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# Work and Songs under Italian Fascism<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction: Fascism and propaganda (1922–1943)

All recent studies on the Fascist regime in Italy agree on the fact that Mussolini and his staff paid particular attention to the use of media, in particular the new media, which were spreading or arriving in Italy in those years: the radio, movies, records and the first versions of television.<sup>2</sup> The regime started to organize some form of control over the communication media and to exploit them for its own propaganda very early.

An Ufficio Stampa (Press Office) was founded in 1926 to control the press. This Office became part of the Government in 1935 as a *Sottosegretariato di Stato* (Undersecretary's office) and, in 1937, it became the *Ministero per la Cultura Popolare* (Ministry for Popular Culture) (see Tranfaglia and Maida, 2005).

These three different steps in the history of this office set more and more rigid rules: in fact the regime passed from some form of influence on the

<sup>1</sup> The songs analysed in this article were published in the LP 'Come è bello avere un posto all e ferriere', ed. Paquito del Bosco, *Fonografo Italiano*, Anno V, n. 10, Nuova Fonit Cetra, Roma 1982 (new edition on CD 1997). Many thanks to Paquito del Bosco for his help.

<sup>2</sup> The public radio, EIAR, was born in 1926. In 1933 another institution, *Ente Radio Rurale* (organization for rural radio), aimed to popularize the Radio in rural villages through a special form of broadcasting for schools and public places. Television programmes began officially in 1954 in Italy, but some experiments with closed-circuit programmes were been conducted before the Second World War, during the Fascist period. See: Monticone, 1978; Verdegiglio, 2003.

cultural production to a stronger control and eventually to strong censorship after 1937.

The Ministry for Popular Culture had control over many cultural institutions:

- National press
- Cinecittà (Cinema)
- Istituto Luce (Documentaries)
- Ente Nazionale per il Teatro (the National Theatre Trust)
- O.N.D. - Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro (the National Working Men's club)
- Discoteca di Stato (the National Sound Archives)

In our context the most interesting institutions are: the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro, abbreviated as OND, which organised the workers' free time, and the Discoteca di Stato, which was the first sound archive in Italy.

I want to discuss the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro for its influence on the diffusion of Italian folk music, but also on changes in that music.

Among the activities promoted by the OND clubs were singing and playing local music in choirs, and dancing in folkloristic groups. The regime disliked any free cultural and social expression of folklore, such as free dances in public places, free public festivals, carnivals, and so on. One of the OND tasks was the organisation of all these kinds of meetings, changing them in well-controlled events (see for example Sanvitale 1999; Cavazza 1987: 109–122).

At the same time the OND supported also some scientific projects like collecting and transcribing rural songs, later published in the proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> conference on Folk Art and Tradition (Liuzzi 1936).

My focus here is on popular songs. *Canzonette* was the word used at that time. It means light not important songs. Nowadays we use the English definition Popular Music to define this kind of authorial production, commercialized before the Second World War through 78 rpm records or scores, diffused by media like the radio. The OND also produced some *canzonette* such as 'La canzone dell'operaio' analysed in this article.

The Discoteca di Stato was another interesting public institution born under the fascism. It was founded in 1928 inspired by a very important author of songs, the futurist poet and dramatist Rodolfo De Angelis.<sup>3</sup>

His initial idea was only to preserve the 'Great Voices' by collecting and preserving in archives the recordings of the best opera singers, as well as poetry read by poets, or speeches by important Italian intellectuals and politicians.

The Managers of the Discoteca di Stato soon realized that music was the most important recordable product, and in 1934 a new law laid down two new aims for the archive, which are interesting for us: the first aim was to promote the recording of rural music and spoken dialect as well as new classical composition; the second aim was to store two copies of every record published in Italy in the Discoteca.

