the great duty, the great pleasure of being mothers, mothers, mothers, that is, donors of children, of boys, of men to the homeland” (Serao, 1916:135). These elements can be considered as distinctive traits showing her adherence to the then current cultural orientation as a result of a rigid, conformist and authoritarian society, such as the Italian one of those years, of which the Neapolitan song was testimony even beyond the national borders, mostly due to the Italian emigration to the United States which contributed strongly to the creation of the Neapolitan Song as a transnational genre.

Focus on gender stereotypes and interpretative paradigms: two case studies

My reflection aims to inquire into the complexity of a phenomenon in which these clichés are reflected in a dynamic of repetition, to the point of defining their “normalisation” and, therefore, also the deviation from this norm, a deviation which in turn determines repetition and normalisation as well. To this end, I consider two case studies, since these connections and mutual references, between gender stereotypes and interpretative paradigms, are emphasised in the music production of Evemero Nardella, on the texts of various authors (Liberio Bovio, Ernesto Murolo, Eduardo Nicolardi, and Rocco Galdieri).

Evemero Nardella (1878–1950) was an Italian singer and composer. He studied in Naples at the Conservatory of Music “S. Pietro a Majella”, under the guidance of Giuseppe Martucci, Paolo Serrao, and Camillo De Nardis, obtaining two diplomas in singing and composition. His most famous songs, specially owing to the Piedigrotta festival (Russo, 1993; Paliotti, 1996; De Simone, 2003) are: *Surdate*, *Chiove*, *A furastera*, *O Paese 'e Maria*, *Ammore 'e femmena*, *Buonasera ammore*, *Che t'aggia di*, *Miezzo 'o ggrano*, *Matenata*, *Te si' scurdate 'e Napule*, *Suspiranno*, *Carulì*, *Canto p' a' luna*, *Vernata*, *Addo' ce miette o' musso*, *Margarita*, *Senza sole*, *L'ammore nun se cagna*, *Vocche desiderose*, *Questa donna chi è*, *Catena*, *Bella ca duorme*, *Gira lu munno*. Here I consider two songs by Nardella: *Surdate*, lyrics by Liberio Bovio (Casa Musicale Raffaele Izzo, 1910) and *Mmiez' 'o grano*, lyrics by Eduardo Nicolardi (Casa Musicale Raffaele Izzo, 1909).

Son of the philosopher Giovanni and grandson of Liberio Corso, lawyer, university professor and journalist, Liberio Bovio (1883–1942) was a well-known writer, journalist, playwright (*Gente nostra*, *O prufessore*, *O Macchiettista*), poet and author of the verses of famous Neapolitan songs also with dramatic tones, such as: *Lacreme napoletane*, *Carcere*, *E figlie*, *Zappatore*, *Guapparia*. He achieved his first success in 1910 with *Surdate* and in 1934 founded a music publishing house, La Bottega dei 4, together with Nicola Valente, Ernesto Tagliaferri, and Gaetano Lama.

Journalist, poet, and author of the verses of some of the most famous songs of the Neapolitan popular repertoire of the 20th century, Eduardo Nicolardi (1878–1954) also used the pseudonym of C. O. Lardini. Among his successes: *Voce 'e notte* set to music by Ernesto De Curtis, *Mmiez' o grano*, *Tarantella 'ntusseccosa*, *L'ammore a tre*, *Na palummella janca*, *L'amore passeggero*, *Quanno 'o destinovo*, *Primmo ammore*, *Testamento*, *Surdato 'e Napule*. His lyrics of *Tammurriata nera* deal with the phenomenon of children born from rapes of Neapolitan women by black soldiers, set to music by E. A. Mario, Nicolardi's father-in-law.

According to the two categories identified for this analysis, that of gender stereotypes refers to the concept of the *stereotype*, from the Greek στέρεος (rigid) and τύπος (character), and borrowed from the French neologism *stereotype* coined by the typographer and publisher Firmin Didot for a printing technique he patented in 1795. The term contains two elements: the preconceived idea and the conventional model.

