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Tight Knit:
A Biography of Globalization

Elizabeth L. Krause

Contents

List of Illustrations
Acknowledgments
Introduction

1. Encounters
2. Integration
3. Festival
4. Value
5. Action
6. Money
7. Check-Up
8. Tots
9. Blitz

Project Abstract: The Province of Prato serves as an ethnographic laboratory for investigating the conditions of globalization. Here, a historic textile district known for its MADE IN ITALY “brand” has earned the distinction of having Europe’s largest Chinese community. Most of these transnational migrants produce low-cost fast-fashion garments. Many long-standing informal economy practices persist, yet the status quo has changed. Workers have intensified their ways of being flexible, and the state has deepened its mechanisms of control. What family arrangements does this economy require, repel, or generate? How do family members cope with über-flexible lives? Finally, what cultural logics and values emerge from encounters between fast-fashion workers and state institutions? An innovative encounter ethnography approach guides data collection. Transnational collaboration occurs at all levels of the project. Substantive contributions are made in economic anthropology and critical embodiment studies.
I had no idea what to expect when I was invited to an after-party for *Pitti Uomo*. The party was slated for a clothing store where my friend, whom I'll call Max, was invited to make a rare DJ appearance after a ten-year hiatus. The event was hard for me to picture—a party in a men's store? His girlfriend, Kate, was as bemused as I was. Being a hapless consumer of high fashion, I had to check the trade show’s significance and, with *GQ* as my guide, found confirmation: “This unique, worldly mix is what makes *Pitti Uomo* so special and, in practical terms for *GQ* readers, where so many of next season's trends are first found among the rows and rows of show booths.”¹ The fair is held biannually in Florence’s Fortezza da Basso along with other industry events for women (*Pitti W*), for children (*Pitti Bimbo*), and for fabrics (*Pitti Filati*).²

The idea of the after-party all started to click when we walked into *Extreme*, a hip men's boutique in Florence’s alternative district, near Piazza of Independence, whose owner combined ultra-cool rugged American wear with fashionable but down-to-earth Italian styles. Nudie Jeans and Vans were sold at European prices. Red Wing work boots mingled with locally branded sweaters woven from cottons and wools so fine you could hardly help but fondle them.³ I’ve since seen a similar look at Banana Republic in the “heritage” section.

Max and another DJ took turns spinning vinyl and filling the store with soul and swamp grooves. Big aluminum bins of ice were soon brimming with bottles of Budweiser. Being a native of St. Louis, with childhood memories of the sweet malt that wafted from the Anheuser-Busch brewery, I felt right in my element. For the food, we had to walk outside into the cold January drizzle and around the corner into an empty art gallery. It was simple
Tuscan fare: panini of either freshly sliced roast pork or specially prepared tripe. Kate and I fought our way to the chef serving the pork. The crowd offered plenty of eye candy. Not a tie in the place. No baseball caps. Not a man in a business suit. Just very stylish people. One after another. Beards appeared to be very in.

By the time we meandered back to the store it had become a bit of a wet, frothy mess. Staff had brought out the Bud before they brought out the bottle openers. Guys were opening the bottles in all sorts of crazy ways. Some Germans used a lighter on several of our beer caps. Mine pretty much exploded and made a foamy puddle on the ground before I could drink it. It wasn't the only one. The floor was thoroughly doused—even in the window display. Miraculously, no beer soiled any of the garments, beautifully hung like objects of art.

