Document generated on 04/12/2025 11:38 a.m.

Anthropologica

Anthropologica

“Separation, but not Division”
A Southern Italian Perspective on “Lived Conspirituality”

Giovanna Parmigiani

Volume 65, Number 1, 2023

Contemporary Spiritualities on a Global Scale: Ethnographic Perspectives
Les spiritualités contemporaines à l’échelle globale : regards ethnographiques

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1109801ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18357/anthropologica65120232597

See table of contents

Publisher(s)

University of Victoria

ISSN

0003-5459 (print)
2292-3586 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Parmigiani, G. (2023). “Separation, but not Division”: A Southern Italian Perspective on “Lived Conspirituality”. *Anthropologica*, *65*(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.18357/anthropologica65120232597

Article abstract

Conspirituality—that is, the connection between conspiracy theories and spirituality—has recently gained popularity in academic and non-academic circles. Often associated with populist and irrational beliefs, it has been linked to right-wing politics, faulty thinking, and disruptive and potentially violent behaviour (Greenwood 2022; Russell 2022). While these connections have been proven to be true in some cases, in this paper, rooted in my long-standing ethnographic research, I offer a contribution that illuminates other aspects of conspirituality—in line with recent attempts to honour the complexity and internal variability of the phenomenon (for example, Greenwood 2022; Ong 2021). In particular, differently from the overwhelming majority of current approaches in the study of conspirituality, I propose to frame the study of conspirituality not only by focusing on ideas and beliefs, but in conversation with the study of “lived religion” (see, for example, Ammerman 2021; Hall 2001; McGuire 2008) in a way that distinguishes the actual experience of persons from normative beliefs and practices. Similarly to what the study of “lived religion” does to the study of religion, I claim that the study of “lived conspirituality” could offer insights into the phenomenon of conspiracism, today (Ong 2020). By analyzing discourses and practices of conspiritualists that I observed on the field, I will challenge mainstream interpretations of the role of the individual and of marginality in New Age conspirituality.

© Giovanna Parmigiani, 2024

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

https://www.erudit.org/en/

"Separation, but not Division"

A Southern Italian Perspective on "Lived Conspirituality"

Giovanna Parmigiani
Harvard Divinity School and CSWR

Abstract: Conspirituality—that is, the connection between conspiracy theories and spirituality—has recently gained popularity in academic and non-academic circles. Often associated with populist and irrational beliefs, it has been linked to right-wing politics, faulty thinking, and disruptive and potentially violent behaviour (Greenwood 2022; Russell 2022). While these connections have been proven to be true in some cases, in this paper, rooted in my long-standing ethnographic research, I offer a contribution that illuminates other aspects of conspirituality—in line with recent attempts to honour the complexity and internal variability of the phenomenon (for example, Greenwood 2022; Ong 2021). In particular, differently from the overwhelming majority of current approaches in the study of conspirituality, I propose to frame the study of conspirituality not only by focusing on ideas and beliefs, but in conversation with the study of "lived religion" (see, for example, Ammerman 2021; Hall 2001; McGuire 2008) in a way that distinguishes the actual experience of persons from normative beliefs and practices. Similarly to what the study of "lived religion" does to the study of religion, I claim that the study of "lived conspirituality" could offer insights into the phenomenon of conspiracism, today (Ong 2020). By analyzing discourses and practices of conspiritualists that I observed on the field, I will challenge mainstream interpretations of the role of the individual and of marginality in New Age conspirituality.

Keywords: conspirituality; Italy; COVID-19; new age; conspiracy theories; lived religion

Résumé : La conspiritualité, c'est-à-dire le lien entre les théories du complot et la spiritualité, a récemment gagné en popularité dans les milieux universitaires et non universitaires. Souvent associée à des croyances populistes et irrationnelles, elle a été liée à la politique de droite, à une pensée erronée et à un comportement perturbateur potentiellement violent (Greenwood 2022 ; Russell 2022). Si ces liens se sont avérés exacts dans certains cas, cet article s'appuie sur mes recherches ethnographiques de longue date et propose une contribution qui met en lumière d'autres aspects de la conspiritualité, conformément aux récentes tentatives visant à rendre hommage à la complexité et à la variabilité interne du phénomène (par exemple, Greenwood 2022 ; Ong 2021). Contrairement à l'écrasante majorité des approches actuelles de l'étude de la conspiritualité, je propose en particulier d'encadrer l'étude de la conspiritualité en se concentrant non seulement sur les idées et les croyances, mais aussi en relation avec l'étude de la « religion vécue » (notamment, Ammerman 2021 ; Hall 2001 ; McGuire 2008), qui distingue l'expérience personnelle réelle des croyances et des pratiques normatives. Tout comme l'étude de la « religion vécue » apporte à l'étude de la religion, j'avance que l'étude de la « conspiritualité vécue » pourrait permettre de mieux comprendre le phénomène du conspirationnisme aujourd'hui (Ong 2020). En analysant les discours et les pratiques des conspiritualistes que j'ai observés sur le terrain, je remets en question les interprétations courantes du rôle de l'individu et de la marginalité dans la conspiritualité du New Age.

Mots-clés : conspiritualité ; Italie ; COVID-19 ; New Age ; théories du complot ; religion vécue

---

As many scholars have shown, conspiracy theories are not a new phenomenon. They have been around at least since the French Revolution (Byford 2011, 38–94).[1] Therefore, the study of conspiracism—that is to say, a "distinct culture … which encompasses a specific system of knowledge, beliefs, values, practices and rituals shared by communities of people around the world" (Byford 2011, 5) that involves conspiracies—has been engaging scholars in many academic fields for a long time (see Robertson et al 2018). In its most general definition, a conspiracy theory is "an explanation, either speculative or evidence-based, which attributes the causes of an event to a conspiracy or a plot" (Byford 2011, 20–21; Dentith 2018). Deriving from the Latin *con* and *spirare*, literally to breathe together (a word that describes gestures of secrecy and exclusionary knowledge), conspiracy theories have been blooming, recently, in "spiritual" environments to the point that a new word was coined to refer to these particular instances of conspiracism: conspirituality. According to

Ward and Voas (2011, 104), the first to introduce this term in academic settings, conspirituality is

> a politico-spiritual philosophy based on two core convictions, the first traditional to conspiracy theory, the second rooted in the New Age: (1) A secret group covertly controls, or is trying to control, the political and social order … (2) Humanity is undergoing a 'paradigm shift' in consciousness, or awareness, so solutions to (1) lie in acting in accordance with an awakened 'new paradigm' worldview.[2]

Often characterizing marginal and oppositional groups and having counter-hegemonic functions (Asprem and Dyrendal 2015), conspirituality seems to be at the center of many contemporary discourses related to spirituality, both online and offline, both academic and not. It certainly has a role in my own ethnographic field, but with nuances that go beyond common stereotypical representations.