I examine both the preconceived ideas conveyed in the song's lyrics and the conventional models of interpretation found in its recordings, as well as the connection between the two. Stereotypes – simplified representations of reality – find ideal expression in all kinds of songs, not just Neapolitan ones, thanks to the brevity of the medium, typically just a few pages. This conciseness lends itself to both individual and collective appropriation, since, as Lakoff observes, “languages use us as much as we use language. As much as our choice of forms of expression is guided by the thoughts we want to express, to the same extent the way we feel about things in the real world governs the way we express ourselves about these things” (Lakoff, 1973: 45). As the antechamber of prejudice, stereotypes constitute a set of representations attributed, without distinction or verification, to a group of people, assigning the same characteristics to all who belong to that category.-

The analytical exploration of gender stereotypes is linked to the matter of the lyrics of the songs, and it could not be otherwise, considering that the Neapolitan song includes a wide panorama: songs with lyrics in Neapolitan language/dialect; songs in Italian by authors associated with the Neapolitan tradition; translations of Neapolitan songs into various foreign languages. All of these attest to the circulation of its materials and cultural content, which was further promoted through mediums such as illustrated postcards.

The analytical exploration of the interpretative paradigms examines its functioning through a lot of versions of the same song, in fact according to Moore “ [a] starting point is to take account of four positional aspects of the singer's voice” (Moore, 2012: 102) which consist of register, resonant cavity, the attitude towards rhythm, the attitude towards pitch. In the case of the Neapolitan song, due to the presence of performers/singers of various backgrounds, from spontaneous to operatic, it is interesting what Moore says about the register “ [f]irst, in which register is the singer singing? Normally three registers can be conceived a low register, which adds gravity, sensuality or melancholy to a singer's performance, [another] which can be read as ‘normal’ [and finally] high register, whether or not this extends to falsetto, which act can be considered virtuosic, embodying physical effort, carefree, etc., depending on the context” (Moore, 2012: 103). In the case of Neapolitan songs, *falsetto* does not exhaust the range of operatic registers, and the resonance cavity properly pertains to operatic emission.

In the cultural context examined here, Italy in the early 20th century, gender stereotypes – rigidly attesting to binary, cisgender positions, both feminine and masculine ones – are determined by pro-community values in reference to the society to which they belong, since “if we take a quick look at the patriarchal family [in which] the woman takes care of the children, the livestock, prepares the clothes” (Kuliscioff, 1890: 11) there are not many differences between the feminine model of the late 19th century and that of the first decades of the 20th century. Kuliscioff presented her argumentations at the 1890 conference at the Circolo Filologico Milanese, including the famous statement: “one could say with Letourneau that *man’s first domestic animal has been woman*” (Kuliscioff, 1890: 10), referring to *The Evolution of Marriage and of the Family* by Charles Letourneau, published in London in 1900 (*L’évolution du mariage et de la famille*, 1888).

In the demarcation of gender, the traditional female stereotype proposes a model of a woman who is fulfilled in the private sphere and who has a subordinate role with respect to man, while the male model, oriented towards the preservation of community values – honour first and foremost – realises his power in the private sphere over his wife and children, with all the variations of power within the community to which he belongs. The discourse on gender stereotypes – although it can consider only or separately such stereotypes that affect women or men – always reflects the “orchestration” of gender relations, as “each of the two sex-classes supports its own patterns of in-class social relationships” (Goffman, 1977: 305) and therefore in the fixation of a cliché, at the same time, the space for the other one is determined, and so even if both man and woman are understood as woman/wife/mother and man/husband/father, they overcome this fixity in the transgression of the stereotypes themselves; in this case a man and a woman both find themselves in the extramarital affair, so they converge on the figure of faulted role, of single/lover. In the Neapolitan song, as seen through its lyrics, the woman is subjected to a stereotype that lacks a male counterpart and, in a sense, serves as a precursor to deeper and more enduring ones: that of the immature woman – delicate, compliant, never fully autonomous, always a child in need of protection, and therefore incapable of making responsible decisions or acting independently. This stereotype leads to what we might call “stereotype-consequences”: the woman as object – sometimes a “doll,” sometimes a “commodity” more or less exotic – available for male pleasure. Furthermore, the specific female stereotype of the immature doll/woman nevertheless fits fully into the songs that circulated well beyond Neapolitan and Italian borders, without losing in translations that load of meanings typical of gender conventional image of the lovely dolly-girl, that is the following one; since men are not educated to play with dolls, the epilogue is always that they destroy this toy as we find in the Italian

