Italian Cowboy Songs:

The Wild West in the Countercultural Imagination

"It was not just of fights; this frontier was of guitars as well."

Jorge Luis Borges[1]

In the years encompassing the social unrest in Italy in the late 1960s and 1970s, the most popular countercultural *cantautori* of the long decade produced a considerable amount of American-cowboy music. These songs and albums, while not necessarily country-western in musical style, featured gunslingers on horseback, 'Indians',[2] prairies, bison and trains. In a countercultural climate that was anti-capitalist, anti-individualist, and against a postwar Italian governmental and economic establishment that had been greatly influenced by the U.S., the songs stand out as apparently incongruous, and from their singular position, they provide a font of information about Italian *cantautori*, the influence of U.S. musical paragon, Bob Dylan, who acted as a guiding voice, and the counterculture itself.

This chapter proposes two reasons for which the myth of the U.S. West, known in Italian as *il Far West*,[3] was extremely popular despite its apparent incompatibility with Italian countercultural values. Firstly, it appears the myth had become a nearly empty vessel for diverse content after years of the excavation of meaning, in a process analyzed by Roland Barthes in his 1957 treatise on modern media and mythology.[4] Barthes claims that the language of myth has the power to create empty vessels for ideology by allowing a formal signifier to refer back to a system of ideas constructed between it and the original sign. The meaning of myth, he says, "is already

complete, postulates a past, a memory, a comparative order of ideas. When it becomes form, the meaning leaves its contingency behind, empties itself, history evaporates, only the letter remains."[5] In the case of *il Far West*, it seems that the form had become overly empty, through distance and distortion, and so the system of ideas it represented was not a single commonly accepted and understood ideology, but, rather, varying sets of ideological systems. This chapter proposes that it is this very nature of the myth that made it so popular in Italy during years that saw the nation extremely divided at nearly all levels. That is, Italians from multiple factions could paste their own narrative and ideals on that of the chameleon heroes in the West. Secondly, it's important to understand how the myth was sanctioned for the public by a chain of grace that departed from postwar comic books to *western all'italiana* films and mainstream media more broadly, then, crucially, from Bob Dylan to the Italian *cantautori* Francesco Guccini and Francesco De Gregori.[6] Fabrizio De André, as we shall see, takes a critical stance against the foreign myth in his music, at a time, near the end of the revolutionary years, when the counterculture itself had begun to break apart into factions that conspicuously mimicked the 'Cowboys and Indians' of the myth.

In order to understand why, precisely, the myth was popular in Italy, it will be useful, first, to understand just how popular it was. As was the case in the U.S., *il Far-West* landscape appeared almost ubiquitously across Italian media leading up to, and continuing into, the long decade of revolution that began at the end of the 1960s. *Tex Willer*, an Italian-produced comic-book series about a Texas Ranger in the frontier West was the bestselling comic book from 1948 to 1989, including during the years in question here. *Western all'italiana* film releases in Italy—better known in the U.S. as Spaghetti Westerns—peaked in 1968 with 72 films, and continued in popularity even through the economic depression of the 1970s with a second, smaller peak of 42 releases in 1974, until the genre eventually began to fade out, across the western world, around

1978.[7] On television, there were ads such as Carne Montana's western-styled Gringo campaign, 1966-1979, while RAI aired the musical comedy show *Non cantare, spara!* (Don't Sing, Shoot!) in 1968, costarring the Italian *cantautore*, actor and playwright, Giorgio Gaber.[8] Even Totò, the actor-comedian *par excellence* of the 1940s and 50s, produced a 9-part television series called *TuttoTotò* in which the sixth episode, "Totò Ciak!" featured a Western-genre segment with an elderly Totò mounted on a horse and dressed as a cowboy in an Old-West town. The series aired in 1967, starting just a month after Totò's death.

However, as mentioned above, it was not just mainstream production that sanctioned and propagated cowboy heroism, but countercultural productions as well. Indeed, the myth became so entrenched that by the time of the 1977 Revolution, the Left, as we will see, appeared almost to be playing at Cowboys and Indians. Between 1972 and 1985 Francesco Guccini, Francesco De Gregori, and Fabrizio De André, three of the most influential *cantautori* of the age, filtered postwar Italy to a surprising degree through the lens of the American foundational myth. Guccini and De André are a decade older than De Gregori. Both were born in 1940 and they came out with their first LPs in 1966 and 1968, respectively. De Gregori was born in 1951 and released his first solo LP in 1973. All three have been considered by many then and today to be narrators and interpreters of those tumultuous years.

Francesco Guccini and Francesco De Gregori began as early as 1972 and 1976, respectively, to present their views from within the mythical space and both continued to do so into the 1990s.[9] While examining songs like De Gregori's "Bufalo Bill", "Cowboys" (I cowboy) and "Adelante! Adelante!" and Guccini's "Little City" (Piccola città), "Amerigo", and his live album *Between Emilia Street and the Wild West* (Fra la via Emilia e il West), this chapter reads their use of the myth (together will Dylan's) to be very similar to the myth as utilized by

mainstream producers. Namely, the myth of *il Far West* becomes a tool implemented to tell their own narratives; they are the hero/victims in a nostalgic landscape, which represents at once the paradise-lost of childhood and that of the utopian promise of the West itself. Their relationship with the West is sentimental, and because they view it from within, they aren't able to fully parse it, discover its discrepancies, recover and reveal its most troubling historical implications.

De André's use of the myth is not distributed across his career, as it is for Guccini and De Gregori, but is restricted, rather, to the years 1978-1981. When he first uses it in the 1978 album *Rimini*, it is not as a metaphor for his experience, but, rather, he views the myth from outside it. He harnesses it to review the events of the 1977 revolution, which he sees as having, at times, played themselves out in the counterculture as a sort of prairie story of Cowboys and Indians. In two songs from the album, "Wolf Tail" (Coda di lupo) and "Romance in Durango" (Avventura a Durango), De André depicts the left as it appears to imagine itself in 1977: split into two factions, the Metropolitan Indians (Indiani metropolitani) and the pistol-toting militarist Workers' Autonomy group (Autonomia operaia). And as De André, himself, says of "Romance in Durango," he additionally satirizes singer-songwriters who romanticize frontier violence and fancy themselves sorts of cultural outlaws.

As the revolutionary years came to a close, in the first half of the 1980s, all three artists released American frontier songs that, to a great degree, reflect back on the economic miracle and counterculture years. As we shall see later in the chapter, in 1977 Umberto Eco declared that the cowboy has revealed himself a false hero in Italy, and the three *cantautori*'s post-revolutionary songs seem responses to his unmasking. Guccini and De Gregori still relate sentimentally, with an air of nostalgia, appearing to mourn the loss of the cowboy hero and his utopia. De André, on the other hand, begins work to return historical memory to the mythical space, he produces an album

that is free of cowboys and that restores each character to his historic position. In his 1981 album, *Fabrizio De André*, commonly called *The Indian* (L'indiano) due to its cover art, the narrator and hero is the Native American, and as history demonstrates, he is also the victim. In songs like "What I Don't Have" (Quello che non ho) and "Sand Creek" (Fiume Sand Creek) the cowboy and his European ilk—implying the historical European-American colonizing soldier and businessman but also implying the contemporary European *cantautore* and his audience—have been returned to their historical position as violent imperialists and bringers of capitalist socioeconomic structures that destroy the native man and his nomadic model.

Historian Paul Ginsborg proposes three reasons for the ultimate failure of the 1968 revolution and its transformation into the very different 1977 revolution. He states that, firstly, the revolutionaries themselves were sectarian and often expressed their ideals "in the vaguest terms," making it difficult to unify under a single banner. Secondly, he argues that society at large did not share in the revolutionary values—which were understood broadly as marxist and collective—but rather that "the society that was being formed in the image of the 'economic miracle' was one that accentuated atomization and individualism."[10] Finally, he points out that the Strategy of Tension's civil acts of terror, beginning in 1969, forced the leftist revolutionaries into either submission to smaller reforms or violent and extreme retaliation. The Strategy of Tension (strategia di tensione), often better known as the Years of Lead (gli anni di piombo), was enacted by the Italian secret service and neo-fascist agents, but surreptitiously supported by the Christian Democrat government, which had close ties to American interests. In fact, many commentators suspected that President Saragat in the early 1970s believed, like his allies at the CIA that, "the activities of the extreme right would serve the salutary purpose of increasing the demand for a strong and moderate government."[11]

All three of Ginsborg's suggested reasons for failure—the Left's diverse ideological make-up, mainstream Italy's identity as largely aligned with capitalist ideals, and possible U.S. influence or interference—could be read in correlation with the prominence of the vague and changeable, but ultimately capitalist and American, myth of the West. Indeed, Barthes stresses that mythical language cannot fully suppress historical meaning, only distance and distort it. So, while *il Far West* setting was used to convey many ideologies, it always covertly conveyed, as well, its original historical meaning, which was so at odds with revolutionary values and so sympathetic to U.S. interests during the Cold War.

This chapter, however, is not concerned with theorizing about the myth as a tool for cultural control during years that saw Europe as a battleground between capitalism and communism. It is, rather, concerned with understanding how singer-songwriters in Italy (one could draw implications for the U.S. as well) effectively sanctioned and idealized a myth that carried with it and broadcast the very ideological systems that the counterculture set itself up against. For this reason, I believe the stakes of this chapter to be particularly high, for, if indeed, as many people believe, singer-songwriters in contemporary culture stand in a unique position from which they can hold a mirror up to the masses, from which they can help man understand himself and his experience, from which they can aid man in parsing history, culture, and ideology, then we must see countercultural singer-songwriters as largely failing their audience by adhering to this particular myth.

As Richard Slotkin, author of *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*, claims, the value system that 'myth' represents becomes naturalized and accepted as a given within the structure of the set of symbols that supports the myth. "Ideas," he says, "are offered in a form that disarms critical analysis by their appeal to the structures and traditions of story-telling and the cliches of historical memory."[12] With this in mind, it seems that,

if singer-songwriters, in the role of modern-day poets, have the ear of youth generations, it is vital that they are aware and critical of the modern myths they may engage with. Furthermore, if we as a society are to treat singer-songwriters as modern-poets and literary producers of note, as Bob Dylan's 2017 Nobel Prize for Literature suggests, then scholars and educators cannot afford to be non-critical of singer-songwriters. There must be semiological guerrilla fighters who read and decode myth, according to Umberto Eco.[13] This is a particularly apt metaphor for the revolution years, and who better during those years than the artists with an entire generation's attention, the cultural heroes of that era, the singer-songwriters?

In order to arrive at the use of the myth by the counterculture, this chapter will first define the original U.S. myth and summarize the revolutionary events of 1968-1980 in order to propose their essentially oppositional values. It will then go back in time to explore the history of the American frontier in Italy's communal imagination, from opera to immigration, from adventure novels to comics. It will move on to look at how the myth changed in the second postwar period by considering the comic book series, *Tex Willer,* in order to understand what the West might have meant to counterculturalists as children. Then it will explore further modifications that fully prepare the myth for countercultural adoption in Italy, as seen, largely, through Sergio Leone's 1968 *C'era una volta il West*, Sam Peckinpah's 1973 *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*, and Bob Dylan's involvement in that film and his related music. Finally, the chapter will investigate how the myth was used by countercultural producers, and, most importantly, young singer-songwriters, like Bob Dylan, Francesco De Gregori, Francesco Guccini and Fabrizio De André.

Characterizing America's Founding Myth and Italy's Revolutionary Left

The Essential Ideologies of the American Myth

To each culture, a foundational myth. To each modern nation, as Benedict Anderson argues, the foundational myth is part of the invention of itself, which requires a nation to claim both sovereignty and limitation, and to create a sense of almost religious kinship. The myth of the West in the U.S. is a particularly prevalent and successful example of Anderson's "invention of nationhood where it does not exist."[14] The Pioneer Myth, the Cowboy Myth, the Myth of the Wild West, is a story taught in grade school, a story taught to justify both history and contemporary society. It is the story of the plucky pioneers, the raccoon-hatted explorers, the primitive savage-enemy / noble Native-American friend, the progress and strength-of-will demonstrated in the cross-country railroad, and, finally, the accomplishment of a teleological anthem and battle cry, which accomplishes both national sovereignty and its limitation, the much touted Manifest Destiny. It is the myth, as well, of the wholly original American citizen and his distinction from both New-World Natives and Old-World Europeans. He is individualistic and uncultivated yet modern and rebellious, at once reluctant and willing to be violent, distrusting of the State yet profoundly nationalistic and innately just, self-actualizing, daring. This is a strong communal imagining, its strength demonstrated still today in the U.S.'s First and, particularly, Second Amendments.

Some of the keywords of the original myth: rebirth and renewed potential; adventurous pioneer spirit; absolute, uncorrupted individual justice; hard work and progress; already reveal an incongruence between the original version of the myth and history. For these positive values and

attributes not only hide, but are verily born out of, the dark underbelly of the West as frontier: its big business interests, its immigrant and African American labor exploitation, its national land grabs, and the slow genocide of North American native people that would see its final act in the Great Plains, when Native Americans could not be pushed any further West.

The mythical Wild West, Frontier West, and Italian *Far West* represent a long historical time-period, but most-frequently their stories play out in the decades following the Civil War. These are the years of greatest action and conflict in the West due in part to President Lincoln's 1862 Homestead Act, which allowed settlers to file for federal land grants on the Great Plains and further west, while Native Americans were forced onto increasingly restricted reservations. Tribes of warriors allied and rose up in self-defense and the Great Plains American Indian Wars were fought from 1862 on. These wars and these years mark some of the most well-known battles and characters of the centuries-long conquest: the Battle/Massacre of Washita River, the Sand Creek Massacre, Red Cloud's War, the Great Sioux War of 1876–77, the Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Wounded Knee Massacre.[15] The California Gold Rush also occurred in this period and sent New Englanders and new immigrants West. It has become a recurring setting for rags-to-riches tales, while it had as its consequence a major, state-funded genocide in the Great Basin. Likewise, the Black Hills War and General Custer's Last Stand, the most famous of frontier battles, were driven by gold found in Lakota territory. The cowboys—who in the myth appear wandering the range, upholding justice (or stealing from the rich) wherever possible—historically were most often corporate and government employees, herders for cattle barons, agents of the Wells Fargo Pony Express, or Indian Agents for the government. It's worth noting, finally, that the utopian aspect of the myth, that of rebirth in a virgin land, implies an empty space and clean slate. Yet, as

is implicit in the genocides cited above, the Western 'wilderness' was not wilderness at all, but, rather, a habitat created across millennia by Native Americans.[16]

With the facts of history in the foreground here, it becomes apparent that when one says that this American national myth represents courageous individualism, personal freedom, rebirth and potential, and anti-authoritarianism, one must also acknowledge that the myth's positive values are based on their negative historical counterparts and that they guarantee the positive aspects of the myth to a certain set of people (white, male) by exploiting, for personal gain, other groups (new immigrants, ex-slaves, Native Americans, and women (mostly appearing in the myth as prostitutes)) and nature itself. Yet, in the U.S. the myth develops to a point that it can no longer be convincingly argued 'untrue' within the borders of the nation, for it is a cornerstone of the self-conception of a people who have come to resemble the myth and therefore to sustain it. That the myth manages to transform itself in order to continually find resonance with many Americans' self-conceptions during periods that would seem to it antithetical is noteworthy. Yet, as it mirrors, however imperfectly, its people and their history, it is not wholly surprising. That the myth could take on such power in Italian culture, however, when it is neither based in Italian history, nor a representation of the foundation of the nation, and that it could, furthermore, replicate itself and amplify its power during the 1960s and 70s in Italy when youth struggled against capitalistic and individualistic values that were associated with the U.S., is, at first glance, apparently inexplicable.

The Essential Ideologies of the Italian Revolutionaries

The first instance of revolt in Italy was in the spring of 1968 by university students who were unconvinced by the individualistic and consumeristic values that had become predominant in Italy since the economic miracle of the 1950s and 60s. Catholic priest, teacher and reformer, Don Lorenzo Milani's 1967 *Letter to a Teacher* (Lettera a una professoressa), which he wrote together

with pupils, denounced the education system as favoring rich students and saw it as just one symptom of the triumph of individualism in Italy. It became a cult text for student revolutionaries the following year and was read together with the revival in Marxist thought that was printed in journals like Emilio Panzeri's *Red Notebooks* (Quaderni Rossi).[17] The Vietnam War had changed Italian youths' perspective, cracking their perception of the American Dream. Revolutionaries were on the side of the Viet Cong and in 1968 one popular anti-imperalist slogan was "Create one, two, many Vietnams!" Works like Milani's and Panzeri's had formed an ideological basis for the values that students would propose in opposition to those of capitalist society. The movement was at once collective and libertarian, it was anti-authoritarian, with even the authority of the nuclear-family model coming under attack. It was a peaceful movement unless provoked by police violence, yet, with slogans like "power comes out of the barrel of a gun," and its idealized view of revolutionary fighters like Che Guevera and Chinese and Vietnamese communists, revolutionaries seemed, from the beginning, prepared to fall back on violent struggle. In its individual libertarianism and ambivalence towards violence, the '68 revolution had some values in common with the West mythos. Yet, those values do not broadly define it, rather, as Paul Ginsborg states, "the values of solidarity, collective action and the fight against social injustice [as] counterposed to the individualism and consumerism of 'neo-capitalism'" were the main characteristics of a movement that, at its heart, was Marxist.[18]

In the summer of 1968 and through 1969, students joined forces with factory workers and numerous extra-parliamentary revolutionary political groups were formed that occupied the political space to the left of parliamentary parties like the traditional PCI (Italian Communist Party). The most prominent labor group was the Continuous Struggle group (Lotta continua), which until 1976 promoted a marxist self-conception of the working class towards improved

working conditions and an eventual toppling of capitalist and white-collar hegemony. The groups continued organized strikes and trade-union bargaining, with significant results even through the economic downturn of the 1970s. PCI support increased during those years and in 1975, for the first time in the history of the postwar Republic, the center-left nearly overtook the center-right Christian Democratic party (DC) to gain control of the parliament. Yet, the PCI did not overtake the Christian Democrats, and the successes the left garnered were in the form of reforms rather than revolution. At the same time, neo-fascist Black Brigades' acts of civil terror, beginning with the bombing of Piazza Fontana in Milan in late 1969, put pressure on the left to return that violence in kind. As early as October 1970, a small faction of revolutionaries on the left formed the Red Brigades, their answer to the right's Strategy of Tension actions, and declared the need for violent action "which would sharpen contradictions in Italian capitalism and make inevitable a civil war between exploiters and exploited."[19]

The struggle continued with worker strikes and occasional violence of the Black and Red Brigades until 1976 saw a disillusioned and frustrated left begin to resort increasingly to acts of terror and 1977 saw a new youth movement manifest itself. 1977 was very different from 1968: the youths were disillusioned, prone to heroin use, and disaffected from traditional, and seemingly unmovable, politics. This disillusionment revealed itself in two forms: a faction that was creative and artistic, tending to create alternative structures in community centers rather than attempting to overhaul all of society, and a faction that was militaristic and sought to organize a battle against the state.[20] By 1977 it was as if the values of 1968 had been distilled and divided between the distinct groups that resurfaced nearly a decade later, but still the drive for both groups was anti-capitalist and the youths' values were constructed in opposition to capitalist values. Yet, for all of its opposition to these fundamentally modern American values, the 1977 revolutionaries, as we

will see, in many ways, at least aesthetically, constructed themselves in the image of *il Far West* and the American foundational mythology. To begin to understand how the myth gained such a lasting foothold in the Italian communal imagination, and what it might have meant to the revolutionaries who dressed up as Cowboys and Indians in 1977 to bear out their cultural renewal, let's take a look back at the myth's long history on the peninsula.

A History of the American Frontier in the Italian Cultural Imagination

The Swiss-Italian ethnomusicologist, Marcello Sorce Keller, argues that in Italy it was written music, the music of opera, rather than popular folk music, that became "the symbol of an artistic and cultural identity that aspired to consolidate into a political unity."[21] Indeed, it is through opera, rather than the folk tradition, that the foundational myths of the New World—initially its war for independence in the wilderness of New England, then its adventures in *il Far West*—first manifest in Italian cultural productions. Pierpaolo Polzonetti cites 1768, the British occupation of Boston, and Niccolò Piccinni's setting of Francesco Cerlone's libretto, *Neapolitans in America* (I napoletani in America)[22], as the first Italian operatic production set in the U.S. colonies. The 18th-century archetypal character in Piccinni's opera, as well as those that would follow was the Quaker. See, for example, the 1770 Neapolitan *Quaker Pulcinella* (Pulcinella da Quacquero), Piccinni's 1772 *The American* (L'americano), or Pietro Alessandro Guglielmi's 1783 *The Funny Quaker* (La quacquera spiritosa). Surprisingly, this figure is quite similar to the 20th-century American archetype of the cowboy as they are both, according to Polzonetti, "the independent fighter who acts according to laws that do not coincide with those laws that bind and bond the rest of the social system."[23] And while tales of American independence mostly vanish from the Italian stage until

the early 20th century, its early introduction to Italian culture through opera, if Sorce Keller is correct, and its inclusion, from the beginning, of an early cowboy prototype in the Quaker, could explain, in part, how *il Far West* came to claim such a strong hold within the Italian cultural imagination.