In my first analysis of COVID-19 and conspiracy theories, I adopted an aesthetic and performative filter to integrate current understandings of conspirtuality that were emerging among my interlocutors (Parmigiani 2021). Therefore, in dialogue with the work of Sabina Magliocco (2012), I distinguished (Parmigiani 2021, 515) between "believing in conspiracies" and "conspiracy-believing:"

> …whereas the first is embedded in a paradigm that equates belief and faith (understood as the "non-rational"), the second, by focusing on the aesthetic (that is, sensory and artistic) and performative dimensions, problematizes that same binarism. Conspiracy believing, in fact, is not only a cognitive or psychological choice; it is primarily a practice that engages simultaneously different affects, experiences, and "ways of knowing" of individuals and groups. Accordingly, it can only be grasped contextually and, possibly, positionally—that is, in reference to the micro and macro contexts in which they are embedded and to the position of the individuals and groups vis-à-vis other individuals and society at large.

While I still consider this an important distinction, in this article, based on my ongoing ethnographic work among contemporary Pagans and New Age practitioners in Southern Italy, I would like to complement my previous work by putting conspirituality in conversation with the study of "lived religion." In other words, I would like to concentrate on—and advocate for—the study

of "lived conspirituality" and the value of "slow ethnography" in the study of conspiracy theories. To support my claims, I will present some of the most widespread conspiracy theories I found in Salento among some of my interlocutors—that is, the ones related to chemtrails, the Xylella fastidiosa olive trees epidemic, and COVID-19 vaccines. Moreover, I will concentrate on some of the "lived" aspects of conspirituality I found among my interlocutors by presenting the emic distinction between *separare* (to separate) and *dividere* (to divide). This distinction—that, I believe, resonates with Pagan and New Age-related "relational ontologies"—both orients my interlocutors' actions and challenges common assumptions on conspirituality.

Conspirituality in Salento, Italy

> It is the new moon in Virgo. The fall equinox is getting closer, but the temperatures are still summery—per usual—in the Salento area of Italy, on the southeastern fringe of the Italian peninsula. Gloria and I have organized a new moon circle for the occasion on the terrace of the place where I live when I am in the field. Gloria is a member of a contemporary Pagan group in the area, an expression of what is locally called "alternative spiritualities."[3] I have met and worked with Gloria and other Pagan and New Age practitioners since 2015, and such rituals are not new to me. While we prepare the space for the ritual with incense, the sound of the drum and a singing bowl, and by calling the directions, I once again realize the fondness that I have for my friend and for the layers of memories linked to her, the Salento land, and my interlocutors.[4]
>
> It is late afternoon, but the sun is still hot. In spite of the heat, all women arrive on time. There are ten of us, of different ages. Some are new acquaintances, some are regulars. Luna, the eldest, is seventy-two. Paola, the youngest, is in her twenties. We climb up the old and steep limestone stairs that lead to the terrace (a sort of initiatory passage), and the ritual—led by Gloria, this time—begins.

Gloria is connected with the *cerchio* (in Italian, "circle"). This is a group of women who call themselves and one another "sisters," who interact with each other as members of a family, and who share a spiritual journey. The *cerchio* rarely meets as "a circle" or as a "coven;" more often its members meet in groups of two or three, arranged according to the situations, life periods, locations, purposes, rituals, and goals. These meetings are very often open to old and

new acquaintances and friends, those not belonging to the group.[5] This moon ritual is one of these occasions, and I was thrilled to be able to be the host this time. The circle does not have any ritual structure, and it is non-hierarchical. Therefore, there is neither a priestess in charge of the rituals nor very detailed liturgical etiquettes. The interactions are, mostly, spontaneous, and so are many of the rituals of the *cerchio*. While Pagan, the circle is not, strictly speaking, a "reconstructionist" group: in contrast to many Pagan groups studied in Italy and in Catholic countries, its members do not worship the same gods and goddesses; they do not conceive "the past" as a distinct reference point and do not aim at reproducing pre-Christian religions. They do not require any initiation; they do not perform counter-identities vis-à-vis their sociocultural and religious Catholic contexts; they do not use the term "witch" to describe their identities nor "witchcraft" to define their spiritual practice. The women of the *cerchio* do not necessarily share the same beliefs and do not worship the same Gods or Goddesses. What keeps them together as a *cerchio* is their involvement in particular aesthetic (meaning both "sensory" and "artistic") performances. Specifically, the *fil rouge* that links the women of the *cerchio* is the practice and "interpretation" of the "traditional" dance and music called *pizzica*, connected with the healing rituals of *tarantismo*.

The latter is a widely studied phenomenon that has been controversial since the Middle Ages. With pre-Roman origins, according to some, it apparently lasted into the 1980s. Often described in the form of mental and physical suffering—sometimes also as a form of "possession"—*tarantismo* was thought to be provoked by the bite of tarantula spiders and cured through various private rituals and a public one in Galatina. The private rituals involved the performance of *pizzica* music, used as a cure or antidote, and were associated with a rowdy "ecstatic dance" that could last for hours. The yearly public ritual took place in and around the chapel of St. Paul in Galatina, on the occasion of the Festival of St. Peter and St. Paul on 29 June. This public ritual was a result of the centuries-long appropriation of the aforementioned healing practice by the Catholic Church by associating it with the cult of Saint Paul. During this ritual, women who had been "bitten" by the spider used to travel from the countryside and gather in the town of Galatina, begging the saint to heal them from their suffering through this particular "dance of possession."

The most influential study of this phenomenon is still the one conducted in June 1959 by Ernesto de Martino and his équipe that resulted in the book *La Terra del Rimorso*.[6] *Tarantismo*, as described by Ernesto de Martino (1976 [1961]),

disappeared from the public scene at the end of the twentieth century. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, with the modernization of the region, it ceased to be performed as a predominantly healing practice, while reemerging mainly as a popular culture musical phenomenon. As some scholars have noted, re-appropriations of *tarantismo* (similarly to re-appropriations of forms of "vernacular magic" throughout Italy) emerged in Salento and elsewhere in the country at the turn of the century in conversation with scholarly studies on the phenomenon. In reference to *tarantismo*, these re-appropriations, called *neotarantismi*, have been read as identity phenomena or as forms of "patrimonialization" (see, for example, Pizza 2015). Moreover, they have been linked to the practice of a form of ecstatic dance conceived as a post-modern critique of rationalism, or as a version of "*meridianismo*." In recent years, however, as my research has shown, a new form of *neotarantismo* started to spread and become more visible in Salento: a "spiritual" one, like the one I have been studying and practicing with the *cerchio*.

