

A THEORY OF MUSICAL GENRES: TWO APPLICATIONS

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Structure of this study

This study is divided into three parts. In the first part a definition of "musical genre" is stated and commented on: from this basis observations and examples are made about the types of rules that contribute to the definition of a genre and on the ways in which they are accepted by various communities. In the second part an analysis is made of the genres characterized by the *canzone* form in Italy today, in the wider meaning intended with *canzone*. This synchronic analysis is aimed at explaining the structure of a substantial part of the present Italian musical system, and at illustrating the possible distinguishing lines between similar genres usually confused under the common heading of "light music". In the third part, one of these genres, the *canzone d'autore*, is analysed in its course through time; this diachronic analysis is aimed at the investigation of the ways by which a genre becomes codified, and its possible transformations.

1.1. Definition

A musical genre is "a set of musical events (real or possible) whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules".

The notion of set, both for a genre and for its defining apparatus, means that we can speak of sub-sets like "sub-genres", and of all the operations foreseen by the theory of sets: in particular a certain "musical event" may be situated in the intersection of two or more genres, and therefore belong to each of these at the same time.

For "musical event", the definition of "music" given by the Italian semiologist Stefani may be considered valid: "any type of activity performed around any type of event involving sound". This definition is controversial, but that which has made it so is exactly what we need in this case, that is the fact that it is, if anything, too broad. This means that those who are not in agreement can refer to a set of rules that define a more restricted set, but they cannot prevent a community, small and discredited though it may be, from considering a "musical event" that which they, the objectors, do not consider music at all.

Excessive broadness is a defect also of my own definition of genre: it allows me {52-53} to call "genre" any set of genres, and therefore some which usually go under other names: musical systems, ethnic music, even "terrestrial music" (a union of all the types of musical production and consumption on this planet) or "galactic".

The only solution I have found to this problem is to decide each time whether a certain set of musical events is being considered in relation to other opposing sets in which case I will call it a genre - or in relation to its sub-sets - in which case I will call it a system. In any case this defect is preferable to the opposite risk, that is, not recognizing as a genre something which is considered as such by millions of people.

Reference to the reality or possibility of musical events may appear redundant too: it does not refer only to the peculiar characteristic of a genre to collect exist-ant works and at the same time invite the composing of future works, but, for example, to the question of whether a score is a "real" or a "virtual" work - a question which I believe implicit, with the

answer to it, in the chosen definition of a musical event. This reference, however, should help to avoid any forcing which could derive from a mechanical application of the theory of sets: the empty genre, corresponding to the empty set.

According to the definition, a similar genre would imply that a given community had agreed on a certain set of rules relative to the course of musical events (real or possible), and that these events did not exist: which is not only a paradox from a logical point of view, but mostly from a sociological one (and from many others). The situation nearest to this would be the proclamation of a manifesto, of an aesthetic programme: in this case, of course, the genre is not empty, but at least consists of the possible musical events that can be made according to the rules of that programme. Therefore the empty genre can be reduced to a role of purely topological abstraction in order to guarantee the carrying out of operations with sets, without its "reality" being questioned.

The notion of "course" is also connected with Stefani's definition and with the conception of "activity" contained in it, but this is of secondary importance.

The codified character of generic rules is associated with the regulation of the relation between the levels of expression and of content.

Now, due to the particular aspect assumed in music by every semantic question, and to the nature of performance of this art, and, as a combined consequence of these two factors, due to the importance assumed with regard to this by the context, the circumstances and the relations between the participants in a musical event, it is impossible to try to pick out one point, one moment in which or on which generic rules perform their regulating task. The definition must therefore contain a multifunctional term applicable, according to rules and genres, both to the formal choices of a nineteenth century composer and to the reactions of rock {53-54} concert fans, and in the same way to the acoustics of a jazz club as to the thanksgiving ceremony of a contemporary composer after a first performance: "course" seemed to me an ideal term; the rules will then define the sense in which it has to be intended.

The fact that the set of rules be "definite" seemed to me sufficient to number amongst genres non-written poetics and above all genres based on oral tradition, and necessary in order to avoid an infinite multiplication of variants.

I have not imposed limits on the community whose agreement forms the basis for the definition of a genre: its extension is not a problem (the decision to study Verdi's melodrama or political songs of the 1972 student movement in Milan State University will depend on individual interests) neither is its composition. A genre which amalgamates complicated relations between composers, performers, audience, critics and organizers, each with their own particular rules, may be no more worthy of attention and analysis than a genre based on an arbitrary agreement between twelve journalists and a record producer, who all include in it musical events apparently heterogeneous according to obscure idiosyncratic rules.

A word about the way this social acceptance works, therefore about the principles of codification: this is obviously the heart of the diachronic development of genres, their collocation in systems where the single genres change their function according to the times, and within them the musical events. This aspect will be dealt with further on, and exemplified in the last part of this study. Before this I think that a survey of the various types of rules which combine to form the definition of a genre is necessary.

1.2. Types of generic rules

I must point out that the following list, however hopefully complete, cannot possibly give all the types of rule that can be involved in the definition of a genre. I have not tried to construct categories outside history, but to look for those which seem to be effectively operating to-day: this is not an attempt to resolve the problem of analysis of genres once and for all, but to indicate its complexity. What should emerge from this panorama is the necessity for an interdisciplinary approach, so that every custom, musical or not, amongst those forming a genre, is examined with the most appropriate theoretical tools.

This would not prevent a musical system or a part of it from being analysed, once a seemingly relevant group of rules has been found, only in the light of these rules.

A system so examined would appear like a matrix with rows of rules and columns of genres, in which each single element a_{ij} would indicate the value of the rule i for the genre j . Obviously a similar matrix would only be used to jog the researcher's memory. {54-55}

No specific hierarchical order is given to the rules presented here. On the other hand, in the description of each single genre some rules are more important, and a few much more important than others, to the point where these others can some-times be considered marginal and ignored. In this case the existence could also be claimed of a sort of "hyper-rule" which establishes this hierarchy; to this hyperrule we can easily attribute the name of "ideology" of that genre. Other cases will involve the difference in the strength of codification.

1.2.1. Formal and technical rules

The reflections just made on the ideology of a genre and the hierarchy formed by this can be surely applied to the formal and technical rules. In most musicological literature which has tackled the problem of genres, from positivists to very recent examples, the formal and technical rules seem to be the only ones taken into consideration, to the point where genre, style and form become synonymous. With all this scientific confusion one cannot expect common sense to be more precise and in fact these terms are easily interchanged in daily use. It must be said, however, that a record buying adolescent of today has clearer ideas on musical genres than the majority of musicologists who have made such a fuss about them.

Undoubtedly each genre has its typical forms, even if the opposite is not true, i.e. that a form is *not* sufficient to define a genre. It is also well established that styles of genre exist: but the practice of stylistic quotation has become so familiar that no one is willing to accept a style of genre as an identity document any longer.

In any case the formal and technical rules, on a compositional level, play a major role in all musical genres, not only in the so called "cultivated" ones. There are rules which have a written code, in theoretical treatises or teaching manuals, and others, no less important, which are passed on by oral tradition or through model works. This is also valid for those rules which refer to performance techniques, to instrumental characteristics, to a musician's ability. The trumpet player in a classical orchestra and the one in a big band are certainly on the same level from the point of view of sight reading and memory, but from that of embouchure, extension and improvisation they are not in agreement and the interpretation of a rhythmical pattern of dotted quavers and semiquavers will find them in disagreement. The guitarists in a punk group and Andres Segovia have different ideas on the concept of tuning and memory, not to mention all the other aspects. The banality itself of these examples shows how well rooted the rules of genres are in our musical culture. But, to return to the level of compositional structure, one cannot help but notice the number of conventions omitted, the codes governing these aspects of music in such a well-rooted way as to appear banal, but which do show their importance {55-56} when compared to other musical cultures or when they are questioned by historical development, or also, as in this case, when one tries to find their nuances.