As matter of fact the Discoteca made few or no recordings of rural music under fascism. We would have to wait for the foundation of the AELM (Musical and Linguistic Ethnological Archive) promoted by Diego Carpitella in 1962.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless the collection of commercial songs continued in a regular way and today the Discoteca has an important record collection. I have already said that the Discoteca di Stato was put under the control of the Ministero per la Cultura Popolare in 1937. Two years before, in 1935, a fascist law had established a special Committee of censorship. Before being published, each song had to be approved by this Committee. In this way the Discoteca began to exercise control over the songs' production and publication.

The history of OND and Discoteca di Stato is an example of the evolution of the regime. During the Twenties and the early Thirties the artistic and cultural activities were strongly influenced by the fascist ideology and were used for the propaganda, although sometimes this happened in a contradic-

<sup>3</sup> For the history of Discoteca di Stato see the website: [www.dds.it](http://www.dds.it).

<sup>4</sup> Before the Discoteca di Stato-AELM, another important archive for oral traditional music had been founded in Italy in 1948: the Centro Nazionale di Studi di Musica Popolare (now Archivi di Etnomusicologia), sponsored by the Accademia di S. Cecilia and the RAI (the national radio and television after the Second World War).

tory way and a little freedom for creativity was tolerated. After the conquest of Ethiopia, the foundation of the 'empire', the alliance with Nazism and the racial laws, the cultural politics became more and more propagandistic and the censorship more and more rigid. The regime collapsed in 1943, during the last part of the Second World War.

### **Case study. Three popular songs about factory work, at the beginning of 'musical globalisation'**

My case study is a group of three 'canzonette' composed under Fascism. I am talking about the beginning of musical globalisation, as a lot of influence on Italian songs was coming from abroad, particularly from France and South and North America. This foreign influence had a particular importance and also contributed to the establishment of a lot of symbolism in Italian popular songs. Some stereotypes emerged during and before the Twenties, such as the association between the dance coming from South America and its 'licentious' element, or the idea of North American music being 'modern'.

This was allowed to happen despite the fact that the regime was very eager to construct an idea of a strong National Identity, and to promote a sort of autarchy also in the music.

All these foreign influences were in most of the cases injected into a formal and harmonic model derived from local productions: the regional song in dialects, born at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (the most famous being of course the Neapolitan song) and the 'romanze da salotto' [parlour songs]. These genres were in turn influenced by the high tradition of the Italian opera, especially in the vocal style and melodic contours.

The topic of the three songs I have analysed is 'work', in particular factory work. I have chosen this subject because it was one of the favourite topics of the regime's propaganda: Italy needed people to work in order to become a 'strong country', a 'satisfied and proud nation', but mostly to be independent from international trade.

From 1926 Mussolini promoted the 'battaglia del grano' [wheat battle], a

programme which aimed to increase wheat production and to reduce the national dependence on imported food. Documentaries and photos show him working in a wheat field. Some songs were composed to support the ideology of 'battaglia del grano', dealing with the beauty of agricultural work, such as 'La canzone del grano' [The wheat song] which begins with the words: 'The sunrise gave the sun to the morning/It found the farmers marching/ on the usual way, full of passion/to give the fields arms and sweat/ And on the street/ as in a prayer/ they sung a hymn from the heart'.

Industry had a particular function in the economy. Compared to other Western European countries Italy was less industrialised, but national industrial production was important for the autarchic project of Mussolini. Some big factories, like FIAT in Turin or Ansaldo in Gene, became crucial for the transport system and weapons production.

Before Fascism, in Italy, industrial urban culture had features different from the rural one. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Italy free associations of workers (Società di Mutuo Soccorso and Leghe) promoted social and political battles for better work conditions. The first trade unions (most of them strongly influenced by Marxist ideas, some of catholic inspiration) were very popular in the North of the country. In 1920 after crucial strikes and with the political support of the Socialist Party they obtained a reduction of working time to 8 hours a day.