For, indeed, *il Far West* was reintroduced in Giacomo Puccini's 1910 *Golden Girl of the West* (La fanciulla del West), and the myth, from there, takes off to capture the nation's imagination throughout the century. Puccini's opera tells the story of an outlaw/hero and his romantic soprano love-interest during the years of the California Gold Rush, 1848-1855. While the Revolutionary War operas primarily featured Quakers and 'noble savages', *Golden Girl of the West* includes the stock characters—popularized by James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales,*[24] and later in Italy by Emilio Salgari's adventure-tale series, the *Far-West Series* (Ciclo del Far-West)[25]—that remained fashionable throughout the 20th century: outlaw/bandit (hero), sheriff, gold-rush miners, the Indian and his squaw (natives), traveling minstrel, Pony Express rider, Wells Fargo agent (the last three being variations of the cowboy hero).

While it began as a representation of a fascinating *otherness:* another land, another people, another possible future, it would also have made many people along the Italian peninsula long for their own independence from foreign powers, long for their own rising up and forcing out, which would not be realized for nearly 100 years after the American Revolution. It furthermore symbolized the promise of unknown riches to the adventurous emigrant, which we see in the Italian-transplant protagonists and lesser characters featured in many early New-World operas,[26] as well as in the increased popularity of the genre in coincidence with historical waves of Italian emigration. Indeed, *Golden Girl of the West*, a rags-to-riches story *par excellence,* with its Gold-Rush bonanza-frontier setting, not only marks the return of the genre to the public eye, it marks as

well the near-end of the largest historical wave of Italian emigration to North America, 1890-1917. Crucially, however, Puccini does not tell the emigrant story, nor will it be told by any of the most popular tales of *il Far West*. Puccini returns, rather, to a nostalgic time and space of possibility and promise, of literally hidden treasures and, in turn, unimaginable wealth and potential.

By the turn of the 20th century, as revealed by muckraking literature like Upton Sinclair's 1906 *The Jungle*, the experience of the immigrant in the industrialized cities of the East is that of a despised subaltern; progress and modernization show their ugly under-bellies as immigrants and ex-slaves (the same groups seen in the periphery of Westerns as they race to build the railroad) are exploited for national and industrial gains.[27] Yet, an Italian considering or undertaking emigration had few options and the dream of a better future, no matter how improbable or romanticized, seems a hope that was clung to in the absence of others. The emigrant's hope reveals a bit further how the myth of the West began to prosper in Italy, during years in which young Italians were departing for a mythical and faraway 'America'. Tales of the West gave the emigrant courage and hope as he or she risked life and loss, while it gave the family left behind an adventurous image to cling to as they waved farewell to their loved ones and continued on in their absence.

A Conflation of Cowboy and Indian

Tex Willer is arguably the cultural production that played the largest part in popularizing the myth in Italy, and the eponymous hero is still today a household name that evokes certain idyllic nostalgia for those who read the comic book in their youths.[28] *Tex Willer* (originally *Tex Killer*) was first published in September of 1948, just a few months after Italian general elections placed the Christian-Democratic party decidedly in control of parliament at a time when American culture was massively disseminated in Italy,[29] and the Americas returned to the Italian mindscape after Fascism as an idealized promised land. In post-WWII Italy, the Italian myth of *il Far West* changed

as it took on forms newly relevant to contemporary society.

Il Far West, as it did at the turn of the century, represents the dreams of emigration as the Americas saw a surge in European immigration in the decades following the war. Yet, now the cowboy embodied a new Italian hero as well. After two long decades of Fascism and the war years, the cowboy easily took on aspects of the non-conformist, the anti-fascist, the guerrilla-fighter partisan (partigiano), and member of the Italian resistance movement. These were all Italian hero-figures who had fought occupying German forces and Italians who remained Fascists under Mussolini's puppet regime, the Italian Social Republic, after Italy's and the Allies' armistice was signed in September of 1943. The partisan, like the cowboy, relied on a sense of absolute justice in the face of corrupt State justice, and relied on violence to achieve it. The partisan, too, left civilization and family and took to the 'wilderness', the mountains and forests, where he joined bands of individuals who fought (together and individually) for a grassroots defense of justice. Wilderness and civilization switched positions, as cities were highly controlled by Fascism and threatened by war, while in the wilderness men were free. In a world like this, the imagining of the city-utopia *had* to begin outside its walls, in a space that seemed yet to be controlled or defined.

The frontier West, now, represented a land of new hope, a nation yet to build, which was inviting imagery for a country coming out of 20 years oppressed by the Fascist regime and torn apart by war. So, the cowboy-hero naturally accrues new affiliations in postwar Italy, as readers filter the stories through the lenses of their own experience. At the same time, he gains an additional important affiliation within the stories themselves, one that appears to be an absolute necessity in the postwar, for it occurs, and in a remarkably similar fashion, in both the U.S. and Italy. Namely, two famed cowboy stories, the Lone Ranger's and Tex Willer's, whose heroes became synonymous with the West in the 1950s, are tales of dual heroes, who represent both the

Cowboys and the Indians of the mythology.

The Lone Ranger was a popular radio show that ran starting in 1933 out of the Detroit station WXYZ; it gained nationwide popularity in 1949 when it was developed as a television show. *Tex Willer,* when it was released in 1948, proves nearly an identical tale. Both the Lone Ranger and Tex are affiliated with Texas Rangers and both roam the West fighting crime and upholding justice. The characters and settings have much in common, but what is most remarkable is that both cowboy heroes have dual identities, as both are white men associated with official U.S. authority, as well as with Native Americans and their alternative value sets and relationship to the Great Plains and frontier West. The Lone Ranger saves the life of the Potawatomi or Comanche Native American, Tonto,[30] and Tonto years later saves the Lone Ranger's life. When Tonto is introduced in 1938, he renames the Lone Ranger 'Kemo Sabe' and becomes his constant partner. In this way the ex-Texas Ranger takes on a native identity as Kemo Sabe or 'faithful friend.' Tex, similarly, adventures with the Navajo, Tiger Jack, who is his blood brother and who calls him Night Eagle (Aquila della Notte). Tex Willer is, furthermore, not only a Texas Ranger, but chief of the Navajo Nation when he is dressed as Night Eagle. Thus, the Lone Ranger and Tex even more completely absorb part of the myth of the Indian to make the Cowboy/Indian relationship less oppositional and antagonistic to the modern reader. This movement of associating the white hero with his Indian counterpart is not an entirely new one. Indeed, in James Fenimore Cooper's mid-19th-century *Leatherstocking Tales* pentalogy, natives were often the allies of white men, as they were historically during the years of the New York frontier and the French and Indian Wars. The hero of the pentalogy is, furthermore, a dual figure, Natty Bumppo/Hawkeye, the child of white parents raised by a Native American tribe in Delaware and accompanied by his native 'foster' brother, the Mohican Chingachgook.

While this conflation of the imperialist and native figure is not, perhaps, a new one, after WWII it seems to become nearly an imperative, and the legendary characters of *The Lone Ranger* and *Tex Willer* set the stage for innumerable stories to come.[31] It is important in these stories to understand how the conflation functions, as it takes both heroism and victimhood from native people, while lending a new sort of native heroism and victimhood to the cowboy. To take one example of the hundreds of *Tex* stories that might have been read by children who would later make up the long revolutionary generation, in the 1958-59 story cycle, *Navajo Blood* (Sangue navajo),[32] two businessmen kill four young warrior Navajos on horseback as they travel by train. Tex prevents an immediate Navajo vendetta, by first placing faith in U.S. authorities to take care of the matter and, when that fails, by using mostly non-deadly military tactics to disarm local troops, while working together with a journalist to bring the events to the headlines on the East Coast and force government action. The tale is resolved when the killers turn on each other and both die just hours before they would have been brought to justice by U.S. government officials. The story maintains a structure in which only white can/is allowed to defeat white, emptying historical Native Americans of agency and making them puppets of their white leader, Tex. Readers continually see Tex refer to the Navajos as 'his navajos'[33] as they unquestioningly follow his instructions as the wisest of the tribe,[34] and as they are relegated to a silent space, often only responding 'Ugh'[35] (meaning 'yes,' as introduced by James Fenimore Cooper) to his orders.

In story cycles from the years relevant to this chapter's investigation, for example the 1971-72 cycle, *Promised Land* (Terra promessa),[36] Tiger Jack has gained some autonomy, but is still a subaltern voice, grouped with the youngster Kit, Tex's son, rather than with his blood-brother Tex. Indeed, when Brunetto Salvarani in his book on comics, *Do You Mind If I Comic* (Disturbo se fumetto), remembers the late 1960s and playing at 'Tex,' he recalls, there was a hierarchy in

children's minds, determined by the source text. "The fact is that when we played," he writes, "no one wanted to be Tiger Jack: everyone wanted to be Tex, at most someone, fascinated by Carson, chose him for his part, and the smallest of the group (to his great happiness) was inevitably Kit Willer. Tiger Jack was […] too silent, too absent in his omnipresence, too perturbing in his being 'other' to be able to be part of the game."[37] The Indians, as a whole, oscillate between stereotypes of Noble Savages and Barbarous Savages. They are respected as calm, thoughtful, wise, by the 'good' white men, while their tendency for 'savage behaviors', such as torture, must be curbed by Tex, as we see in *Navajo Blood*: "[Soldier:] 'I wouldn't be surprised to find that poor guy hanged from the torturing pole.' [Captain:] 'You've forgotten that the chief of the Navajos is Tex Willer and I'm absolutely sure that Tex Willer would not degrade himself by ordering a man to be tortured.'"[38] This exchange is one of many that reveal a prevailing opinion that even noble savages are, in some fundamental sense, less noble than the noble pioneers.

In Italy, Tex's position as defender of the Native American people can be read in its original mythical context or as a metaphor for the Italian context. In the original context, the *Navajo Blood* story and Tex's conciliatory tactics are risible. For example, a key plot point in *Navajo Blood* is that the headlines in Washington—"Navajos in Revolt," "Fort Defiance Razed to the Ground," "Tex Willer guides his […]"[39]—cause the government to pacify the Navajos in order to end the conflict. While in the actual time of this tale, the post-Civil-War years, the government was exterminating Native Americans in the final Great Plains Indian Wars and any conflict with the Navajos would have been cause to massacre, not pacify them. Furthermore, that Tex would defend the lives of four Navajos or place faith in the U.S. government to secure justice in the matter, reveals his mythical position. For, the lives of four Navajos meant next to nothing in light of the cultural genocide that was wrapping up on the continent.

If, on the other hand, one reads *Tex* as a metaphor for contemporary Italy in which the frontier West is overlaid on the peninsula, Tex's collaboration to end censorship with Floyd, editor of the *New Gallup Dispatch*, takes on contemporary and local relevance, as does his fight against the collusion between the private sector and the State, and the defense he takes up of the underclass. Italians suffered a long history of censorship, with media controlled by the Catholic Church, the past Fascist state, and the current Christian-Democratic government. Italy has also undergone a long and notorious struggle against collusion between the private and public sectors to allocate capital and control. Finally, the Italian people experienced centuries of colonization and suffered as an underclass on the peninsula until driving out the last imperial powers in 1866, while the south of Italy, where agricultural land significantly resembles the plains of the West, still considers itself an underclass to the north.

Yet, whether readers consider the nature of Tex's convictions and objectives to be Native American or a metaphor for the Italian, the hero takes them up with half-measures that maintain the status quo and keep Navajo/Italian underclasses pacified and contented in their status as marginalized and continually threatened subalterns. He works only barely outside the normative structures, by collaborating with officials and playing political games, never by threatening their general power or their right to that power. Thus, Tex is revealed as a complex figure. As Night Eagle he is seemingly situated at the margins, outside of social norms, and dedicated to courageously defending those with no voice in the system. Yet, at the same time, as Tex the ranger and Indian agent, he is firmly within the system, part of the official government apparatus that not only defends the native people, but also placates them into submission.

It is this character, read in childhood stories in the 1950s and early 60s, who perhaps most influences the basic adult conception of the cowboy hero in Italy in the late 1960s and 70s. For, as

Scott McCloud points out in his *Understanding Comics,* "Cartoon is a vacuum into which our identity and awareness are pulled,"[40] and for this reason legends expressed through cartoons or comics are particularly fit to imprint themselves on young minds.[41] This theory argues for the power of visually expressed iconography experienced in childhood, and cultural productions by adults who read *Tex* as children support McCloud's theory. It plays out neatly in some of the *cantautori*'s work explored later, but is perhaps most manifestly demonstrated by Niccolò Ammaniti's 2001 novel *I'm Not Scared* (Io non ho paura).[42] The novel is set in the politically tense climate of civil terrorism during the height of the violence of the Strategy of Tension in 1978. This is the year that sees the Italian prime minister, Aldo Moro, kidnapped, killed, and left on the streets of Rome by the Red Brigades. The protagonist of the book is 9-year-old Michele Amitrano, the child of a poor working-class family in southern Italy. Michele discovers another boy, the son of a rich Northern industrialist, chained and imprisoned in a hole behind an abandoned house, and, without understanding the dangerous political atmosphere or context of the other child's imprisonment, he becomes entangled in a deadly adventure. Michele summons Tex and his Navajo blood brother, Tiger Jack, whenever he needs to bolster his courage during a potentially dangerous adventure, as the story blends the nostalgia for childhood summers, innocent dares and dangers, the imagined thrill of *il Far West* read about while sprawled on one's bed, and the real heroism of helping a boy escape death by vigilante kidnappers.[43]

The choice of *Tex* as blending agent demonstrates the powerful emotional response that myth catalyzes in Italian readers as it is associated in their memories with their own pasts, as well as its relevance to the communal memory of a decade defined by revolt and terror. It also demonstrates an interesting way in which the 1970s thought about Tex and Tiger Jack. In the comic-book series, as shown above, Tiger Jack is still clearly a subaltern in the comic-book

universe of the early 1970s, and as Salvarani remembers it in the late 60s and early 70s, no one wanted to play Tiger Jack because he was essentially a non-character. Yet, in what could very well be Ammaniti's own remembrance of childhood comic-book heroism by 1978 (Ammaniti was 12 in 1978), it is Tiger Jack who stands out as the character who most resonates as an essentially *Italian* hero. In a moment when Michele needs to decide between his own personal safety and his sense of doing the right thing, he asks himself: "What would Tiger Jack have done in my place? He wouldn't have turned back even if [the god] Manitou had personally ordered him to. Tiger Jack. He was a serious guy. Tiger Jack, the Indian friend of Tex Willer. […] I am Tiger Jack, even better, I am the Italian son of Tiger. […] Too bad I don't have a dagger, or a bow, or a Winchester rifle."[44] In Ammaniti's telling (and Umberto Eco, as we shall see, agrees), by 1978 Italy had become a nation of Indians rather than cowboys, but highly mythified Indians, who had certain cowboy values and certain cowboy friends, and who "massacred" bad guys with rifles.[45] At the same time, in the U.S. and Italy, another hero was emerging out of the mythical landscape, a hero who absorbed some of the quiet honor traditionally associated with the mythical Indian chief who holds a peace pipe rather than a weapon. This hero is the minstrel cowboy who holds a guitar rather than a gun.

A Conflation of Cowboy and Musician

Famous John Ford and John Wayne Classical Western films desisted, as did *The Lone Ranger* and *Tex,* from portraying Native Americans as enemy 'injuns' or savage criminals, and instead created a prairie that largely pitted white hero against white villain, with native people at the periphery. But when Spaghetti Westerns and other types of so-called 'Revisionist Westerns' began appearing, new directors sought to disrupt Ford's and Wayne's classical narratives, as traditional Western ideals began to be questioned and as directors sought increased realism.[46] Yet, just how these

narratives disrupted and/or improved the mythical setting for generation of Western stories can be a bit hard to see.

In one sense, this is because the hero/victim conflation isn't improved and re-historicized to paint a more accurate picture of the history of the Western frontier. Instead, that conflation in revisionist films often appears in a heightened form, as the Native American disappears completely and only the white man remains. This is the case, for example, in Sergio Leone's *western all'italiana* films, as well as in Bob Dylan's 1976 "Romance in Durango", Francesco De Gregori's 1976 "Bufalo Bill", Francesco Guccini's 1978 "Amerigo". Sergio Leone's Spaghetti Westerns, to begin with, presented a highly culturally neutral communal remembering as native people were practically absent, figuring only nominally in names like Cheyenne and Tuco. Leone cites as his reason for excluding them from his films: "I could not conceive of fake Indians like they use in Hollywood […] Indians fit perfectly into my Western canvas, but not into my cinematic vision: if I had to include them in a film, I would want them to be authentic, and today they are almost impossible to find."[47] Their absence, then, one could argue is part of Leone realism. For, the "true essence of [his] cinema" is, he claims, "a fairy tale rich with ties to contemporary reality,"[48] and the contemporary reality in Italy, obviously, and in the U.S, tragically, was one without many Native Americans. A further move towards realism that Leone claims is the inclusion of violence: that is, the blood and explicit deaths that are not present in classical Western films, in shows like *The Lone Ranger,* or in comics like *Tex.* Violence, Leone says, turns his fairy tales into critical realism, moral tales, "truer than chronicles," as he puts it. The violence for Leone "has a political origin," and reminds the audience that death existed in the West as a "real fear," that the bullets of guns had and have real consequences.[49] In this sense, the director would seek in some way to rehistoricize the mythical space itself, yet without Natives present, it is still a contrived space.

Leone's violence has the flavor of class and value struggles within a single economic and cultural system, rather than an imperialist struggle between two structurally opposed, and mutually exclusive, modes of existence: nomadism and capitalism.

While Leone works within the sub-genre of Revisionist Westerns, seeking like other directors to return realism to the West, he does not manage to disentangle his heroes from their Cowboy/Indian conflation, indeed, he entangles them even further. The hero in his 1968 *Once Upon a Time in the West* (C'era una volta il West), for example, is both a fascinating instance of the Cowboy/Indian dual identity and an example of a further conflation that was convenient for a 1960s generation that idolized folk musicians: the conflation of gunslingers and guitar-singers. The hero in *Once Upon a Time in the West* is nameless and nearly voiceless; he is nicknamed Harmonica after the instrument whose melancholy tune heralds his arrival and comes almost to substitute his voice. Harmonica's motivations show the same narrative hybrid as in *Tex*, complexly entwining the relationship between oppressor/oppressed and white/native, while his character blends the figures of cowboy-as-wandering-knight and cowboy-as-wandering-minstrel, one masculine, courageous and deadly, the other feminine, pacifist and artistic.

In the film, Harmonica has followed the villain, Frank, for years, seeking revenge. A flashback during their final duel reveals the moment that has formed the hero's identity and the reason for his vendetta. It seems that, years before, Frank had hanged Harmonica's brother, forcing the young Harmonica to act as the gallows stand so that he would effectively kill his brother when his own body became too weak to support the other's weight. The audience sees this memory through the green-gold eyes of the fair-haired Charles Bronson, who plays Harmonica. Yet Harmonica remembers himself as a young boy of obviously native origin. The drastic physical difference in the memory is so jarring that the viewer seeks another solution; perhaps Harmonica

is avenging another boy's past, for example. But the flashback is clearly a memory and the appearance of the instrument in the scene finalizes the relationship between the adult Harmonica and the child in the memory. For, in the end Frank, to stifle the young native boy's screams, shoves a harmonica in his mouth, the very harmonica that will come to identify the adult hero, the very harmonica that the adult hero will shove in Frank's mouth when he kills him.