version by Enrico Fanti, *Bambola infranta*, of the song *A Broken Doll*, (recorded by Al Jolson and later by Nora Bayes) written in 1916 with a foxtrot music by James W. Tate and lyrics by Clifford Harris: “You called me baby doll a year ago/ You told me I was very nice to know! [...] / But if you turn away you’ll be sorry someday/ You left behind a broken doll!”. The Italian success was reinforced by the movie with the same title, *Bambola infranta*, directed by Giulio Antamoro in 1919, with Diana Karenne as its female protagonist, which contributed to the international fame that Antamoro had obtained with *Christus*. Another interesting song is *Cara piccina*, published in 1917 (La Canzonetta editions) lyrics by Libero Bovio and music by Gaetano Lama, also translated into French by Didier Gold in *Chère petite*. Beyond the lyrics, it is worth reflecting on an illustrated postcard that, under the title “Dear Little Girl” and the caption “Verses by Libero Bovio, Music by Gaetano Lama”, features a drawing of a building labeled “The Haude of Love” from which three naked young women emerge. Now, because attributing meaning and value to iconography (Burke, 2001) is crucial to re-constructing the cultural history of a song, the image of a brothel, where women are raised for male pleasure, is much stronger than many words to affirm gender stereotypes that have an impact on individuals and the collective. Since the communication that fuels gender stereotypes always reaches both male and female audiences – within that “orchestration of gender relations” – an “ironic and critical attitude of Italian men towards the few women organizers, lecturers, [and] writers on social issues” (Labriola, 1918: 56–57) is often expressed. This is evident in caricatures published in sources such as GEC (1942), which depict women with awkward, disproportionate bodies, seated at desks, or shown as neglectful mothers whose children suffer or are put in danger. Similar illustrations portray women in political demonstrations or debates, alongside sketches of men doing housework or depicted as mistreated husbands. In fact, being devoid of reason, how could women have the faculty of judgment if they are “so many little heart-stealing heads”? As in the lyrics of *Lo shimmy de le stelle* (S. N. Tortora and Nardella, 1925), a song recorded by Gilda Mignonette and also sung by Anna Fougès. Women are objects of desire, sex objects in *Il tango delle geisha*, which rhythmically is a habanera, having nothing in common with tango, written by Tortora and Lama (La Canzonetta, 1927). Here, the commodification of the female body with the aggravating racist distortion towards oriental women, and the absence of a boundary between consent and violation, are evident and feed the stereotype of the woman-object, which still includes the woman-doll:

From the ports of Japan / in droves come forth / the perfumed Geishas of love. Oh sweet little steps / Of birds in flight / Chirping a little / They go and often, in silence, slowly, / the Musmé sing. Silk dolls. Trinkets of the heart/ Light as fragile biscuits, We are of love, We are of mystery/ The little toys of pleasure (*Il tango delle geisha / musica di Gaetano Lama; versi di S. N. Tortora, Napoli, La Canzonetta 1927*).

Therefore, gender stereotypes serve the dominant culture not only by offering a simplified interpretation of reality, but also by prescribing how that reality ought to be. As a consequence, they also have normative as well as descriptive power; in fact, normalisation entails that if someone acts differently, more often if women show assertive or transgressive attitudes towards men, this is sanctioned as a deviant. “Deviant” is, indeed, the “experience of many other women who attempted to deviate from the traditional track of female life” (Kulisioff, 1890: 3). For this reason, Neapolitan songs stage examples of deviance from the norm, warning of the risks of the “negative” of the norm itself. Now generating “deviation”, as a sort of departure from the expected manners, is very interesting because it broadens the song contents dramatically, with the “jacket song” (Vacca, 2016) which tells of revenge and femicide, or in an ironic and irreverent way with the “macchietta” (Privitera, 2008), a caricature, a satirical stage character, often based on popular stereotypes, in which female protagonists want to emancipate themselves, make fun of men, and assume male attitudes.

Thus, Nardella’s *Surdate* functions both to challenge the male stereotype – specifically that of the soldier, with all its corollaries of honour, sacrifice, and contempt for danger – and to link gender clichés with broader interpretative paradigms.