I have been conducting participant observation, performing open-ended interviews, and collecting life histories with individuals from this contemporary Pagan community and their friends and acquaintances since 2015. I spend more or less two hours—every day, also when I am not in the field—exchanging messages, chats, conversations, and insights with many of my Salentinian interlocutors and observing their online activity and the activity of the websites and social media pages that I know are important to them. My network of interlocutors, today, includes more than a hundred individuals, with different levels of connection with me: some became (close) friends, some are acquaintances, some I have met only once, and some I had not met in person (yet) but only virtually or through my interlocutor's stories. They are all followers of different kinds of "alternative spiritualities," and they live, more or less continuously, in Salento or have a connection with that land.[7] Some of them follow forms of Earth-based spiritualities (from neo-shamanism to Paganism) and others lean more towards other esoteric practices and beliefs (such as Theosophy, Metaphysics, and New Age, in general). Most of them are solitary practitioners but like to share knowledge and practices with other practitioners and friends who follow different traditions and spiritualities—reinforcing the "horizontality" of the relational bonds among them.

> We sit on the warm stone of the loggia—the flat roof typical of the local traditional architecture. Only birds and white rooftops around us. Blue pillows and yoga mats sketch a circle that we inhabit with our bodies,

energies, sweat, and anticipation. After the initial greetings and thanks, Gloria introduces the ritual with a peremptory statement—both a claim and an exhortation.

"There is a difference," she says, "between separating (separare) and dividing (dividere). We need to separate to comprehend (comprendere), and not to divide to discriminate."

This was not the first time I had heard Gloria talking about this. Some days before this ritual we met over a shared pizza and a couple of beers. We had decided to spend an evening together and share a meal, a chat, and some relieving *tramontana* wind. After some initial considerations on our common recent experiences—a road trip, a *curandería*, and some *pizzica* nights—our conversation drifted towards chemtrails, the *Xylella fastidiosa* olive tree epidemic in Salento, and COVID-19 vaccines: all very polarizing topics. This is when I first heard Gloria's endorsing of the *separare/dividere* distinction.

While the rifts and polarizations around the Coronavirus pandemic, within and without "spiritual" circles, have been at the center of everyone's attention since early 2020, the first two issues might need some further contextualization.

As Alexandra Bakalaki explains in her article on this topic (2016, 12),

> The word chemtrail refers to trails left behind by airplanes allegedly spraying the atmosphere with chemicals that damage the environment and all lifeforms. The chemtrail narrative emerged in North America in the 1990s and, like many other narratives that challenge official knowledge about nature and causes of global dangers, spread around the world through the Internet.[8]

For many years, I have heard several of my interlocutors blame chemtrails for change in the Salento climate ("*non è più il clima di una volta, qui in Salento. Il sole non è più lo stesso. Questo caldo non è normale*."[9]), in the appearance of the Salento sky ("*il cielo è grigio. Ci vogliono far andare a comprare cose nei centri commerciali*"[10]), and for physical ailments ("*mi sento fiacca, stanca, non ho energie. Ieri hanno spruzzato e oggi sto così*"[11]). Within the spiritual perspective adopted by some of my interlocutors, the chemtrails are believed, among other things, to deprive human and non-human beings of their direct connection with the sun; and, therefore, they are considered responsible for a weakening of physical, emotional, and spiritual bodies. They are believed to be the result of an unclear but very deliberate disruptive action by "those" who are against the evolution

of humanity and of the planet Earth—reptilians, according to some, or others "who are not in the light" (*che non sono nella luce*).

Xylella Fastidiosa is the bacterium that is believed to be at the root of the Olive Quick Decline Syndrome. More often referred to as *Complesso del Disseccamento Rapido dell'Olivo* (CoDiRO), this disease has been affecting Salento's olive trees since 2013 (see, for example, Bleve et al. 2016, Schneider et al. 2020). Apparently, Xylella arrived in Salento from Costa Rica[12] and represents "one of the most dangerous plant-pathogenic bacteria worldwide" (Schneider et al. 2020, 9250). Xylella is believed to be responsible for the widespread desiccation of olive trees in Salento, although there is no unanimous agreement on this point. In 2013, right after the discovery of a population of olive trees impacted by the disease, political and scientific authorities recommended drastic policies, including the eradication and felling of hundreds of healthy olive trees, in addition to the infected ones, in the name of precaution. They established 100-metre "buffer zones" around infected trees and ordered the felling of olive trees, sick or healthy, within this radius. These radical measures have been strongly opposed by a significant percentage of the inhabitants of Salento, especially by those who go by the name of "*Il Popolo degli Ulivi*" (The Olive Tree People).[13]

The *Popolo degli Ulivi* emerged spontaneously as a grassroots movement that involved activists from different political contexts and personal affiliations.[14] The lack of agreement on the cause of CoDiRo, on the containment of the olive tree disease, and of its cure made *Xylella Fastidiosa* in Salento an out-and-out *querelle*. From environmental concerns to the involvement of organized crime, from anti-scientism to conspiracism, the emergence of *Xylella* and its developments fostered several different reactions. As a matter of fact, there is still no agreement on how to address CoDiRO, nor a common vision on its causes and the status and agency of its main protagonists: the olive trees. As I demonstrated elsewhere, in conversation with Bron Taylor's notion of *Dark Green Religion* (2010), it is not possible to fully understand the *Popolo degli Ulivi*'s activism regardless of neo-animist instances (Parmigiani 2022 and forthcoming), exemplified by the ubiquitous personification of olive trees that permeates contemporary environmental activism around the protection, tutelage, and guardianship of olive trees in the Salento area of Italy vis-à-vis the *Xylella* threat and the eradication of olive trees.

What do chemtrails, the *Xylella* olive tree epidemics, and COVID-19 have in common? They are all linked, in the Salento context, to conspiracy theories, conspiracism and, in this particular case, to what is now ubiquitously referred

to as "conspirituality."[15] While oppositional in nature (conspiracy theories are, *de facto*, counter-narratives), contrary to what it is usually believed to be, conspiritual beliefs are not necessarily divisive in practice. If formal analyses of conspirituality stress the former aspect of conspiracy theories, my "slow ethnography" let the latter emerge. It is within such a perspective that the *separare/dividere* distinction gains its importance. This emic theory of relationships, I believe, helps to focus our attention on unexplored dimensions of conspirituality and challenge common assumptions and understandings of these phenomena.