Truly nameless after completing his revenge and shedding the symbolic instrument, the hero leaves his former identity behind. Once known as Harmonica, a vessel for multiple, complex and impossibly incongruent sets of meaning, the nameless hero is now empty of signification and walks off into the sunset ready to be filled again. A careful viewer is left wondering, however, what precisely this metamorphosis from young native victim to adult white hero could mean for Leone. Is it a symbol of a universal underclass that is blind to race? Is it meant to further obscure the identity of the hero, to make him not only nameless, but faceless? Whatever Leone's intent, it is certainly, if perhaps unwittingly, another example of the sewing together of the victim's and victor's narratives into a single smooth history. The cowboy in the 1960s *becomes* the native, or vice versa. As a child, Harmonica is innocent, primitive, savage, uncorrupted by civilization. As an adult, he becomes the romantic ideal of the *bon sauvage,* he has lost his primitiveness and savagery (which has turned into a noble vendetta), without, however, being corrupted by civilization. Significantly, he has lost all outward traces of his nativeness, as well, and is now a blond-haired and green-eyed European. In transferring this ideal, Leone's myth simultaneously homogenizes the historical setting and creates a new sympathetic hero for a new audience. For, the mythical Cowboy is not just Cowboy/Indian, he is also Cowboy/Musician.

Indeed, two figures who traditionally wander the wilds between civilized lands are the hero (erring knight or roaming cowboy), who becomes a popular symbol of courage, and the vagabond

(traveling minstrel), who remembers and spreads his story in the communal imagination. Domingo Fausto Sarmiento in his 1845 *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism,* tells of four types of gauchos on the South American Pampas, one of which is the outlaw (*gaucho malo*) and another the minstrel (*gaucho cantor*). He remarks that in the *gaucho malo* "we have the idealization of this life of resistance, civilization, barbarism, and danger, while the *gaucho cantor* corresponds to the singer, bard, or troubadour of the Middle Ages and moves […] between the life which is passing away and the new life gradually arising."[50] Eighty years later, Jorge Luis Borges said similarly of the Pampas, "it was not just of fights; this frontier was of guitars as well."[51] Both the minstrel and the knight reject the city, society, and its norms, both are adventurers sitting around a campfire, both have their sidearms, instruments of pain and pleasure respectively. In the Argentinian Pampas there were four types of gauchos, all of whom are discrete, and two of whom are minstrel and outlaw. In the North American and Italian myths, on the other hand, the various types of possible cowboy aren't clearly defined, and, perhaps for this very taxonomical imprecision, these two may blend into one. That is to say, the symbols of violence and pacifism, war and art, of revolutionary subversion and of poetic subversion, can become one. Leone's Harmonica carries both instrument and weapon, and before him others had done the same, for example, the reformed gunslinger in the 1954 U.S. Revisionist Western, *Johnny Guitar,* reapplies his fingers, the fastest draws in the West, to strum the strings of a guitar.

To complicate matters further, a fascinating reversal occurs in the 1960s and 70s when, not only do the fictional cowboys, ideological artifacts of a national foundation myth, become carriers of folk song, but the real-life folk singers, themselves, begin to model themselves on the mythical cowboys. This imitation is, indeed, at least somewhat influenced by the U.S. Folk Revival. To be sure, an investigation of Folk Revival artists would turn up some of the same idolization of the

violent and capitalistic/privatizing Wild West from artists who simultaneously promoted pacifism, economic equality, and collective sharing of land. One case in point might be neatly proposed in Woody Guthrie's guitar slogan, "This machine kills Fascists," his famous "This Land is Your Land," and his idealizing of Jesse James as a figure who fought economic inequality. Guthrie succumbs to mythical slippage as all those cultural producers we have seen thus far: he conflates the weapon and the instrument, he overlooks genocide in his Manifest Destiny anthem, "This Land is Your Land," and he makes icons of frontiersmen, who were heroes of an era of genocide and colonization, recreating them as the ultimate protesters.[52]

In the cases explored in this chapter, however, there is a mythical recreation of the cowboy that largely goes beyond U.S. folk music, so as to hardly even concern it any longer. The concern here is not folk music, itself, but, rather, certain post-folk-revival aesthetic choices[53] made by singer-songwriters in film, on stage, and on album covers in the 1970s. Of similar importance, conversely, is the influence that these aesthetic representations of the West had, not only on U.S. counterculturists, but on the Italian *cantautori* and counterculture as well. The idea is clearly born out in Sam Peckinpah's 1973 *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* in which the cowboys carry no musical instruments, yet they are both Sarmiento's *gaucho malo* and *gaucho cantor,* for Billy the Kid and his sidekick Alias are played by the popular musicians Kris Kristofferson and Bob Dylan. Peckinpah's heroes are contemporary cowboys, dressed in slightly bell-bottomed pants, cowboy and bowler hats, cowboy boots, vests and leather or suede jackets. Yet, what is most interesting is not that the characters have somewhat modernized and hippified dress, but, more significantly, that the singer-songwriters themselves dress like cowboys. That is, to look at Kristofferson as himself in the 70s or as Billy the Kid, to look at Dylan as himself or as his character, Alias, it is hard to distinguish the line between reality and fiction.[54]

Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid tells the story of Pat Garrett, an ex-outlaw friend of Billy the Kid's, who has become sheriff (and bourgeois) because he feels he needs security for his retirement years. He is charged with bringing in the outlaw Kid, who in the film is portrayed as a hero with mixed mythical vigilante-outlaw values and contemporary hippie values. The value sets combined in the character of Billy the Kid have a few things truly in common; for example, both the vigilante-outlaw and hippies value the extra-societal, rebellious, and idealistic. Yet, on the whole they are incompatible; to give just one example, the vigilante outlaw depends on violence and individualism in the pursuit of monetary enrichment, while hippie values demand peaceful and communal protest in the pursuit of, amongst other things, improved social welfare and spiritual enrichment. Indeed, *Pat Garrett* ties itself up in contradiction as it attempts to take Kid's character beyond its limited parallels with contemporary counterculture and mold him into a prototype of the hippie hero. The Kid gives a nod to contemporary pacifism by killing reluctantly, but ultimately he does so without remorse to maintain his freedom. He lives, ostensibly, on a free-love-style ranch commune, but it is a place where women have just barely edged themselves out of a strictly-prostitution position as they are most regularly seen in frontier West settings.[55] Ultimately, he dies in a highly romanticized denouement that absolves and sanctifies him. His untimely and fictionalized death, which is similar to Dylan's cowboy's death in his song "Romance in Durango", is portrayed as one of a martyr who sacrifices himself for his beliefs and for the people he defends.

It seems Peckinpah chose as his historical character an outlaw who would come as close as possible to fulfilling countercultural values,[56] yet as mentioned above, neither the historical nor mythical story of Billy the Kid quite mesh with countercultural values in 1973. For the rest, the cowboy hero gains countercultural viability through a hippified aesthetic, fictional supplements such as his sacrificial death, and, importantly, by Bob Dylan standing at his side. Indeed, by casting

two heroes of the contemporary music scene in the roles of the protagonists, Peckinpah gives a conclusive touch of contemporary credibility to his revised folk heroes. Dylan plays a shopkeeper who is inspired by the Kid's escape from jail and puts down his pen to pick up a knife and follow him. His character plays no music in the film but he, himself, wrote and performed the soundtrack, the most famous song of which is "Knockin' on Heaven's Door.*"* He also wrote "Romance in Durango" while filming in Mexico, a song which he released three years later on his 1976 *Desire,*[57] and which will be investigated further on in this chapter in both his version and Fabrizio De André's 1978 rendition. While Kristofferson was both an actor and a musician (Janis Joplin having made his "Me and Bobby McGee" a #1 hit just two years before), this is, significantly, the first film Dylan chose to act in. And while Kristofferson is from Texas, making a Western style natural for the country and folk singer, Bob Dylan was born in a mining town in Minnesota and moved to New York City when he set out to make it as a musician. This makes Dylan's cowboy style more obviously a conscious aesthetic choice.

In fact, when Dylan appeared on the music scene in 1961, he was a beatnik hipster in tight jeans, a Greek fisherman's hat, and sunglasses. At that time in New York, he played with the likes of John Lee Hooker and, along with Woody Guthrie and the folk-revival influence, two of his early influences are cited on his 1962 debut album as blues and African American spiritual. Indeed, the self-titled *Bob Dylan* album featured covers of traditional folk songs as well as songs by the African American musicians Jesse Fuller, Curtis Jones, Blind Lemon Jefferson and Bukka White. After his debut album, Dylan's 1963 *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* and 1964 *The Times They Are a-Changin'* present the singer-songwriter's short-lived transition to political and protest-style folk music, with songs that deal with social issues like racism and economic inequality. Dylan's appearance on those album covers, as on his debut album, is that of an urban beatnik. Yet, by 1965

he had moved away from the acoustic-folk and protest-movement music, most notably when he caused audience outrage by headlining at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival with an electric guitar.

At that point, Dylan's musical style first transitioned towards an electric rock and blues rock sound and his looks on album covers in the mid and late 1960s are still variations of a Greenwich Village alternative, urban look. By the arrival of the 1970s, however, with albums like *Nashville Skyline* (1969)*, Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973), *Desire* (1976)*, and Masterpieces* (1978)*,* his style had changed again. While his music continued to include blues rock and electric rock, he moved, across the 1970s, decidedly towards country, folk rock, Americana, and roots rock songs, while his aesthetic stylings on album covers feature a rural western-music look. He notably picked up a cowboy hat that would become nearly synonymous with him as an artist for those years and afterwards and that is featured on the covers, not only of 1973's *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* soundtrack, but also on the covers of his *Desire* and *Masterpieces* albums. This shift away from songs of protest and away from a progressive, alternative style that was associated with youthful 1960s desire for social change is more marked as it is replaced by an apparent retreat to a regressive mythical-frontier space. Yet, Dylan's multitudinous metamorphoses as an artist, in those years and later, are complex and complicated to parse. As opposed to being read as a reactionary move, his turn to the cowboy-aesthetic may conversely give the impression, especially to foreign listeners, that the mythical West was somehow, itself, a progressive space. As this chapter moves on to look at the Italian *cantautori*'s use of the myth of *il Far West* and their individual relationships to Dylan's style and music, it will consider how they were variously influenced by the myth, and, particularly, Dylan's use of it, and how that influence shaped, perhaps, even the appearance of the counterculture itself.

The Italian Counterculture Self-Conceived in Far-West Terms

Bufalo Bill and Amerigo, Mythical Cowboy Heroes

1966 and 1985 are the binding years for the Italian songs dealt with here. These years, significantly, encompass both those of cultural revolution and civil terror in Italy and of Francesco Guccini's and Francesco De Gregori's greatest production of U.S. cowboy songs and albums. In Guccini's and De Gregori's work, there is a marked nostalgia for the mythical landscape. It is associated with the Cowboys-and-Indians games of their youths, as Guccini says in the 1972 song, "Little City" (Piccola città), when the narrator remembers school days in Modena when he daydreamed: "my eyes watched you all [the nuns], but they dreamed of heroes / guns and billiards; / my imagination ran towards the prairie that separated Emilia Street and the Wild West."[58] De Gregori and Guccini engage with the myth as a yearned for and internalized utopia throughout their careers, as De Gregori sings in his "Cowboys" of 1985: "Cowboys go on horseback, in the Arizona of our hearts",[59] and their nostalgic tone begins already to make apparent the lack of decoding of this particular national foundational myth. Indeed, Guccini and De Gregori trace the origins of the frontier West back, not to a historical source, not even to its mythical source, but, rather, to personal memory, which can be proffered as communal memory since it originates, to a great degree, in the most popular Italian comic of their childhoods, the cowboy-ranger comic *Tex Willer*.[60] In this conception of the myth, the *cantautori*'s protagonists act as both the heroes and the victims of the landscape; heroes because of their cowboy status in a promised land of adventure, and victims because they grow up to find out that that land is either gone or never existed. Two examples of this hero/victim cowboy exist in the titular songs from De Gregori's 1976 *Bufalo Bill* and Guccini's 1978 *Amerigo*.

According to De Gregori, the guiding concept in his *Bufalo Bill* album is America,[61] a

setting and concern he returns to in 1985 with his "Cowboys" (I cowboy) from *Chess and Tarot* (Scacchi e tarocchi) as well as his 1993 "Adelante! Adelante!" (Adelante! Adelante!) from *Love Songs* (Canzoni d'amore). The titular hero has a long history in Italy, beginning with his Wild West tours of Europe. Italian adventure novelist Emilio Salgari dedicated an early 20th-century novel to him[62] and in 1939 the Fascist regime introduced the comic series *The Adventures of Buffalo Bill, the Italian Hero of the Prairie* (Le avventure di Buffalo Bill: l'eroe italiano della prateria) in *The Little Courier* (Il piccolo corriere), which, as historian Renee Laegreid remarks, was produced "in the service of Italian nationalism, appropriating [Buffalo Bill's] contributions to the U.S. colonization of the frontier West and applying them to further the Italian imperialist agenda."[63] Indeed, Buffalo Bill Cody was a key figure in creating the myth of the cowboy in both the U.S. and abroad, a figure whom he highlighted in his show to be not only a famed hunter but also as instrumental to the colonial mission.[64]

De Gregori's misspelling of 'bufalo' in the title of his album was meant to show the implicit contradictions of the U.S. myth and its Italian adoption; a *bufalo* in Italian is a water buffalo, connoted with mozzarella, while the North American bison is *bisonte* in Italian.[65] Yet the cover image depicts a sexualized American cowgirl whose flirtatious smile and smoking gun don't quite invoke a sense of irony, let alone critique. The title song, furthermore, rather than representing a contradictory and problematic mythical West, is sentimental and romantic. "Bufalo Bill" was inspired by an American Western film, 1970's *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* by Sam Peckinpah, and as such, it doesn't demonstrate a significant lacuna between the American and Italian versions of the myth,[66] nor does it present an altogether different figure from the colonial hero created by Cody and reutilized by Fascism to encourage militaristic and colonial-settler support in Ethiopia. While De Gregori attempts to depoliticize his Bufalo Bill and depict him as a simple hunter and

adventurer, his depoliticization doesn't disentangle Buffalo Bill Cody's reputation in Italy from its close association with expansionism, both in the American West and during the Scramble for Africa and Fascism[67] which Laegreid argues was "codified" in Italy, "reifying themes of imperial conquest"[68] across decades of publications of dime and adventure novels. In that sense, De Gregori's attempt to depoliticize the figure is an effort, whether unconscious or not, to dehistoricize Buffalo Bill and absolve his mythical status of its historical association with colonialism and genocide, placing him squarely, rather, within a nostalgic memory of a personal past.

De Gregori's narrator in the album's titular song is unnamed until the final line when he says "My name was Bufalo Bill".[69] Until that point, his identity easily fuses with the singer-songwriter's as the narrative 'I' remembers his childhood in an idyllic landscape: "At that time," he sings, "I was a boy / gullible and romantic […] with a mustache like a man's"[70] and "the country was very young, / soldiers on horseback were its only defense. / The sparkling green of the prairie / demonstrated glaringly the existence of God, / of the God who designs the frontier and constructs the railway".[71] Without alluding to the genocide on the plains during the historical Buffalo Bill Cody's life, the song takes a light tone, folding Bufalo Bill's famous bison hunts into the games of Cowboys and Indians played in backyards. The narrator sings that there are those who kill for love or money, but I, a hunter, "always killed as a game […] and I was an only child, blonde a bit like Jesus".[72] De Gregori's narrator is a nostalgic and tragic hero; he is telling the story of his 20-year-old self,[73] from the point of view of an old man who has lost the frontier. Bufalo Bill's idyllic prairie gives way in the end to highways and he sits on the side of the road "one sad afternoon"[74] to contemplate it; then, at fifty, we are given to understand that his idyllic Eden is gone, so he goes on tour in Europe.[75] This is at once Buffalo Bill Cody's tale and the singer-songwriter's. They both

must grow up and leave the prairies and exploits of the frontier behind them (one the actual frontier, the other the comic books and games of Cowboys and Indians) to tour Europe and perform (one with a gun the other a guitar), apparently nostalgic for the utopian games of their youths.

Francesco Guccini, like De Gregori, folds his own mental map of the world to superimpose the myth of the West on his childhood.[76] As mentioned previously, in 1972's "Little City" Guccini remembers his hometown of Modena vividly, with its signs of bombings and its smell of postwar, which he differentiates from his daydreams about "heroes, guns, and billiards" as his "imagination ran towards the prairie that separated Emilia Street and the Wild West." Then, as he had distinguished the reality of Modena from the utopian *Far West*, so he distinguishes nostalgic memory from unsentimental recollection: "Silly adolescence, false and stupid innocence, / continence, empty third-hand American myth."[77] As the song and remembering progress, the dreams of heroes become "obscure nightmares of a dark period," the imagination is no longer inhabited by the West, but by his erotic teenage dreams, and the streets bear witness now to his frustrated love, rather than his games. Like De Gregori, there is a friction between myth/reality, youth/adulthood, that revolves around the myth of the West, and more broadly, the myth of America.

Indeed, Guccini eventually writes: "There is continual confrontation between his America—marginalized, backbreaking, defeating—and mine, made of myths, imaginations, and flights of fancy."[78] The 'he' of "his America" in this quote refers to Guccini's great uncle, Enrico Guccini, who is the titular Amerigo character in the long introductory and title track for his 1978 *Amerigo* album. His uncle had emigrated to the United States and the experience of the American Dream he recounted upon returning to Modena differed tremendously from Guccini's childhood ideal. Yet in the end, for all of his awareness of the problems of the myth, Guccini treats *il Far*

West as representing nothing more and nothing less than a beautiful promise that becomes a personal loss, as well as a loss for other potential Italian immigrants, when it is exposed as false.

Guccini's Amerigo is 20 years old, like De Gregori's Bufalo Bill, when he takes off for America—"He had the unlined face of a 20-year-old, / with anger and adventure and still vague ideas of socialism"[79]—and returns to Europe, like Bufalo Bill, when he is old and worn. Guccini remembers meeting him when he is young, he is still like a cowboy to the boy whose ideas of America are of Atlantis, the heart, destiny, paradise-lost and Fort Apache.[80] Amerigo's cowboy status is emphasized by a strange apparatus that "seems a pistol holster"[81] to the young Guccini, but that was in reality a hernia belt. The image of the hernia belt cum pistol holder tells the entire narrative of Amerigo's heroism and victimhood. As the song recounts, Amerigo had left as a hopeful immigrant and came back a tired old man, crucially contextualized within the rhetoric of immigrant rather than settler-colonizer,[82] both hero and victim of the tale.

As opposed to the young Guccini's idyllic, mythical ideas, Amerigo's America was made of blood, hard work, hard days, whores, beer, immigrants in the coal mines, and all for a few bucks. Guccini contrasts the idealized solitude of the cowboy with his uncle's lonely lost youth, the Po Valley a distant dream and English a strange sound that wounded him like a knife.[83] He contrasts the Missouri and Texas of the open, endless, free *Far West* with the Missouri and Texas where his uncle worked locked up in the darkness of the mines. He introduces beer and prostitutes to his uncle's loneliness and struggle: objects of the cowboys' greatest pleasures become pitiful substitutes for the home and community the immigrant left behind. At the end of the song, Guccini revisits the idea of the pistol holder/hernia belt and concludes that America, itself, is the hernia.[84]

The *cantautore* certainly critiques the American myth here, and with his references to Texas, holsters, Fort Apache, he refigures his uncle as a truer cowboy than in the comics and

reinstates some truth to the Myth of the West as well. It is in this very refiguring, however, that the Cowboys-and-Indians myth presents its greatest rub in Guccini. For it substitutes past Native-American victimhood for contemporary European immigrant disillusionment in order to ingratiate and propagate itself: the historical native victims disappear and now cowboys represent mythical heroes and contemporary Italian immigrant victims.

This includes Guccini's own dreams of immigration to the Americas. In fact, in another song from the album, "100 Pennsylvania Ave.", the personal nature of Guccini's long preoccupation with the U.S., and his sense of disappointment with the myth of America, becomes clear. For, not only his great uncle, also Guccini himself emigrated to the U.S., the latter Guccini only for a few months in 1970 to follow a Pennsylvanian girl he had met at Dickinson College in Bologna. Disappointed by his actual experience of the once imagined and idealized place, Guccini returned to Italy and began sorting out the incongruences of the real and imaginary in his music. "100 Pennsylvania Ave." has a brisk moment of sublime clarity, in which he pulls apart a great deal of that which the myth of the West has blended together in its various conflations. For one verse, the cowboys are an imperialist force bringing 'civilization' to the Indians, just like Kennedy's New Frontier turned out to include extending U.S. power through imperialist action in Vietnam. For one verse, the hippie generation who value 'love' and 'nature', who side with the Natives of the American Indian Movement through the late 60s and early 70s, are more like John Wayne than they like to depict themselves. In the song, Guccini daydreams about his old Pennsylvania flame and her new boyfriend:

> I imagined you and him, two Americans safe and sound, a little like John Wayne,
>
> Continuing Kennedy's myths and teaching the Indians:[85]
>
> Love and ecology up there in Maine.[86]

Guccini, in this moment of supreme clarity, realigns the mythical players, but the myth is too close to his personal experience and his dealings with it and, as a whole, it expresses a personal nostalgia and resentment for the loss of a promise he once held close.