This is the case of the choice between "musical sounds" and "noise", of note systems, of the conception of musical time, of the importance to be given to various elements (melodic, harmonic, rhythmic), of the level of complexity that an entire musical system, or a single genre is prepared to admit. There is a common element to these aspects and it is that every instant of an event involving sound contains an enormous quantity of information compared to that which it is humanly possible to manage. The musical codes reduce this quantity showing what is significant and what is not, what is worth relating to other facts and what should be considered background noise (as in the definition of silence). The typical unease of those facing an unknown musical genre or system for the first time consists in the fact that they "don't know what to listen to"; the harm done to new music by bad interpretation can be traced to this root. When facing musical genres characterized by the existence of a text, the formal and technical rules referring to it should also be taken into consideration. The use of syntax, metre, the lexical choices all contribute to the identifica-

tion of a musical genre no less than they individualize the style of a single author. More generally, the conception of the relationship text-music and the formal solutions used to broach the subject, and the subject's ideology itself, vary enormously from genre to genre.

1.2.2. Semiotic rules

Of course all the rules of genre are semiotic, since they are codes which create a relation between the expression of a musical event and its content. But in the context of rule classification it seemed to me more useful to call by this name those nearer to the traditional fields of research in this subject or some of its branches. Since I have just cited the case of musical genres with a text, it should be added that not only can a musical text be studied from the point of view of narrative strategy, as the object of textual semiotics, and with reference to the value of the possible worlds created by a narrative type of text, but that very circumstantiated rules of genre on this subject exist even if they are not written.

The narrativity itself is in question in some genres both in the text and, in particular, in the music. The fact that in this last field, research on attention control and on rhetorical devices is not yet well developed does not alter the fact that certain differences in the concept of musical development between different eras and genres appear obvious and well coded.

Then there are those rules referring to the communicative functions pointed out by Roman Jakobson in his linguistic studies: referential, emotional, imperative, phatic, metalinguistic, poetic. Jakobson holds that they are all more or less present {56-57} simultaneously in every message, but that one dominates the others. The rules of genre determine this dominance: a music which is mainly phatic is "background music" (an interesting case where a genre may include works originally intended for other uses). Attention to the aesthetic poetic factor, in different degrees and with different intentions, distinguishes "art" music from the others, as it distinguishes "progressive rock" from "hard rock", the "*chanson d'auteur*" from "pop song". The metalinguistic function is as fundamental in defining the "avant-garde" (who make no distinction between "speaking of music" - also in music - and "making music") as is the imperative function which predominates in dance music and the emotive one in film music and advertising jingles.

These are rules of genre, of course: there is a non-written agreement, for example, on the permissible level of emotional excitement which can be induced by contemporary music above which the music becomes "pamper" or neo-romantic".

The semiotic rules do not necessarily refer to the musical text (or the verbal one connected to the music) in a strict sense: the chosen definition of musical event with its wide range invites consideration of parallel codes referring to the context involved. The latter is also a case of prosemic rules which refer to the spacing of the participants in a musical event. Each genre has its own space set out in a particular way, and this would not be worth mentioning if this characteristic did not contribute to the definition of the meaning of a musical event. The relationship between the space, the community occupying it, the intensity of sound and the "synthetic force" of the music, treated by the modern press in reference to big rock festivals, were earlier dealt with by Paul Bekker in his study of symphonies and by Adorno in his essay on the use of music in radio. The distance between musicians and audience, between spectator and spectator, the overall dimensions of the event are often fundamental elements to the definition of a genre, and often guide the participants, in the right or wrong way in determining what they should expect about other rules of genre; often "how you are seated" says more about the music that will be performed than a poster does.

Codes closely parallel to musical ones are, for example, gestural-mimic codes: not only the obvious ones strongly coded by various dance forms, but also those referring to the postures and movements of singers, instrument players, conductors, the listeners and even the critics. Rules regarding dress are also similar in their principal effect which consists of reassurance about the identity of the musical event in act and in the choice of other codes.

But with fashion we are moving from the confines of the usual semiotic field to those of the sciences of behaviour and sociology. {57-58}

1 2.3. Behaviour rules

Methods of approach to this type of rule vary enormously, from those of the various psychology schools to those of so called "microsociology": but it is beyond doubt that many of the studies of this type made in the musical field have found regularities, even when they were not looking for them, within the same genre. Many of these studies are aimed at the psychology of musicians, in particular concert performers, orchestral musicians or session men, whose reactions when faced with an audience or an unknown score were analyzed. However, the audience also has psychological and behavioural reactions codified from genre to genre. We will see for example how the performer's "sincerity" is valued differently according to genres.

It is well known to those familiar with more than one genre that each genre is characterised by rules of conversation, smaller and larger rituals which more than any other rule help to make an exclusive circle of a genre and to quickly show up any intruder who is not well informed.

1.2.4. Social and ideological rules

Every genre is defined by a community of varying structure which accepts the rules and whose members participate in various forms during the course of a musical event. Distinguishing between genres according to their social functions, their internal social structure, or their classes, groups or generations that prefer them is not the task of this section of my paper: it is well known that this has been the favoured aim of genre study since the first sociological studies of music were made.

But there are cases in which this sociological information becomes a part of the set of rules for a genre: it is by no means unusual for sociological analysis to be anticipated by the precise awareness, on the part of participants in a musical event, of the social meaning and structure of that in which they are participating. For example, the division of labour typical to a genre is also a rule, and again, the link between a genre and certain age groups or social classes can become a rule, even to the point where single individuals can deny their group or class by the adoption of a certain genre.

Similar things can be said about ideological rules as about social rules. But, bearing in mind what we said about the so called hyper-rules which create hierarchies among the other rules, it seems more interesting to bring ideology back to its original meaning of "false conscience", rather than limit ourselves to the observation of the political or ideological connotations of this or that genre.

In this sense it should be noted that knowledge of the rules of a genre by one of its participants is almost always of an ideological nature, and this, amongst other {58-59} things, has stopped many militant critics (often militant in one genre only) from carrying out a scientific study of musical systems and their genres without prejudice. Ideology can not only give more importance to certain rules compared to others, but can actually conceal some, when these are found to be in contrast with others considered more "noble". However it should be stressed once more that a hierarchy of rules need not necessarily be of an ideological nature, nor need it depend on the codifying force of each rule (I admit that this can be considered a kind of "scientific" ideology).

1.2.5. Economical and juridical rules

Amongst the rules of genre, these however readily available for critical analysis, are those most often subject to ideological concealment. One does not expect a musician or a listener of a given genre to let us know the economical and juridical background that guarantee the survival and prosperity of that genre; one does expect this from an avid critic of that genre. This is a very representative example of the difference between ideological hierarchies and hierarchies formed due to the force of codification: these rules, the strength and importance of which has actually been transformed into state laws, can be concealed behind the artist's independence or "the anger of a generation".

Naturally the opposite can also happen: this is the case of certain pseudo-sociological or pseudo-political studies in which the importance of the economical structure is blown up out of proportion and the other elements are declared accessory, not on the basis of a sci-

entific analysis but merely so that they cannot influence the conclusions already drawn.