Separare and dividere: Conspirituality Beyond Polarizations

Separare (to separate) comes from the Latin *se* (apart) and *parare* (prepare, bring forward). Therefore, it does not imply a disjuncture, a dismembering, but the acknowledgement, and sometimes even the creation, of new entities.[16] *Dividere* (to divide), instead, comes from the Latin *dis* (against) and *videre* (to see, to consider). While frequently used as synonyms, *separare* and *dividere*, according to Gloria, imply different positionings: one is a "bringing forth while apart" and leads to *comprensione* (comprehension) and the other is a "seeing against" that indicates *discriminazione* (discrimination). *Comprendere* comes from the Latin *cum* (with, together) and *prendere* (seize, grab) and, while usually used as a synonym of understanding, refers to a common action, one that is inclusive. Differently, *discriminare*, while also used as a way of knowing (and judging), instead, comes from the Latin *dis* (off, away) and *cernere* (sifting).[17] From Gloria's words it is clear that she believes in, shares with others, and encourages others to adopt the perspective that we need to embrace separation, and not division, as a creative enterprise—an enterprise that implies a common grabbing, a common gain. Conversely, what Gloria finds particularly troublesome in the current oppositional times is thinking about separation as a division: as an action that "sees against," that does not acknowledge and recognize (Giordano 2014), that depicts the world as contraposing factions, that sifts off and away, and that produces power imbalances and abuses (discrimination). After all, as it emerged from another conversation—with Stella, this time, a woman who also attended the aforementioned moon circle—"*separare* is similar to the yin/yang principle, where the opposites are separated to be better understood but not to divide the world in 'good vs bad'"—that is, through rigid ethical, ontological, and epistemological binarisms. Comprehension, she claimed, is honoring complexity—within and without us. Therefore, it is not surprising

that recently some of my interlocutors, including Stella, have started to greet each other with the expression *io sono un'altra te stesso*[18]—I am another you. This greeting is an inclusive one. It goes beyond recognition: it reinstates and performs a deep connection between individuals (including other than human and more than human beings).

While triggered by contemporary events, I consider this *dividere/separare* distinction as rooted in a particular way to experience and understand the world and its presences—one that some scholars of religion would describe as "neo-animist." Such a perspective entails a vision of the world that, "departing from Edward Tylor's definition of animism as belief in souls or spirits, uses the prism of relationship for understanding interconnectedness with beings of all sorts, including human and other-than-human" (Stuckey 2010, 188). It is important to note that, in spite of the recent academic and non-academic success of the term "neo-animism," the choice of using the word animism, even if it comes after the adjective new or neo, is not a "neutral" one. Given the colonialist implications of Tylor's use of animism, it might be argued that opting for an alternative terminology could be beneficial to both scholars and those who adhere to various relational and non-anthropocentric worldviews. For this reason, I generally prefer to use the expression relational ontologies. Those who follow a relational ontology, such as the Pagans from the *cerchio* and other followers of alternative spiritualities in Salento, see and experience the world as populated by different persons—some of them human, and some of them not. In addition to this "neo-animist" perspective, my interlocutors (including Gloria and Stella) embrace common New Age beliefs that everything is connected and that everything is energy.[19] This affects their experiences and understandings of individuality, selfhood, and personhood in very practical ways. If we are used to understanding and theorizing on the notions of individual, self, and person as completely overlapping, conspicuous anthropological literature has shown that this is not always the whole story.[20] In some cases, as with my interlocutors, the intersections between individual, self, and personhood appear to be much more complex than mainstream Western narratives tend to portray—and include, sometimes, objects, lands, other human, more-than-human, and other-than-human persons.[21] In other words, it is from their experience of expanded and participatory consciousness—that I call, with anthropologist Susan Greenwood (2005, 2009, 2019), "magic"– that Gloria and Stella's *separare/dividere* distinction derives.[22] And it is from this same consciousness that my interlocutors, in spite of their conspiracist views, develop inclusive and non-divisive practices.

"I Am Another You:" Insights from "Lived Conspirituality"

In the 2021 winter break, I went to Salento after a couple of years of absence: my longest one, since I started my fieldwork. As for many, the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted my travel plans. I was very excited to go back to the field and to meet my friends. I had been in contact with them remotely, but I really missed being with them in person. My excitement, though, was not without a bit of anxiety. I knew that some of my interlocutors and closest friends were anti-vaxxers and very vocal against COVID vaccines—that they call *siero* (serum). By engaging with their online presence on social media and from our almost daily WhatsApp exchanges, I knew that they were very critical of those who "imposed the serum" and, sometimes, also of those who chose to get injected. I was one of the latter, and I did not fully know what to expect once in their presence in Salento. Moreover, I was in favour of using a mask—a practice I knew that not everybody among my friends was as eager to adopt. This was another possible sensitive issue in my post-COVID-19 relationship with my friends in Salento, according to the comments and posts I observed them making and sharing online. In more than one post and comment on Facebook, in fact, I noticed very strong reactions among some of my interlocutors vis-à-vis not only the promotion of COVID-19 vaccines by the Italian—with ads and the institution of the "green pass"—and other governments, but also in relation to those who did get the vaccination: indignation, anger, sarcasm, and even disgust. Strong words and strong feelings populated their links and public posts on Facebook, in a setting that could be considered, as I will point out below, a "digital war." To my surprise, I must confess, the fact that I was vaccinated and wearing a mask did not affect my re-encounter with my interlocutors *at all*.[23] They were happy to see me and to spend time with me. They did not outwardly judge me for my choice of getting vaccinated, nor did they try to convince me that it was the wrong decision—neither explicitly nor implicitly, for example with irony or jokes. Moreover, when we explicitly addressed the fact that I was vaccinated and preferred to use a mask when inside, they made it clear that it was not a problem for them—as long as I did not expect them to do the same (which I did not). With a laugh, probably generated by my bewildered face (at least from what could be detected by looking at the parts of my face not covered by the mask), they reassured me that they knew and could feel that I truly respected their choice and, especially, their *ability to make the right choice for themselves.* "Why," they asked, should it be different (*diverso*) for us with you?[24]" In particular, Eleonora told me:

> Everyone makes their own choices according to their own discernment. Those who get the vaccine and those who don't: who are we to judge? What I—and many of us—contest is the imposition of one choice over the others and the discrimination that those who don't want to get the vaccine have to go through, in this country. I cannot see my family, for this reason, and I fear I will lose my job. They consider me "*less than*" because I did not want to get vaccinated. I am afraid, I am afraid.