The lieutenant surprised me/with tears in my eyes and the guitar in my hands,/and he said: ‘Napoletano,/you are not a tenor, you must be a soldier’. I said: ‘Mister/Lieutenant,/send me to prison, it doesn’t matter. /I think of my country, which is far away,/I am Neapolitan/, if I don’t sing, I die’. The lieutenant sighed: ‘Naples is very beautiful./Napoletano, I am in love too./Sing softly’. I said: ‘Mister Lieutenant,/sing you too, it doesn’t matter’./The moon comes in and shines of gold/ to make the comrade shining and golden. /All my companions, in the night,/crying with me, sing in chorus. And I say: ‘Lieutenant,/are we going to end up in prison? It doesn’t matter./Our country is far away/and who is Neapolitan,/either sings, or dreams, or dies’ ” (*Surdate. canzone di marcia / versi di L. Bovio / musica di E. Nardella. Napoli, Raffaele Izzo 1910*).

Bovio lyrics present a soldier “sui generis” a man who sings instead of practicing to fight, who takes up the guitar instead of the rifle, who misses his homeland, Naples, instead of facing the enemy and who, finally, finds full approval in the military community, so that his behaviour becomes manifestly anti-war when, even, the lieutenant and his comrade sing all together, because “whoever is Neapolitan, either sings, or sleeps, or dies!”. Therefore, *Surdate* bears witness to an anti-cliché with respect to that of virility embodied in a soldier; another anti-cliché comes up through this song; the Neapolitan

(man) is born to sing and to dream. I have examined a range of performances by: Pietro Mazzone, Tito Schipa, Beniamino Gigli, Franco Albanese, Giacomo Rondinella, Fausto Cigliano, Sergio Bruni, Nunzio Gallo, Mario Merola, all available on YouTube, to highlight the interpretative paradigms, taking into account the difference that Moore makes between “performance” and “track” (Moore, 2012: 244). By listening to the tracks and watching these videos, we can observe a wide vocal and musical variety of interpretations of the piece, which represent paradigms that have established themselves throughout the history of the Neapolitan song. Some elements that contribute to the shaping of these interpretations lie in the singing techniques, primarily differentiated into lyrical (Schipa and Gigli) and spontaneous (Mazzone, Albanese, Rondinella, Cigliano, Bruni, Gallo, Merola), with surprisingly common traits across the two categories. For example, Rondinella, similarly to Schipa, uses a *filato* style, or the half-spoken, half-sung delivery found in Rondinella’s interpretation and even more prominently in Merola’s, especially in the version accompanied by an actual video clip.

The instrumentation also characterises the interpretative choices: from the *concertino* (small concert) with mandolin accompanying Mazzone’s voice in the most typical realisation of the *posteggia* (Di Massa, 1961), to the classical orchestrations in the versions by Schipa and Gigli, which feature the deliberate use of wind instruments – especially the trumpet, associated with military contexts – and the snare drum that opens Merola’s version. Meanwhile, the guitar arrangements by Cigliano and Bruni stylise the “military” rhythmic elements present in the piece, particularly in the introduction, and serve as instrumental interludes between the verses.

Using the same method – selecting multiple versions of the same piece – *Mmiez’ o ggrano* highlights a characteristic that became established in the early twentieth century, as evidenced by historical recordings of the Neapolitan song repertoire: interpretative fluidity, whereby women sing texts originally composed for male performers.

In fact, women, and not only in Neapolitan songs, are mostly the narrated objects and not narrating subjects, and for this reason the interpretative fluidity allows a re-reading of the texts making one reflect on the question with which Moore opens his *Song Means*, that is: “What meanings can the experience of a song have and how does it create those meanings?” Interpretation indeed creates references in contexts as a process of experience and attribution of meaning, as Moore says: “Are there differences of gender, of ethnicity, of training? The more experienced the musician we listen to, the more likely we will be able to observe differences in there are” (Moore, 2012: 213).