In a few years Fascism cancelled all these achievements, forbidding strikes and abolishing all kinds of workers' free associations and all kinds of parties other than the PNF (National Fascist Party). Some public institutions controlled by Mussolini's government, such the Ente Nazionale Previdenza Infortuni (the National Organisation for the Prevention of Accidents), abbreviated in ENPI, were founded in order to assist the workers. The OND (Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro) organised the workers' free time. Fascism wanted to appear like a good father providing all kinds of assistance. The reality was that it only intended to exercise all sorts of control through those organisa-

tions. At the same time the 'beauty' of the work and its good consequences in terms of welfare became themes of the propaganda.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, in the songs I analysed for this article there isn't any reference to strikes, protests, and requests for better conditions of work. The factory worker protagonists are three men satisfied with their work and their life.

However the songs were composed in different time (1929, 1937, ca 1940) and each of them is very different from the others.

### 1. A realistic song

The first song is 'Ferriera' [Steel factory], by Cesare Bixio and Bixio Cherubini.<sup>6</sup> It was published in 1929. It was the first period of Fascism, also in terms of propaganda and censorship. Some ideas and attitudes coming from the pre-fascist period remained in the cultural practice.

The composers were very famous. They produced hundreds of songs, many of them together.

'Ferriera', 'Rotaie' and 'Miniera' are all on the same topic: work and work accidents (Cellerino 2001).

I define 'Ferriera' as a realistic song, drawing on the definition of the *Chanson réaliste* française of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, which dealt with poor and unlucky people (Dutheil Pessin, 2004). These genres of songs were well known in Italy because of the close cultural exchanges. Bixio himself composed some songs for a famous French singer, Mistinguette. He lived in Paris for a few years.

'Ferriera' is a narrative song. In the first part the protagonist presents himself, talking about his life and his family, in the second part a narrator describes the tragic situation caused by the work accident.

In the following analytical points I would like to highlight how the music and some sound signals quoted in the lyrics are important for the song's mood.

<sup>5</sup> On the OND activities in important Italian factories see: Annibaldi, Bigiaretti, Ossola, Fornero, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> *Come è bello avere un posto alle ferriere*: track 2.

- The church bell rings in the dark. A man is going home after work.
- He's singing, because he's happy. His family is awaiting him in the little house.
- But in the music there is a premonition of disaster: in particular the instrumental introduction in G minor, starting with a diminished chord (Amb5), is in conflict with the happy situation described in the first verse.
- The situation seems to relax in the refrain, which is in a major key.
- The disaster announced by the music arrives in the second verse: a fire kills the worker.
- Nobody sings anymore and the church bell is still ringing, although with a different meaning.
- The major key in the last refrain creates now a touching effect.

The lyrics of 'Ferriera' consist of two verses alternating with a refrain. There is regular metrical organisation with rhyme couplets.

*Verse:* Scende silente l'oscurità  
 Ed ogni artiere con ansientà  
 Con sole che declina  
 Esce dall'officina  
 Suon di campane sonano allor  
 Come è felice il cuor

*Refrain:* Suona campana suona, vien giù la sera  
 Torna cantando l'uomo dalla ferriera  
 Pensa ai suoi bimbi e canta la sua casetta  
 Ove è una zuppa e un algelo che l'aspetta  
 Bacia una testa bionda e una chioma nera  
 Come è felice l'uomo della ferriera

*Verse:* Negli altiforni della città  
 L'acciaio fuso sfavilla già  
 Ma il fuoco traditore  
 Investe il forgiatore  
 Presso il compagno che muor laggiù  
 Nessuno canta più

*Refrain:* Suona camoana suona vien giù la sera  
Ma non ritorna l'uomo dalla ferriera  
Come è più triste il suono delle campane  
Mentre i bambini aspettano il babbo e il pane  
Torna al balcone invano colei che spera  
Ma non ritorna l'uomo dalla ferriera.