1.3. The musical community

A musical event can involve variously structured communities. Thanks to the type of definition we have accepted here for genre and musical event, the community involved does not necessarily coincide with that physically present at the moment in which the sounds may be heard. This may be banal, but it indicates clearly that a study of genres cannot coincide with a sociology of musical consumption (with which the press often confuses it) even if this can be included. Proof of this can be seen in the fact that a genre, in order to be called such, does not necessarily have to have what is normally meant by the term "audience". This last statement is to the point. The structure of a musical community is typical of a genre, to the point where it often becomes part of its range of rules (as we have seen in 1.2.4., above). But we must keep in mind the historicity of the categories through which we can analyse this structure and, more importantly, of those which become part of the rules of genre. {59-60}

Common notions of composer, player, manager, listener, critic and so on are too obviously connected with a definite period and culture: we can use these to study various phenomena taking place outside that area, but only for convenience, specifying the conditions in which they are used. It is not necessary to delve too far back, finding references in ancient history or ethnomusicology, in order to give examples of the inadequacy of the categories just mentioned. It is enough to see how many distinctions are needed in order to use the same category of performer or player for Arthur Rubinstein and for Keith Emerson, or for the two trumpet players mentioned earlier (see. 1.2.1.). The best solution to this problem seems to me to be always to refer as precisely as possible to the role played by each single participant in a musical event, even if this makes for some excessive pedantry.

Apart from the functions attached to the various tasks within a genre, there are the characteristic functions of the different genres that form a musical system. With what purpose do musical communities form? Are there connections of any kind between these communities and the others into which society is divided for other purposes or on the basis of other analytical criteria? It seems obvious to me that the sociology of music cannot answer these "classical" questions if it does not take into consideration all the components which go to form the definition of a genre, refusing the contrast between the instruments of analysis based on research and those of an hermeneutic nature. I believe that one must recognize the validity of different approaches in various fields of research. It is a well-known fact that big differences in social functions and in the participation of various social classes and strata can be found even between genres that the first sociological studies would have lumped together under a single heading. The contribution offered by the various methods of analysis to these results is indistinguishable.

The thing that has caused most damage to sociological studies is that kind of sociology which attributes the same awareness to the object of analysis as to that of the analyst. According to this point of view, classes, groups and generations would always be conscious of their precise role in musical reality, an awareness one would hardly attribute to them in other fields. However, this is a risk in this study too, not least in the notion of musical community on which it is based. In what way are the rules of genre codified? How aware is the musical community of this codification? Is this awareness on the same level for all the members of the community? Let us clear up these questions straight away.

1.3.1. The conditions of codification

A new genre is not born in an empty space but in a musical system that is already structured. Therefore a considerable part of the rules that define it are common to other genres already existing within the system, those that individualize the new genre being relatively few. In this context it is understandable that the characteristic group of rules is formed through the codification of those which in the beginning are only transgressions to the rules of other genres.

The nature of these transgressions can be extremely varied according to the rules in question and, consequently according to their intentionality: they go from the application of

new techniques, made possible by technological development, to the proclamation of an aesthetic programme (that is the transgression containing its codification) passing through numerous intermediary points.

The important thing is that, almost always following the success of a single musical event, these innovations are used as a model and become a rule. But one must not fall into the trap of thinking that the codification of a genre consists simply in the confirmation of a success. According to this interpretation transgressions to unbreakable rules are made first and the result then put in a sort of black box - how it works no-one knows - and if this box indicates "success" then the transgressions are codified.

A more reliable example is that some rules of genre begin to be considered outdated by some members of the musical community in spite of the fact that they are still respected. Thus an expectation is created which represents, albeit still in a vague way, the new rules. "Success" is only the codification of these rules, through the example that has been given and by the community that decrees it. As the cliché says, then, success - which has nothing to do with aesthetic value - consists in the answer to expectations. Sometimes these expectations coincide with rules already codified, at others with the desire for new codifications. That which is mysterious, or better still, that which is worth studying, is not success but its opposite: the reason why musical events with all the characteristics for working well (satisfying the rules of genre) meet only with failure. In other words why do rules deteriorate?

1.3.2. Awareness of codification

Analytical competence in a code is not essential to its use: we all learn to speak before we are taught the rules of syntax, grammar, rhetoric and semantics. The same can obviously be said for the code of a genre. In the case of codes like the linguistic one, experience tells us that analytical competence is an improvement, a way of penetrating further the infinite variety of messages possible in that code. But the same cannot be said of all the rules of genre. There are musical codes which, even more than linguistic ones, offer such a variety of combinations that the life of a man is not sufficient to achieve their complete analytical comprehension. But there are other codes which have extremely limited possibilities of combination, to the point where not only analytical competence, but even the knowledge of all the {61-62} possible messages is easily acquired in a relatively short time. There appears to be a threshold dividing "rich" codes from "poor" ones. On one side of this threshold, analytical competence, to quote a much used term, allows the reduction of excessive information and therefore increases the interest in the messages; on the other side analytical competence makes all messages predictable and therefore of little interest.

The deterioration of rules of genre can be interpreted as being tied up with the analytical comprehension of "poor" codes. As soon as a large part of the musical community can foresee more or less that which, until a short time before, was the object of directional (orientated) but not analytical expectation, the musical event which fulfils that expectation loses interest and something is required to contradict it.

A fact which can be linked with this interpretation is the following: the more a genre is founded on a group of complex rules, the more "rich" codes it will contain and the longer its rules will last. The opposite is then valid for those genres or systems consisting mainly of "poor" codes: the change of rules is much more noticeable.

However, this fact, though familiar to all observers of changes in musical fashion in the capitalist West, is not generalized to other cultures or historical periods. The phenomenon is comprehensible when we consider that what we have defined as success, or better still the opposition interest/disinterest, is a cultural unity which forms part of the motivation of musical activity in some communities but not in others; i.e. those for which the communicative aspect is of supreme importance, not those for which music is a ritual (for example). This is a demonstration of the fact that some rules of genre (for this is what they are) condition not only the use of other rules but also their process of codification and the influence of analytical competence on this. The level of interdependence between all these factors is increased by the fact that the level of competence of genre rules is not always the same at the same time for all the members of a musical community.

1.3.3. The various competences

As has been seen since the famous analysis by Adorno, codal competence varies not only from one genre to another, but also within one single component - the audience - of a given genre. It is obvious that competence varies for components such as composers, players, critics, organizers and so on. The problem is how to fit together these differences in the light of what has been said up to now.

The most obvious point is that the ideology of genre is the feature which varies most from one component to another. There will therefore be rules considered more important by one component and less so by another. But the reference to {62-63} ideology cannot be separated from the opposition between "use competence" and "analytical competence". In other words, use competence can assume an ideological character when the code to which it refers is denied as such (as a convention) and is presented as a "natural" fact. On the other hand it seems plausible that the opposition existing between use competence and analytical competence among various components of the musical community can be traced to the individual function of these components also from a non-ideological point of view. The main consequence of this difference is the possibility of an aberrant decoding, that is the use of different codes from those of the emitter. Rather than a scientific misadventure, this seems to be among the principal causes of historical movement and of the richness of musical life.

Let us suppose that a new musical event is brought to the public attention. One part of the musical community, let's say the critics, can, thanks to their analytical competence of codes, consider it an admissible variant of a genre already known. But another part, let's say the audience, can consider a particular combination of rules to which the event conforms so unusually as to be significantly against the well-established ideology, so that the creation of a new genre is considered necessary. On the other hand, the critics may not recognize, because of ideological deformation, the regular elements which link a new event to a genre already in existence. If we extend these examples to all the possible relationships within a musical community, we see that the life of genres has little or nothing in common with a Teutonic respect for rules and regulations, but rather that it is fuelled by relationships between various laws, by transgressions against them and above all by ambiguities.

2. The system of "*canzone*" in Italy today

The use of the term *canzone* implies the definition of a set of rules. To do this however we do not need to quote all the rules one by one. The theory of sets permits some operations which abbreviate this otherwise lengthy process, on the condition that we take as already defined some particular sets. This is what normally happens for any cultural unity, in order to avoid infinite regression. The following definition exemplifies this possibility.