While in "100 Pennsylvania Ave." Guccini recognizes the cultural violence that played out in order for America and the West to transform into a new 'promised land', the album's title, *Amerigo*, reaffirms the New World as a non-place, a wilderness, that came into being, through naming, after its discovery by Italians. Guccini describes the myth of America over and over again, in 1972, in 1978, and in 1984, as a land of cowboys. He is disappointed with and resentful of that mythical space whenever he comes face to face with the reality of it, yet in that very disappointment he reveals the point at which his encounter with the myth fails. He recognizes it as a false myth, but he wishes it were real, hence his nostalgia and resentment. While in his 1967 "Auschwitz (Song of a Child in the Wind)" (Auschwitz (Canzone del bambino nel vento)) and 1981 "Concentration Camp" (Lager), Guccini contemplates and critiques Nazi extermination camps, his relationship with the myth of *il Far West* does not appear to allow him to see the American frontier in those terms. Indeed, in his very desire for the myth to have proven real, he validates the underlying genocide on which it is based.

In the final lines of the song "Amerigo", Guccini, like De Gregori did in "Bufalo Bill", mirrors himself onto the narrative.[87] The narrator, Guccini's narrative 'I', sings: "I didn't understand then that that man was my face, he was my mirror."[88] This is an example of a final, complex conflation that is vital, I argue, to understanding how the cowboy hero gained traction outside of mainstream culture; it involves the folding of the singer himself, counterculture hero, into the convoluted mythical signification of victim/hero/cowboy/singer-songwriter. De Gregori did the same in "Bufalo Bill" and we will see Bob Dylan do it as well. The personal layer helps

these songs to purify themselves of the historical and politic and allows them, in turn, to dwell in a love the narrators nurture for the memory of the myth in their youths. As Barthes states, however, myths cannot suppress historicized meaning, they can only distance it. Thus, in the songs' nostalgic tones there is an implied nostalgia, as well, for the original ideological values of the American foundational myth as well as for the historical period.

Indeed, the myth is incongruous with the goals of the countercultural years; the historical as well as the original and countercultural mythical landscapes may very well present as the clean slate of the 'wilderness'[89] but, in reality, they represent a space that witnessed the final act of a long genocide of native people, the abuse and refusal of agency and identity to people of color and women,[90] and the ecological devastation wrought by the progress and activity of the frontier, all of which attempts to disappear in the mythical space. Seen in this rehistoricized and repoliticized light, the *cantautori*'s affinity for cowboys, while perhaps apparently seditious in its anti-authoritarianism and critique of contemporary society, appears rather reactionary. For, in fact, the first-person narrators in "Bufalo Bill" and "Amerigo" exult in and exist precisely within the constructs of dominant culture, in a retrograde mythical landscape that sentimentalizes a time when men of European descent roamed free and, with violence, claimed what they wanted whenever they wanted it.

Bob Dylan as a Connecting Figure

As I argued above, together with the victim and hero conflation, it is, precisely, the conflation of the violent-wanderer and musician-wanderer in the countercultural cowboy hero that may very well make him such an enchanting figure to singer-songwriters. De Gregori and Guccini certainly see themselves, or at least their protagonists, as not just cowboy figures, but, more broadly, as erring heroes. De Gregori's narrative-I of "Bufalo Bill" leaves the prairie to "wander [*girare*]

Europe"[91] and Guccini implies the centrality of 'wandering' or 'roaming' from the start of his career. On his first album, 1966's *Folk beat n. 1*, in "Talkin' Milano", an Italian take on Bob Dylan's 1962 "Talkin' New York", Guccini sings: "Late at night, sleeping I dreamed that I had become Bob Dylan, I wandered [*giravo*] the world with my guitar."[92] Dylan, for his part, in "Talkin' New York", is definitively wandering. The memoire-song begins with a mythic origin story for the Minnesotan musician—"Ramblin' outa the Wild West, / Leavin' the towns I love the best"[93]—and ends with his return to that origin: "I rambled out of New York town […] And headed out for the western skies."[94] From this starting point, with Guccini's "Talkin' Milano" and Dylan's "Talkin' New York", we can see relatively clearly the first steps of the final stage in the relay of grace from the American myth, through Dylan, to the Italian *cantautori*.

Dylan's music featured visions of the frontier since as early as "Talkin' New York" and his early interest in the setting as well as the cowboy archetype could be seen as related to his adoration of Woody Guthrie and the folk-music revival. Indeed, scholars have argued that the figure of the 'outlaw,' which includes but is not limited to the cowboy, is a central figure across Dylan's career.[95] However, in the 1970s his relationship to the West altered and seems to pivot, at least in part, from an interest in traditional folk music and to begin to be interested in the mythical frontier space itself. Indeed, as noted previously in this chapter, on the cover of his 1976 *Desire* and his 1978 *Masterpieces*, Dylan's persona begins to resemble that of the cowboy hero in the album's song "Romance in Durango", and of his character, Alias, from *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid,* which was shot in Durango, Mexico, and which is similar to the film in tone and story. The first-person narrator of the song is a cowboy-outlaw in the southwestern U.S.; he has killed a man, and together with his love, Magdalena, is fleeing the country. He had to sell his guitar for bread,

but he promises Magdalena that he will buy another and play for her while they ride. His dreams of the future end when he is shot down, leaving Magdalena his gun to defend herself.

There is a clear conflation of the gunslinger and musician in the song, as the narrator makes central both his guitar and his gun.[96] Additionally, there is the conflation of the hero/victim in the tragic role of the outlaw and, crucially, in the narrator's status as both colonizer and colonized, which is spotlighted when he distinctly traces his roots as native Aztec-Mexican. Using the first-person plural possessive, he sings: we'll ride "past the Aztec ruins and the ghosts of our people",[97] promising Magdalena: "We'll drink tequila where our grandfathers stayed / When they rode with Villa into Torreón".[98] In the reference to Pancho Villa, the narrator reveals an important detail of the timeline that suggests he is not simply an Aztec-Mexican cowboy at the historical frontier. Villa captured Torreón in 1912, which means that, as grandson of a Mexican revolutionary, the narrator must be living in or around present-day 1973, when the song was written. Thus, the narration appears less a historical romance and more a fantasy of the singer himself.

The conflation of various identities within a single hero allows for him to take on nuances of contemporary values (for example, a new countercultural affinity for the values of indigenous people), which, in turn, renews the validity of the outdated, stereotypical John-Wayne cowboy of the American foundation and Hollywood myth. The traditional cowboy was square, an enemy of native people, defender of the establishment and the rule of law, while Dylan's new cowboy hero is hip, one with the native people, and an outlaw. Yet, when the formal aspects of the myth are removed, the underlying ideologies remain the same; underneath it all, Dylan's cowboy persona, on album covers, in films, and in song, is much like the historical and mythical original: a colonizer with a gun who fancies himself a frontier vigilante.

Bob Dylan made it clear across much of his career that his music wasn't a voice-piece for

any political or social movements.[99] After 1965, he distanced himself from his previous association with popular-folk and protest music, and by his mid-twenties he had left songs like "Times They Are A-Changin'" and "Blowin' in the Wind" behind him, resisting any particular stance vis-à-vis the cultural movement.[100] However, regardless of his view of the counterculture or protest culture *per se*, his narratives of the West are crucially non-progressive in even a general sense. Tellingly, in Damian Carpenter's chapter on the redemptive figure of the outlaw in Dylan's work, in *Lead Belly, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, and American Folk Outlaw Performance*, he focuses on two less-likely songs from *Desire* and elides mention of "Romance in Durango" all together. This is perhaps because Dylan's cowboy-dress and horseback-ride are a troubling escape, not just *from* the law, but also *into* the realm of a white-male-colonial utopia during the very years that saw the U.S. battle for civil rights,[101] Native-American rights, and women's rights. At the very least Dylan's choice of mythical setting appears tone deaf and uncritical, at most retrograde and reactionary, when viewed, particularly, in relation to AIM (American Indian Movement), which formed in 1968, and which fought for the rights of Native-American people and continuously demonstrating across the 1970s to remind U.S. citizens of the horrors of the frontier period.

In 2017, Bob Dylan was the first musician to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, which might seem surprising in light of his a-political stance during the revolutionary years and his use of a colonial myth as part of the creation of his own heroism. Yet, it appears to demonstrate just how uncritical our understanding of the myth of the West has become. It highlights, furthermore, McLuhan's claim that beginning in the 1970s, youth generations self-educated on music, without guidance or critical assessment, and it underlines Barthes' claim that mythology quite effectively obscures history beneath the veneer of certain formal presentations. It is worth mentioning, however, one more pertinent fact of Dylan's Nobel Prize: namely, that the Nobel Committee is not

American. Bob Dylan's cowboy film, his cowboy dress, his cowboy songs appear, on the surface, quite differently to Europeans and Americans. Indeed, the myth of the West alters when it is translated, it distances itself more completely from its historical truths, from the values that make up the original U.S. foundation myth and the underpinnings of the American Dream that follows. So does the myth of the singer-songwriter. They both take on additional meanings unique to each culture and language they are translated into.

Bob Dylan, in fact, continued to be read as a revolutionary figure in Europe long after he'd fought to depoliticize his music in the U.S. In the case of Italy, specifically, if the American dream of the 1950s was fracturing for the 1960s and 70s generations, it was, according to Paul Ginsborg, only to be replaced by a new American dream represented in the counterculture: its music scene, with Dylan as its icon, its campus protests, and its west-coast commune lifestyle.[102] Though Bob Dylan distanced himself from the American protest movement in the U.S., he and his music came across the Atlantic as still strictly aligned with the movement in the 1970s. Thus, while Dylan's retreat to the mythical West appears domestically as somewhat reactionary, his cowboy songs come to Italy with all of the progressive associations he had had in 1962. Dylan, indeed, began to have an immense influence on the Italian folk music scene beginning, mainly, after he had broken with the movement in 1965 and begun to turn towards a cowboy aesthetic.[103] As mentioned, Francesco Guccini's first album, *Folk beat n. 1*, in 1966 finds the *cantautore* creating a Dylan-inspired song, replete with harmonica, in which he fantasizes about being Dylan as he travels the world with his guitar. Francesco De Gregori, too, openly styled himself after Dylan, imitating his dress and use of harmonica holster, and playing covers of his songs regularly.[104] In 2015, De Gregori came out with a tribute album, *De Gregori Sings Bob Dylan: Love and Theft* (De Gregori canta Bob Dylan - amore e furto), of Dylan translations. There is a third *cantautore*, however,

Fabrizio De André, who is equally important during the Italian counterculture years and who, significantly, distanced himself from Dylan and engaged very differently with the myth of *il Far West*.

Fabrizio De André's Critique of the Mythical West and Contemporary Use of It

Unlike those of the previous singer-songwriters investigated here, Fabrizio De André's songs, generally, are non-personal, and, if they are nostalgic, it is for something lost by another, not by De André himself. The Genoese *cantautore* is brutally critical of the treatment of Native Americans and his frontier West songs reflect this. While they depict a lost utopia, it is one that is lost to the native people, not to the cowboys, who appear in his music as antagonists rather than heroes. De André's opinion of Dylan, as opposed to his contemporaries, is ambivalent across his life, and near the beginning of his career, in 1969, it is outright dismissive. When asked if he is inspired by American folk singers, he replies "I don't think there is any relationship," stating that his own songs "depart from a folk, if you can call it that, that is occidental European, above all French, while the songs of Bob Dylan, and of Joan Baez and other English-speaking musicians, depart from a Western style of folk. There's a huge difference!"[105] When asked his opinion of Dylan, he says that he doesn't know his work well enough to comment.[106] Indeed, De André claims he only came to know Dylan's music via De Gregori, leading up to their collaboration on the album *Volume 8* in 1975, when they translated "Desolation Row" for De André's 1974 album *Canzoni*.[107] Significantly, singular amongst his colleagues, De André states his opinion that by 1974 Bob Dylan's music no longer had a meaningful impact on youth audiences.[108] Twenty years later, De André had not changed his tune, even as interviewers continued to insist on the importance of

Dylan's influence on Italian *canzoni d'autore*, affirming again in 1997 that his own music and Dylan's have nothing in common.[109]

De André's view of Dylan, I argue, is a correlative of his view of *il Far West*, as across four songs, he unpacks the myth to critique those who attempt to repurpose it for their own ends and, in turn, to reveal its underlying ideologies. In the first of the songs investigated in this section, his "Wolf Tail" (Coda di Lupo), De André wields the myth to critique the Italian counterculture itself; in the second song examined here, his version of Dylan's "Romance in Durango" (Avventura a Durango), he satirizes cowboy songs to mock singer-songwriters' self-depictions as outlaw heroes. In a later section, the chapter will look at two more songs, his "What I don't have" (Quello che non ho) and "Sand Creek" (Fiume Sand Creek), in which De André re-historicizes various truths of the frontier. Importantly, and increasingly across his career, there is an aversion to utilizing Native American identities to tell European tales, which is clear in De André's oeuvre as early as 1978 in his concept album *Rimini*.

De André claims in 1978 that *Rimini* is "a disc made by, and making fun of, the petite bourgeoisie."[110] The cover depicts the seaside Italian town of Rimini as an idealized bourgeois vacation spot and the songs on the album are bourgeois and petit-bourgeois tales, while the two songs examined here are tales of the countercultural as well as the bourgeois. Those songs, "Wolf Tail" and "Romance in Durango" were notably categorized by critics as "Dylanian ballads," but, as we will see, the songs read only on the surface as Dylan-style romantic frontier tales. When excavated, it is apparent that De André is using the songs to critique the countercultural left, including its *cantautori,* as it appears to imagine itself in 1977: split into two factions that bear a remarkable resemblance to Cowboy-and-Indian prairie icons.

The *Rimini* album that Fabrizio De André created in collaboration with Massimo Bubola in 1978 was inspired, according to De André, by the huge and impossible dreams of the petite bourgeoisie in the Rimini of Federico Fellini's *I vitelloni* (The Loafers) and *Amarcord* (I remember).[111] The album is kaleidoscopic in both its musical variation and textual allusions. It tells of the dramas of vacationers to Rimini, symbolic location of the ideal bourgeois vacation, which De André calls in an interview "a mirage of affluence/well-being and consumption."[112] The album goes on to fold the peninsula in half lengthwise to mirror Genoa, De André's and Columbus's birthplace, onto Fellini's birthplace of Rimini. The title track superimposes the west-coast port city of Genoa over the east-coast seaside resort town of Rimini and creates a link between old- and new-world narratives; characters from the New World migrate to and settle in the album as if they have disembarked from Columbus's returning ships. It introduces Columbus, not as an idealized hero, but as a limp figure on a stretcher, with his hands manacled and a cloth shoved in his mouth. When the young protagonist of the album's first song removes the cloth, Columbus laments: "'I committed two errors […] to abort America / and then look upon her sweetly."[113] Columbus laments his devotion to a sad Catholic king and before the album transitions more fully to the New-World settings, De André situates listeners in the historical relationship between the Christian immigrants and native population: "I invented a kingdom for [the king]," Columbus says, "and he slaughtered it on a wooden cross."[114] Like De Gregori and Guccini, this is a micro and macro-layering of local hometown Italy with the myth of the New World, yet the nostalgia is gone from "Rimini". The myth of America begins to unravel right in the album's first song, as the installation of the myth is not the story of America's discovery or creation, but rather of America's "abortion" and then subsequent mythification as those who destroyed her started "looking upon her sweetly."

After the album's initial folding of the Italian map to lay Genoa over Rimini, it then folds the world map in half in the third song, "Wolf Tail". Like Marco Ferreri's 1974 Western farce, *Don't Touch the White Woman!* (Non toccare la donna bianca!), the song's climactic scene takes place at the Battle of Little Bighorn. Ferreri's film is an allegory for the French student movement in 1968; General Custer (Marcello Mastroianni) is called to modern-day Paris to battle Sitting Bull (Alain Cuny) and his Indians, who are squatting in the city and who, as stated in the opening scene, "do not recognize the value of private property."[115] The film returns cowboys—who in the film are a group of representative white men, Custer, Buffalo Bill, an Indian Scout, and a CIA agent (Paolo Villaggio)[116]—to their historical position of violent antagonism toward Indians. Yet, the Indians themselves, are no longer Native Americans, but a group of marxist hippies, led only nominally by Sitting Bull, while their true leader is white loin-clothed marxist called the 'Mad Indian.' While Sitting Bull wavers and frets, the Mad Indian preaches to the tribe about collective action, which in the end, allows them to defeat Custer. "Where are the warriors of old, who would fight alone against 100 guns?" Custer laments, as his troops are depleted. Finally, when Sitting Bull's father takes aim at Custer and kills him, the Mad Indian is holding the rifle as well, a sort of ghost presence and guiding force.

In this film, Ferreri parses some of the conflated identities in the myth, yet, like the comic book, *Tex Willer,* the Indian is no more than a metaphor for the European and, like *Tex,* agency is taken from Sitting Bull and his tribe and handed over to the white-man hero.[117] De André's "Wolf Tail" is not an allegory of student revolutionaries as mythical Indians, but, rather an exploration of the student revolutionaries, themselves, who by 1977 had come to understand themselves as *indiani*. The Metropolitan Indians (*indiani metropolitani*), perhaps inspired in part by Ferreri's film, were a faction of the 1977 cultural movement which De André remembers and critiques in

1978. While De André never uses certain key mythical terms like “cowboy” or “West” that show up as English-loan words in De Gregori and Guccini, and while he never specifies that the protagonist of the song, Wolf Tail, is a Native American, it becomes clear through the story that the metaphor is one of a young Cherokee coming-of-age yarn knit together with that of a young Metropolitan Indian that plays out on the Italian peninsula. A contextualized reading of the song reveals it to be an exploration of the revolution that both laments its ultimate failure and questions some of its decisions and ideals. Clearly of primary concern for De André, in a conviction that remains strong for the *cantautore* throughout the 1990s, is the adoption on the part of the Metropolitan Indians of Native American heroism and victimhood.

Between 1968 and 1977, the Italian protest movement had slowly but drastically altered. After the initial dissent in 1968, it was under pressure from the economic downturn of the 1970s, from the failure of the extra-parliamentary groups on the left to find traction within the government, and from the civil terror of the Black and Red Brigades that had begun in 1969 with the Black Brigade’s bombing of Piazza Fontana in Milan. One of the key differences between the 1968 and 1977 movements, as Paul Ginsborg points out, was that in 1977 the students were disaffected from traditional politics and that the movement began and ended with the needs of its participants. The example Ginsborg gives is of ‘auto-reductions,’[118] which in 1968 had been practiced on family electricity bills to support factory laborers, while in 1977 they were practiced on concert-ticket prices.[119] Some artists, like De Gregori, organized free or nearly free tours in support of the students. However, De André in 1978 remembers *The Naked King*'s (*Re nudo*) (the most influential contemporary counter-culture magazine in Italy) protest against ticket prices and remarks:

> *Re nudo*'s initiative to lower ticket prices was serious, but to expect it to be free, or to want to take down the artist, seems to me a highly unfair position. Maybe I am just outside of certain frames of mind though, I am not a revolutionary, not even by temperament, and even if I were, I would have fought for candies, for superfluous things, like all the bourgeoisie.[120]

This is a lightly veiled dig at youths' 'superfluous' concerns, behind which the *cantautore* detects, perhaps, the same bourgeois individual whom Žižek looks for when he denounces false universality or "the interest of a particular class [which] disguises itself as universal human interest."[121] Indeed, it is in the same interview that he says *Rimini* "is a disc made by, and making fun of, the petite bourgeoisie." In his comment, De André begins to reveal that he considers not only the beachgoers of "Rimini", but also the revolutionary Wolf Tail and the romanticized modern-day cowboy of "Romance in Durango", as well as he, himself, to be petit-bourgeois actors dressed up in various costumes.