I felt struck by my interlocutors' choice of words and by the smoothness of the exchange, and I immediately thought about the expression they had been using, lately: *io sono un'altra te stesso*—I am another you. If I had paid attention only to what they shared on social media, to some of their online performances and the mainstream representations of conspiritualists and anti-vaxxers, I would have expected strongly oppositional reactions and, possibly, conflict.[25] Nonetheless, even more than the inclusive behaviour of my interlocutors and my unnecessary anxiety, it was the perception of my friends' emotions and affects that moved me. I realized that they felt that society, the mainstream media, and often their family members, friends, and acquaintances were not considering them *able to make the right choices for themselves*. They felt they were considered "*less than*," rejected. They clearly felt belittled, marginalized, and even unsafe, occasionally, for their opinions and somehow unjustly judged. Given the ease with which my friends and I negotiated our different positionalities vis-à-vis the COVID-19 vaccine (in spite of current mainstream narratives about conspiritualists),[26] it became clear to me (once more) that their adoption of the anti-vax and conspiratorial positions that I had witnessed online was affectively charged. Moreover, I suspected that the strength of my friends' adoption of conspiracy theories was directly proportional to the hostility and belittling that they perceived from their interlocutors —more or less informed by mainstream media and discourses. The latter commonly locate conspiritualists on one end—the irrational, paranoid, and even potentially dangerous one—of the set of binarisms and oppositions (scientific/magical; left/right; true/fake; smart/dumb; ethical/unethical; rational/irrational; inclusive/exclusive; humanitarian/violent; and so on) that ubiquitously characterizes conversations on conspiracy theories. The Italian mainstream media and social media have almost unanimously been portraying anti-vaxxers and conspiritualists, even when attempting to better understand their positions, as gullible and extravagant,[27] ignorant, or even dangerous. Nonetheless, in spite of the content of the opinions, what seemed to be characterizing the Italian online debate, more than in other countries,

was its polarization. As Luengo et al. (2021, 9) have noticed, in their comparative analysis of YouTube videos and COVID-19,

> ...it could be said that higher levels of polarization occur amongst Southern European countries like Spain and Italy (both countries adhering to a polarised pluralism model), compared to other countries ascribing to the liberal model (the United Kingdom in our study), which provides evidence supporting previous research studies. The results confirmed the hypothesis that the polarization of digital deliberation between Spain and Italy is higher than in the United Kingdom. But, also, the findings based on more disaggregated analysis suggest that the most polarized attitudes are even rewarded by other users in Mediterranean countries.

In light of these observations, therefore, it might be argued, that the topic of conspirituality, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, is part of what has been recently called "digital wars,"[28] or "the ways in which digital technologies and media are transforming how wars are fought, experienced, lived, represented, reported, known, conceptualized, remembered and forgotten."[29] It is worth mentioning that the word "war" here, while undoubtedly referring to dimensions of violence, conflict, and dominance, is understood as a research field more than a signifier, where the same term *war* is interrogated as an analytical category. Within such a perspective, the aforementioned set of binarisms—regardless of which "poles" one inhabits—can be seen as mobilizing *performative effects* of division and even discrimination, to use Gloria's words.[30] It is precisely in reaction to the effects of this polarization that Gloria, Stella, and other interlocutors started interrogating the separation/division distinction. They position themselves as promoters of separation, and not polarization, as a way to understand each other vis-à-vis those who, both within and without the conspiritualist *milieu*, promote division and discrimination. Moreover, they encourage others to do the same. In this sense, they represent examples of what Ong (2021) calls the "moral labor" that some, within the alternative spiritual communities, are engaging in to challenge discriminatory, polarizing, and divisive tendencies within their communities.

As I mentioned above, neo-animist worldviews, New Age beliefs, and the experience of magic as participatory consciousness inform the attitude towards contemporary polarizations that I described in my ethnographic material. The convictions and experiences that we are all one, all connected, and all in relationships with human, non-human, and more-than-human persons,

together with an experience of individuality that challenges mainstream modern western ones, in fact, are at the basis of Gloria and Stella's positionality vis-à-vis contemporary "digital wars." Rather than being an expression of "crypto-capitalist narcissism" (Fedele and Knibbe 2020,2) or obscuring power differentials (Crockford 2021), holistic thinking and beliefs, in this particular case, are an inspiration for inclusive, communitarian, and comprehensive practices.

Conclusions: The Importance of Studying "Lived Conspirituality"

In 2020, Anna Fedele and Kim Knibbe argued in favour of an "anthropology of spirituality"—one that considers the religion/spirituality distinction as a phenomenon to study rather than an analytical construct (2020, 1) and that problematizes the relationships between spirituality, gender, and the secular. In doing so, the authors situate their works within the field of study inaugurated by sociologist of religion Meredith McGuire who, more than ten years ago, advocated for the study of "lived religion" (2008). The latter introduced a way to focus on "how religion and spirituality are practiced, experiences, and expressed by ordinary people…in the context of their everyday lives" (12) and to distinguish "the actual experience of religious persons from the prescribed religion of institutionally defined beliefs and practices" (12).[31] In this paper, by engaging with my ethnographic field as a site of "lived conspirituality"—that is to say, by focusing on the actual experience of people in their ordinary settings—I showed the potentialities of such an approach for the study of the connections between conspiracy theories and contemporary spiritualities. Such a "lived" perspective allowed me to honour the complexity of spiritual experiences and gather ethnographic materials that challenge current mainstream representations of conspirituality. Differently from what the latter might suggest, my conspiritualist friends might adopt conspiracist worldviews, but, as my study of "lived conspirituality" shows, their *practices* do not align with the polarizing and discriminating discourses often associated with conspiracism. In fact, my interlocutors started to interrogate the distinction between *separare* and *dividere* vis-à-vis the ubiquitous media diffusion of polarizing narratives within and without the conspiritualist milieu *as a consequence* of their worldviews and spiritual experiences. They claimed that, where the others want to *divide*, to "see against," to polarize, they needed to "bring forward" (*separare*). Where others enact *discrimination*, they should bring *comprehension*—a grasping together (*comprendere*). Stemming from their holistic thinking and perspectives, common

within New Age spirituality, my interlocutors and friends developed an inclusive way to inhabit current "digital wars:" one that recognizes and practices the conviction that, after all, we are all "another themselves" to each other.

Giovanna Parmigiani
Harvard University,
gparmigiani@hds.harvard.edu

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions for supporting this research, my Salentinian interlocutors, and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments on a previous version of this article.

Notes

1 Unless otherwise specified, all translations from Italian are mine.

2 As I mentioned in a previous article on this topic (Parmigiani 2021), esotericism scholars Egil Asprem and Asbjørn Dyrendal help refine the connection between conspiracism and New Age spirituality. They point out that the term *conspirituality*, although descriptively useful, is neither "new" nor "surprising." Instead, it can be linked to the structure of the "cultic *milieu*" (Asprem and Dyrendal 2015).