2.1. The "*canzone*"

A *canzone* is a musical event of short duration (an average of 3-4 minutes) with lyrics. The system of *canzone* accepts sound selection, notational and structural conventions of the system of European written tradition, including those variations which are derived from contamination with Afro-American, Latin-American and European folk music. Within this system, the principal characteristics of which we {63-64} will take as read, the *canzone* can be considered a short strophic composition (intending this term in the wider sense of a repetition of similar parts) consisting of a melody which is highly influenced by the rhythmic scansion of the spoken language, usually accompanied. The melodic, harmonic, rhythmic and timbric character of the *canzone* can vary freely within the described system (with differences from genre to genre) but with the exclusion of polyphony and of the techniques of the so called New Music of the post war period. Formal and technical rules alone are not sufficient to isolate the sub-system of *canzone*. It is obvious that what has been said up to now can also be applied to some forms and genres of cultivated music within the considered musical system which no-one would dream of listing as *canzoni*, whilst at the same time recognizing the historical and cultural relationship that exists, for example, between

canzone and aria, *romanza* and Lied. The purpose of this study is not that of listing all the rules on the basis of which cultivated musical system may be distinguished from that of popular, light or mass music (a distinction which can be taken as read, here, or as the object of specific research). I believe we can accept a definition which limits the set of formal and technical rules mentioned to the sphere of popular music. The operation is scientifically correct and this is the important point here: as we have seen it is not necessary to give a complete list of the *canzone* sub-system rules, but to show 1) that a definition of *canzone* using the theoretic terms seen up to now is possible and 2) that some caution is necessary. Proof of this last point can be seen in the fact that whilst in Italian the term *canzone*, apart from vocal or instrumental forms of the Renaissance period, is without doubt limited to the area of popular music, the same cannot be said of its equivalent in other languages. The fact that Lied is not translatable as *canzone* without a series of explanations, proves that Italians and Germans wishing to discuss "songs" must work from a reasonably pedantic definition such as the one given. However, I think that the English word song can be used from now on whenever it is intended in a formal sense, using the Italian *canzone* when referring to the system or to the genre *canzone d'autore* only.

2.2. The genres of "*canzone*"

The following principal genres based on the form *canzone* (song) are present in the Italian musical system today: the traditional song, the pop song, the "sophisticated" song, the *canzone d'autore*, the political song, the rock song, the children's song.

This does not exclude the existence of other genres, which are however considered sub-genres of those listed. The case of musical events which are attributed to more than one genre at the same time is also frequent: *canzone d'autore* and rock song, *canzone d'autore* and political song, and so on. {64-65}

The differences between one genre and another will be analysed here with reference to the types of generic rules listed in the first part of this study.

2.2.1. Formal and technical rules

From the point of view of the overall formal structure, only traditional song obeys a rule which governs the use of a particular form derived from the *romanza*. The other genres have no specific forms. However, form is influenced by technical rules which touch on other structural rules, and which are linked to semiotic rules: these are rules pertaining to the level of structural complexity of the single genres. They range from maximum simplicity - recognizable from the number and regularity with which the single elements are repeated - for the pop song or children's song, to maximum complexity for the sophisticated song. One must bear in mind, however, that the same criteria are not always valid for the lyrics: in this case the *canzone d'autore* is at the highest level of complexity, with regard to richness of vocabulary, rhetoric and syntax. Both in the music and in the lyrics the different levels of complexity are expressed in the syntax, intended in the wider sense of relationship between parts. Pop, rock and children's songs are paratactic, traditional and sophisticated songs are syntactic, whilst the political song and the *canzone d'autore* are syntactic with regard to the lyrics but not necessarily to the music.

From the melodic and harmonic point of view, the model for traditional song is Puccini, whilst all the stylistic variations which emerged after the fifties can be excluded. In this sense the traditional song, if only from a musical point of view, is conservative and nationalistic. On the other hand the sophisticated song is cosmopolitan and adopts as its own the most fashionable musical styles even if they belong to other genres, as does the pop song. Compared to the pop song, however, the sophisticated song is decidedly richer, especially from a harmonic point of view. The children's song and the rock song in their choice of musical materials respect their international rules of genre: in the first case using the elementary tonal functions with melodies based on arpeggios and fragments of the major scale, and in the second using blocks of chords together with modal melodies with a clear blues influence. It must be said that these formal rules referring to the rock song, vague in themselves, are also weak when compared to the fairly rigid rules of the traditional song. In other words the rock genre can use songs which respect the formal pattern of traditional

song but not vice versa. The same formal tolerance under the melodic-harmonic profile applies to the *canzone d'autore* and to the political song. In both these cases we can speak today of a preference for chord blocks and melodies derived from various European folk traditions as well as from American country blues.

From a rhythmic point of view the widest variety of tempos and meters is found in the sophisticated song and in the traditional song: this last saves itself from the {64-66} abundant syncopation to be found in the sophisticated song, which is influenced more than any other by jazz. The tendency to respect the strong accents in a bar is at its highest in the children's song, whilst the pop song and the rock song are those where the rhythmic pulse must always be in evidence. The *canzone d'autore* is fairly open on this point, whilst the political song usually has a clear and definite rhythm.

Strictly connected with these rhythmic conventions, - moving on to orchestration - we can see that pop, rock and children's song base their rhythmic scansion on drums (and so does sophisticated song but with a more varied distribution of accents). Political song tends to do without, accepting folk percussion instruments instead (exceptions to this rule are very recent). The *canzone d'autore* oscillates between the rules of other genres, whilst the traditional song tends to accept drums only when drowned by violins.

It is almost impossible to think of the traditional song without a kind of symphony orchestra. Up to the moment of its transformation in an exhibition of songs of various genres promoted by the record industry, the Festival of San Remo was a cult centre for traditional song, and it had an orchestra containing string quintet, woodwind, brass and a modern rhythm section. Songs were also repeated by a small nightclub group in order to demonstrate their adaptability to small groups, but on the record released the big orchestra was always present. The sophisticated song also has a rich instrumental section, even a luxurious one. The "musical" concept they try to put across is that no expense has been spared in the arrangement. Pop song has no specific rules, if not that it refuses an excessive poverty in the same way as excessive virtuosity, which would be acceptable in rock song. Rock song has a characteristic, "international" timbre, so does the children's song. The *canzone d'autore* today basically accepts the instrumental set 'up of rock (drums, bass, electric guitar, keyboards) plus acoustic guitar, which is the favourite instrument of most of today's *cantautori*. In political song acoustic guitar is still dominant, occasionally accompanied by folk instruments. Electrification is still considered a violation (no less than for Dylan at Newport).'

The technical capacity of instrumentalists is connected to instrumental groups: for string, woodwind and French horn sections, both for traditional and sophisticated songs, elements, both current and obsolete, from symphonic orchestras are used. The other brass players, saxes and rhythm sections use jazz origins or draw on the idiom of dance orchestras. In pop, children's, rock songs and *canzone d'autore* autodidacts predominate. In common with most countries where the musical industry is highly developed, the recording of discs which themselves influence live performance, is in the hands of a restricted group of session men, who are proud of their ability to perform in various genres. Technical competence is therefore standardized. {66-67} It is obvious that, when left to play what they like, these musicians tend towards that which is almost everywhere known as "fusion" music. For the many unwritten parts the producer, whose job is to organize the respect or violation of the rules of genre, communicates with session men using examples of genre, such as: "This is a pop song: don't play that kind of Jaco Pastorius bass".

The amateur status of the political song separates the technical skills of its players from those of session men, and also from the session men's fetishism for big name instruments; a *cantautore* (not his accompaniers) can be a fairly poor player of his instrument.

Composers of traditional or sophisticated songs generally work using a piano, the others more often a guitar; for other genres piano is not excluded, except in the political song - where the composer is often the performer as well - for obvious historical problems of availability. In each of these cases the instruments connote the degree of knowledge of the techniques of classical composition.