"Wolf Tail" is a song of refusals and overcoming, as well as a song, finally, of disappointment and disenchantment. Each verse ends in a re-versioned refrain telling the listener not to believe in various gods: Never believe in an English god, in a loser god, in a gluttonous god, in the god of the Scala, in a god of happy endings, in a back-breaking god, in a god without staying power.[122] The protagonist is born under the 'English god,' understood to be bourgeois ideology, but by 14 and his coming-of-age ceremony, when he steals a horse and is given his name 'Wolf Tail,' he is associated with a different way of life, a life antithetical, and no longer believes in the 'loser god' of his grandfather's tutelage. Communist ideology follows, crucifying his grandfather on a fork, symbol of peasant uprisings, and his grandfather and his church are "dirtied and cleaned"

with blood that painted them red.[123] Communism, too, is overcome, "Never believe in the gluttonous god," De André sings, and in this verse the transition is to both 1968 and 1977.

By 1968, young marxists affiliated themselves with neither the Soviet Union, exposed as a violent and authoritarian regime, nor with the traditional Italian Communist Party (PCI). Paul Ginsborg argues that they were, in fact, as ferociously anti-PCI as they were anti-capitalist.[124] The tale of the following god, the god of the Scala, folds the ten years of social struggle onto itself, and one verse recounts both the beginning and the end of the long decade. One of the first manifestations of 1968 saw protestors gather to throw rotten eggs at upper-class theatergoers at Teatro della Scala in Milan. The protest was symbolically repeated in 1976, but that time it turned violent. In this verse, the young Wolf Tail carries a metal rod, as many protestors did in 1976.[125] He apes his courageous rite of passage in the second verse as an excuse to kill and steal. "I stole my first horse and I became a man" he had said in the second verse; now he claims with the same simple pride: "I killed a suit and I stole it from him."[126] The synecdochic use of "suit" (*smoking*) to refer to a business man ironically reveals an attitude that Marx crucially condemned in the capitalist economy, that of treating men as commodities, their value as men strictly associated with their value in the workforce.

Just as soon as it starts, the '68 revolution is over, "Never believe in the god of the Scala," and the next two verses trace the final disillusionment of Wolf Tail as he starts using drugs and faces his last battle:

Then we returned to Brianza for the opening

Of the bison hunt

They tested our breath and our urine

And an Andalusian poet explained the mechanism to us

‘For the bison hunt,’ he said, ‘the number is closed.’

And never believe in a god of happy endings.

<break/>

And I was already old when near Rome

At Little Bighorn

A shorted haired general spoke to us at the university

Of our brothers in blue coveralls/uniforms who had buried the hatchet

But we did not smoke with him, he had not come in peace.

Never believe in a backbreaking god.[127]

De Gregori’s Bufalo Bill says there are three types of people who kill bison: those who do it to steal, those who do it for love of the hunt, and those who do it for play. He implies that he did it as a game, like a boy playing at Cowboys and Indians. In De André, this imagery of young Italians ‘playing’ at a bison hunt in a Cowboys-and-Indians game, is turned on its head. Wolf Tail’s Brianza implies the BR, or *Brigate Rosse* (Red Brigades), and the bison hunt is not play at all, rather it is a reference to the increased violence against government officials, industrialists, and journalists in those years. The BR grew in size and action in the late 1970s and the group was increasingly affiliated with a faction of the 1977 movement that stood in sharp contrast to the creative Metropolitan Indians: the militaristic Worker’s Autonomy group (*Autonomia operaia*). Wolf Tail attempts to join the militants but is denied entrance after he fails a drug test. He is told that the ‘number is closed’ or *il numero è chiuso* for the hunt, which evokes the memory of a university reform introduced in the 1960s that ended number-based university acceptance limits and allowed any student to attend.[128] Without reforming the education system as a whole, this singular reform resulted in overcrowded and barely functioning schools that, in their malfunction,

stacked the deck against lower-class students who had to work while attending university. Education reform was a large part of the impetus for the 1968 student movement and it leads the song back to Sapienza University and a February 1977 campus occupation led by *Autonomia operaia.*

De André's 'Little Bighorn' in the song recounts a visit by Luciano Lama, head of the trade union most closely associated with the PCI, CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labor), to the occupied campus. The events of that afternoon have come to be known as The Hunt of Lama (*Cacciata di Lama*). In the song, Lama is described as a short-haired general who tells the activists that their brothers, the factory workers, have laid down their arms. De André's '*tute blu'* is ambiguous and I have translated it above as 'blue coveralls/uniform,' for it evokes both the coveralls of factory workers (whom Lama represented) and the blue uniforms of Union soldiers who fought Native Americans in the West. The idiom 'to bury the hatchet,' meanwhile, comes to the English language from the tradition of Native Americans at the cessation of hostilities. Lama's was essentially a call to end violence,[129] as he recalls himself: "In those years Italy ran great risks […] the battle [against terrorism] completely absorbed us, and so we did not see all the rest with the necessary clarity."[130] But the crowd understood it as a call to surrender, a call to sacrifice, and both the creative and militant elements of the crowd mobilized in a violent clash with the PCI *servizi d'ordine* (rally marshals). "We did not smoke with him, he had not come in peace," De André sings. This moment defined the student movement as overwhelmingly militant, while the peaceful and creative Metropolitan Indians demonstrated themselves to be a minority. Two weeks later a demonstration of 60,000 people in downtown Rome turned into a four-hour guerrilla-style battle with both police and students firing shots. Paul Ginsborg remembers that "demonstrators chanted a macabre slogan in praise of the P38 pistol, the chosen weapon of the *Autonomi.*"[131]

De André's protagonist, though figuring himself after a Native American when he is renamed Wolf Tail, has elements of the cowboy figure as well, as he attempts to join the militant faction in the bison hunt and then joins in with the militants in the Hunt of Lama. When the mixed crowd of Metropolitan Indians and militants reemerge on the streets of Rome two weeks later to sing the praise of their pistols, they have transformed into a loose affiliation of autonomous pistol-carrying militants. The Metropolitan Indian element is gone and they have transformed into the cowboyesque Men of P38 who, as we will see further on, soon become the iconic face of the revolution. Meanwhile Wolf Tail, in the final stanza, recedes into a heroin-induced stupor, trying to remember what he had been fighting for.

The final stanza is a lament for a life experienced as a series of hopes and disillusions, for both the Metropolitan Indian and Cherokee Native American, Wolf Tail. Indeed, the entire song can be read as the history of native people in the U.S. as well. The 'English god' arrives with the immigrants, the 'Loser god' is Wolf Tail's Cherokee way of life as he believes for a moment in the future promised by white men, who, however, betray him and crucify his grandfather on their church. Wolf Tail attempts to fight back but is powerless against the imperial culture. At a certain point his people are introduced to drugs and alcohol and at the same time their traditions are taken from them; like the sacred bison hunt, which becomes both illegal and impossible as the bison's numbers are reduced by the game-hunting practices of European settlers. The final battle, that of Little Bighorn, is remembered as a native victory in the American myth, but it is a convenient memory, one of the few victories and one of the last. Wolf Tail succumbs to the drugs; as his culture, his people, and his land have all either been stolen from him or destroyed.

This layering of two narratives is the critical act in "Wolf Tail", as De André contrasts the Native American and Metropolitan Indian plights. He furthermore questions some of the student

ideology, as he had with the auto-reduction of concert prices. In the context of *Rimini* as a whole, which evokes bourgeois vacations and Fellini's *I vitelloni* (The Loafers), verses like "I learned to fish with a bomb in hand," and "Never believe in a backbreaking God," raise a question: Are these revolutionaries or *vitelloni*? Indeed, Paul Ginsborg admits that the creative element of the 1977 often refused to work when jobs were available and "desired above all to 'stare insieme' [be together] and enjoy themselves."[132] More than De André's perception of the movement, what is most significant about the song, in the case of the examination here, is the *cantautore*'s depiction of the counterculture as a group of adults as having chosen a side, and an aesthetic, very much as if they were still playing at Cowboys and Indians.

"Romance in Durango", another song on the *Rimini* album, investigates the other side of countercultural split in 1977 Italy and the other side of the Cowboys-and-Indians game De André appears to detect in the movement. Namely, militant groups like the Workers'-Autonomy faction, the Men of the P38 (Gli uomini della P38), who chose their name in reference to their pistol of choice, the Walther P38 semi-automatic. The P38 group became infamous in a photo taken on May 14th, 1977, during a police assault in Milan. The photo shows a masked and lone gunman, legs spread, gun raised and aimed. During the incident, within moments of the photo being taken, a 25-year-old policeman was shot and killed. The gunman's identity was unknown, but it was known that he was a member of the Men of the P38. The photo hit the media stream and became instantly iconic. After years of concern around the level and type of conflict, years of ambivalence, the publication of this photo consolidated the opinion of the PCI, which joined with much of the country in condemning the actions of the P38 group. As Umberto Eco said in his article, "A Photo" (Una foto), published in *L'Espresso* on May 19th, 1977: "I think that [the photo] revealed suddenly, without need for much more discourse, something that had been circulating in many conversations,

but that words alone did not manage to make people accept. That photo did not look like any of the images in which the idea of revolution, for at least four generations, had been emblematized. The collective element was missing, and the figure of the individual hero returned in a traumatic mode."[133] Suddenly, the myth of the cowboy hero and the myth of the collective-action hero had collided, and the cowboy revealed himself terrifying, individualistic, extreme, and above all unacceptable. The myth of the individual revolutionary hero in Italy, Eco says, is rather always that of a victimized person. The myth of the West was able to victimize the cowboy by association with natives, but that association, water-tight on desert vignettes, became a sieve on the streets of Milan, the sincerity of the cowboy's absolute justice poured out of the photo, leaving insoluble violence behind.

Eco uses the event to demonstrate how, in contemporary society, the simulacrum has become more real than the real. The image of the world is truer than the world itself, and symbols, in effect, create reality. He argues that "this individual hero had the pose, the terrifying isolation […] of the solitary shooters in the West—no longer dear to a generation that wants Indians."[134] Yet, it is not so clear as that, for indeed, the opposite could be argued, that the image of the cowboy inspired and allowed armed revolutionaries to continue their activity, precisely because they resembled him as the marginalized figure they had seen in media representations fighting, and killing, for extrajudicial forms of justice. The semiologist and essayist, Gianfranco Marrone, in his 2012 "One photo, a thousand things," (Una foto, mille cose) gets more to the points as he says of the P38 group: "the fact is that this violent deviation, as much as it was explicitly motivated by a thousand, sometimes quite sophisticated, post-marxist analyses, was, in effect, fueled by the disseminated media image of the solitary gunslinger (from the West, one understands), the real hero, in spite of his [opposition to] the classic revolutionary iconography."[135] What Marrone is

claiming here is that the Italian public had been unwittingly influenced by mythological images that were, in that moment, quasi-ubiquitous in mass-media productions. As Barthes claims, and as this chapter maintains, those mythical images *seem* to change, but the altered myth, unless deconstructed, always conveys elements of the historical truth and original mythical ideology.[136] For this very lack of mythical decoding, the Italian public, including its counterculture, a public who may have ultimately disagreed with much of what *il Far West* represents in both historical and mythical terms, may yet reproduce it again and again.

Mythologies offers a number of methods for the decoding of myth so as to unmask its functionality and the historical truth underlying it. Barthes suggests that one useful method (the opposite of what De Gregori does in his "Bufalo Bill") is to re-politicize, or re-historicize, mythical media that has been depoliticized in an attempt to "purify" it.[137] Though he does not speak in terms of 'myth',[138] Umberto Eco's 'semiological guerrilla', proposed in 1967, has a similar duty to Barthes' mythologist. Barthes and Eco both argue that mass media covertly circulate ideology in messages that appear unbiased and natural and they argue for the importance of those in society who would, as Eco puts it, "reintroduce a critical dimension to the passive reception" of mass-media's messages.[139] In his "Towards a Semiological Guerrilla", Eco discusses the contemporary atmosphere of dissent and, taking Marshall McLuhan as a jumping off point, he argues that contemporary mass protest refutes the method/form and content of societal hegemonic control yet it most often does not successfully act as the semiological guerrilla he calls for. He concludes, rather, that in their own productions, dissenters often do not "manage to leave the circle, and thus re-enter it without wanting to. Revolutions," he says, "often resolve themselves in the most picturesque forms of integration."[140]

I have argued that it is a lack of critical decoding, or de-mythifying, which causes some of

the singer-songwriters analyzed here to create and disseminate narratives with obscured but extant ideological messages that are still in line with hegemonic ideologies, whether those ideologies relate to capitalism, violence, colonialism, racism, or misogyny. On the other hand, I have argued that Fabrizio De André, in his 1978 *Rimini* album, asks the Italian public to reflect on cowboy iconography in the moment, precisely when the iconography of the West has become poignantly out of place and revealed as perhaps even injurious. We have seen how the song "Wolf Tail" is told by a narrator who is part of the Metropolitan-Indian collective but who imagines himself to be Cherokee and how De André highlights the different stakes of the Metropolitan Indians' and Native Americans' struggles. De André completes his critique of contemporary culture in "Romance in Durango," in which he confronts both the militant and the singer-songwriter's affinity for the cowboy hero, who both appear to be playing at the 'Cowboy' side of Cowboys and Indians.

The second *Far-West* song on the album, "Avventura a Durango", is a retelling of Dylan's original "Romance in Durango", with small but significant changes that render it an absurd caricature. As previously discussed, Bob Dylan wrote "Romance in Durango" while shooting *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* in Durango, Mexico, and his song has a feel similar to the film's: adventure, love, an endless desert, and a tragic hero on the run. The first-person narrator of the song is a cowboy and outlaw in the southwestern frontier. He has killed a man, and together with his love, Magdalena, is fleeing towards Durango. He had to sell his guitar for bread, but he promises Magdalena that he will buy another and play for her while they ride, he promises her that they will be married and live happily ever after in Durango. His dreams of the future and his reassurances end when he is shot down, leaving Magdalena his gun to defend herself. The narrator is a perfect vision of the classic, romantic cowboy outlaw on horseback, but crucially, as we have

seen, he reveals himself to be a contemporary 1970s cowboy, much as Dylan portrayed himself.

Fabrizio De André and Massimo Bubola's "Durango" tells essentially the same tale as the original, with two crucial differences. The first is that the narrator's native roots are erased; Dylan's "Past the Aztec ruins and the ghosts of our people,"[141] becomes De André's "Past the Aztec temples and the ruins"[142]; gone as well is the mention of his Mexican-revolutionary grandfather.[143] This effectively disentangles the figure of the cowboy from any conflation with the native people. De André, then, adds an element of satire to the tale, as his translation includes local features that disrupt the continuity of the narrative and introduce a farcical tone. Dylan's cowboy, for example, had sold his guitar for some bread, while De André sings that he sold his for "some pizza".[144] Where Dylan, in the refrain, evokes an imperfect and incomplete Spanish with the insertion of short lines like "no llores, mi querida",[145] De André invents a non-existent dialect, close to *abruzzese*—"Nun chiagne Maddalena"[146]—underlining the untranslatability of the story. Indeed, while De Gregori and Guccini apparently idolize Dylan in their songs and interviews, soon after its release, De André gave the song as an example one of the album's "petite-bourgeois scenarios." He describes it as "a pretty pitiful and stupid story" and states that it was included ironically.[147] Rather than idolizing the cowboy/musician hero, De André appears to be laughing at him and his romanticized view of both himself and the frontier West.

Rimini, as a whole, is poking fun at petit-bourgeois culture, not just on the beaches, but dressed up in a foreign myth: as vigilantes on the streets, as mythical Indians on campuses, and as singer-songwriters who imagine themselves on horseback with guns and guitars. In his version of "Durango," De André parses the myth of the West, he untangles conflated elements, and, in so doing, he demythifies, not just the mythical hero of the Cowboy, but that of singer-songwriter himself. De André's songs, in fact, are surprisingly similar to the very example Barthes gives of a

myth whose functionality has been unmasked through re-politicizing. He describes the image of a black soldier saluting a French flag, which, he says, acts as an alibi for French imperialism. He instructs that one must look past the surface patriotism by viewing the image from the point of view of the soldier, thus one cannot help but remember the actual events of colonialism that have been distorted and purified by mythification. De André begins this move in *Rimini* and completes it a couple of years later in his "Sand Creek", which, as we will see, is a song that reveals him as singular amongst his colleagues, the only singer-songwriter who does not reproduce the imperialist alibi, but, rather, rehistoricizes the mythical past.

Cowboy Songs as the Revolutions Ends

For De Gregori and Guccini, the cowboy myth reappears in the post-revolutionary 1980s as relatively unchanged. Their critique is still mixed with a prevailing nostalgia for the mythical utopia, which is perhaps an overcome ideal in revolutionary politics on the Italian streets, but one that still absorbs their mental landscapes. And it is still a representation of innocence, youth, and lost hopes for a bright future. In De Gregori's 1985 album, *Chess and Tarot* (Scacchi e tarocchi), the song "Cowboys" (I cowboy) is a sort of lament for their loss. As De Gregori's Bufalo Bill finds his mythical land interrupted by the arrival of the future, of the car and the highway, so the cowboys in 1985 are set up for a fall when the future arrives. Yet, the song is not an unmasking of the cowboy as a foreign hero, but a sentimental farewell.

Cowboys go by horse

Through the canyons of life

Their glory is a golden belt

And a rusted buckle

<break/>

The desert is their star

Their star has no family

And the future for them has no morning

The wine has no bottle

<break/>

The desert is their star

Their star forestalls the sunset

And the future for them is a beautiful thing

That, when it arrives, will settles the score

<break/>

Cowboys are fast animals

When they return they are already leaving

Their streets have no crossroads

Their life is a railway

<break/>

When the train departs again

Everyone is armed to his teeth

They salute you with their rifles

Legs astride the buffer stop

<break/>

Cowboys go by horse

In the Arizona of our hearts

They have no children they have no parents

They have no troops they have no loves

<break/>

They adventure alone

So they seldom get lost

They are drifting hearts

They are souls in the current

<break/>

And when the train returns it's evening

And the future presents itself

Before the cowboys, who knows if there was

After the cowboys there is nothing else.[148]

The cowboys live in the present but think of the future as a beautiful thing. They travel alone so that they are truly free, no army or family to bind them. They may no longer wander the range but still travel in the "Arizona of our hearts," De Gregori states. In the last verses, when the future finally arrives, one senses that it is the end for the cowboys and their mythical and internalized range, yet, De Gregori can imagine nothing before or after them. The future that they saw as 'beautiful,' the future they 'forestalled' on the range, creates a void in the song when it arrives. It erases the cowboy but replaces it with nothing else. As if with that foreign dream gone, there can be no others rooted in the local. This appears still true for De Gregori in his 1992 album *Love Songs* (Canzoni d'amore) in which he reflects on the Christian Democrats' decades of government control and the corruption scandal that ended it. The *cantautore* finally appears to overcome the romanticized cowboy hero, presented as the gaucho of the "endless plains" of South America in "Adelante! Adelante!"[149] He says: "Running along the state highway / Is a train full of salt / From

Turin to Palermo […] And these streets without laws / And these stalls without flocks / Without parents to remember / And without children to respect."[150] The lawless streets, the freedom to wander, is seen in a negative key in 1992, while the cowboy's train was, in fact, sowing the earth with salt, assuring a barren future in which nothing local could sprout.

While cowboys wander in the "Arizona of our hearts" in De Gregori's 1980s, Francesco Guccini resurrects the 1972 Cowboys and Indians of his "Piccola città," to provide the title of his 1984 live album *Between Emilia Road and the Wild West* (Fra la via Emilia e il West). On the album sleeve he remembers the frontier in his hometown of Modena:

> Emilia Road cut Modena in two: the street on which I lived crossed it, and on the other side, there were ample fields and the town's periphery. Those fields were like our domesticated 'West', with just a couple of steps and crossing a street there were suddenly Cowboys and Indians, horses and arrows; there was, in sum, Adventure, translated into 'the Po Valley,' by films and comics. Then, Emilia Road went on cutting Modena in two, but the West had a different face, and the 'American Myth', that of many generations before mine, spoke a different language, that of rock, of vinyl covers, of the face of James Dean in *Rebel without a Cause,* of books that had just been discovered and published in Italian. But the two references always existed, one foot here and the other there, the dream (better, the utopia) and the reality.[151]

Guccini sums it up: "the West had a different face," he says, it became the American myth that spoke the language of rock and vinyl covers. Yet, "the two references always existed, one foot here and the other there, the dream and the reality." Like De Gregori's "Cowboys", *Between Emilia Street and the Wild West* is a farewell tribute to the myth, an explanation of its relevance, its meaning, its status. The players are all clumped together, without hierarchy or distinction:

Cowboys and Indians, rock, film, comics, rebellion, the American myth, the Po Valley. Guccini describes the mythical elements so well, but the historical is all but missing. Though for Umberto Eco in 1977 the cowboy dream had played itself out with horrifying consequences on the streets of Milan and subsequently revealed its foreign nature, for Guccini in 1984 it is still a paradise lost, a dream, a promise. It is still a representation of that which is, and that which could be. Indeed, even in his 2004 song "Christopher Columbus" (Cristoforo Colombo), while cowboys aren't present, the promise of America is the same: "He found a street of stars in the heavens of his soul. / He feels it and can no longer fail, he will discover a new world […] Even if it is a mirage, at this point he is weighing anchor […] And he navigates, navigates away, / toward a world still unthinkable in any theory."[152] It is a pure and lofty goal, a utopia, a mirage. America is ever an ideal land for Guccini, one that begins and ends not with the Native people, but with the Italian people.

