

Health, charismatic cults and contemporary folk culture

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1. The charismatic Catholic communities

The movement of charismatic renewal arose among the American Catholic communities at the end of the sixties. In the last 30 years it has spread dramatically throughout the world – industrialised and not – mainly among the well educated middle urban classes. Now, in all the continents there are communities that, even though they have different organisational structures, claim to be a more or less organic part of this movement⁽¹⁾. It is not rare to witness large national and transnational meetings attended by international leaders of the movement, who travel in different nations collecting crowds of believers everywhere. Such meetings strengthen the ties among the communities, making it possible for them to communicate, exchange information and discuss doctrine.

The movement arose as an attempt to renew the spirit of the Catholic Church. It was centred on a new dimension in which faith can be experienced directly by the believer through an attenuation of the mediating role, between man and God, of the institutional sacral staff (the priests and Catholic hierarchy), and forging a more personal relationship between him and the divine (mainly Jesus and the Holy Spirit). A sign of this relationship, and of the power that characterises it, are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, that is to say, the charismas as defined from Paul in the *First letter to the Corinthians*.

In the last 20 years the charismatic renewal has also spread in Italy. It should be pointed out that it has spread equally in urban and rural areas, chiefly through small communities or simple prayer groups: that is, groups of individuals that periodically gather in an informal way to beg and invoke the descent of the Holy Spirit. The phenomenon has interested various anthropologists who have produced a number of studies⁽²⁾. Two ele-

ments are usually stressed: a) the ideology that permeates charismatic communities; and b) the miraculous healing, which also characterises charismatic communities in other national contexts⁽³⁾. As far as the focal points of their ideology are concerned, it could be underlined the assertion that faith must be lived in a totalising way, as an experience that informs and qualifies the whole existence. It represents a bulwark against the spread of the evil forces working in a world that is perceived as negative, as essentially pervaded by the action of the devil. In other words, the charismatic experience connects the negative to concrete and historical human events and transposes it on a meta-historical horizon; it is no longer mere contingency, but becomes the fruit of the satanic action. Human action thus comes about in a meta-historical ambit and the world itself becomes the theatre for the eternal struggle between God and the devil (cf. Lanternari 1983, 1987; Cardamone and Schirripa 1997). This ideology naturally does not only characterise the charismatic. It can be found in a wider range of experiences from the folk Catholic world. As far as southern Italy is concerned, I would like to quote what Paolo Apolito wrote about one of Maria's apparitions in Southern Italy:

«The visionary culture transposes on the symbolic ambit and remodels in the irrefutable mythical scheme of the gigantic and incessant struggle between God and Devil, the conflict felt between the unexpected, precarious and daily contingency (in the form of evil forces) and the desire for stability, safety and comfort. This is incarnate in the celestial powerful and eternal figures that are perceived as the only ones that can conquer the evil forces). Through a peculiar way of lived-narrated assimilation, a great collective narration builds the cosmic events of the apparitions, inserting in them in the crossways of their daily rhythm, in the symbolic constructions of the individual and the collective difficulties of the pilgrims and [...] all mankind. [...] Shaping the lived assign of other (the battle, the enemy, the Madonna), the possible has been re-captured, bent and explained as moment of a cosmic play which has a fixed end, the human history becomes sacred history. Even if in the human history the evil, in his daily intrusiveness, is not excluded; at least one can find a Meaning.» (Apolito, 1992: 165-166).

Miraculous healing, as I have already said about the ideology, is surely not only a characteristic of charismatic communities. In these communities, however, the miracle and the subsequent healing are part of a context that is completely different from the typical one of the religious folk therapies, on which many European ethnographic monographs focuses. Actually, in charismatic communities the miracle, and the healing that it produces, is inserted within a complex existential path centred on the conversion.