English translation: The silent darkness is approaching/ And while the sun is setting/ The worker is uneasily/ Leaving the factory./ Bells are now ringing/ How happy his heart is!  
Ring bell, ring bell, the night's coming/ The man is returning from the steelworks singing/ And thinking of his children and his sweet home/ Where a bowl of soup and an angel are waiting for him./ He kisses a blonde head and black hair/ How happy the steelworks man is!  
In the blast furnaces of the town/ The melted steel is already shining./ But the treacherous fire/ Attacks the steel worker/ Near the mate who is dying down there./ Nobody is singing anymore!  
Ring bell, ring bell, the night's coming!/ But the man is not returning from the steelworks./ How much sadder the bells sound,/ While the children are waiting for their father and their food./ In vain the hopeful woman is watching from the balcony,/ But the man is not returning from the steelworks.

Some musical features are common in many contemporary dance song, such the rhythm of tango, often associated with passionate and sad situations. The change of mode (minor in the verses, major in the refrain) is common in many Neapolitan and Italian *canzonette* during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. We could say that 'Ferriera' is a typical song for tango dancers, despite the story being so tragic.

As I said before the song was written in 1929. It communicates the image of a simple and suffering Italy. This image soon proved unacceptable for the regime: some years later the Ministry of Popular Culture forbade the Istituto Luce from filming poor people in its documentaries.

## 2. An autarchic song

In 1937, the OND produced 'La canzone dell'operaio' [The worker song], by Attanasio and Staffelli, for the Piedigrotta song competition in Naples.<sup>7</sup> Piedigrotta was the major annual event to present compositions of new Neapolitan and Italian songs. A very famous singer, Carlo Buti, recorded the

<sup>7</sup> *Come è bello avere un posto alle ferriere:* track 1.



song. Throughout his career he interpreted more than 1500 songs, some of which were fascist propaganda songs, such as 'Faccetta nera' [Black face], composed during the colonial war in Africa.

'La canzone dell'operaio' is a propaganda song. The situation is similar to that in 'Ferriera', but there seem to be no impending disasters: in the factory people are working 'prudently and powerfully' and the protagonist is completely happy and satisfied. The factory is 'The light of my life and source of work!'. War too is seen in a positive way (I would like to remind you that this was the time of Italy's colonial wars). The image of a happy and honest worker with a happy and safe family is combined with plenty of devotion to Fascism. He calls his children 'balilla', the name that the regime imposed on the boys; he 'blesses the black shirt', a fascist symbol that all the men had to wear. Many fascist slogans are inserted into the lyrics. Mussolini is mentioned three times, as 'mastro Benito' (master Benito), 'Duce' (leader, commander, as in his official title), and 'un grande artefice' (a great artificer).

The song consists of three verses and three refrains, and each verse comprises two stanzas with rhymes following an ABAB scheme. Most lines are hendecasyllabic, consistent with many rural songs, in particular the 'stornello' (which I will mention later).

*Verse:* Al suon della campana mattutina  
 Si sveglia il sole con i raggi d'oro  
 Mi affretto per andare all'officina  
 Luce di vita fonte di lavoro.  
 I miei balilla dormono  
 Ed il mio cuore fra di lor rimane  
 Sono tranquillo d'animo  
 Nella casetta mia non manca il pane

*Refrain:* E per la strada canto  
 Questo stornello che mi è caro tanto  
 Fior d'ogni fiore  
 Patria e famiglia sono il nostro amore  
 Mastro Benito ci ha forgiato il cuore

*Verse:* L'opera ferve attenta e poderosa

Il maglio batte ed arde la fornace  
Il braccio che è di acciaio e non riposa  
Produce per la guerra e per la pace  
E veglia un grande artefice  
Nella fucina della nostra gente  
Per rendere l'Italia  
Sempre più grande, sempre più potente

*Refrein:* Ed io lavoro e canto  
Questo stornello che mi è caro tanto  
Fior da gradire  
Il Duce ha detto credere e obbedire  
Combattere per vincere o morire