Kate and I were amazed at how many women were wearing fur jackets or fur vests. One really stunk—recent roadkill. It was like a woodland cadaver enveloped her body. Crazy obnoxious. A couple of women wore ponchos with alpaca fleece cascading like furry waterfalls. I wouldn't have been caught dead in something like that. I struck up a conversation with one such fashionista and couldn't resist sharing a recollection from the 1970s, back when I was a Girl Scout. To get my sewing badge I made a plaid felt poncho with blue fringe. The woman was quick to validate me, “Yes, ponchos have made a comeback and they're so convenient—this season with all the oversized shirts and sweaters you really need a poncho instead of a jacket.” I nodded politely. In the New England college town that I called home, with one boutique and its nearby line of big-box retail stores, I was far removed from such logics of convenience.
Kate and I shared a laugh afterward. We were hardly fashionistas. Especially not me. She was a natural beauty, comfortable in her elegance. We recalled the story a friend had told us, of young Italian women who go out and strip or otherwise work as prostitutes just to have enough money to buy high fashion clothes, shoes, purses, or whatnot. Oh, the possibilities for fashion fetishism!

The night wore on and the crowd thinned, and I struck up a conversation with a middle-aged man, Johnny, who happened to be Extreme's owner. I complimented him on the party. Johnny told me that the Bud rep had suggested he serve hotdogs, but he decided that would have been over the top. That's where he drew the line. The result was a compromise, he said, the Italian sandwiches with the artisan meats along with the American beer. The guy serving the porchetta was a famous local Florentine who did the best, he told me. Johnny and I got to talking about his inventory. He owned the company that made the sweaters sold in the store. The factory was located in the same part of the province of Prato where I was living at the time. I told him about my project on families, immigration, and globalization. His firm made use of Chinese labor only for one phase of production, he said, solo un passaggio. He emphasized this point, that it was literally only one phase, to sew on collars. Because there weren't any Italians available to do this work anymore.

“What would happen,” he mused, “if all the Chinese people in the world went to the moon?”

* * *

I didn’t know what to make of the moon comment. His tone was matter of fact. There seemed to be a pragmatic spirit underlying it. What was he getting at? In retrospect,
the comment struck me as a remark about the centrality of Chinese workers in the global production chain and what consequences their sudden disappearance would have for the flow of goods, for the very mechanisms of the market. But why the moon? Why off the earth? In private and in public, Italians frequently commented about the migration of Chinese into Italy. In Prato, a dominant sentiment pointed to profound feelings of alienation. The moon comment seemed less outlandish when considered alongside these kinds of sentiments—sentiments of disorientation evoked alien entities or outer space. It brought to mind the comment by the local man from Prato, who had told our lost out-of-town friends, non spingetevi oltre, don't push yourselves beyond.

The moon comment triggered me to think about the owner’s professional challenge of staying one step ahead. In these parts, not many Italian sweater-firm owners or even subcontractors had stayed in the game. Just about everyone I knew and almost everyone they knew had gotten out some years ago. How had he done it?

Johnny enjoyed a reputation as a person who had a way of staying ahead of the trends. He was early to enter the modern globalizing apparel industry. Born in 1955 in Florence, he opened a used clothing store after graduating from high school and then another in 1975. In 1979, he opened the new clothing boutique, and after some years, in the early 1990s, he joined forces with an Italian distributor and started a brand, World Tribe. Johnny focused on the production and creation of the brand, helping to develop slogans such as “One World, One Love.” He found himself traveling to China, Indonesia, Bangladesh. He went to Thailand in search of a particular schoolboy bag—a hip shoulder-slung briefcase, the sort that students used. He was looking to import it. In Bangkok, he started asking around and “found out that the producers were Chinese—but Chinese in
Bangkok, understand? Chinese in Bangkok.” And so he asked his contact why this was the case, and the man told him, “‘Look, in Bangkok the economy is completely monopolized by the Chinese because they are more, let’s say- they work more than the Thai, the Thai are more relaxed, they think about other things, and the Chinese work and they are totally in charge of the economy.’” And then, reflecting a widespread sentiment, he remarked, Because the way of, let’s just say, the way that the Chinese develop is really at the level of metastasis, metastasis, in the sense that they grow and grow and destroy everything because at the level of price nobody can then compete, right?”

The World Tribe label thrived for a while. Eventually it hit a wall. Consistency was nonexistent. There was no way to challenge or resolve problems. With all production delocalized and overseas, quality was falling apart. The most intense travel had coincided with him marrying and having two children. The inconsistency in quality and the constant travel had left him in pieces. “I'd get home at night completely spappolato, destroyed.”