This conversion, moreover, is not to be considered only as an action for approaching – or re-approaching – the divinity. It implies the need to re-

model existence itself around this new event: everything that happens in everyday life, such as the plans for the future, will from now onwards come under the new relationship established with the divine. It is in this context of radical existential change that one has to insert miraculous healing, which in this way sanctions the new relationship.

Healing is not interpreted only as the irruption of the divine into human contingency as happens in Roman Catholic tradition. On the contrary, it is introduced within a global re-reading of an afflicted existential path. In this context, illness and healing make sense in reference to the conversion. In the miraculous healing process that takes place within centre-stage charismatic contexts there are a patient and his long existential path. This is discussed and re-interpreted in the light of the radical change that the individual experiences through his conversion to the charismatic way of living the faith. The re-reading of the existential path of the convert imposes that the critical moments of his existence become its significant elements; and the discomforts suffered are underlined. The conversion will give meaning to those sufferings, and therefore allow one to free oneself from remembering "bad living". To quote a sentence by Giordana Charuty, charismatic therapy is often an action to «heal the memory»⁽⁴⁾.

In these healing paths, then, individual bad living, as well as its physical sufferings, is nearly always identified with the demon's actions. In this case, a metaphor permeates the whole therapeutic process: individual evil is seen to correspond to Satan's action. Actually, in charismatic ideology, individual suffering bodies are the microcosm in which the eternal fight between the good, God, and the evil, Satan, is re-lived daily. If men suffer, it is due to the action of Satan; if they recover it is because of the intercession of the Holy Spirit, Jesus, the Madonna and the Saints. The body is the battleground between good and evil: if pain is the sign of Satan's action, healing is the sign of divine benevolence. The whole therapeutic process takes place – in this metaphor that brings the macrocosm – in which the eternal struggle between the divine and the demoniac occurs – near to the microcosm – the suffering body also perceived as the locus of that eternal struggle. It is in a sense that therapy frees people from bad living. Moreover, furthermore, it is this metaphor that gives new sense to the individual existential path. The pain people suffer can be interpreted as the consequence of the Devil's action, and in this way they become intelligible and interpretable to the individual. Recovery is not only liberation from evil, but also the sanction of an existential path that has conversion at its centre. In this way, miraculous healing also becomes meaningful to those who do not experience it personally. As a sign of the divine victory over the demo-

niac in the microcosm of a suffering body, it enables the divine cosmic victory to be predicted. This allows the believers who have not recovered to expound miraculous healing as the premonition of a greater reward: eternal salvation.

2. *The community of Santa Domenica di Placanica*

I would like to analyse here some specific issues concerning the charismatic movement of *Santa Domenica di Placanica*, its relationship with folk culture, and the subversive role of the body. I will discuss the research I carried out for many years (1989-1995), with Giuseppe Cardamone (psychiatrist), on the Catholic charismatic community of *Santa Domenica di Placanica* (Calabria, Southern Italy), better known as “community of the *Madonna* of the Scoglio” or more simply “community of the Scoglio”⁽⁵⁾.

Santa Domenica is a small village in the Calabrese Mountains. It shares with the other settlements of this area a long history of depopulation due to migration towards foreign countries, the northern Italy or the nearby big cities, which are more comfortable and where there are greater opportunities for finding work. It is an area characterised by a depressed economy with a high rate of unemployment, chiefly among young people, and, as frequently happens in Calabria, the percentage of intellectual unemployment is very high.

Santa Domenica is not far from Serra San Bruno, where until the sixties there was an exorcist cult, known throughout the region, that has been analysed by Ernesto De Martino (1980 [1960]; Ceravolo 1999). The villages of Calabria are part of that southern Italy whose religious and cultural expressions De Martino interpreted as the limit of penetration of the hegemonic project of Catholic Church⁽⁶⁾. From Serra San Bruno – and from many nearby villages, including some from the coast – thousands of people come to the hamlet twice a week, Wednesday and Saturday, to attend the worship held by the charismatic community. It is not unusual to find people from other areas of the region as well as people from other southern and central regions of Italy, especially in recent years when the cult has had a certain coverage in the mass media too. In each meeting people ask for healing and grace for themselves and their relatives, and during each meeting somebody claims that their wishes have been granted. Cosimo Fragomeni, known as Fratel Cosimo, is the leader of charismatic community⁽⁷⁾. He is a layman. He is a leader with little formal education; his biography resembles that of many other visionaries. Books about his life