3 On alternative spiritualities in Italy, see, for example, Palmisano and Pannofino 2021.

4 I have been doing fieldwork in Salento since 2011, and I have been in the field for nearly five of the last eleven years.

5 These often use the "spiritual but not religious" label to define themselves and include in their spiritual lives several different practices.

6 On *tarantismo* see, among many, Pizza 2004, 2015.

7 While most of my current interlocutors reside in Salento, some of them spend only a few months a year there (like me). Others live in other areas of Italy or elsewhere in the world but are in contact with some of my interlocutors because they worked with them in a past stay in Salento or are current collaborators.

8 See also Soukup 2008 and Crockford 2021.

9 This is not Salento's usual climate. The sun is not the same. This heat is not normal.

10 The sky is grey. They want us to go shopping in the malls.

11 I feel tired, without energy. Yesterday, they sprayed and today I feel like this.

12 See, for example, Simpson 2015.

13 For the 2021 plan of action against Xylella, see, for example, Bucci and Sandroni 2019; Burdeau 2019; Camera dei Deputati 2022; Cristini 2017; Rinnovabili.it 2015.

The reference to the "people," in the name *Popolo degli Ulivi* clearly has populist overtones.

14 The *Popolo degli Ulivi* defines itself as a "...community of citizens of goodwill who want to save the Apulian centuries-old olive trees. Anyone can contribute and is welcome: associations, committees, political parties, researchers, entrepreneurs. ... 'Il Popolo degli Ulivi' community is based on knowledge and networks: the sharing of information helps the whole territory grow. May the centuries-old and millennia-old olive trees of Apulia be the occasion to re-think new forms of economy and horizontal organizational models, and to rediscover, in a modern way, what our Messapic, Greek, and Roman ancestors already know: we are the olive trees." Il Popolo degli Ulivi 2017.

15 As I addressed elsewhere (Parmigiani 2021), during the COVID-19 pandemic, while I could not travel to Italy, I observed online and in some virtual conversations and environments that some of my Salentinian interlocutors appeared to be adopting conspiracy theories: from anti-vaccine positions to speculations on the origin of COVID-19, from harsh criticisms of the introduction of the "green pass" to even some QAnon-inspired conspiracies. These narratives appeared to be directly linked to their spiritual views, and I started to study them as a form of conspirituality.

In the fall of 2021, to curb the spread of COVID-19, the Italian government approved the introduction of what was called a "green pass": a COVID-19 vaccine certification. Only those in possession of the "green pass," and therefore vaccinated against COVID-19, and those who tested negative for COVID-19 up to a couple of days after the test date could benefit from some public services including public transportation, dining in restaurants, cafes, and bars, and attending concerts and shows.

16 Una Parola al Giorno 2012.

17 I consulted https://www.etymonline.com and https://www.etimo.it for etymologies.

18 This greeting is presented as the translation of "*In Lak'ech , hala ken*," allegedly a Mayan greeting. See, for example, Conesa 2020.

19 On New Age see, for example, Hanegraaff 1996 and, more recently, Crockford 2021.

20 On conceptions of personhood in anthropology relevant to my argument see, for example, Strathern 1988 on dividuality; Pérez, 2016 on "distributed personhood.".

21 See, as a comparison, Espírito Santo, 2016 and 2019. See also, for example, Descola 1996, Viveiros de Castro and Skafi 2014.

22 I understand "magic," with anthropologist Susan Greenwood, as "participatory consciousness." In her words, "Magic is a holistic orientation to the world that is essentially relational and expansive… it is an aspect of human consciousness, and therefore it is especially appropriate to study magic in modern…societies" (Greenwood 2009, 18). "Participation forms its own holistic language of connections that are both social and individual. A form of mental processing that happens through a shift in consciousness, this change in awareness makes associations and connections between things, situations and feelings" (Greenwood 2009,29).

23 A reader might wonder if my presence affected my interlocutors' reactions or if their reactions were genuine. Moreover, they could wonder if my interlocutors' remarks are taken by me at face-value. These are all legitimate questions that I am always aware of, as is the case for any ethnographer who does research in the field. One of the benefits of a "slow ethnography" is that the ethnographer is exposed to a number of circumstances and informants' reactions over the years, and they have "a history," so to speak, with their interlocutors. Therefore, they are able to better assess how some reactions "sit" in the type of relationships they have with their interlocutors and within the range of interactions that characterize specific individuals. In this specific case, given the type of relationships that I have with my interlocutors and knowing the ways and circumstances in which they express disapproval, I would have expected a different reaction. Besides my personal experience and the observation of the presence of explicit narratives, discourses, and conversational stances around *separare/dividere*, I could observe non-oppositional attitudes in relation to others. For example, a no-vax acquaintance of theirs changed their mind and decided to get vaccinated. Their case was passionately discussed among my interlocutors.

24 They used the term *diverso*—a word that, in Italian, shares with *dividere* a similar etymology: *diversus*, *de* + *vertere*, to turn different ways.

25 The fact that I did not fully trust mainstream narratives and my friends' online personas speaks in favor of the importance of "slow research" (Ong 2020) and long-term ethnographic commitments, also in the study of conspirituality. It is important to note, though, that not *all* of my interlocutors adopt non-oppositional stances. Within the different groups I am following, there are some who cultivate or, at least, do not

challenge oppositional discourses. In light of this, I believe that highlighting the voices of those who challenge opposition is even more important. On the one hand, this does justice to the "moral labor" (Ong 2021) some of my interlocutors engage in to foster understanding and inclusion. On the other hand, it offers a more accurate portrayal of the complexity of the phenomenon of conspirituality.

26 As Ong (2021) points out, there are more nuanced positions within spiritual communities than the ones portrayed by media (for example, Evans 2020 and Meltzer 2021). For the Italian context, see, for example, Ferri 2021; Pilo 2022.

27 See, for example, Bianchi 2021; Raimondo 2021. See, for example, Adnkronos, 2022; Il Messaggero 2022.

28 See also Jonathan Corpus Ong (2020) and Ford and Hoskins (2020) on "radical wars."

29 Hoskins et al. (n.d.)This is part of the inaugural statement from the editors of the recently founded academic journal "Digital Wars."

30 On the ethics of representing perpetrators, see Ong 2020, 2021 and Phillips 2019. On polarization in the digital space in Italy, see Luengo et al. 2021.

31 For the sake of the study of "lived conspirituality" it is worth stressing, with Meredith McGuire, that "Because religion-as-lived is based more on such religious practices than on religious ideas or beliefs, it is not necessarily logically coherent. Rather, it requires a practical coherence: It needs to make sense in one's everyday life, and it needs to be effective, to 'work,' in the sense of accomplishing some desired end" (2008, 15). The same could be argued for conspirituality.