*Verse:* E passa il giorno e torno a casa mia  
Fiero e contento quasi a prima sera  
Al dolce suono dell'Ave maria  
Io benedico la camicia nera.  
I miei balilla aspettano  
Con essi sol la madre il mio tesoro  
Vicino a me si stringono  
Mi baciano le mani del lavoro

*Refrein:* Ed orgoglioso canto  
Questo stornello che mi è caro tanto  
Fior di mughetto  
Noi tirerem diritto è tutto detto  
Per ogni vanga e libro c'è un moschetto.

**English translation:** When the bell rings in the morning/And the sun wakes up with its golden rays/I hurry up and go to the factory/The light of my life and source of work!/My *ballillas* are sleeping/And my heart stays with them./I'm in peace/In my sweet home never short of food  
And I sing in the street /This *stornello* that I like so much/*Fior d'ogni fiore*/We love our country and our family/*Mastro Benito* forged our hearts.  
The work continues, prudently and powerfully/The mallet is hammering and the furnace is burning/The strong arm doesn't rest/It is producing for war and peace!/A great maker is watching over/All our factories/making Italy bigger and bigger and more and more powerful.  
And while I work I sing/This *stornello* that I like so much/*Fior da gradire*/The *Duce* said 'Believe and obey'/'Fight to win or die'  
And when the day finishes I go back home/Proud and happy, It's almost evening/To the sweet sound of Ave Maria/I bless the black shirt/My *ballillas* are waiting/Alone with their mother, my treasure/They gather around me/And kiss my hard-working hands

And I proudly sing/This *stornello* that I like so much /*Fior di mughetto*/We're going on, nothing can stop us! /'For every spade and every book, there is a musket'

'La canzone dell'operaio' is a very 'autarchic' song. It is a schizophrenic mixture of Italian musical stereotypes which are used to introduce the complex image of this man: a good worker and a caring husband and father, but also a true Italian, ready to become a determined soldier:

- Carlo Buti uses his voice, influenced by opera style, in different ways, alternating a *tenore di grazia* light voice with an emphatic half-spoken voice.
- In the orchestra strings and woodwinds (especially violins and the flute) are used to accompany the happy worker while he is going to the factory on a sunny day, but brass instruments (especially trumpets) in military bands style are always ready to emphasize the fascist beliefs.
- Sections of military march are mixed with melodic contours in folk style (in particular the *stornello* grace notes).

In the folk tradition of central Italy *stornello* is the name for many poetic and melodic formulas used to improvise songs. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was possible to find *stornelli* in a large area, in central and southern Italy.

Roman *stornello* and Tuscan *stornello* became also popular in the urban context and in written and recorded music. Carlo Buti, who was born in Florence, recorded some 'Stornelli fiorentini'. The main feature of urban *stornelli* is a melismatic, sometimes virtuosistic melodic contour. The *stornello* sung by Lola in Mascagni's 'Cavalleria Rusticana' is very famous.

Lola (hintert der Szene)  
(dentro alla scena)

x)

O sü - Be Li - lie! Zahl - lo - se En - gel sah ich nachts er -  
Fior di giag - gio lo, gli an - ge - li bel - li stan - no a mil - le in

(sich nähernd)  
(avvicinandosi sempre)

schei - nen, doch, ach, so schü - wie er ge - währ - ich kel - nen. O sü - Be Li - lie!  
cis - lo, ma bel - lo co - me lui ce wäs - no so - lo. Fior di giag - gio . lo,.

We can notice, in each cadenza, a *portamento* with a passing note. After this *stornello* Lola sings a long vocalization.

In 'La canzone dell'operaio', the man says, in the refrain: 'I sing in the street / this *stornello* that I like so much' (just as Lola):<sup>8</sup>



In this couplet the melodic line looks like a true *stornello*, in particular because of the light voice and because of the melismatic contour and the passing notes in the cadenzas.