history speak diffusely about the first time that Maria appeared to him, when he was in his teens (in the sixties), and about the first miracles that he was involved in. In his own land, Fratel Cosimo has built the church where the cult worships. For many years in that little church, then not consecrated, Fratel Cosimo – who was known to only a few people – received sick people and prayed for them to be cured. There were many *ex-voto* witnesses of healing cases in the seventies, but the cult began to be better known later, at the end of eighties. Then, for approximately 15 years, the thaumaturgic activity of Fratel Cosimo was almost unknown. What happened in the eighties to make the cult so popular? One of the first episodes that were important for the notoriety of the cult was the healing of a woman in 1988. This woman had been confined to a wheelchair since 1975. She attended the charismatic community for some months, then unexpectedly one evening – when she was before Cosimo – she got up and began to walk. The news was given extensive coverage in the local newspaper, but surely this alone could not justify the fame the cult acquired in a few short months. It was certainly not the first healing there, even if it was the most surprising. I think that the adhesion of Fratel Cosimo to the charismatic movement, about a year before that healing, was the main reason that the cult acquired the fame that it did. Actually, with this adhesion, his role changed completely: he was no longer a solitary thaumaturgist but the leader of a charismatic community that was quickly organised, attracting believers even from the villages of the coast.

3. *Charismatism and folk culture*

While I was studying the cult with Cardamone, we did not give Cosimo's adhesion to charismatism the importance it deserves. Today it seems to me that it is central to the whole issue. What changes does this adhesion bring about? How is Fratel Cosimo depicted in the books about him? Before his adhesion to charismatism his existential trajectory is similar to that of many other thaumaturgists raised in rural backgrounds: visions of the Madonna, the construction of a place of worship dedicated to her, miraculous healings, etc. He is, after all, a usual figure in the folk culture of this area⁽⁸⁾. Before he joined charismatism, Fratel Cosimo had adhered to a model that was already known and diffused. The adhesion to the charismatic movement was a sharp break with this model. It marked a separation from some of the religious forms typical of the folk culture of this area. We do not know a great deal about the social origin of the people who approached Fratel

Cosimo in the seventies, but they were certainly people from the nearby villages, and shared with the thaumaturgist a long history of cultural marginality. If the social subjects whom he dealt with were marginal, also marginal were the folk models to which he adhered in those years. They are patterns that are in decline nowadays when new hegemonies impose new models, even on the level of religious expression. The limit of the cultural penetration of the Catholic hegemony, which Ernesto De Martino discussed in his works, has moved on to other forms and patterns. Folk magic, as well as folk Catholicism are slowly withdrawing in favour of other ways of magic-religious protection, which are often syncretistic or refer to forms such as orientalist irrationalism, that arouses considerable interest in Italian society.

Joining the charismatic movement therefore gives Cosimo the chance of an alternative pattern. In particular it provides him with a cultural device that enables him to go beyond the narrow entourage of people that had addressed him up to that moment. In fact, the community that organised itself around him in the eighties – after he joined charismatism – is composite, from the cultural and social point of view. Undergraduate students stand side to side with farmers, people of rural extraction and individuals belonging to the professional middle class of the coastal towns. It is a variegated world also from the perspective of the believers' social biographies; individuals disappointed by their past experiences in the revolutionary and institutional left gather with people that have had considerable experience of militancy in Catholic organisations. So the success of the charismatic is not only due to thaumaturgical skill, but also – in my view – to the ability of having built a pattern that fits in better with the changed cultural context of the area.