Noticeable differences can be seen from a vocal point of view. In traditional song the requirements of intonation, extension and voice power are close to those for operetta, especially for male voices; whilst sophisticated song adds the need for competence in the techniques of emission deriving from jazz and of a typically feminine nature. The good male singer is a tenor and sings traditional songs, the good female singer is a star of musicals (a genre that, however, does not exist in Italy) and sings sophisticated songs.

Children's songs are sung by children, or by singers of various genres who imitate the voice most adults consider should be used when speaking to children.

Pop song does not require particular vocal gifts, whilst rock song requires a notable extension towards high notes, and phonetically a highly accentuated vocal mask. In political song ideological attention is given to the modes of traditional folk singing, but practice tends towards an operatic model, whilst accepting a popular type of deformation of the model.

In the *canzone d'autore*, things that might be considered as mistakes of intonation, emission and bad pronunciation in other genres are accepted as characteristics of individual personality, which is of primary importance in this genre.

At the conclusion of this paragraph we come to the rules governing lyrics: we can see that the tendency of the *canzone d'autore* towards individual characterization can be seen above all in the vocabulary, which is richer and more open to literary suggestions. Among other genres, a rich lexicon can also be found in sophisticated and political song, where the influence of the written language is also evident, but, obviously, pertaining to other types of literature (literary genres).

Certain expedients connoting a lower, old fashioned, form of poetry, like putting the adjective before the noun (which is admitted in Italian, but not frequent), {67-68} or apocope to obtain words accented on the last syllable (*amor* instead of *amore*) are, however, more typical of the traditional song, and in the *canzone d'autore* constitute only individual variants. The poetical character of the *canzone d'autore* is more commonly based on preference for metaphors, whilst it cannot be said that the verse undergoes a treatment different from other genres. A big problem for all genres of Italian *canzone* is that of words accented on the last syllable, especially where the English and American musical influence is strongly felt. The ideology of the rock song genre for example is that the Italian language is not suitable for this music, and that it is sung in Italian only for questionable commercial reasons. Italian rock singers are all trying to persuade their record producers to let them conquer the world market by singing in English. Many rock and pop song composers and also perhaps a few *cantautori* compose their melodies singing in a false English which they then translate into Italian. This results in a vast amount of words accented on the last syllable, and since these are very limited in number in Italian repetition and impoverishment of vocabulary are automatic.

2.2.2. Semiotic rules

Textual strategies vary from genre to genre. Political songs must show without doubt that the world they speak of is the real world, as it is today or as it was during a particular moment in history. Traditional, pop, rock and sophisticated songs show a possible world which is an elementary variant of the real one, a scene in which the listener can take the place of the song's protagonist. Generational and sociological connotations can vary in these genres, but not the identification mechanism. This is also valid for children's song, where the possible world coincides more obviously with the infantile imagination, which cannot be denied to contain a reality comparable to the real world of an adult.

The case of the *canzone d'autore* is different: the listener must always remember that the song's protagonist is another person, and, if there is identification, it is directly with the singer, not with the protagonist of each song. The *cantautore* is a poet with whom the listener relates: this will be shown later to be a fairly recent rule.

To this we can connect the aesthetic and metalinguistic functions which predominate the *canzone d'autore*. Traditional and sophisticated songs are also objects of aesthetic attention, but the principal communicative function is the emotional one, as in pop, children's

and rock songs. In rock there is a big imperative component, whilst political song often has a referential and emotional function, and is exempt by rule from aesthetic judgement.

Since a song is a complex system of signs, the various communicative functions are sustained in various degrees by the component signs. In the musical event {68-69} consisting of one song only, aesthetic attention is concentrated mainly on lyrics in the case of *canzone d'autore*, on the vocal interpretation of a traditional song and on music in a sophisticated song (with other contributing elements, of course). Obviously one can say that any one song is "beautiful", but what I have been trying to underline is that in some genres a particular auto-reflexivity is essential before a certain song can become a part of that genre.

The iconographic codes of record sleeves and photos of singers are also adapted to the aforementioned communicative functions.

Prosemic codes are closely bound to the spatial structure of the places in which musical events of various genres are performed. But that these are codes of space and not simple derivations of the economy of a genre can be seen by noting that certain typical distances are observed even in places not usually associated with that genre. So a typical theatrical set up with audience in seats will be seen in a traditional or sophisticated song concert even when held in the open air, whilst the fact that the audience stands or sits on the ground marks a conventional limit between a performance of political songs and one of *canzone d'autore*, thus demonstrating that these codes are not only linked to the average age of the audience.

Children's songs exist exclusively on records or in television, whilst a rock concert tends to offer a spatial relationship between musicians and audience of a dictatorial nature.

An interesting aspect of prosemic rules in Italian *canzone* is the fact that there are very few places suitable for holding musical shows in Italy, so that the various genres are often performed in the same places. This does not stop violation of the rules from being noticed: this shows that a rule of genre is not established as a statistical fact but through the opposition to other rules and the relationship with the whole system.

For example, the opinion shared by the *canzone d'autore* community is that the best place to hold a recital is in a theatre with low acoustic resonance, in which the audience can be near the stage, dominating it from above rather than being dominated, and without the audience being too spread out. Such a theatre probably does not exist in Italy.

One of the reasons why some *cantautori* have started using a form of concert similar to a rock concert in recent years can be traced to the lack of suitable facilities. You cannot entertain your audience between one song and the next or count on the fact that everyone will see your expression of suffering when you are reduced to the size of a pin' in the middle of a stadium. It can be seen from this how the spatial codes are connected to gestural, mimic and facial codes. Due to the lack of detailed study on this subject, for which the numerous photographs existing should provide abundant material, this subject will be dealt with in the next section, dedicated to codes of behaviour. {69-70}

2.2.3. Behaviour rules

The instrument that reveals these codes in detail is the television camera, thanks to its capacity for entering the sphere of "private distance" of a singer.

Traditional and sophisticated singers are in their element on television; their gestures are no different to those of the presenters (whom they often replace). The pop singer is in his element too, but tends to overdo the smiles and raised eyebrows which reveal his underlying anxiety to please.

The rock singer and the *cantautore* are uncomfortable on television: the former because television is too bourgeois, and is too small for his exaggerated gestures, and the second because it is too stupid; anyway the *cantautore* must always give the impression of being uncomfortable in front of his audience, because privacy is his "true" dimension. In either case nervous tics are acceptable. The singer for children has no specific image: in some cases he is a *cantautore* who decides to write children's songs, but in most cases he is an anonymous singer who records the theme song of an afternoon television programme; but who does not appear in public, not even on television. The political singer hardly ever ap-

pears on television, and the gestures associated with him are those of the participant in a political meeting, though he is also permitted a degree of the "privacy" of the *cantautore*. Rules of conversation and codified etiquette exist for every song genre. For example, there are those regulating the behaviour of interviewer and interviewee, those which say what should happen to a singer after a concert, those referring to the behaviour of the audience and those referring to the relationships between critics and organizers when they meet.

Coverage of all these would take more space than the whole of this study put together: therefore I shall limit myself to the more obvious cases of violation. The semiologist Umberto Eco has said that the difference between comedy and tragedy is in the fact that, whilst both are cases of violation of rules of behaviour, in a tragedy the broken rule is mentioned frequently, while in a comedy it is never mentioned, thus taking it for granted that everybody knows (except of course the one at whom the laughter is aimed). This, according to Eco, is the reason why Greek tragedies still have an effect on us, whilst for the most part the comicality of comedies (that which is not dependent on rules which have survived the centuries) is lost. If this theory is valid, then laughter is a sign of transgression from a rule known by the person laughing, and therefore of the rule itself.