De André's America, meanwhile, is increasingly the opposite of Guccini's, one that begins and ends with the native people. In 1981, three years after *Rimini* and about a year after the decade of civil terrorism comes to a close,[153] he releases a self-titled album which is most commonly known as *The Indian* (L'indiano), due to its title-less cover and cover art. The album works towards lessening the power of the mythical West in Italy, towards reinstating a historical tale of centuries-long imperialism, by realigning the nature of the relationship between Native Americans and European pioneer-immigrants. It marks the beginning of a process of New-World historicizing that De André will continue to carry out as the 500-year anniversary of Columbus's landing in the Americas and Genoa's celebration of that anniversary approaches. De André seems to understand in his prior works and *L'indiano* that part of the power of myth is in simple naming itself, and thus cowboys—the English word in Italian so strongly associated with the myth—are never named.

White men indeed are hardly present, it is a tale told by colonized people about colonized people. This is apparent in the album's first impact, the cover, which reproduces American artist, Frederic Sackrider Remington's, 1909 portrait *The Outlier*. It depicts a Native American man on horseback, alone on the prairie with the sun at the horizon behind him. His clothing is apparently traditional, his hair long and decorated with feathers, his chest bare. Yet, his horse and his rifle are signs of the European invasion and the struggle to maintain his way of life as more and more artifacts of the invading culture besiege him, as fewer and fewer of his people remain to support him and he becomes marginalized and excluded from even the prairie around him. The cover stands in stark contrast with the other images we have seen, there is no filter between the gaze of the viewer and the Native American's gaze, no intermediate cowboy, no sign that the native is a symbol of another struggle.

The album's eight songs deal with examples of cultural distinctions and impositions of the Native American in North America and Sardinians in Italy, as De André recognizes a similarity between Sardinian and Native American culture and between the imperialism that destroyed much of those cultures.[154] The stories are told, for the most part, from the point of the victim or subaltern, blending and superimposing the Native American narrative on the Sardinian narrative so that, at times, their tales become one. I will deal here only with the Native American songs, the first of which is the first track, "What I Don't Have" (Quello che non ho), a song that defines an Us and Them—Have Nots and Haves, Dispossessed and Possessors—setting up the average listener, who is explicitly addressed as 'You', to experience the song from an inimical position as 'One Who Has'. The narrator, rather, is 'One Who Has Not':

> What I don't have is a white dress shirt
>
> What I don't have is a secret in the bank

What I don't have are your pistols

To conquer the sky/paradise, to earn the sun.[155]

In the following stanzas, it continues: the narrator is one who lives without getting away with things, without anything he does not need, without a watch to help him hurry away, without a rusted train to take him back in time, without gold teeth, without a corporate lunch, without the prairie around him, without powerful connections, without an address in his pocket, without the listener on his side, without the capacity to lie or cheat. In the final verse of each stanza the narrator reveals the function of possessing these things and in three of the six stanzas, as in the one cited above, the function is either "to earn the sky/paradise, to conquer the sun" or "to conquer the sky/paradise, to earn the sun." This refrain is densely packed with implications. It reminds the listener that frontiersmen and soldiers used civilization and religion as a justification for taking native lands and lives; they were earning paradise by doing God's will, while, quite literally, conquering an earthly paradise in the New World. Conversely, the Sun Dance, a ceremony practiced by groups indigenous to the Great Plains, was banned by the conquering nations, which meant essentially banning the passing down along generations of traditional song and dance and therefore was tantamount to truly conquering the Sun, the bringer of life. The banning of the Sun Dance, on the grounds that it was uncivilized, parallels the banning of the traditional Sardinian boar hunt evoked at the song's start by the sounds of rifle shots and yells. There was a movement to ban the hunt by Italian legislators who considered it uncivilized in the early 1980s and De André saw in it a vivid example of cultural impositions of norms and 'civilization' by a foreign power.[156]

The sun and sky are conquered by objects that are reminiscent of historical colonization, but that are flecked with contemporary details, reminding the listener that colonization is still happening, and sending one's gaze back to the Native American narrative while rooting him firmly

in contemporary Italy. The pistols, for example, are not just pistols, nor are they the colonizers' pistols, though that particular gun is evocative of the frontier West. They are, rather, "your pistols" (*le tue pistole*). You, listeners. This is not the mythical West that absolves cowboys, it is a historicized remembering with implications for all citizens of imperial nations. The "rusted train," too, links the past and present in this way, as it not only summons a weathered and time-worn locomotive, but one with the capacity to carry its riders back in time. The native has lost his prairie and he has no train to take him back in time to save his people and ameliorate his present: "What I don't have is a rusted train, / that can take me back to where I started from. […] What I don't have is this prairie / to run faster from my melancholy."[157] While European Americans, and Italians, may perhaps lament the arrival of the modern era and the subsequent loss of the great American plains, they still have a 'rusted train' and a 'plain' on which they can go back in time. As we have seen across this chapter, they may simply pick up a comic book or write a song to return to a flat, mythical time, where the plains and all the freedom and heroism they have come to represent can be lived in the present.

It is significant that a series of mundane objects demonstrates the almost magical power of dispossessing Natives of their culture. Taken as a whole, these objects are symbolic of the capitalist mode. The watch represents objective and scheduled time and the white man's control of time as well as space (the prairie), gold teeth and bank accounts signify possession of capital, white shirts and paid lunches a corporate interdependence. Yet, these tangible objects alone are not the agents of power and control, even more important are the words and allies that the narrator does not possess. The narrator does not have friends with connections, and, significantly, does not have "you" as a friend: "What I don't have is you on my side."[158] Again, De André draws the old inimical lines and you, the listener, are in enemy territory. The song pivots around the central idea

that the tenets of capitalism as an imperial force and the tenets of a hunter/gatherer or agrarian/pastoral societies are incompatible. It pits those who have, those who conceive of wanting, having, and taking, as fundamentally opposed to those who have not, want not, take not but what they need. The song implicates the listener 'you' as well as the cowboy and his 'pistols' as inimical to the nomadic native man, who is crucially a 'man without.' He is without possessions, without desire, as well as existing without, as in fully outside the structures he opposes, a position that you, the listener, for all your sympathy, cannot claim.

Two songs later, in "Sand Creek" ("Fiume Sand Creek"), the sounds of gunshots and shouts in the distance, the same which introduce "Quello che non ho," are accompanied by a horn, an oliphant or bugle. It portends two very different hunts: one, the bison hunt that caused the warrior Cheyenne men to be away from the camp,[159] the other the hunt of the aged, women, and children left behind at the Big Sandy Creek reservation massacre. The historical event occurred in 1864, when Colonel John Chivington led a group of 700 militia men, dressed in Union-army uniforms, but not acting under any official directive (not that it matters), to massacre a group of more than one hundred unarmed and peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho whose chief, Black Kettle, had, before leaving, hung a U.S. and a white flag in the camp and received assurance from local authorities of the security of his people. The song is told from the point of view of a young native boy who wakes in the moonlight to the sounds of the approaching militia.

Colonel Chivington was 43 at the time of the Sand Creek massacre, yet, like De Gregori's Bufalo Bill ("I was so young and 20 seems so young"[160]), De André says "he was a 20-year-old general / turquoise eyes and turquoise coat."[161] Like Guccini's Amerigo, who had "the face of a 20-year-old without wrinkles / and with rage,"[162] De André says Chivington "was a 20-year-old general / son of a tempest."[163] Perhaps De André sought to evoke and call into question the image

of the much more famous George Armstrong Custer, who became a general at 23. Custer's death in 1876 is remembered as a sort of heroic martyrdom that pairs well in the communal imagination with the comfortable memory of Sitting Bull's heroic victory. The tale seems to turn the entire history of conquest on the western frontier into a 'fair fight'. Perhaps De André wanted to turn the tables on the common perspective taken on the native victory and Custer's death at Little Bighorn, without, however, conceding to tell the tale again and reinforce its mythical power. Indeed, Custer is less remembered for his own massacre of Cheyenne at Washita River when he was 29. Or perhaps, De Gregori, Guccini, and De André all associate a certain rebelliousness, vigorous intrepidness, and self-assured idealism to that age.

The defiance and daring are clear, but the idealism becomes a thorny issue and therefore a sticking point for De André. Three Europeans (or European Americans) go West—Bufalo Bill, Amerigo, Chivington—all with the same youthful idealism of securing riches and glory in their futures,[164] yet only one is portrayed as a threat to indigenous life in the West. Crucially, the narrator/hero of "Sand Creek", unlike in "Bufalo Bill" and "Amerigo", is not a cowboy victim/hero narrative 'I' who lives in the mythical West of conflated signification. Rather, he is a Cheyenne boy who recounts the adventures of his enemy and the song's villain, a young man so similar in description to Bufalo Bill and Amerigo. Truly, only one of the three men in these songs murdered innocent natives on November 29, 1864, but all three could equally send the action of the song forward in De André and Bubola's dreamlike and hazy telling, which begins with an arrival, "There was a silver dollar on the Sand Creek riverbed," and follows with a departure, "Now our children sleep on the Sand Creek riverbed."[165] The implication is clear, the desire for gold and silver caused a genocide in North America. Within the space of four refrains, "Sand Creek" tells the tale of a day and a massacre, as well as a longer tale of the West. For there is a repetition of

three in the song, that creates the sense of a prolonged struggle, a return to struggle, a maturity of struggle. Across six stanzas, there is the sense of a narrator who is reborn across generations and across generations always encounters the pale-faced enemy.

The narrator first awakens to hear the bugles in the distance and three times he does not react to the approach or prepare to fight. Three times he simply closed his eyes and opened them to find himself still there,[166] still listening to them approach:

> Our warriors were far away on the bison trail
> And that distant music kept on getting louder,
> I closed my eyes three times
> And I found myself still there
> I asked my grandfather if it was a dream
> And he said it was.
> Sometimes the fish sing at the bottom of Sand Creek.[167]

His grandfather tells him he is dreaming, perhaps simply to reassure him, or perhaps evoking early European settlers to the Americas and Native Americans who at first could not conceive of any sort of culture that could effectively annihilate their own. Natives for centuries either did not understand or refused to believe that their traditions and culture would not be allowed to exist in tandem with imperial traditions and culture. They sought conciliatory measures and agreed to increasingly smaller reservations where they thought they could live in peace. This incomprehension echoes in the narrator's childish innocence, in his dreamlike and blinking refusal of the approaching forces, and even in his own description of his death, which he believes is still a dream:

> I was dreaming so hard that my nose started to bleed

A flash in one ear and paradise on the other side

The larger tears

The smaller tears

When the snowy tree

Flowers red stars

Now the children play on the Sand Creek riverbed.[168]

The larger and smaller tears can be read as the tears of the adults and of the children, but also the tears of an individual and the accumulated trail of tears, as it were, that followed the removed natives for generations. As the boy dies, the natural cycle of life and death, represented in the snow-covered tree, is replaced with a cycle of unnatural death during the spring of one's life, represented in the bloody blooms. As the stanza ends, the narrator's voice is abstracted, omnipresent, hovering outside of the boy as he declares: "now the children sleep on the Sand Creek riverbed."

The first cycle in the song ends with the night's end. The "dark cover" that had first "taken our hearts," according to the narrator, is gone. The sun rises on the camp and with it comes the end of disbelief and inaction, the beginning of recognition and anger, as a mature warrior-narrator returns to witness the destruction:

When the sun raised its head between the night's shoulders

There were only dogs and smoke and overturned tents

I shot an arrow at the sky

To make it breathe

I shot an arrow at the wind

To make it bleed

The third arrow, look for it on the Sand Creek riverbed.[169]

As he arrives to fight the enemy, he represents a new type of native in the Great Plains frontier, territory of nomadic warrior bands like the Cheyenne and Arapaho, who were immediately more hostile to colonization than eastern tribes had been. But it is too late now for a war, the narrator's people are already gone. Furthermore, his land and food are disappearing, and the enemy has become so immense, so overpowering, that it is like trying to fight the Earth that surrounds him, like shooting at the sky and the wind. Perhaps he shoots his third and final arrow at the enemy; perhaps he is killed before he can pull the string; perhaps he renounces the fight. Whatever its trajectory, the arrow is powerless in the face of the dollar glimmering from the bottom of Sand Creek. In exchange for that dollar, Union soldiers lined the riverbed with Cheyenne children, and the narrator's final arrow sinks to the bottom of the creek to lie with the future generations it would have defended. "My third arrow, look for it on the Sand Creek riverbed," he says. This final refrain is a command to the listener, in the second person singular: Look for it. It is a command to revisit the space, historical, mythical, or actual, at Sand Creek, which runs just nine miles from modern-day Chivington, Colorado, named after the colonel who massacred the Cheyenne. There, if you go, you will find the symbols that remain of the frontier West: silver dollars, the future generations of Native Americans absent, and discarded weapons, put down once the West was won.

De André completes the album with "If They Cut You into Little Pieces" ("Se ti tagliassero a pezzetti") and "Green Fields" (Verdi pascoli). "If They Cut You into Little Pieces" is a song of praise to liberty and her counterpart, imagination; but the last stanza returns the listeners to local violence that was in its death throes in 1980 as De André and Bubola composed their album. The narrator discovers Lady Liberty playing music on the river's edge; they dance, he plays guitar and

mandolin, and they make love. But the next time he meets her, she is trapped in a grey suit, newspapers in one hand and her destiny in the other.

I crossed your path at the station

As you followed your fragrance

Trapped in a smoke-grey suit

Newspapers in one hand and your destiny in the other

You walked side by side with your assassin.[170]

The image is at once that of a commuter and that of a Black Brigades bomber who on August 20, 1980, enacted one of the final and the most fatal bombing of the years of the Strategy of Tension at the Bologna Train Station, killing 85 people and injuring 200 others. "Newspapers in one hand and your destiny in the other," De André sings. The destiny held in hand is perhaps a briefcase, which completes the commuter's ensemble or masks a bomb, like the one in Bologna, which was abandoned in a travel bag. Whether blown to bits in an armed-revolutionary's briefcase or cut to bits by a life of soul-crushing administrative work, the briefcase is a symbol of violence against liberty. Liberty, however, cannot be destroyed by either the capitalist drive or by the violence of the Strategy-of-Tension years. The Earth itself, as long as it exists, will always return liberty to the individual:

But if they cut you into little pieces

The wind will gather them up

The kingdom of spiders will sew your skin back together,

And the moon will weave your hair and your face.[171]

Liberty, indeed, will survive all of man's best attempts to snuff her out, just as she survives for both Native Americans and Italians in the next and final song, "Green Fields", the earth-like

paradise of the Native American myth of the afterlife. In those green fields, under that blanket of stars, De André ends the album in a return to the mythical prairie, but this one is free of pistols, arrows, cowboys, Indians, it is full of fruit trees, music to dance to, parents and children at play: a proper utopia.

Conclusion

Fabrizio De André becomes increasingly preoccupied with the idea of the false-discovery myth of the Americas, what he called "a lie",[172] and the myth that develops out of that initial lie. Aside from the music he wrote, he took the opportunity in the early 1990s, at concerts and in interviews, to condemn the festivities around the approaching 500-year anniversary of Columbus's landing. Even his notebooks from the early 90s are filled with references to the anniversary, which he sees as a flagrant insult to surviving Native Americans.[173] He says at a concert at Piazza degli Scacchi in Marostica, Vicenza on September 13, 1991: "The evening of October 12, 1992, I will certainly not be toasting the centennial… the quincentennial of the discovery of America. […] I will be in solidarity with the Indians and I will remember together with them that which they remember as the day of greatest national mourning."[174] He would remember the truth that, as he says, our children are punished in school for declaring, that when Columbus discovered America, it had been populated since time immemorial.[175] Yet, De André himself, as much as he denies the myth, as much as he criticizes immigrants who took native North American land and disrupted their culture, is nonetheless guilty of following that desire for the promise of something more. He moves to Sardinia and buys a farm in the 1970s, like Columbus to the U.S., he takes a boat from Genoa to Sardinia and settles there. De André is described in a 1969 music-magazine article, probably much to his chagrin, as taller than the average Italian and lanky and restless "like a cowboy."[176] He refuses to become the Western folk hero *a la* Guthrie or Dylan that the music scene might have

hoped he would become. Yet, he does, just like Tex (the cowboy with good but naive intentions), defend the native people, their traditions and their rights, while acting as a foreign occupant of their land, thus a threat to the very culture he defends.

Yet, with all of his imperfections in regards to the myth of *il Far-West* and colonialism, itself, it is significant that he began the work of parsing the extremely popular myth and recognizing its effects on those young people who'd engaged with it deeply since their childhoods. Perhaps if other popular *cantautori* had been, like De André, more critical of the U.S. myth and less prone to propagating it in the Italian communal imagination, 1977 would not have been a countercultural manifestation of Cowboys and Indians. Perhaps the initial 1968 revolution would have matured to become more self-aware and thus more powerful if the youth generation had not had a single utopian imagining in which it could plant its many diverging ideologies. Perhaps, if not for the predominance in the mental landscape of a foreign founding myth, the 1960s and 70s could have acted more effectively as a moment of national rebirth and renewed communal identity for the postwar and post-Fascist generation. Then, even if the revolution was doomed to fail, perhaps *cantautori* would not have still expressed their sense of being betrayed, lost, futureless, in the terms of disillusionment with a foreign myth. Perhaps they would have, indeed, felt less lost.

On the other hand, perhaps it all implies and stems precisely from this unwillingness to dig into recent Italian history so as to construct a contemporary national identity from the roots up. Indeed, recent Italian scholarship has argued along these lines. As Pier Luigi Sacco wrote in his 2011 *Italia Reloaded:* "In Italy conflict cannot assume a lucid, self-aware, critical dimension because we have unlearned, as a society, to confront in a mature way the opinions and interests different from our own, precisely because we have renounced the desire to responsibly come to terms with our own history."[177] Giuliana Minghelli in her 2013 *Landscape and Memory in Post-*

Fascist Film: Cinema Year Zero argues similarly that neorealism, as much as it was a cinema of commemoration of the war and mourning for the years of Fascism, also sanctioned a process of national forgetting as it chose to narrate the stories of innocent Italians: partisans, proletariats, children, women.[178] The myth of the West is certainly a national amnesia apparatus in the U.S., but its popularity in Italy perhaps signals the increased state of national amnesia on the peninsula, as Italians focused their memories abroad, in a foreign myth, that reduced risk of contamination with their experience of nationhood since 1860.

[1] "no sólo de peleas; esa frontera era de guitarras también." Jorge Luis Borges, "Palermo de Buenos Aires," in *Prosa completa 1* (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1985), 25.

[2] 'Indians' will be used here to refer to myth and icon, whereas 'Native Americans' will refer to history and the people.

[3] I will refer to the Italian concept of the mythical west as *il Far West* or *Far West* in italics to attempt to clarify the use of terms.

[4] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012).

[5] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, 226-7.

[6] The tradition of Far-West tales in Italy did not begin in the 20th century. Pierpaolo Polzinetti argues that, as early as 1700s, Neapolitan operas host 'outlaw' heroes whose adventures are staged on the American frontier (Pierpaolo Polzonetti, "Quakers and Cowboys: Italian Mythologies and Stereotypes of Americans from Piccinni to Puccini," *The Opera Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2008): 23). This tradition culminated in Giacomo Puccini's 1911 opera, *La fanciulla del West*, generated by Puccini's attendance in Milan of *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* show (Renee M. Laegreid, "Buffalo Bill, the Italian Hero of the Prairies" in *The Popular Frontier: Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Transnational Mass Culture*, edited by Frank Christianson (Oklahoma City: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017), 416). Furthermore, Emilio Salgari's adventure series were popular and included his *Ciclo del Far West*, 1908-1910.