At the community-worship meeting this variegated universe is clearly noticeable. A crowd that go there to worship, but above all to heal. The Scoglio in fact is chiefly the place where miraculous healing happens. From this point of view the pattern proposed by Fratel Cosimo, although consistent with charismatism, shares many elements with the folk culture of this area. Both physical and spiritual illnesses, in the charismatic view, are the sign of the devil's action. The sick body is a microcosm, which reflects the eternal struggle that, in a meta-historical horizon, opposes the divine to the malignant. Therefore, if illness is the sign of the devil, healing is the fruit of positive action by the Holy Spirit. In addition, the believers, in fact, invoke the Holy Spirit with Jesus and the Madonna, so that he descends on them to heal. The action of the devil is often interpreted in terms of possession, and the process of healing is viewed as an

exorcism; to be performed it needs the Holy Spirit – with an endorcism – to descend into the afflicted. The possession paradigm and consequent exorcism are usual elements in Calabrian folk culture, and obviously in this area, where – as I said before – there were, and still are the vestiges of an important exorcist cult. Nevertheless, my aim here is not to show a repertoire of continuity and break-up elements that Cosimo’s charismatic model has with regards to folk culture. This would be of dubious value. Rather I wish to emphasise how the continuities and persistence with the folk cultural world are inserted dynamically into the framework of the charismatic model proposed by Fratel Cosimo and how they give it coherence. At the same time these elements are fundamental for this model to be effective also in the rural areas where the traditional forms of religious expression still remain. The elements of continuity actually give the charismatic pattern a certain “family air”. This pattern has succeeded in such different social and cultural groups because it is able to perform on two different levels: one of break-up and newness; the other of continuity and tradition.

4. Subversive bodies

I have said several times that people go to Scoglio above all to heal. In the believers’ words, this healing can affect body and soul. I shall briefly describe the two most important moments of the healing ceremony: the first one is before the ceremony begins; the second in the final portion of it. The first is the meeting between patients and Fratel Cosimo. It is not easy to meet Fratel Cosimo; he actually meets only 100 patients before each ceremony. They have to book by telephone, and the “charismatic diary” is often overbooked. Fratel Cosimo spends one hour at these meetings. Therefore each patient meets the thaumaturgist for a very short period: between 30 seconds and a minute. In the brief encounter patients do not have time to give an exhaustive explanation of their problem, and the charismatician rarely replies. In one sense, meeting Fratel Cosimo is like having a relationship with the statue of a saint: there is no direct dialogue. Every patient briefly explains his own problem and begs for healing. The device is the awaiting of a miracle. At times, however, the charismatician speaks, or he makes contact with the person in a dream. In these cases the charismatician plays the role of supervisor of the physician’s work, or more often that of antagonist, by imposing the interruption of the medical care and to seek healing through prayers alone.

The final portion is when Fratel Cosimo, at the end of the ceremony, invokes the Holy Spirit, Madonna and Jesus to heal people suffering in body and soul. It is a moment of considerable emotional intensity, and it is often possible to hear people shouting with joy because they believe that they have been touched by divine grace.

However, other things happen throughout the ceremony. This is something that characterises the Scoglio and about which people have spoken diffusely in the numerous rumours about Fratel Cosimo in all the villages and cities in the area. Various believers receive “physical healing” and many others fall into what is called – in the charismatic idiom – the “sleep of the Spirit”, a quasi-catatonic state that sometimes lasts for several hours. For the charismatic, during the “sleep of the Spirit” the Holy Spirit works on the individual to strengthen his faith, but above all to heal the body or the soul. Many believers seek such an adorcism, because it is sign of healing and of having obtained the divine grace. Nevertheless, there are no techniques for inducing it, it is the Holy Spirit that chooses.

Other believers, instead, have extremely dramatic psychomotor crises, which the charismatic calls a “crisis of liberation”. In this case the Holy Spirit works to free the individual from the devil that possesses him and the psychomotor crisis is the sign of the struggle between the divine and the devil inside his body⁽⁹⁾.