In Italy, for example, people laugh if, during a *cantautore's* press conference, someone asks him if he is going to get married, a perfectly normal question for traditional or sophisticated singers (even if with different meaning from one to the other), and absolutely prohibited for a rock singer (even if the Italian rock singer is not as aggressive as his Anglo-American models, and behaves like a "good boy" in {70-71} front of the journalists, just like a pop singer, or is accessible, ironic and moderately intellectual, like a *cantautore*).

An example of how rules of behaviour are linked with the ideology of a genre, and with other rules, comes from the *canzone d'autore*. In reaction to a period during which the *canzone d'autore* was the object of attention by critics in a very pedantic, ideologised way, and in which the *cantautore* had to learn to act like a politician or a philosopher, the opinion spread that in fact these were only songs after all. A *cantautore's* sentence: "It's a matter of *canzonette* (light songs)", echoed in songs, interviews, articles and even in the title of a record, has sanctioned the existence of a rule which states that a *cantautore* should not make serious declarations longer than one phrase, and then should make fun of it; according to this same rule, an interviewer who quotes Adorno will be laughed at in exactly the same way as the one who speaks of marriage. But the ideological character of this rule can be seen from the fact that no *cantautore* would dream of not following all the other rules that distinguish him from the true producers and singers of *canzonette*, those who work in the fields of traditional or pop songs.

First and foremost, no *cantautore* would decline from affirming his sincerity. In traditional or pop song sincerity is not a problem: no one cares if the singer suffers or is happy in the same way as the song's protagonist, as long as the imitation is plausible and does not disturb the listener's identification with the standard situation described. But no one would stand for a *cantautore* or a political singer who shows false sentiments or ideas. The cases of rock and sophisticated song are slightly different: in these two genres the sociological character of identification is more marked, and therefore we ask for, if not a soul-baring sincerity, at least a higher grade of generational or social credibility.

2.2.4. Social and ideological rules

As it has been said in the first part, these rules, at a macro-social level, have nothing to do with consumer statistical data. The working class for example buy mostly pop songs, but in a strict connotative sense the term "working-class song" generally meant, until a few years ago, political song and today it probably means, if anything, traditional song. Consumption of rock music connotes the social area of unemployed and marginalised young people, even if the major part of those attending rock concerts are students from the lower middle and bourgeois classes (since young people in Italy were much more and longer dependent on their families, rock never had an audience comparable to those of its original countries). Sophisticated song is also ideological in this sense, as it always tries, through its lyrics, arrangements, record sleeves, etc. to connote a social position superior to that of its consumers. {71-72}

Less easy to collocate is children's song: it is legitimate to assume that a large part of these records which enter the charts are bought by adults for children for whom they consider them suitable, but the success is so great, constituting a considerable slice of the singles market, that one must believe that children themselves form a consistent part of the market.

The *canzone d'autore*, however, perhaps conforming to its "sincerity", appears to have a social image which corresponds to its actual area of consumption: that is lower middle and middle-class intellectuals, students, the Italy of mass secularisation, of the university open to everyone and of intellectual unemployment.

At the musical community level, the *canzone d'autore* can be distinguished from the others by the identification between singer and author, both of the lyrics and of the music. This it must be said - is in spite of the numerous attempts in its history to qualify it simply as art song, or quality song. Probably this rule, to which very few exceptions are tolerated, is due to the particular valuation of sincerity which I mentioned before: a singer cannot be considered sincere if he is not singing music, or worse still, lyrics not written by him. To give an abstract example, a song like *You've got to hide your love away*, which according to a famous John Lennon interview is the dividing line of his transformation from pop to that which in Italy is called *canzone d'autore*, could not have been considered a *canzone d'autore* if it had not been ascertained that Paul McCartney had nothing to do with it. But of course Lennon should have sung it alone or with an accompanying group, and not in the Beatles: all the Beatles became, in a way, *cantautori* only when the group split.

Two or three Italian musical groups who could be included in the genre of *canzone d'autore*, are barely accepted as such because of this, and when this happens it is usual that one member of the group is described as a *cantautore*, and the others his backing group, even if this is clearly not true.

In other aspects, the musical communities of various genres of *canzone* are fairly homogeneous, if we exclude the case of the political song, where the singer is usually also his own manager, producer and discographer. This synthesis of roles, but with a more marked division of labour, can be found in other genres as well, but not as a rule.

2.2.5. Economical and juridical rules

With the exception of the political singer, all singers belong to the same economical system, characterized by the presence of the larger record companies and management agencies. But there are differences between one genre and another. The *cantautore*, thanks to his copyrights, can almost double the sum other singers receive from the sale of their records, and since in Italy performance rights are not {72-73} recognized he is the only one to earn anything, or a lot, from diffusion by radio or television

This has created a situation whereby the *cantautore* is less economically dependent on live performances; moreover, until a few years ago it was the rule for *cantautori* to perform alone. Their concerts therefore had the only overheads of advertising, theatre and P.A. hire, and copyright taxes of which almost a half are returned to the *cantautore* himself). Today a *cantautore's* tour is more costly and has assumed a more promotional character. The same applies to rock singers and groups, though these have much higher overheads, must divide royalties and copyrights with far more people, and can count on a proportionally smaller record market compared to the expense. When you know that the average price of a ticket to a *cantautore* or rock concert in Italy is less than half that of other European countries, you can understand why the rock group phenomenon cannot reach really professional levels in Italy: even the most famous groups on the scene, frequently present in record charts, do other jobs, principally as session men, in order to earn their living. The only rock singers able to achieve a certain degree of prosperity through their work are, in fact, *cantautori*.

Pop, traditional and sophisticated singers rely above all on performances in dance halls, which can pay pretty high fees all year, thanks to the fact that there are no particular limits to the price of tickets. For these singers the record is their main promotional vehicle. Children's song, as has been said, is exclusively a recorded product: its economical rule consists in convincing, in various ways I leave to your imagination, TV programmers to chose

this or that song as title song of some well-known Japanese cartoon.

Up until a few years ago political song concerts were offered free by the various political parties and other mass organizations, and frequently groups or singers were commissioned for a series of performances, sometimes with a fixed salary. Then political song was equalled to the *canzone d'autore*, which brought about an evident economic crisis even before the artistic-ideological one arrived since all the other economic conditions are different and inferior to those of the *canzone d'autore*. Also in this case, the factor which seems to characterize the Italian situation with regard to economic rules is the rigidity with which concert ticket prices are established. The variation between minimum and maximum is the same, 500 lire, within the same group of genres: *canzone d'autore*, rock, political song on one side, traditional, pop and sophisticated on the other. If an increase or decrease on this amount is practised, it can mean a risk of disturbances or desertion (if it costs too little, it is probably worth little); but even a minimum increase is a risk. There is a precise idea within the musical community of what a concert should cost: frequently the same person may be willing to spend 7000 lire in a discotheque and then { 73-74 } protest if a rock concert ticket costs 4000 lire. Inherited from some components of the political movement between 1968 and 1977, this economical, ideological rule afflicts first and foremost those same musical genres (as political song) which identified to a greater extent with this movement.

And now that history has once more made its entrance in this study, we can take a closer look at it.

3. Development of the "*canzone d'autore*"

The *canzone d'autore* made its appearance at the end of the fifties, in a system of *canzone* radically different from that in existence today. The principal genres in Italian *canzone* at that time were: the Neapolitan or dialect song, the traditional song, the variety show song (a genre which is no longer present) and the night-club song (a genre which has divided and been transformed). Research in the field of folk music began in these years, and there was no political song as a genre (the rebirth of this genre in Italy is connected to the rediscovery of resistance songs within the studies on folklore). At this time there were no children's song as a genre, American rock songs were consumed in no specific context and a specific production of records for simultaneous mass consumption could not yet be said to exist. The *canzone d'autore* was born into this system, from an accumulation of transgressions of the rules of the genres which form it.