In the following couplet the lyrics are in the form typical of Tuscany and Lazio (but also used in the South<sup>9</sup> and in Mascagni's example), with the first line beginning with the word 'Fiore' (flower). However, the melodic contour and the emphatic kind of voice are very far from the grace of the *stornello*. The song that the man 'likes so much' seems not to be a *stornello*, but a fascist slogan, well pronounced with a loud voice: 'Fior d'ogni fiore/We love our country and our family / Mastro Benito forged our hearts'.



The repeated notes (D) on the words 'mastro Benito' recall the instrumental introduction of the song with trumpets in military style:



<sup>8</sup> Transcriptions by Serena Facci.

<sup>9</sup> An example of this kind of stornelli was recorded in a village in Puglia by Diego Carpitella and Alan Lomax in 1954. It was published in *Italian Treasures: Folk Music and Song of Italy. A sampler*, CD Rounder Records 11661-1801-2.

### 3. A 'modern' song in American style.

The last song I am proposing is an 'American' song: 'La prudenza' (prudence) composed by Maneri and Seracini, sung by Gilberto Mazzi.<sup>10</sup> Under Fascism the influence of North American swing and hot jazz was very important in Italian songs and movie music. Italian singers, composers and conductors (the most famous was Giuseppe Barzizza, who conducted the radio orchestra since 1936) interpreted Italian songs in American style or American songs translated into Italian.

We have to remember, though, that at the end of the Thirties Fascism officially banned foreign music from radio broadcasts, in particular jazz and other Afro-American music. The use of English words in music was also forbidden: Barzizza had to change the name of his group, Blue Star, into Italian (Stella azzurra).<sup>11</sup>

In such a context the publication of 'La prudenza', a propaganda-educative song in a perfect swing style, could seem strange.<sup>12</sup>

The song was produced by the Ente Nazionale Previdenza Infortuni, which was the national office for the prevention of accidents. One of its most important aims was to spread information about safety at work. It provided publications, such as magazines like *Leggetemi!* [Read me!], books, postcards and songs.

In 'La prudenza' the ENPI encourages workers to solve the problem of work accidents by themselves. The American swing music gives a particular mood. Modernity and optimism were the sentiments associated in Italy with this kind of music. Songs in swing style were common in those Italian movies known as 'film dei telefoni bianchi' (white phone movies), the white phones being one of the status symbol of rich people. The singer Gilberto Mazzi, in 1938 became famous for a song sung in one of these movies, 'Mille lire al mese' [One thousand liras a month], which expressed the middle class dreams of welfare. This song was in swing style too.

<sup>10</sup> *Come è bello avere un posto alle ferriere*: track 6.

<sup>11</sup> The relationship between Fascism and Jazz was inconsistent. See, between other (Mazzoletti 2004).

<sup>12</sup> At the moment I am not sure about the date of publication. Paquito del Bosco talks about the early Forties, towards the end of the fascist regime.

American popular songs influence the melodic form of 'La prudenza': two verses alternate with a refrain, as common in Italian songs, but this refrain comprises a chorus + a middle eight + a chorus, as in many American popular songs.

Compared with 'Ferriera' and 'La canzone dell'operaio', this song is completely different in the musical style, in the meaning and in the protagonist's behaviour:

- A man is talking with a hypothetical friend; confidentially he's suggesting to be careful at work.
- He's careful, he's very efficient because he's 'modern', and he's not unwary.
- He doesn't talk about family, children, little sweet houses: he seems to be a bachelor.
- The rhythm is good for a swing dance, not for a tango or for a march.
- He isn't singing a *stornello*, (something very old!), he's singing a *ritornello* (refrain).
- No bell is ringing. He seems to be in a town.
- The song seems to respond to Bixio and Cherubini, the composers of 'Ferriera' and other songs about work accidents. It contains a reference to one of their songs, the very famous 'Parlami d'amore Mariù'. The man says 'When you work don't think of the blue eyes of your Mariù'.