Examining many versions of *Mmiez’ o ggrano* by: Teresa De Matienzo, Roberto Murolo, Sergio Bruni, Massimo Ranieri, Consiglia Licciardi, Lina Sastri, Maria Pia De Vito, Fausto Cigliano, Peppe Servillo, ‘Ebbanesis (stage name of Viviana

Cangiano and Teresa Pisa), all available online, they show the interesting variety of performative paradigms referred to in particular to the interpretative fluidity. This analysis also attests to a great multiplicity referring to three of the four parameters or “positional aspects of the singer’s voice” (Moore, 2012: 102): the “register”, the “cavity of origin” (*false*to, nasal, chest), the “rhythmic exactness” (ahead, above or behind the beat) and the “pitch accuracy”, the difference in registers even with the same voices (Licciardi and Sastri), the difference in resonance (De Matienzo uses *false*to unlike the other female performers and Cigliano with a more pronounced nasal resonance), and in the choices that concern the rhythmic aspect (the stop at the end of the phrase on the note corresponding to the tonic syllable or on the last note). Over and above that, the instrumental arrangement of *Mmiez’ o ggrano* is very varied, with the effects of echo and responses added in the two-voice version of Ebbanesis, and the theatrical gestures used by Massimo Ranieri in reducing the distance between the stage and the audience, at the Teatro Valle in Rome, in his show on 26th July 1974.

But what elements allow the interpretative fluidity which characterises the performance of *Mmiez’ o ggrano* by both men and women?

And in the evening, under the annurca apple orchard,/this ever-young heart laughs and jokes. And the moon, playing/inside the branches, on the ground with the blades of grass,/does an embroidery. Oh, Stella, Stella, waiting for a signal,/the ripe wheat is golden./And your hair is just like it./And you know that I die,/if in the midst of the wheat, you don’t let me kiss them. But you don’t sleep. It’s useless,/your heart hears me/when, under the trees,/I pass secretly. And you come out pale,/beautiful like no other./And the moon, winking at us,/mocks us, this mischievous moon. Oh, Stella, Stella, waiting for a signal” (*Mmiez’ o grano, canzona campagnola /veris di E: Nicolardi (C. O. Lardini) /musica di Evemero Nardella, Napoli Raffaele Rizzo 1909*).

“Oh Stella” (“Oje Stella” in Neapolitan) is here a vocative that is suitable both for the celestial body and for a woman named Stella. The light of the star is like the woman, who comes out pale with an allusive purity, beautiful like no other, with hair like the mature wheat which takes on a golden hue. The most recurring topic of the Neapolitan song is women, equalled only by Naples narrated as a city-nature with many points of contact with the figure of woman, evoked here as a metaphor for mother-earth, not in her role as biological mother, but as a symbolic representation of fertility, origin, and rootedness in the land, as an alter ego. So the female body is seen in its specificity, or rather sectioned: only eyes, only mouth, only hair, only hands. Starting from the most extreme point of this “dissected body”, as a fetish-object, we find women’s hair, because being able to look at a woman’s hair is the first sign of intimacy (Conti, 2008: 355–6).

This semantic ambiguity of “Stella” is a rhetorical strategy determining interpretative fluidity, which is a trait that the Neapolitan song has in common with the international production of popular music, sharing a lot of practices, especially those aimed at the transmission of the song object as a cultural practice (Rouse, 2015; Stadler Elmer, 2021). In fact, all songs as objects of cultural practice build a tradition and “whatever a tradition is, it cannot exist solely in an individual. The individual dies and the tradition goes on” (Park Turner, 2017: 113), and, therefore, to say that:

(...) People ‘share’ presuppositions or practices means that they have the same presuppositions or practices. The usual argument for this is transcendental: people do something, such as communicate; they could not communicate unless they shared the same framework; therefore, they share the same framework [...] The argument for ‘sharing’ or sameness requires us to believe that there is some mechanism by which the same rules, presuppositions, or practices get into the heads of different people [...] The means in question must be much more effective than ordinary ‘training’, which is of course imperfect [because] acquiring the tacit possessions that people need is an imperfect training-like feedback process that could not guarantee that people would ‘share’ anything tacit, but could only, like training at its most successful, assure that people had certain habituated capacities to perform. (Park Turner, 2017: 113–4).