The “crisis of liberation” and the “sleep of the spirit”, then, are the two moments at which the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the struggle between him and the devil is, in the believers’ interpretation, dramatically evident. They represent the moment that the body becomes a real “theatre” of the struggle between the divine and the demoniac, and its postures are, for the onlookers, external and visible signs of this struggle. Such crises follow a definite bodily code that makes them immediately comprehensible to the other believers at the ceremony. This shared code allows the body to narrate sufferings otherwise unexpressed. During the act of worship, in fact, the believers don’t speak, they don’t use words to communicate their sufferings to the assembly. Encouraged by Fratel Cosimo and his closer assistants they beg. Many of them are there because they hope to be healed, because they hope to interrupt a plot of suffering. However, this suffering cannot be listened to in the ceremony, there is no space for individuals to tell their story and what afflicts them. Their suffering is destined to be speechless. It is only at the end of the ceremony in fact that some believers have the privilege to speak. But the ones who speak, who have the opportunity to tell the others their own story, are not the people that at that time are suffering; on the contrary,

those who speak are the ones who have recovered because of the miraculous action of the Holy Spirit. In this way the community of the Scoglio celebrates divine healing power, but it once more denies the believers the chance to share their own suffering, which is therefore shared only by means of the gestures and the postures of the body. The body grammar shared by the community somehow allows individual suffering to be collectively shared. «It is the body, the collectively shared grammar of his gestures, that makes explicit the contents of people in crisis experiences. It is the body that narrates the suffering» (Cardamone – Schirripa 1997: 175). As I have said they are gestures and postures that impress and worry and which people talk about a lot in the villages and in the cities to strengthen the supernatural character of what it happens at the Scoglio.

The body idiom I have briefly described here is often concealed in the ceremony. During the ceremony Fratel Cosimo often tells the believers not to take care of whoever is involved in “crisis of liberation” or “sleep of the spirit”. It is the Holy Spirit – Cosimo says – that is working; the believers must pay attention to the liturgy. The body idiom – which outside the Scoglio is perceived as the sign of what happens there and as the sanction of the supernatural character of those events – has a marginal role during worship. The expression of the body cannot be central to the act of worship because its characters are irreducibly subversive. What Cosimo wants to conceal is the subversive position of the body that narrates its suffering.

The bodies that narrate their suffering break the orderly web of the charismatic cult. They allow divine healing action to become the central stage; at the same time they also permit suffering and bodily narrative to be at the centre. The body idiom also allows the expression of individual contents that are often subversive as regards the values professed by the charismatician.

It should be pointed out that during the ceremony charismaticians are inclined to put the elements of community that characterise their movement to the fore. They normally address each other as “brother” and “sister”, they greet people with an embrace or a kiss, and often tend to meet at the Scoglio during the week for prayer meetings. They divide jobs and tasks and in general exalt a communitarian spirit to the detriment of anything individual. It is the community, not the individual, at the centre of their world. Referring to the believers’ own sufferings through the body idiom means inserting elements of an individual/community dialectics, which break this scheme.

Moreover, even the contents that emerge from these gestures and postures are surely subversive with respect to the charismatic discourse. There is a collective grammar that makes the body idiom immediately comprehensible to the believers. Nevertheless, this collective *langue*, consistent with charismatic ideology, does not accomplish the body idiom. In it we discover a kind of individual *parole*, through which the bodies narrate their own sufferings, their own marginality and oppression (Corin 1980; Crapanzano 1977; Cardamone – Schirripa 1997). As Vincent Crapanzano (1977) points out, it is possible to retain possession as a cultural idiom that allows the individual to articulate his subjective experience. Therefore two aspects, which belong to every type of communicative event, can be singled out. We could say, like Corin (1980), that it is possible to assign to the body idiom, like other idioms, two different levels: that of the expression, which belongs above all to a collective ambit, and that of the meaning, which mainly concerns the individual.