*Verse:* La prudenza se in salute vuoi restar  
 Con costanza devi praticar  
 Questa massima applicata nel lavor  
 Te lo giuro vale un gran tesor

*Chorus :* Lavorando manovrando  
 Macchine o motor  
 Non distrarti, non fidarti  
 segui il tuo lavor

*Middle eight:* Non pensare ai cruciverba o agli occhi blu  
 Della tua Mariù  
 Ma sorvegliati e ripeti nel cervel  
 Questo ritornel

*Chorus:* Sii prudente, sii prudente  
 Se vuoi bene star  
 La prudenza è una scenza  
 Che non può sbagliar

*Verse:* Lo stordito, l'intontito credi a me  
 Nuoce agli altri e specialmente a sé  
 Basta un fallo, un'imprudenza nel lavor  
 Per piombare a un tratto nel dolor

*Chorus:* Io sto bene sempre bene  
 Ma lo sai perchè  
 L'incidente, l'accidente  
 So scansar da me

*Middle eight:* Nella vita l'infortunio ad ogni età  
 In agguato sta  
 E per questo mi ripeto nel cervel  
 Sempre un ritornel

*Chorus:* Sii prudente, sii prudente  
 Se vuoi bene star  
 La prudenza è una scenza  
 Che non può sbagliar.

**English translation:** Caution. If you want to be safe,/You have to watch out./This rule is a treasure/If you apply it while working.

Working, steering /machines or engines /Pay attention, don't relax/Control your work

Don't think of crosswords or of the blue eyes/ Of your Mariù/But keep a check on yourself and sing in your mind/ This refrain:

Be careful, be careful/If you want to be well!/Caution is a science/Which mustn't make mistakes.

The heedless, the confused (believe me)/Harms others and especially themselves/One error is enough/One incautious action at work/and you may suddenly be in sorrow

I'm well,very well/Do you know why?/I know how to avoid/accidents and incidents/In life, the accident/Is always waiting in ambush/And for this I repeat in my mind/this refrain:

Be careful, be careful/If you want to be well!/Caution is a science/Which mustn't make mistakes.

I don't know if this very little autarchic song, produced by a fascist public institution as the ENPI escaped the fascist control, or if it is a result of a subtle, maybe devious attempt, by the fascist regime, to convince people by using a new and more attractive language.

## **Conclusion**

The three songs analysed, dealing with factory work and work accidents, are very different. Each of them corresponds to a different moment in Fascist history.

The first one, 'Ferriera', composed during the twenties, is a realistic, narrative song, talking about a dramatic situation. Sounds and lyrics depict a poor, vulnerable Italy. The music is freely open to different foreign influences.

The second one is produced by the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro, the institution that organized the workers' free time. 'La canzone dell'operaio' is a true propaganda song, composed in the worst period of the regime's censorship and cultural control. All the musical elements shape an autarchic song, without any foreign influences.

Despite the different mood and musical style, 'La canzone dell'operaio' is a sort of response to 'Ferriera'. A lot of elements are shared: the happy family in a little house; the day time announced by the church bells; the habit of singing in the street and at work as in a rural environment.

The third one, 'La prudenza', is what we can call a 'modern' song according to the mood of the late Thirties and the early Forties. In Italy before and after the Second World War, the American style was synonymous with modernity. The swing rhythm of dance and hot jazz style are used by the Ente Nazionale Protezione Infortuni to convince people that work accidents are connected with an ignorant, possibly rural Italy, but they can be avoided in a new, modern, efficient world.

To conclude I would like to stress that work accidents are still a very big problem in Italy, because in many factories the security norms are not respected. In 2007, 1170 people died in work accidents. Recently some singers have rearranged 'Miniera', an old song about work accidents composed by Bixio and Cherubini in 1927, before 'Ferriera'.



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