Gender stereotypes and interpretative paradigms continue to manifest themselves in Neapolitan songs well beyond the period of 1900–1920. They influence all aspects of performance – certain traits have determined the success of songs interpreted by operatic singers and still do. They shape behaviours, especially musical ones, by encouraging the freedom to arrange songs in ways that allow them to regenerate and adapt to new contexts and musical trends. They also guide aspirations – for example, in the repertoires of wedding parties, where they help reinforce community values and shape the expectations of younger generations. Choices, behaviour, and aspirations pertain to cultural practices because:

(...) To which practices a behaviour belongs rests on the life conditions it expresses; and which conditions these are depends on the behaviour, its contexts, and understandings of life conditions. The relevant understandings are mostly those interwoven into the actor’s world, into the activity or contexts to which he or she is a party. For things can be standing or going only in those ways for which his or her body, activities, contexts, and practices make room. And understandings of these ways are generally interwoven into and carried out by the practices involved. Actions, understandings, and practices are thus holistically related. (Schatzki, 1996: 107).

Conclusions

But what connects gender stereotypes and interpretative paradigms?

These two categories are found and function together in songs, as well as in other objects that pertain to cultural practices, since in the act of performing (not only interpreting, but all the process of creation-interpretation-fruiting-analysis), since by looking more deeply at a song we “learn about ourselves” as Moore (2012: 286) underlines and, I add, we become aware of how *performativity* (Butler, 1988) comes into play in performing.

I adopt the concept of *performativity* because “from theatrical, anthropological, and philosophical discourses, but mainly phenomenology, to show that what is called gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo. In its very character as performative resides the possibility of contesting its reified status” (Butler, 1988: 520). When she says “the act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene [considering that] the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief” (Butler, 1988: 526), she is arguing that individuality in relationships functions like a script – one that can be recited in multiple ways. Just as theatrical representation requires both a text and its interpretation, the body, when “understood” in terms of gender, performs its role within a “corporeal space.” In my view, both gender stereotypes and interpretative paradigms intervene here, as they enable interpretations that go beyond the limits of pre-existing norms.

If, therefore, for Butler, gender as performativity depends on the social and political contexts that precede identity and determine its recognition, and is not something one *is* but something one *does*, then gender exists only to the extent that it is repeated through ritual acts and gestures. In “this sense, gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes” (Butler, 1999: 33); it is a verb rather than a noun, a *doing* rather than a *being*. Consequently, every act connected to performing songs is configured as a ritual gesture that, in cultural practice, enacts the *performativity* of gender, situated within the tension and contradiction between the perpetuation and subversion of gender norms. Historical evidence – stereotypes and paradigms – substantiates its fascination.

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**Rodni stereotipi i interpretativne paradigme u napolitanskoj pesmi:
Dve studije slučaja**

Apstrakt: Napolitanska pesma je deo muzičkog repertoara koja je tokom vekova simbolizovala jednu široku zajednicu, a istovremeno pruža izuzetno zanimljivo polje istraživanja za analitičke studije koje prevazilaze isključivo muzičke elemente i uključuju pitanja kulturnih praksi. Ovaj rad razmatra napolitansku pesmu s početka 20. veka, kako bi istakao dve analitičke kategorije – s jedne strane sociološku, a s druge estetsku – koje se odnose na rodne stereotipe i interpretativne paradigme. Analizom dve studije slučaja, ovo istraživanje razmatra dve pesme koje je komponovao Evemero Nardela (1878–1950): *Surdate (Vojnik)* (1910), na stihove Libera Bovija, i *Mmiez' 'o grano* (1909), na stihove Eduarda Nikolardija, koja prikazuje scenu koja se odvija „usred žita”. Istraživanje rodni stereotipa zasniva se na tekstovima ovih pesama, s ciljem da se istaknu unapred oblikovane predstave o muškarcima i ženama, dok se interpretativne paradigme razmatraju kroz analizu brojnih snimaka istih pesama, dostupnih na internetu. Metodološki, ova analiza podstiče epistemološko-estetsku rekonstrukciju napolitanske pesme kao kulturnog objekta, obuhvatajući i tekst i izvođenje, te pokušava da odgovori na sledeća pitanja: Koji elementi u tekstovima ukazuju na rodne stereotipe? Koja retorička strategija omogućava fluidnost u interpretativnoj praksi? Na koji način se rod povezuje sa stereotipima i interpretativnim paradigmama?

Ključne reči: napolitanska pesma, početak 20. veka, rodni stereotipi, interpretativne paradigme, performativnost.