Body expression is declined between these two levels and allows individuals to clearly show their own suffering, whose private content emerges in collectively shared models. Critical phenomena can in this way be inserted in a plot of meanings that allows individuals to place their own experience once again in a metahistorical horizon, which can give meaning to their own suffering. The level of the meaning, of the individual expression, finds a place in the endless variations of these stereotyped manifestations performed by the believers. The folds of these variations tell the story of each individual, and it carries out meanings that could be subversive with respect to the values of the community.

We have analysed elsewhere the idiom of these bodies, and the stories of suffering that they narrate (Cardamone – Schirripa 1994a, 1994b, 1997). They are frequently stories of women that use the body idiom of possession to express their silent rebellion to a condition of subalternity and marginality. During the “crisis of liberation”, women with psychomotor crises often move in the ceremonial space shouting repeatedly: “no”. They move excessively, and touch other people with their hands. In this way, they break the rules of the southern code of behaviour, and conform to a behaviour code consistent with demoniac possession. By means of the behaviour code of possession, they can demonstrate their rejection of the socially approved behavioural norms and at the same time, by touching the other believers, can ask for human contact, evidently lacking in their daily life. During these crises, other women perform explicit imitations of the sexual act, breaking at once with the charismatic ethic of chastity, but above all displaying an exasperated need of a

sexuality that is still very often denied to the young women of many zones of southern Italy.

What I wish to assert here is exemplified by the story of a young believer, who I will call conventionally Ann, and who I have already analysed with Cardamone in another article (Cardamone – Schirripa 1997: 177-178).

Ann is twenty years old and lives in a hamlet not too far from S. Domenica. She lives with her family members – both parents and two older brothers – all of whom work as farmers. Apart from a short and failing experience of migration to Milan, with a consequent return home, Ann and her family have always lived in the same hamlet.

As a result of a family bereavement, Ann began to suffer from a series of health troubles and to behave so eccentrically that the family recognised in the signs and symptoms an attack of the malignant. For this reason, her parents and brothers led her to the Carthusian monks who live in a village nearby: Serra S. Bruno, which is renowned in the area for being exorcists. So, the journeys to the Chartreuse proved unfruitful; Ann didn't improve; on the contrary, organic illness was added to her troubles. She thus began an incessant wandering in search of a solution to her sufferings. Her family decided to consult medical doctors and psychiatrists and, in the meantime, they took her to the Scoglio.

After they joined the community, Ann and her family became the centre of the attention for many believers. The reason was the way Ann behaved (imitation of sexual acts, sudden lapses of consciousness alternating with clamorous episodes of excitement, shouts addressed to Cosimo and to the Madonna), and how she communicated a state of extreme suffering. She moved within the sacred space and spoke to other believers, touched them or frequently fell at their feet. Her unpredictable moves forced her brothers to protect her from the danger caused by her behaviour. Her gestures, postures and attitudes, though exasperating and embarrassing, were comprehensible within the community code. Ann went to the Scoglio because she was possessed by the devil and while she was there the Holy Spirit worked to free her. Her body became the theatre of the struggle between Satan and the Holy Spirit and her gestures and sufferings narrated the events of the clash to the believers. This is how the believers interpret what happens to Ann. The gap between Ann's behaviour and the believers' interpretation is not easily bridged. Ann still continues with her gestures and attitude, and the result is that the other believers tend to leave her in the margin of the sacred space. Her body is not easily tameable; her silent rebellion is not to be confined in the narrow border of the charismatic

behavioural code. Her destiny, then, even in the context of charismatic worship, has been one of loneliness and marginality.

The values of the community of the Scoglio do not allow a body to express silent rebellion to the condition of woman, characterised by loneliness and subalternity, typical of the rural Southern Italy⁽¹⁰⁾.