References

Adnkronos, 2022. "No Vax, l'identikit degli irriducibili." ["No Vax, the identikit of the irreducibles"] https://www.adnkronos.com/no-vax-lidentikit-degli-irriducibili_5F2FtNPpN6xp3aYr0Fsnf. (accessed 24 May 2023).

Ammerman, Nancy Tatom. 2021. *Studying Lived Religion: Contexts and Practices*. New York University Press.

Asprem, Egil, and Asbjørn Dyrendal. 2015. "Conspirituality Reconsidered: How Surprising and How New is the Confluence of Spirituality and Conspiracy Theory?" *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 30(3): 367–382. https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2015.1081339.

Asprem, Egil, Asbjørn Dyrendal, and David G. Robertson. 2018. *Handbook of Conspiracy Theory and Contemporary Religion*. Boston: Brill.

Bakalaki, Alexandra. 2016. "Chemtrails, Crisis, and Loss in an Interconnected World." *Visual Anthropology Review* 32(1):12–23. https://doi.org/10.1111/var.12089.

Bianchi, Leonardo. 2021. "L'irresistibile ascesa della "conspiritualità" ["The Irresistible Rise of 'Conspirituality'"] https://complotti.substack.com/p/pandemia-e-conspiritualita (accessed 24 May 2023).

Bleve, Gianluca, Marchi, Guido, Ranaldi, Francesco, Gallo, Antonia, Cimaglia, Fabio, Logrieco, Antonio Francesco, Mita, Giovanni, Ristori, Jacopo, and Giuseppe Surico. 2016. "Molecular characteristics of a strain (Salento-1) of Xylella fastidiosa isolated in Apulia (Italy) from an olive plant with the quick decline syndrome." *Phytopathologia Mediterranea*, 55(1), 139–146. https://doi.org/10.14601/Phytopathol_Mediterr-17867.

Bucci, Enrico and Donatello Sandroni. 2019. "Il Cospirazionismo (Psichedelico) del Fatto su Xylella e Monsanto" ["The Psychedelic Conspiracism of the Fatto on Xylella and Monsanto"]. https://www.ilfoglio.it/scienza/2019/06/05/news/il-cospirazionismo-psichedelico-del-fatto-su-xylella-e-monsanto-258660/ (accessed 24 May 2023).

Burdeau, Cain. 2019. "Europe Worries as Bacteria Wipe Out Ancient Italian Olive Trees." https://www.courthousenews.com/europe-worries-as-bacteria-wipe-out-ancient-italian-olive-trees/ (accessed 24 May 2023).

Byford, Jovan. 2011. *Conspiracy Theories: A Critical Introduction*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Camera dei Deputati Servizio Studi XVIII Legislatura. 2022. "Gli Interventi per il Contrasto al Batterio della Xylella Fastidiosa" ["Interventions for the contrast to Xylella Fastidiosa bacterium"]. https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1208003.pdf?_1584396517115 (accessed 24 May 2023).

Chia, Aleena, Ong, Jonathan Corpus, Davies, Hugh, and Mack Hagood. 2021. "'Everything is Connected': Networked Conspirituality in New Age Media." *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research*. https://doi.org/10.5210/spir.v2021i0.12093.

Conesa, Alonso Monroy. 2020. "The Myth Behind the Mayan "In lak'ech." https://monroyconesa.medium.com/the-myth-behind-the-mayan-in-lakech-e24b33e18c8c(accessed 24 May 2023).

Cristini, Carlo. 2017. "Il caso Xylella Fastidiosa in Salento" ["The Xylella Fastidiosa Case in Salento"]. https://www.lavoroculturale.org/lurking-etnografico-xylella-salento/carlo-cristini/2017/ (accessed 24 May 2023).

Crockford, Susannah. 2021. *Ripples of the Universe: Spirituality in Sedona, Arizona*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press.

de Martino, Ernesto. (1976) [1961]. *La terra del rimorso. Contributo a una storia religiosa del Sud [The Land of Remorse: A Study of Southern Italian Tarantism]*. Milan: Il Saggiatore.

Dentith, Matthew R. X. 2018. "Conspiracy Theories and Philosophy. Bringing the Epistemology of a Freighted Term into the Social Sciences." In *Conspiracy Theories and the People Who Believe Them*, edited by Joseph E. Uscinski, 94–110. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Descola, Philippe. 1996. "Constructing Natures: Symbolic Ecology and Social Practice." In *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives,* edited by Philippe Descola and Gísli Pálsson, 82–102. London and New York: Routledge.

Dyrendal, Asbjørn. 2015. "Norwegian 'Conspirituality:' A Brief Sketch." In *Handbook of Nordic New Religions*, edited by James R. Lewis and Inga Bårdsen Tøllefsen, 268–290. Boston: Brill.

——. 2013. "Hidden Knowledge, Hidden Powers: Esotericism and Conspiracy Culture." In *Contemporary Esotericism*, edited by Egil Asprem and Kennet Granholm, 210–235. Sheffield; Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing.

Espírito Santo, Diana. 2016. "Clothes for Spirits: Opening and Closing the Cosmos in Brazilian Umbanda," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6(3): 85–106. https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/10.14318/hau6.3.010.

——. 2019. "Divination." In *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, edited by Felix Stein and Joel Robbins. http://doi.org/10.29164/19divination (accessed 24 May 2023).

Evans, Jules. 2020. "Nazi Hippies: When the New Age and the Far Right Overlap." *Medium*. https://gen.medium.com/nazi-hippies-when-the-new-age-and-far-right-overlap-d1a6ddcd7be4 (accessed 24 May 2023).

Fedele, Anna and Kim E. Knibbe. 2020. *Secular Societies, Spiritual Selves? The Gendered Triangle of Religion, Secularity and Spirituality*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge.

Ferri, Giulia. 2021. "Sangue, patria e ambiente: l'ecofascismo è il nuovo volto delle sette" ["Blood, Country, and Environment: Eco-Fascism is the New Face of Sects"]. https://espresso.repubblica.it/inchieste/2021/03/24/news/ecofascismo_e_il_nuovo_volto_delle_sette-293573179/ (accessed 24 May 2023).

Ford, Matthew and Andrew Hoskins. 2022. *Radical War: Data, Attention and Control in the Twenty-First Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Giordano, Cristiana. 2014. *Migrants in Translation: Caring and the Logics of Difference in Contemporary Italy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Granholm, Kenneth. 2014. "The Secular, the Post-Secular and the Esoteric in the Public Sphere." In *Contemporary Esotericism*, edited by Egil Asprem and Kennet Granholm, 309–329. Sheffield; Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing.

Greenwood, Susan. 2005. *The Nature of Magic: An Anthropology of Consciousness*. New York: Berg.