[7] Three films in 1963, 24 in 1964, 31 in 1965, 51 in 1966, 65 spaghetti westerns produced in Italy in 1967, 72 in 1968, 28 in 1969, 36 in 1970, 42 in 1971, 44 in 1972, 29 in 1973, 8 in 1974, 16 in 1975

[8] Giorgio Gaber plays a half-blood Native American, Idaho Martino, called Half-blood (Meticcio). The series told the story of Custer's 7th regiment on the way to Little Bighorn and Gaber was known for singing the opening theme, "The Ballad of Idaho Martino" (La ballata di Idaho Martino) in cowboy-dress, and summing up the events of past episodes.

[9] De Gregori on his 1992 *Canzoni d'amore* and Guccini's 1992 *Parnassius Guccinii* and his 2004 *Ritratti*.

[10] Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1990), 342.

[11] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 335.

[12] Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1998), 6.

[13] Umberto Eco, "Per una guerrilla semiologica." *Il costume di casa: evidenze e misteri dell'ideologia italiano* (Milano: Bompiani, 1973), 290–98.

[14] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 6.

[15] These post-Civil War years, furthermore, are represented as emblematic of the intrepid white-European individual's opportunity to pull himself up by his bootstraps, turning his plot of 'wilderness' into tilled field. But history shows that big business was already taking advantage of government grants by paying private individuals to sign contracts in order for the business to patch together larger systems of land for mining, securing water or oil rights, or laying railroad tracks. The pioneer West was already land most fallow for industry.

[16] "La wilderness non è tanto un luogo; corrisponde piuttosto a una condizione mentale, ditata culturalmente. L'idea di wilderness come realtà intonsa e selvaggia, contrapposta alla cultura

rimane comunque un'astrazione di tipo urbano che riflette il punto di vista di persone ben lontane dall'ambiente naturale dal quale dipendono. L'idea di una natura vergine, senza traccia di occupazione umana, acquista, inoltre, una connotazione di tipo politico e sociale in quanto implicitamente 'disumanizza' le popolazioni indigene che [ci] vivono." Seminario "Le frontiere del Far West (2007: Bergamo, Italy), *Le frontiere del Far West: forme di rappresentazione del grande mito americano*, ed. Stefano Rosso (Milano: Shake, 2008), 105.

[17] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy,* 300-302.

[18] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy,* 301, 306.

[19] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy,* 361-2.

[20] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy,* 382.

[21] "Oral music, that very music that according to the Romantics expressed the Volksgeist, the quintessential ethnic and spiritual character of a people, never played this role in Italy and was therefore completely absent from the political discourse." Marcello Sorce Keller, "Italy in Music: A Sweeping (and Somewhat Audacious) Reconstruction of a Problematic Identity," in *Made in Italy: Studies in Popular Music*, ed. Goffredo Plastino and Franco Fabbri (Florence, GB: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 17–27, 20.

[22] Polzonetti, "Quakers and Cowboys", 23.

[23] Polzonetti, "Quakers and Cowboys," 23.

[24] *The Pioneers*, 1823; *The Last of the Mohicans*, 1826; *The Prairie*, 1827; *The Pathfinder*, 1840; *The Deerslayer*, 1841.

[25] *Sulle frontiere del Far-West,* 1908; *La scotennatrice*, 1909; *Le selve ardenti,* 1910.

[26] A trend which continues in mythical productions today. For examples, in the 2009 Tex Willer publication, C*ongiura contro Custer,* at the Battle of Little Bighorn, Custer calls to a soldier and

notes “Hai uno strano accento … Sei straniero?” The soldier replies: “Italiano, signore. Sono venuto in America tre anni fa.” While a footnote states: “Giovanni Martini era originario di Sala Consilina (Salerno) dove era nato nel 1853.” Claudio Nizzi, *Tex: congiura contro Custer* (Milano: Oscar Mondadori, 2009), 294.

[27] While some Italians in the States did, indeed, strike figurative gold, it was not through romantic adventure but through business savvy, as brands like Ghirardelli, Progresso, Planters Peanuts, Contadina, Chef Boyardee, and Jacuzzi are household names yet today.

[28] There are Italian-produced Western comics before it, like Rino Albertarelli’s (illustrator, as well of Salgari’s adventure series) *Kit Carson il cavaliere del West* (*Kit Carson, Knight of the West*), which was first published in 1937, but *Tex* has been, by far, the biggest seller and longest lasting comic of the set.

[29] See, for example, Alberto Sordi’s 1954 satirical film, *Un americano a Roma* and Renato Carosone’s 1956 swing hit *“*Tu vuò fà l’americano.”

[30] ‘Wild one’ in dialect of Ojibwe, spoken by Ottawa in Michigan where the Lone Ranger radio show was first broadcast.

[31] There will be many examples given in this chapter, but one may also consider the U.S. films *Dances with Wolves* (1990), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992), and *The Revenant* (2015), and the 1997 Italian comic *Magico vento.*

[32] Gianluigi Bonelli, *Tex: Sangue navajo* (Milano: Mondadori, 2010).

[33] Bonelli, *Tex: Sangue navajo*, 23, 30.

[34] Bonelli, *Tex: Sangue navajo*, 26, 75.

[35] Bonelli, *Tex: Sangue navajo*, 24, 35.

[36] Gianluigi Bonelli, *Tex: Terra promessa* (Milano: Mondadori, 2002).

[37] "Il fatto è però che quando si giocava tra noi, nessuno voleva 'fare' Tiger: tutti volevano essere Tex, al massimo qualcuno, affascinato dalla figura di Carson, sceglieva per sé la sua parte, e il più piccolo inevitabilmente (e con la sua grande felicità) Kit Willer. Ma Tiger Jack […] troppo silenzioso, troppo 'assente' nella sua onnipresenza, troppo perturbante nel suo essere 'altro' per potere entrare nei nostri giochi." Brunetto Salvarani and Raffaele Mantegazza, *Disturbo se fumetto?: Dylan Dog e Martin Mystère, Tex Willer e Nathan Never: Ipotesi per un uso politicamente corretto.* (Milano: Unicopli, 1998), 138.

[38] "Non mi sarei affatto stupito di trovare quel disgraziato appeso al palo di tortura. / Avete scordato che il capo dei navajos è Tex Willer, e sono assolutamente certo che Tex Willer non si degraderebbe sino a ordinare la tortura di un uomo." Bonelli, *Tex: Terra promessa,* 98.

[39] "I navajos in rivolta!" "For Defiance raso al suolo" "Tex W / Guida i s" The final headline is only partially shown but its content is easily inferred. Bonelli, *Tex: Terra promessa,* 177.

[40] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994), 36.

[41] He explains this by stating that "comics have a more direct relationship with iconography than other forms of verbal or written storytelling. An icon, as he defines it, is "any image used to represent a person, place, thing or idea". Cartoons, he claims, are some of the most effective icons because they are more real than real. They are "form[s] of amplification through simplification," which allow us to see ourselves in representations, rather than seeing the faces of others. McCloud, *Understanding Comics,* 27, 34.

[42] Niccolò Ammaniti, *Io non ho paura* (Torino: Einaudi, 2011).

[43] In the novel, Michele discovers a young boy imprisoned in a hole dug behind an abandoned house in the country. As he seeks to help the boy, he discovers that the boy is the son of a

northern Italian industrialist, kidnapped by a group of southern Italians. The story is set during the Years of Lead in Italy, with many political and socio-economic implications and undertones.

[44] "Cos'avrebbe fatto Tiger Jack al mio posto? Non tornava indietro neanche se glielo ordinava Manitù in persona. Tiger Jack. Quella era una persona seria. Tiger Jack, l'amico indiano di Tex Willer. […] Io sono Tiger, anche meglio, io sono il figlio italiano di Tiger, mi sono detto. Peccato che non avevo un pugnale, un arco o un fucile Winchester." Ammaniti, *Io non ho paura*, 50-51.

[45] "Li avrebbe affrontati. Li avrebbe massacrati con il suo Winchester e li avrebbe trasformati in salsicce da arrostire sul fuoco insieme a Tex e a Capelli d'argento." Ammaniti, *Io non ho paura*, 215.

[46] Revisionist Westerns, also called Anti-Westerns or Modern Westerns, is a Western sub-genre from the 1960s and 70s that begins to question the structure and ideals of Classical Western films. In the U.S., Sam Peckinphah and Robert Altman films are generally considered early Revisionist Western productions. Clint Eastwood productions, like *The Outlaw Josey Wales,* are also part of the sub-genre. Spaghetti Western and Jodorowsky's Acid Western genres are examples of Revisionist Westerns from abroad.

[47] "non potevo concepire gli indiani finti che venivano utilizzati a Hollywood […] Gli indiani rientrano perfettamente nel mio quadro del West, ma non nel mio discorso cinematografico: se dovessi inserirli in un film, li vorrei autentici, e oggi come oggi è quasi impossibile trovarli." Francesco Minninni, *Sergio Leone* (Roma: Il castoro, 1994), 7.

[48] "È questa l'essenza vera del mio cinema: una favola ricca di agganci con la realtà contemporanea." Minninni, *Sergio Leone,* 5.

[49] "La violenza dei miei film ha un'estrazione politica. Non è che nei film americani la gente non morisse. Moriva male, in campo lungo, e il pubblico quasi non si rendeva conto dell'idea della morte. La morte, invece, deve rappresentare una reale paura, e può farlo soltanto attraverso l'evidenza fisica […] si deve capire il danno provocato da un foro di pallottola. È realismo, ma realismo critico. […] La favola deve essere più realistica della cronaca." Minninni, *Sergio Leone,* 5-6.

[50] "El gaucho cantor è el mismo bardo, el vate, el trovador del Edad Media que se mueve […] entre las luchas de las ciudades y del feudalismo de los campos, entre la vida que se va y la vida que se acerca." Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Facundo: Civilización y barbarie* (Buenos Aires: Mundo Moderno, 1952), 43.

[51] "no sólo de peleas; esa frontera era de guitarras también." Borges, "Palermo de Buenos Aires", 25.

[52] John S. Partington, ed., *The Life, Music and Thought of Woody Guthrie: A Critical Appraisal,* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2011).

[53] Aesthetic allegiance to the myth of the West is of particular interest, as musical allegiance would be more constrictive within a particular genre, while an artist whose music is new, rock, rebellious, or best of all, unclassifiable, but who dresses like a cowboy, will manage to bring the myth with him into other, more globally popular musical genres.

[54] See, for example, the cover of Kristofferon's 1971 album *Silver Tongued Devil and I* and the covers of Dylan's 1976 *Desire* and 1978 *Masterpieces*.

[55] When the Kid escapes from jail, he returns to his ranch to find his friends all in one room in bed, some with women, some alone. The man in bed with the Kid's woman reluctantly gets up, and the naked girl happily allows the Kid to take his place.

[56] Henry McCarty, best known as Billy the Kid, is arguably the historical figure who most closely resembles the romanticized cowboy outlaw and folk hero. He was well-spoken, including in Spanish, he was known to kill reluctantly and only in self-defense, he never worked as an Indian scout, soldier, or Pony Express rider, but most often was an itinerant ranch hand, horse thief, and sometimes (apparently reluctant) murderer. He lived to be only 21, from 1859-1881, and had little to do with the Great Plains or Gold Rush West, much more to do with the Southwest frontier.

[57] An album that De André calls "uno dei suoi migliori album […] dove c'è ancora il gusto per la ballata." Claudio Sassi and Walter Pistarini, eds., *De André talk: le interviste e gli articoli della stampa d'epoca* (Roma: Coniglio, 2008), 245.

[58] "gli occhi guardavano voi ma sognavan gli eroi / le armi e la bilia; / correva la fantasia verso la prateria, fra la via Emilia e il West." Francesco Guccini, lyrics, "Piccola città", in *Canzoni,* ed. Gabriella Fenocchio (Florence: Giunti Editore, 2018), 55-59, lines, 22-24.

[59] "I cowboys vanno a cavallo / Nell'Arizona dei nostri cuori" Francesco De Gregori, lyrics, "I cowboys", *I testi: La storia delle canzoni,* ed. Enrico Deregibus (Florence: Giunti Editore, 2020), lines 21-22, Kindle.

[60] This is not only the case in Italy; Janne Lahti's recent scholarly edition begins with his memories of playing 'Cowboys and Indians' and reading Western comics, then considers "the European fascination with the West". As a Finnish boy growing up in the 1980s, he cites the French-Belgian *Lucky Luke* and Italian *Tex Willer* as the most influential comics. Janne Lahti, "Introduction*"* in *The American West and the World: Transnational and Comparative Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2019), Kindle.

[61] Intervista a De Gregori di Michelangelo Romano e Paolo Giaccio, reprinted in Riccardo Piferi, *Francesco De Gregori: un mito* (Roma: Lato Side, 1980), 69.

[62] *The Sovereign of the Gold Field*, published serially in 1904, as a novel in 1905 (*La sovrana del campo d'oro* (Genoa: Donath, 1905).

[63] Laegreid, "Buffalo Bill, the Italian Hero of the Prairies", 255.

[64] The cowboys in the show were depicted as helping to "extend American civilization" across the Western frontier. Paul Reddin, *Wild West Shows* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 69.

[65] Piferi, *Francesco De Gregori,* 69.

[66] Piferi, *Francesco De Gregori*, 69.

[67] During Francesco Crispi's push for the creation of Italian colonies in Africa, Renee Laegreid remembers that "anti-imperialist critics depicted Cody and Crispi together in political cartoons, lampooning both men and the supposed benefits of expansion" Laegreid, "Buffalo Bill, the Italian Hero of the Prairies", 260.

[68] Laegreid, "Buffalo Bill, the Italian Hero of the Prairies", 262.

[69] "il mio nome era Bufalo Bill" Francesco De Gregori, lyrics, "Bufalo Bill", in *I testi: La storia delle canzoni,* ed. Enrico Deregibus (Florence: Giunti Editore, 2020), line 33, Kindle.

[70] "A quel tempo io ero un ragazzo […] Credulone e romantico, con due baffi da uomo" De Gregori, "Bufalo Bill", *I testi*, lines 6, 8.

[71] "Il paese era molto giovane / I soldati a cavallo era la sua difesa / Il verde brillante della prateria / Dimostrava in maniera lampante l'esistenza di Dio / Del Dio che progetta la frontiera e costruisce la ferrovia" De Gregori, "Bufalo Bill", *I testi*, lines 1-5.

[72] "il cacciatore uccide sempre per giocare […] Io unico figlio biondo quasi come Gesù." De Gregori, "Bufalo Bill", *I testi*, lines 19, 23.

[73] "Avevo pochi anni e vent'anni sembran pochi" De Gregori, "Bufalo Bill", *I testi*, line 24.

[74] "E mi ricordo infatti un pomeriggio triste" De Gregori, "Bufalo Bill", *I testi*, line 26.

[75] "Mi presentarono i miei cinquant'anni / E un contratto col circo 'Pace e Bene' a girare l'Europa." De Gregori, "Bufalo Bill", *I testi*, lines 30-31.

[76] This is literal; the cover of *Amerigo* is a superimposition of Guccini's face on an Age-of-Exploration era map of the Americas.

[77] "Sciocca adolescenza, falsa e stupida innocenza, / continenza, vuoto mito americano / di terza mano;" Guccini*,* "Piccola città", *Canzoni,* lines 25-27.

[78] "C'è un confronto continuo tra la sua America – emarginata, di fatica, di sconfitte – e la mia – fatta di miti e immaginazioni, di viaggi di fantasia." Francesco Guccini, *Un altro giorno è andato: Francesco Guccini si racconta a Massimo Cotto* (Firenze: Giunti, 1999), 101.

[79] "Ma quel mattino aveva il viso dei vent' anni senza rughe / e rabbia ed avventura e ancora vaghe idee di socialismo." Francesco Guccini, lyrics, "Amerigo" in *Canzoni,* ed. Gabriella Fenocchio (Florence: Giunti Editore, 2018), 129-133, lines 9-10.

[80] "L'America era allora, per me […] Atlantide, l'America era il cuore, era il destino, […] paradiso perduto […] gli eroi di Casablanca e di Fort Apache" Guccini, "Amerigo"*, Canzoni*, lines 17, 18, 22, 23.

[81] "sembrava una fondina per la pistola" in Guccini, "Amerigo"*, Canzoni*, line 8.

[82] Patrick Wolfe argues that the goals of settler-colonialism are to destroy and replace in "contests for land" that are ultimately "contests for life and which are is characterized by [the] "logic of elimination." Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the

Native", *Journal of Genocide Research,* (December 2006), 387.

[83] "E Pàvana un ricordo lasciato tra i castagni dell'Appennino / l'inglese un suono strano che lo feriva al cuore come un coltello." Guccini, "Amerigo"*, Canzoni*, lines 27-28.

[84] "L'America era un'ernia." Guccini, "Amerigo"*, Canzoni*, line 35.

[85] As Richard Slotkin points out, the West mythos was used in American politics by John F. Kennedy during his 1960 election campaign: "I stand tonight facing west on what was once the last frontier […] the problems are not all solved and the battles are not all won and we stand today on the edge of a new frontier—the frontier of the 1960s, […] I believe that the times require imagination and courage and perseverance. I'm asking each of you to be pioneers towards that New Frontier." Similar imagery, of cowboys, Indians, and frontiers, was used by his strategists to gain popular support of military intervention in Vietnam. "American troops would be describing Vietnam as 'Indian country' and search-and-destroy missions as a game of Cowboys and Indians; and Kennedy's ambassador to Vietnam would justify massive escalation by citing the necessity of moving 'Indians' away from the 'fort' so that the 'settlers' could plant 'corn'." Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 2-3.

[86] "E immagino tu e lui, due americani, sicuri e sani, un poco alla John Wayne / portare avanti i miti kennedyani e far scuola agli indiani: / amore e ecologia lassù nel Maine." Francesco Guccini, lyrics, "100, Pensylvannia Ave." in *Canzoni,* ed. Gabriella Fenocchio (Florence: Giunti Editore, 2018), 137-140, lines, 7-9.

[87] Indeed, Guccini's own experience of and fixation with the US was extremely personal to him and he too emigrated in his twenties for a few months.

[88] "e non capivo che quell'uomo era il mio volto, era il mio specchio." Guccini, "Amerigo"*, Canzoni*, line 39.

[89] Since the 1970s, and post-colonial theory, and now eco-criticism, there has been a change in thinking about 'wilderness'. Cf: "L'idea di wilderness [è …] L'idea di una natura vergine, senza traccia di occupazione umana, acquista, inoltre, una connotazione di tipo politico e sociale in quanto implicitamente 'disumanizza' le popolazioni indigene che [ci] vivono." Rosso, *Le frontiere del Far West*, 105.

[90] Underlined by New Western History since the 1980s. Lahti, *The American West and the World*, Kindle loc. 130.

[91] "girare l'Europa" De Gregori, "Bufalo Bill", *I testi*, line 31.

[92] "Tardi la notte, dormendo ho sognato che Bob Dylan ero diventato, giravo il mondo con la chitarra" Francesco Guccini, lyrics, "Talkin' Milano", Francesco Guccini. Il sito ufficiale, https://www.francescoguccini.it/discografia/folk-beat-n-1/.

[93] Bob Dylan, "Talking New York", in *Lyrics, 1962-2001* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004) 3-4, lines 1-2.

[94] Bob Dylan, "Talking New York", *Lyrics*, lines 43, 45.

[95] Damian A. Carpenter, *Lead Belly, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, and American Folk Outlaw Performance* (Routledge, 2018), VitalSource.

[96] Bob Dylan and Jacques Levy, lyrics, "Romance in Durango", in *Lyrics, 1962-2001* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 365-366, lines 5, 20, 51.

[97] Dylan and Levy, "Romance in Durango", in *Lyrics*, line 15.

[98] Dylan and Levy, "Romance in Durango", in *Lyrics*, line 31-32.

[99] Carpenter, *Lead Belly,* VitalSource.

[100] Guccini, similarly, while considered a political *cantautore*, wrote "L'avvelenata" in 1976, in which he chides "critics" and "militants": "I never said that songs make a revolution, one can

make poetry" ("non ho mai detto che a canzoni si fan rivoluzioni, si possa far poesia") in Francesco Guccini, lyrics, "L'avvvelenata", Francesco Guccini. Il sito ufficiale, https://www.francescoguccini.it/discografia/via-paolo-fabbri-43/.