Like Anna, the bodies of the women attending the service express discomforts and messages that are far from the horizons of the believers and, therefore, unheeded. In this context, then, the body appears as an arena in which – through exhibitions and concealment – a struggle of meanings occurs. The rumours of lay people depend on the exhibition of bodies in crisis as proof that something miraculous is actually happening in Scoglio. Fratel Cosimo conceals the body idiom because it exceeds the boundaries of charismatic discourse. Cosimo and his collaborators would wish possession to consist only of the therapeutic action of the Holy Spirit. However, this is not so. Possession makes people release subversive contents, in a silent rebellion to a history of subalternity.

Notes

⁽¹⁾ Anthropologists have studied the spread of this phenomenon in various contexts. There are now numerous accounts on the charismatic movement in many different areas of the planet. For example the USA where the phenomenon has been broadly analyzed by Csordas (1983, 1987, 1994); or Brazil (Prandi 1997); for Europe see, for instance, Giordana Charuty's works on the charismatic movement in France (Charuty 1986, 1987, 1998 [1990]); for the Italian situation, see note 2.

⁽²⁾ Cf. Cardamone – Schirripa (1990, 1994b); Ferrarotti, De Lutiis, Maciotti, Catucci (1978); Frizzotti (1994); Lanternari (1983, 1987, 1994); Schirripa – Cardamone (1991, 1992); Villa (1994).

⁽³⁾ Cf. for example Csordas (1983), and Charuty (1986, 1987).

⁽⁴⁾ See Charuty (1987). On the same topic, see Csordas (1992).

⁽⁵⁾ Cf. Cardamone – Schirripa (1990, 1991, 1994a, 1994b, 1997); Schirripa – Cardamone (1991, 1992, 1994).

⁽⁶⁾ De Martino's work on Southern Italy is part of a broader debate, from the end of the 19th century to the 1970s, on the "Southern question". At the end of Italian political unification (1870), a large number of intellectuals and policy makers such as S. Sonnino, G. Salvemini, G. Fortunato, F. S. Nitti, F. Turati, N. Colajanni, L. Franchetti and others, debated the economic, social, "racial" and moral causes of Southern Italy's underdevelopment. After the Second World War, through Carlo Levi's novel *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (Levi 1949) and Gramsci's *Osservazioni sul folklore* and *La questione meridionale* (Gramsci 1950), which had considerable influence on the Italian anthropologists working "at home", the Southern question became one of the most prominent topics in anthropological debate. See Clemente – Meoni – Squillacioti (1976); Pasquinelli (1977); Rauty (1976). For an English book devoted to this debate cf. Schneider (1998).

⁽⁷⁾ For more about Fratel Cosimo's life see Prochilo (1989) and Turi (1995).

⁽⁸⁾ See, for example, the Natuzza Evolo case (Lombardi Satriani – Meligrana 1982); about the traditional folk healers in Italy cf. Seppilli (1983, 1989).

⁽⁹⁾ Although in his article Csordas (Csordas 1992) does not speak about the body postures related to these states, on the basis of the charismatic classification of kinds of healing, the ones I have described above are similar to the ones he refers to. He speaks about a «*physical healing* of bodily illness, *inner healing* of emotional illness and distress, and *deliverance* from the adverse effects of demons and evil spirit» (Csordas 1992: 280). In effect this classification can also be found in the charismatic movement I am speaking about. Csordas, refers to bodily healings; the “sleep of the Spirit” is the possibility to heal distress and emotional – that is to say: spiritual in charismatic language – illness (like “inner healing” for Csordas); and finally the “crisis of liberation”, through which people can free themselves from demoniac influence or devil’s possession (like “deliverance” for Csordas).

⁽¹⁰⁾ Ann’s body expresses the extreme loneliness of her condition as a woman and, at the same time, attempts to find an ambit of relationships that can contain all the ambiguity of her bodily displays. The expressive code of worship is not sufficient to exhaust the subversive position of her message, and it allows the protagonist to drift toward an ulterior marginality, as is shown by the epilogue of her story. About the female body and woman condition in southern Italy see Pandolfi (1992).

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