——. 2009. *The Anthropology of Magic*. New York: Berg.

——. 2019. *Developing Magical Consciousness*. New York: Routledge.

——. 2022. "A Spectrum of Magical Consciousness: Conspiracy Theories and the Stories We Tell Ourselves." *Anthropology Today* 38 (1): 3–7. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12695.

Hall, David D. 2001. *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*. Princeton University Press.

Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 1996. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Leiden: Brill.

Hoskins, Andrew, Merrin, William, Boichak, Olga, Downey, Anthony, Richardson, Michael, and Gregory Asmolov. N.d. "Digital War." https://www.digital-war.org/digital-war-introduction (accessed 24 May 2023).

Il Messaggero. 2022. "Sileri attacca i No vax: "Siete pericolosi, vi renderemo la vita difficile" ["Sileri Attacks Anti-Vaxxers: 'You are Dangerous, We are Going to Make Your Life Difficult'"]. https://www.ilmessaggero.it/salute/focus/sileri_no_vax_vita_impossibile_cosa_ha_detto_covid_vaccino_ultime_notizie-6463569.html (accessed 24 May 2023).

Il Popolo degli Ulivi. 2017. *Facebook page*. https://www.facebook.com/Il-Popolo-degli-ulivi-920513521342150 (accessed 24 May 2023).

Luengo, Oscar G, De Blasio, Emiliana, and Javier García Marín. 2021. "COVID-19 en YouTube: Debates y polarización en la esfera digital." [COVID-19 on YouTube: Debates and Polarization in the Digital Sphere"] *Comunicar* 29 (69): 9–19. https://doi.org/10.3916/C69-2021-01.

Magliocco, Sabina. 2012. "Beyond Belief: Context, Rationality and Participatory Consciousness." *Western Folklore* 71 (1): 5–24. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24550769

McGuire, Meredith B. 2008. *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Meltzer, Marisa. 2021. "QAnon's Unexpected Roots in the New Age." *Washington Post*, 29 March. https://www.washingtonpost.com/magazine/2021/03/29/qanon-new-age-spirituality (accessed 24 May 2023).

Ong, Jonathan Corpus. 2020. "Limits and Luxuries of Slow Research in Radical War: How Should We Represent Perpetrators?" *Digital War* 1(1-3): 111–116. https://doi.org/10.1057/s42984-020-00006-x.

——. 2021. "'Woo Woo' Against White Supremacy: Resisting Networked Conspirituality in COVID Times," in Chia et al. "Everything is Connected": Networked Conspirituality in New Age Media." *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research*.

Palmisano, Stefania, and Nicola Pannofino. 2021. *Contemporary Spiritualities*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge.

Parmigiani, Giovanna. 2021. "Magic and Politics: Conspirituality and COVID-19." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 89(2): 506–529. https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfab053.

——. 2022. "'If You Dance Alone, You Cannot Be Healed': Relational Ontologies and 'Epistemes of Contagion' in Salento (Italy)." *California Italian Studies* 11 (1). https://doi.org/10.5070/C311154536.

——. "*Ulía*: Relational ontologies and political activism in Salento (Southern Italy)." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* (forthcoming).

Pérez, Elizabeth. 2016. *Religion in the Kitchen*. New York: New York University Press.

Pilo, Alessandro. 2022. "Perché così tanti influencer di yoga e 'benessere' sono anche no vax?" ["Why are so many Yoga and 'Wellness' Influencers also Anti-vaxx?"] https://www.vice.com/it/article/pkpmqn/influencer-yoga-e-benessere-no-vax (accessed 24 May 2023).

Pizza, Giovanni. 2004. "Tarantism and the Politics of Tradition in Contemporary Salento." In *Memory, Politics and Religion: The Past Meets the Present in Europe*, edited by Idis Haukanes, 199–223. Münster, Germany: LIT.

——. 2015. *Il Tarantismo Oggi*. Alessano: Carocci.

Raimondo, Saverio 2021. "Se le fake news alimentano i No vax, sfruttiamole anche noi" ["If Fake News Feed Anti-Vaxxers, we Should Exploit Them, too"] https://www.ilfoglio.it/societa/2021/08/11/news/se-le-fake-news-alimentano-i-no-vax-sfruttiamole-anche-noi-2768173/ (accessed 24 May 2023).

Rinnovabili.it. 2015. "Xylella: si apre la pista della guerra chimica" ["Xylella: the Chemical Warfare Trail opens up"]. *Rinnovabili.it*, 18 March. https://www.rinnovabili.it/ambiente/xylella-ulivi-monsanto-333/.

Robertson, David G., Asprem, Egil, and Asbjørn Dyrendal. 2018. "Introducing the Field: Conspiracy Theory in, about, and as Religion." In *Handbook of Conspiracy Theory and Contemporary Religion*, edited by Egil Asprem, Asbjørn Dyrendal, and David G. Robertson, 1–18. Boston: Brill.

Russell, Francis. 2022. "Pox Populi: Anti-Vaxx, Anti-Politics." *Journal of Sociology* 0(0) https://doi.org/10.1177/14407833221101660.

Schneider, Kevin, Werf, van der, W, Martina Cendoya, M.C.M. Mourits, Juan A. Navas-Cortés, Antonio Vicent, and A.G.J.M. Oude Lansink. 2020. "Impact of Xylella Fastidiosa Subspecies Pauca in European Olives. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences." *PNAS*, 117(17), 9250–9259. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1912206117.

Simpson, Thomas. 2015. "Il Popolo degli Ulivi Asks, Prof Purcell Responds." https://xylellacodiro.blogspot.com/2015/06/il-popolo-degli-ulivi-asks-prof-purcell.html (accessed 24 May 2023).

Soukup, Charles. 2008. "9/11 Conspiracy Theories on the World Wide Web: Digital Rhetoric and Alternative Epistemology." *Journal of Literacy and Technology* 9(3):3–85. http://www.literacyandtechnology.org/uploads/1/3/6/8/136889/jlt_v9_3.pdf

Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. *The Gender of the Gift*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stuckey, Priscilla. 2010. "Being Known by a Birch Tree: Animist Refigurings of Western Epistemology." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 4(3): 182–205. https://doi.org/10.1558/jsrnc.v4i3.182.

Taylor, Bron Raymond. 2010. *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Una Parola al giorno, "Separare." https://unaparolaalgiorno.it/significato/separare (accessed 24 May 2023).

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo, and Peter Skafish. 2014. *Cannibal Metaphysics*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Univocal.

Ward, Charlotte, and David Voas. 2011. "The Emergence of Conspirituality." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 26 (1): 103–121. https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2011.539846.