Since the strongest rule of genre in the definition of the *canzone d'autore* is, as we have seen, the joining of the roles of author and singer, it may be useful to look at a few examples of *cantautori ante litteram*, singers and songwriters who had already done a similar work in the years immediately preceding the birth of the genre, without their belonging to well-known genres being questioned.

Of these the most famous, outside Italy too, is Domenico Modugno. Modugno's career is marked from the beginning by the search for a characteristic which will become a rule of genre for the *canzone d'autore*, that is being a "personality" identifiable with the song's protagonist. Modugno carried on this search first as a dialect singer (born in Puglia, his first song was Sicilian, and then Neapolitan), with a strong vocal characterization, very particular emission of vowels like "o" and "e", which accentuates the popular character of lyrics and music; then, after a spell in cabaret in Rome, he entered the area of production and consumption of 'the traditional song, playing the role of an extravert innovator. The text of his song *Vecchio frac*, in 1955, can seem today to be a barely disguised metaphor of a goodbye to the old ways of considering show-business and song. Paradoxically, however, the success of Modugno's "personality" decreed by the world-wide triumph of *Volare (Nel blu dipinto di blu)* puts in second place his characteristics as an autonomous creator: *Volare*, instead of becoming the first song of a new genre, becomes { 74-75 } the last world-wide success of the traditional song, a modern version of *O sole mio*. Modugno's personality, from that time on, will be more useful to television, cinema and theatre (*Mackie Messer* with Strehler) than to the *canzone d'autore*.

Of different origins are Renato Carosone and Fred Buscaglione. To be honest neither of them write their own songs (this is also true of many Modugno's songs), neither are they soloists (they are both leaders of small night-club groups), and their personalities are more those of variety entertainers than the literary ones of *cantautori*.

That which brings them closer to the dawning *canzone d'autore* is the fact that they realized the deterioration of existing genres, and showed the will to renovate the tired framework of Italian *canzone*: Carosone and Buscaglione did this by using satire or parody, both in the lyrics and in the music. There are notable differences between the two: Carosone mixes Neapolitan and American elements in a some-times moralistic satire of the Italians' dependence on foreign cultural models, or in the parody of tear-jerking traditional songs. Buscaglione plays the role of a provincial Humphrey Bogart, distorting the American cliché in the way he uses it and italianises it for himself.

But in spite of their great success, in spite of the modernity and realism of their songs, no new genre is born after Carosone and Buscaglione. However innovative, their ideas are tied to mechanisms of consumption which are becoming decadent (nightclubs), whilst the time in which the most could be made of their visual impact is still far off.

It is significant that today Carosone and Buscaglione records have become a cult with certain audiences, who consider them the unconscious anticipators not of the *canzone d'autore* but of Frank Zappa and cabaret-rock.

The *canzone d'autore* is born in a moment when the visual image of a singer is given mainly through magazines, partly through record sleeves (many singles are still sold in a standard sleeve with no photo), whilst the only television channel broadcasting popular music is occupied with review shows or with already famous guests, traditional or foreign. The media through which the industry can reach the audience promotionally are mainly two: radio and jukeboxes. The radio, firmly under the control of the Christian Democrats, has a "listener's commission which exercises (and will continue to do so for many years) a true censure, principally of lyrics but also of music (using technical pretexts). This means that the only means for bringing new ideas to the public's attention, especially the young audience's, is through jukebox or through the record shops where the proprietors are still in the habit of letting customers listen to a wide selection of new records without any obligation to buy.

This being the situation, it is easier to reach mass diffusion for a product which {75-76} is not too far removed from existent standards, is not too attached to a definite way of consumption, and which, if it is different, has elements of difference which are easily identifiable through the most important media of the moment.

The first song by a *cantautore* to have success was *Arrivederci* by Umberto Bindi, not the composer's version but that of Marino Barreto Jr., a night-club singer of Brazilian origins. Apart from the good musical construction and the high level of production compared to that of light songs of the day, there were two elements which contributed to the song's success and which created two rules of genre: 1) the lyrics which do not over dramatise the classical situation of two lovers parting, substituting the emblematic *addio* (goodbye) with a more day-to-day greeting; 2) the voice: even if not that of the songwriter, thanks to certain hardness in the pronunciation and the aphonia of Barreto, it breaks with the tradition of "belcanto" tenors, putting into first place the sincerity of the singer so that the correct vocal performance became a thing of secondary importance. Whilst Carosone's parodies of Italian drama (in songs like *E la barca torno sola*) only defined what could be done in a negative way, and whilst Modugno had only brought up to date the classical beautiful Italian singing, the success of *Arrivederci* on the other hand demonstrated two new positive variants of the song model, and above all within the most popular theme, that of love.

Arrivederci was followed by *Il nostro concerto*, sung by Bindi himself, which accentuates another characteristic of the *canzone d'autore*, but in this case only of the early period under examination: the search for good musical quality, and at least for a considerable difference from other genres in production.

There is, in the ideology of the dawning genre, an awareness of the task of saving the Italian *canzone* from the stupidity and standardization to which the record publishers' routine had brought it. Not by chance are men of letters involved in this ferment - like Italo Calvino who wrote lyrics for the group *Cantacronache* - or songwriters willing to sing their own songs, as the *cantautori* do, to prove to the cowardly publishers that they could be a success.

The birth of the *canzone d'autore* takes place in a moment of great transformation for the music industry: the publishers, who, until a few years before wanted only to have songs sung by as many singers as possible, having more success according to the number of versions made of the same song, tend to integrate with the record industry. This is proof that the success of a song depends more and more on there being one and one only performer, and one version only, following the record's diffusion, and of electronic media, compared to the live performance. Within a few years publishers assumed the aspect we know today: the means by which record industry is indemnified, if possible with a profit, for its promotional costs, for and through radio and television. {76-78}

The fact that with the *canzone d'autore* songwriter and singer become an integrated whole (and the same thing will happen with the Beatles a few years later) cannot be considered simply a coincidence.

The *cantautore*, who maybe sings out of tune, but who has a good song and arrangement, is worth more to the record industry than a musical score which could sell only to a few hundred small dance orchestras.

The failure of the hypothesis of radical innovation put forward by the *Cantacronache* is understandable since it was still attached to the old conception of song as a text, independent from its musical performance, and therefore documented on cheaply produced records: it is also understandable that the main result of the *Cantacronache* was the re-establishment of political song.

However, the capitalist industry was no more far sighted. In the beginning the recording company Ricord, who had signed the first *cantautori* from Genoa (Bindi, Paoli, Tenco) and from Milan (Jannacci, Gaber), does not seem to have had too much faith in the phenomenon, considering it limited to a bourgeois intellectual audience, for the most part cabaret fans. It is true that the cultural horizon of the individual *cantautore* is literary, with French existentialist influences - gained from the chansonniers - or jazz and rock influences (both were reserved in Italy to a few connoisseurs, and therefore intellectualized), but it is also true that there already existed a vast student audience, ready to recognize in these imported values an alternative to the then current production. This audience did not live in garrets, did not fall in love because they have nothing better to do, did not go to dubious bars (all situations described in songs of that period) but they were nevertheless more willing to relate to this type of life, in reality lived by few, than with the mammas or broken hearts of traditional songs.

The important thing is not a particular conception of life, but a general non-conformism connected with some musical renovation. A new generation of consumers, young consumers, was being born in Italy too, and their main characteristic was that they opposed all the models of musical consumption of other generations.

It was not just by chance, therefore, that the real push towards the diffusion of the *canzone d'autore*, along with the invention of the name *cantautore* (in 1960), came from the multinational company RCA.