[101] In regard to the case of the fight for Civil Rights, more generally, it is worth nothing that Dylan, himself, had come up in the New York music scene playing with the likes of John Lee Hooker, and two of his early influences are cited on his 1962 debut album as blues and African American spiritual. With only two original songs, the self-titled album featured covers of originals by the African American musicians Jesse Fuller, Curtis Jones, Blind Lemon Jefferson and Bukka White. In this sense, his retreat to the essentially all-white space of the West during years of cultural revolution can be seen as parallel to the claims Anne Helen Petersen makes about Justin Timberlake and John Mayer in her 2018 *Buzzfeed* article "Justin Timberlake, John Mayer, and the Western Rehab for White Masculinity."

[102] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy,* 302.

[103] There are other international examples of Dylan's translation as subversive cowboy. See the song "John, el Cowboy" by Argentinian León Gieco, known as 'El Bob de las pampas' (on the 1974 album *La banda de caballos cansados*, named after a Dylan verse).

[104] De Gregori performed Dylan songs across his career and participated in Dylan's film, *Masked and Anonymous*. He is widely considered the *cantautore* most influenced by Dylan, culminating in his 2005 album *Pezzi*.

[105] "Direi che non c'è nessun rapporto. Direi che le mie canzoni partono da un folk, se così si può chiamare, europeo occidentale, soprattutto francese, mentre tutte le canzoni di Bob Dylan, della Joan Baez and other anglosassoni partono invece da folk di tipo western. C'è una bella differenza!" Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 93-94.

[106] Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 93-94.

[107] Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 391.

[108] When asked if he understands "how important [he] could be for youths, De Andre replies: "If I felt that I was a Bob Dylan (Dylan before, not Dylan now), if I thought I had a useful voice and something to say, I wouldn't have any doubts." Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 139.

[109] Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 405.

[110] "questo è un disco fatto da piccoli borghesi e come tali li prendo in giro." Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 179.

[111] "la Rimini di Fellini e dei vitelloni, i piccoli-borghesi coi loro grandi, impossibili sogni." Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 178.

[112] "un miraggio di benessere e di consumo" Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 197.

[113] "E due errori ho commesso / due errori di saggezza / abortire l'America /e poi guardarla con dolcezza" Fabrizio De André and Massimo Bubola, lyrics, "Rimini", in *Come un'anomalia: Tutte le canzoni,* ed. Roberto Cotroneo (Turin: Einaudi, 1999), 182-183, lines 26-29.

[114] "Per un triste re cattolico – le dice - / ho inventato un regno / e lui lo ha macellato / su una croce di legno." De André and Bubola, "Rimini, *Come un'anomalia*, lines 21-24.

[115] Marco Ferreri, *Non toccare la donna bianca* (PEA Produzioni Europee Associate, 1974).

[116] Paolo Villaggio was a childhood friend and early collaborator of De André, as well as radio and television host in the 1960s and 70s, including on *Canzonissima,* and other collaborations with *music leggera* stars like Raffaella Carrà. Villaggio claims to have written the songs ("Il fannullone" and "Carlo Martello ritorna dalla battaglia de Poitiers" (1963)), while De André claims they wrote them together: "Quanto al mio amico Villaggio … Be', siamo amici, ma un

giorno o l'altro faremo a botte perché lui continua a dire di essere l'autore delle parole di *Carlo Martello,* mentre le abbiamo scritte insieme." Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 78.

[117] Indeed, in *Tex: Congiura contro Custer* (The Custer conspiracy), it is Tex, rather than Sitting Bull, who guarantees the victory at Little Bighorn. Claudio Nizzi, *Tex: Congiura contro Custer* (Milano: Oscar Mondadori, 2009).

[118] So-called 'auto-reductions' are independent reductions in the price of a commodity or service, which are often made in protest.

[119] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy,* 381-382.

[120] "l'iniziativa di *Re Nudo* per la diminuzione del prezzo del biglietto era seria, ma pretendere la gratuità, o pretendere di demolire la figura, il ruolo mi pare altamente scorretto. Ma forse sono proprio estraneo a certi schemi, non sono rivoluzionario, nemmeno per temperamento, e se anche lo fossi stato, avrei combattuto per i cioccolatini, per il superfluo, come tutti i borghesi." Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk*, 179-180.

[121] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 50.

[122] "e al dio degli inglesi non credere mai […] e al loro dio perdente non credere mai […] e al loro dio goloso […] e al dio della Scala […] e a un dio a lieto fine […] e a un dio fatti il culo […] e a un dio senza fiato non credere mai." De André and Bubola, "Coda di lupo," *Come un'anomalia*, lines 6, 12, 17, 23, 29, 35, 44.

[123] "E fu nella notte della lunga stella con la coda / che trovammo mio nonno crocifisso sulla chiesa / crocifisso con forchette che si usano a cena / era sporco e pulito di sangue e di crema / e al loro dio goloso non credere mai." De André and Bubola, "Coda di lupo," *Come un'anomalia*, lines 13-17.

[124] Ginsborg, *A Contemporary History of Italy,* 307.

[125] "possedevo una spranga un cappello e una fionda" (in De André and Bubola, "Coda di lupo," *Come un'anomalia*, line 20). While protestors in 1977 carried *bastoni* and molotov cocktails.

[126] "rubai il primo cavallo e mi fecero uomo […] uccisi uno smoking e glielo rubai." De André and Bubola, "Coda di lupo," *Come un'anomalia*, lines 9, 22.

[127] "Poi tornammo in Brianza per l'apertura / della caccia al bisonte / ci fecero l'esame dell'alito e delle urine / ci spiegò il meccanismo un poeta andaluso / Per la caccia al bisonte, - disse, - Il numero è chiuso. / E a un dio a lieto fine non credere mai. / Ed ero già vecchio quando vicino a Roma / a Little Big Horn / capelli corti generale ci parlò all'Università / dei fratelli tute blu che seppellirono le asce / ma non fumammo con lui non era venuto in pace / e a un dio fatti il culo non credere mai." De André and Bubola, "Coda di lupo," *Come un'anomalia*, lines 24-35.

[128] When students have to pass an exam to enter a university or a faculty within the university it is called *a numero chiuso.*

[129] Paul Ginsborg argues that a fatal flaw in the PCI's policy in the late 70s cut them off from their youth base, "instead of championing civil-rights issues, [the party] rapidly became a most zealous defender of traditional law and order measures." This was due to a desire to end the long years of violence, but it turned youths against the PCI and caused them to revolt against them, in the Hunt of Lama as well as in Bologna during the spring and early summer. Ginsborg, *A Contemporary History of Italy*, 380.

[130] Ginsborg, *A Contemporary History of Italy*, 379.

[131] Ginsborg, *A Contemporary History of Italy*, 382.

[132] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy,* 381-382.

[133] "Credo abbia rivelato di colpo, senza bisogno di molte deviazioni discorsive, qualcosa che stava circolando in tanti discorsi, ma che la parola non riusciva a far accettare. Quella foto non

assomigliava a nessuna delle immagini in cui si era emblematizzata, per almeno quattro generazioni, l'idea di rivoluzione. Mancava l'elemento collettivo, vi tornava in modo traumatico la figura dell'eroe individuale." Umberto Eco, *Sette anni di desiderio* (Milano: Bompiani, 1983), 98.

[134] "Questo eroe individuale invece aveva la posa, il terrificante isolamento degli eroi dei film polizieschi americani (la Magnum dell'ispettore Callaghan) o degli sparatori solitari del West—non più cari a una generazione che si vuole di indiani." Eco, *Sette anni di desiderio,* 99.

[135] "si mette a sparare per le strade essendo però fortemente minoritaria, isolata; d'altra parte, il fatto che questa deriva violenta, per quanto motivata esplicitamente da mille analisi post-marxiste anche molto raffinate, era in effetti nutrita di quell'immaginario mediatico diffuso che vede nel pistolero solitario (da Far-West, per intenderci) il vero eroe, a dispetto dell'iconografia rivoluzionaria più classica" in Gianfranco Marrone, "Una Foto, Mille Cose," *Doppiozero*, 20 February 2012, Doppiozero.com.

[136] Barthes, *Mythologies,* 233.

[137] Barthes, *Mythologies,* 255.

[138] Eco does, however, talk about it in those terms in his 1964 "Il mito di Superman" in which he discusses myth and comics: "Mass civilization offers us a clear example of mythification in mass-media productions and in particular in the comic strips, or *fumetti*, industry" ("La civiltà di massa ci offer un evidente esempio di mitizzazione nella produzione dei *mass media* e in particolare nell'industria delle *comic strips,* i 'fumetti'.") Umberto Eco, "Il mito di Superman", in *Apocalittici e integrati* (Milano: Bompiani, 1973), 227-8.

[139] Eco, "Per una guerrilla semiologica" 298.

[140] Eco, "Per una guerrilla semiologica" 298.

[141] Dylan and Levy, “Romance in Durango”, in *Lyrics*, line 15.

[142] “Dopo i templi aztechi e le rovine” in Fabrizio De André, trans., “Avventura a Durango”, in *Come un’anomalia: Tutte le canzoni,* ed. Roberto Cotroneo (Turin: Einaudi, 1999), 189-190, line 13.

[143] Dylan and Levy, “Romance in Durango,” *Lyrics*, lines 31-32.

[144] “per una pizza e un fucile” in De André, “Avventura a Durango,” *Come un’anomalia*, line 6.

[145] Dylan and Levy, “Romance in Durango”, *Lyrics*, lines 9, 23, 41, 55.

[146] De André, “Avventura a Durango,” *Come un’anomalia*, lines 9, 21.

[147] “Sono evidenti le situazioni di piccola borghesia: Durango, ad esempio, è un fumettone, abbastanza lacrimevole, che noi abbiamo inserito con una certa ironia.” *Fumettone* is a pejorative variant of ‘fumetto’ (comic). It implies a story (usually a novel or film) that is highly popular but that is unrealistic and has little inherent value. Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 197.

[148] “I cowboys vanno a cavallo / Per i canyons della vita / La loro gloria è una cintura d'oro / E una fibbia arrugginita / Il deserto è la loro stella / La loro stella non ha famiglia / E il futuro per loro non ha mattino / Il loro vino non ha bottiglia / Il deserto è la loro stella / La loro stella fa che non tramonti / E il futuro per loro è una cosa bella / Che quando arriva ci si fanno i conti / I cowboys sono animali veloci / Quando ritornano già vanno via / Le loro strade non hanno incroci / La loro vita è una ferrovia / E quando riparte il treno / Tutti armati fino ai denti / Ti salutano coi fucili / A cavalcioni dei respingenti / I cowboys vanno a cavallo / Nell'Arizona dei nostri cuori / Non hanno figli e non hanno padri / Non hanno armi e non hanno amori / All’avventura vanno da soli / Così si perdono raramente / Sono cuori nella deriva / Sono anime nella corrente / E quando ritorna il treno che è sera / E il futuro si fa presente / Prima dei cowboys chissà se c'era / Ma dopo i cowboys non c'è più niente.” De Gregori, “I cowboy”, *I testi*.

[149] “Di questo cavolo di pianura, / Di questa terra senza misura.” De Gregori, “Adelante! Adelante!”, in *I testi: La storia delle canzoni,* ed. Enrico Deregibus (Florence: Giunti Editore, 2020), lines 9-10.

[150] “Passa correndo lungo la statale / Un autotreno carico di sale / Da Torino a Palermo […] E queste strade senza più legge / E queste stalle senza più gregge / Senza più padri da ricordare / E senza figli da rispettare.” De Gregori, “Adelante! Adelante!”, *I testi,* lines 17-19, 29-32.

[151] “La via Emilia tagliava Modena in due; la strada dove abitavo, da una parte, si incrociava con essa. Dall'altra parte c'erano già gli ampi campi della periferia. Erano un po' il nostro "West" domestico: bastava fare due passi, o attraversare una strada, e c'erano già indiani e cow-boys, cavalli e frecce; c'era, insomma, l'Avventura, tradotta in "padano" dai film e dai fumetti. Poi la via Emilia continuò a tagliare Modena in due, ma il West aveva volto diverso, e il "mito americano", quello di tante generazioni oltre alla mia, parlava lingua diversa, quella del rock, delle copertine dei dischi, della faccia di James Dean in Gioventù bruciata, dei libri che altri appena prima di noi avevano scoperto e voltato in italiano. Ma i due riferimenti esistevano sempre, un piede di qua e uno di là, il sogno (meglio, l'utopia) e la realtà.” Francesco Guccini, “Inside Cover Text,” in *Fra la via Emilia e il West*, Vinyl (EMI 2-62 1186693, 1984).

[152] ha trovato una strada di stelle nel cielo dell’anima sua. Se lo sente, non può più fallire, scoprirà un nuovo mondo; […] anche fosse un miraggio ormai salperà via. […] e naviga, naviga via verso un mondo impensabile ancora da ogni teoria.” in Francesco Guccini and. Giuseppe Dati, lyrics, “Cristoforo Colombo,” Francesco Guccini. Il sito ufficiale, https://www.francescoguccini.it/discografia/ritratti/.

[153] The last song of the album, “Se ti tagliassero a pezzetti” (If They Cut You into Little Pieces) is a reference to one of the last acts of terrorism, carried out on August 2, 1980, while De Andre

and Bubola were writing *L'indiano.* The Black Brigades enacted one of the most fatal bombing of years of the Strategy of Tension at the Bologna Train Station, killing 85 people and injuring 200 others.

[154] De André interviewed in 1980: "È strano: ci sono dei recuperi ad un certo livello, una strana commissione fra cultura sarda e cultura pellerossa." Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 234.

[155] "Quello che non ho è una camicia bianca / quello che non ho è un segreto in banca / quello che non ho sono le tue pistole / per conquistarmi il cielo per guadagnarmi il sole." Fabrizio De André and Massimo Bubola, lyrics, "Quello che non ho," in *Come un'anomalia: Tutte le canzoni,* ed. Roberto Cotroneo (Turin: Einaudi, 1999), 202, lines 1-4.

[156] In an interview in 1981, De André says of the peninsula's desire to ban the wild boar hunt in Sardinia, presumably as well in Maremma: "Far votare a Roma l'abolizione della caccia per la Sardegna equivale a far votare ad Orgosolo l'abolizione del calcio domenicale a Roma." Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 249.

[157] "quello che non ho è un treno arrugginito / che mi riporti indietro da dove sono partito. […] quello che non ho è questa prateria / per correre più forte della malinconia." De André and Bubola, "Quello che non ho," *Come un'anomalia,* lines 11-12, 15-16.

[158] "quello che non ho sei tu dalla mia parte" De André and Bubola, "Quello che non ho," *Come un'anomalia,* line 19.

[159] "I nostri guerrieri troppo lontani sulla pista del bisonte" Fabrizio De André and Massimo Bubola, lyrics, "Fiume Sand Creek", in *Come un'anomalia: Tutte le canzoni,* ed. Roberto Cotroneo (Turin: Einaudi, 1999), 204-205, lines 8.

[160] "avevo pochi anni e vent'anni sembran pochi" De Gregori, "Bufalo Bill," *I testi,* line 24.

[161] "fu un generale di vent'anni / occhi turchini e giacca uguale" De André and Bubola, "Fiume Sand Creek," *Come un'anomalia,* lines 3-4.

[162] "quel mattino aveva il viso dei vent' anni senza rughe / e rabbia e avventura e ancora vaghe idee del socialismo" Guccini, "Amerigo," *Canzoni,* lines 9-10.

[163] "fu un generale di vent'anni / figlio d'un temporale" in De André and Bubola, "Fiume Sand Creek," *Come un'anomalia,* lines 34-35. Calling Chivington a 20-year-old general is not just a simple oversight. De André in concerts would present the story of Sand Creek in minute details before performing the song. At a concert on September 13, 1991, a Piazza degli Scacchi in Marostica, Vicenza, he refers explicitly to the man by rank and name: "Colonnello Chivington." (Romano Giuffrida, *De André, gli occhi della memoria: tracce di ricordi con Fabrizio* (Milano: Elèuthera, 2002), 63.) Furthermore, when asked where his passion for Native Americans comes from, he mentions that he was influenced by Westerns, a visit to Canada, and "dalla lettura di libri come *Memorie di un indiano Cheyenne* e *Seppellite il mio cuore a Wounded Knee.*" (Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 246.) The Westerns he cites are *Soldato blu* and *Un uomo chiamato cavallo,* both revisionist westerns with realism regarding the massacres of natives. (Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 254.)

[164] Amerigo's quest for riches is clear in his emigration. Bufalo Bill says that his father guarded cattle, his mother was a farmer, he killed bison to be the best. Indeed, the historical Bill gained fame largely through hunting bison for sport. Chivington was a minister who moved west to set up missions, and who sought glory through the lord. "I have come to kill Indians, and believe it is right and honorable to use any means under God's heaven to kill Indians. ... Kill and scalp all, big and little; nits make lice." General John Chivington cited in Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 86–87.

[165] "C'è un dollaro d'argento sul fondo del Sand Creek […] ora i bambini dormono sul fondo del Sand Creek" De André and Bubola, "Fiume Sand Creek," *Come un'anomalia,* lines 7, 36.

[166] "chiusi gli occhi per tre volte / mi ritrovai ancora lì" in De André and Bubola, "Fiume Sand Creek," *Come un'anomalia,* lines 10-11.

[167] "I nostri guerrieri troppo lontani sulla pista del bisonte / e quella musica distante diventò sempre più forte / chiusi gli occhi per tre volte / mi ritrovai ancora lì / chiesi a mio nonno è solo un sogno / mio nonno disse sì. / A volte i pesci cantano sul fondo del Sand Creek." De André and Bubola, "Fiume Sand Creek," *Come un'anomalia,* lines 8-14.

[168] "Sognai talmente forte che mi uscì il sangue dal naso / il lampo in un orecchio nell'altro il paradiso / le lacrime più piccole / le lacrime più grosse / quando l'albero della neve / fiorì di stelle rosse. / Ora i bambini giocano nel letto del Sand Creek." De André and Bubola, "Fiume Sand Creek," *Come un'anomalia,* lines 15-21.

[169] "Quando il sole alzò la testa tra le spalle della notte / c'erano solo cani e fumo e tende capovolte / tirai una freccia in cielo / per farlo respirare / tirai una freccia al vento / per farlo sanguinare. / La terza freccia cercala sul fondo del Sand Creek." De André and Bubola, "Fiume Sand Creek," *Come un'anomalia,* lines 22-27.

[170] "T'ho incrociata alla stazione / che inseguivi il tuo profumo / presa in trappola da un tailleur grigio fumo / i giornali in una mano e nell'altra il tuo destino / camminavi fianco a fianco al tuo assassino." Fabrizio De André and Massimo Bubola, "Se ti tagliassero a pezzetti," in *Come un'anomalia: Tutte le canzoni,* ed. Roberto Cotroneo (Turin: Einaudi, 1999), 209-210, lines 27-31.

[171] "Ma se ti tagliassero a pezzetti / il vento li raccoglierebbe / il regno dei ragni cucirebbe la pelle / e la luna tesserebbe i capelli e il viso." De André and Bubola, "Se ti tagliassero a pezzetti," in *Come un'anomalia,* lines 32-35.

[172] "È una menzogna che Colombo abbia scoperto l'America nel 1492" Archivio DA IV/09 (B.3; 1-36) agenda, 159.

[173] "Durante I festeggiamenti colombiani la nazione indiana sarà insulto." Archivio DA IV/09 (B.3; 1-36) agenda, 159.

[174] "la sera del 12 ottobre del 1992, non starò certo a brindare al centenario… al cinquecentenario della scoperta dell'America. […] starò vicino agli Indiani e ricorderò insieme a loro quello che loro ricordano come il giorno del più grave lutto nazionale." Giuffrida, *De André, gli occhi della memoria*, 63.

[175] "È una menzogna che Colombo abbia scoperto l'America nel 1492 […] la popolavano da tempo immemorabile. […] Ma se uno dei nostri bambini dà questa risposta a scuola viene punito." Archivio DA IV/09 (B.3; 1-36, agenda), 159.

[176] "Alto uno span outré la media deli italiani, con i sugli sessantasei chili di peso sparse con giudizio lungo il corpo dinoccolato, da cowboy, che sembra non riuscire a trovare mai la posizione adatta per rilassarsi." Sassi and Pistarini, *De André talk,* 107.

[177] "In Italia, il conflitto non può assumere una dimensione lucida, consapevole, critica, proprio perché abbiamo ormai disimparato, come società, a confrontarci in modo maturo con opinioni e interessi diversi dai nostri, proprio perché abbiamo rinunciato a voler fare i conti responsabilmente con la nostra storia." Pier Luigi Sacco and Christian Caliandro, *Italia reloaded: Ripartire con la cultura* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2011), 36.

[178] Giuliana Minghelli, *Landscape and Memory in Post-Fascist Italian Film: Cinema Year Zero* (New York: Routledge, 2013).