The first *cantautori* of the Italian RCA (Meccia, Vianello, Fidenco, all from Rome) were much more juvenile than their colleagues from Genoa or Milan, and their anti-conformism was much less literally (one song is titled *I Hate All Old Women*).

The music too was new, thanks more to the use of special arrangements and recording techniques than for reasons of compositional structure; and it was far closer to American styles than the Genoese or Milanese were. If Neil Sedaka did not have {77-78} such atrocious pronunciation his Italian records, which were very successful, could easily be confused with those of the first Roman *cantautori*. In fact after a short time those for whom this name was coined stop being true *cantautori*, contributing to the birth of the modern

Italian pop song: fashionable, easy to listen to and realistic. But the genre *canzone d'autore* was already established, and RCA covered the situation by signing some of the best Genoese *cantautori*, using the best arrangers and launching them on a vast scale, during a period when this American company has the monopoly of the Italian market.

From a tired musical system, in need of renovation, the birth of new genres was so achieved: one was the pop song, under American influence, which united in the same genre the anomalies created in the preceding years by Adriano Celentano's rock or by the so called *urlatori* (shouters); and the *canzone d'autore*, which at that time could also be called "quality song": the interpreters of that which we today call sophisticated song began to emerge from the sea of light songs, *canzonette*, by singing songs of the *cantautori*.

However much the musical journalist of the time talk about the "difficult" nature of the *canzone d'autore*, comparing it with the "escapist" one of other genres, the *cantautore* is still regarded as a songwriter rather than a poet. This observation is valid both from the point of view of ideology of genre and from that of the objective importance of lyrics compared to music.

But many new things happen: the world-wide success of the Beatles moved the attention for innovation in another direction, whilst the professional songwriters seem to have understood that a song of quality can be made without using the old models, and using new interpreters.

The *cantautori* found that a considerable part of the young audience, and of the bourgeois audience too, had been taken away from them. The *cantautore* found himself with limited autonomy with respect to his genre, having to compete with beat music on one hand and the more commercial song genres on the other, in their same territory. The suicide of Luigi Tenco at the 1967 San Remo Festival, when his song failed to reach the final, is emblematic, whilst the world-wide success of Bob Dylan already indicated a new road: a song nearer to traditional folk ballad than to the melodramatic model, poorer in melody but metrically freer, richer in syllables, thanks to the possibility of repeating notes and even of reciting.

The first to follow this model is Francesco Guccini. His first record was released in 1967, but some of his songs had already been successful in the preceding years when sung by rock groups. Guccini translated the tones of Dylan's protest and apocalypse as well as those of the beat generation poets into Italian; the anarchic, visionary nature of his early lyrics brought him to the fore in the climate of the rigorous protest of the reborn political song, and of the domesticated protest of other {78-79} genres (all Italian songs at that time were protesting against or for something).

The *canzone d'autore's* student audience had their attention fixed on social and political motives, and this made them concentrate more and more on lyrics, considering them the only able to qualify the song from a political point of view.

A specialization of genre is so created, so that whereas in rock - which is based on English progressive rock models - lyrics are an excuse to have a voice participating or at the most an illustration of the music, in the *canzone d'autore* and in political song the music is a background only occasionally illustrating the lyrics.

During the early seventies, whilst political song appears to have covered the whole area of the *canzone d'autore*, one of the first generation *cantautori*, Giorgio Gaber, made his debut in the theatre with a show consisting of songs and monologues, showing the desire to maintain an autonomy of his genre, and proving the importance assumed by the verbal text.

It is by putting the accent decidedly on lyrics and on their poetical function rather than the mainly referential one of the political song, that the *canzone d'autore* achieves its final comeback. For a brief period the new *cantautori*, Francesco De Gregori and Antonello Venditti among the first, are presented as representatives of the "new song" (by an association with the "nueva canción chilena" of the Unidad Popular period), but this political connotation is soon overcome, and, especially with regard to De Gregori, the new singers/songwriters are spoken of as "poets".

It is in 1974 that the genre receives its first official constitution, with the first meeting of the *canzone d'autore* (*Rassegna della canzone d'autore*) organized by the Tenco Club at San Remo, a meeting which is still in existence and that has been flanked until 1980 by four "new song" congresses.

The reborn autonomy of the genre met with some difficulty: a big impression was made by the "political trial" conducted by the audience against Francesco De Gregori during a concert at the Palalido in Milan, a trial which ended with some people inviting De Gregori "to commit suicide like Mayakovsky". The true accusation is substantially that a singer who had been considered a political singer was not following the rules of that genre, and not that he was a non-political *cantautore*.

But the equation *cantautore* = poet is quickly established (the formula of the condemnation just implied it), showing itself in the most various ways, from the poetic content claimed by amateur imitators, to the collaboration between a *cantautore*, Lucio Dalla, and a "real" poet, Royersi; naturally this affirmation is not a stranger to the falling tide of the political experiences of the early seventies, because the average Italian's culture collocates poetry in a purely private, subjective life.

In this concentration of aesthetic attention, the impoverishment of the musical content is soon noticed: the answer - also to foreign competition - is entrusted to {79-80} richer arrangements. It is the period of the triumph of disco-music, and many rock groups are in difficulty as a result. Fabrizio De André, one of the *cantautori* of the Sixties, goes on tour with PFM, one of the best known rock groups, and has great success.

"At last" everyone is saying "the *canzone d'autore* has its own musical dimension". But this tour demonstrated something else besides: that, in spite of the fact that big rock concerts in Italy had been the scene of disturbances for years, to the point where foreign singers and groups avoided this country until 1979, the *cantautori* could fill this gap, still maintaining something of the political meeting and integrating it with the rituals of a rock concert. The height of the *cantautori* success was reached in 1979 with the colossal Dalla-De Gregori tour, where these two appeared in stadiums like rock stars do, and like rock stars were greeted by the lighting of thousands of matches. The first foreign rock star to return to Italy was Patti Smith, who was presented as a *cantautrice*, "poetess of rock". The following year, in spite of the successful tours of Edoardo Bennato and Angelo Branduardi, is a year of crisis for the *canzone d'autore*, at least according to the Club Tenco members, who entitle the discussion at their congress: "Rock Versus Canzone". The *canzone d'autore* has been pushed so close to rock (as it was years before to political song) that in economical terms it has felt the consequences of its competition (during the year of a world comeback of rock) and in technical terms feels the need to redefine the confines and ideology of the genre. It is a question which involves not only the critics but also the whole *canzone d'autore* community, so that, whilst the specialists in the field are discussing a musical revaluation which excludes the rock aspects and easy solutions in terms of arrangement, the audience faithful to the genre (but also a wider one) acclaims the success of Enzo Jannacci and Paolo Conte. The former is, among the *cantautori* of the first generation, the one decidedly less literary, tending more towards comedy, thanks also to the collaboration with Dario Fo, whilst the latter, after writing successful pop songs, started recording by himself only in 1975.

Jannacci is a doctor, Conte a lawyer; both are over 40, both sing in an untidy way with a certain gestural embarrassment, both have a solid musical preparation even if they are self-taught. Both use a particularly rich vocabulary, which is characterized by social extraction or geographical location (Jannacci lives in Milan, Conte in Asti, a small town in Piedmont), they knowledgeably mix poetic and prosaic tones, they use rhymed verse without recourse to banal words accented on the last syllable. If their songs are musically fairly well characterized (with frequent stylistic quotations from various genres or periods), arrangements appear deliberately anonymous and out of fashion.

In other words these two accumulate a series of violations of the current rules of the *canzone d'autore*, partly by returning to the character of the origins, and partly by showing that they respect the hope for renewal, whilst still respecting many of the fundamental rules. It is possible that a future study of the *canzone d'autore* will show as rules of a future

period those which today appear as individual characteristics of these two *cantautori*.