Eventually the brand unraveled. In 2002, he started a new partnership, The Group, specializing in knitwear manufacturing made back in Italy and marketed through trade shows such as Pitti in Florence and Bread&Butter in Berlin. He joked that the shift was one from “globalization” to “tribalization.”

A box-brown label with black ink dangled from one of the beautifully woven men's sweaters in the boutique. The words and images here, as well as on the Group's website, invited an analysis into understanding how value was being created in a globalized market.

The website featured a photograph of a man in the form of a handsome giant, a Gulliver of sorts, sprawled out over a Lilliputian landscape with delicate features that evoked the Tuscan countryside: rolling hills covered in miniature rows of grapevines and
fuzzy olive trees. Silhouettes of little people roped in the sleeping giant with threads. The English-language page read:

Founded in Tuscany in 1973, the knitting factory has developed an approach toward work combining tradition and a contemporary taste for classics. Garments are designed and manufactured in Carmignano, on the Medicean hills, a region full of agricultural and food traditions, rich in history and art. Our highly skilled workforce are [sic] as passionate as a craftsman who declares his endless love for his land giving his work of art his own personal character.

Core to the brand identity was an idea of authenticity that Johnny later told us he felt the Made in Italy mark had lost. His brand called forth not only the tradition but also the magic of handmade goods. It called forth a place well known for its attention to detail whether in the realm of culinary traditions, visual art, or history. In naming the Medicean hills, it indexed the Renaissance. Along with that history flowed forth a bundle of values, nothing short of a whole symbolic order known for its sense of natural beauty.

A tag dangled from natural brown string attached to a men’s sweater in the boutique. On the backside were three panels of text in Italian. The first panel offered washing instructions handed down from the suggestions of “nostre madri”—our mothers. The middle panel provided background on the region where the firm is located, in a region known for its D.O.C.-certified products and Slow Foods. The third panel made clear the global sources for the raw materials, such as Australian or Peruvian wools or American Pima cottons. The middle paragraph of that middle column was the most evocative:
Every day our work gains inspiration from the love of natural life that satisfies the body and things sacred that illuminate the spirit. This same enchanting atmosphere guided even Pontormo in his creation of the Visitation (1528), conserved in the local church of Saint Michael. For these motives we don’t write on the label 100% Made In Italy but rather ... realized as art in Tuscany.6

The MADE IN ITALY mark continued to carry value even if it had been susceptible to variation in the quality of products bearing that name. Before the rise of the low-cost fast-fashion niche, local Italian markets in the 1980s had become flooded with acrylic sweaters and other low-quality MADE IN ITALY products. The label itself signified quality and yet it was a signifier that was also vulnerable to the vagaries of production practices, reputation, and consumer fickleness. Italians in politics and in industry could be heard lamenting damage done to the label’s reputation. Advertising campaigns asserted Italian authenticity, with slogans such as “Absolutely Made in Italy.”7 This lament also echoed through public
commentary following a tragic factory fire in a Chinese fast-fashion firm in Prato that killed seven workers on December 1, 2013. A cartoon that circulated via the internet depicted singed shirts and dresses of various colors hanging on a clothesline with a *made in Italy* tag. The image played on the old adage of hanging dirty laundry out to dry as it made reference to public commentary regarding the fire’s damage to the label’s reputation of quality. Meanwhile, television and print media reported on the complex layers of subcontracting and the hidden immigrant labor practices behind even luxury name brands.\(^8\)

With the case of Johnny’s company, a strategy reclaimed the value of things local, of things Tuscan. Pointing to the natural world and to the spiritual world created something as intangible as beauty, something almost cosmological, something deeply spiritual, located in the soil and in the very essence of a place. These goods could boast an enchanting quality, an extension of the same force that guided the hand of a Renaissance artist in his creation. Beauty itself conveyed another worldly quality, it opened up the space of imagination, of possibility, of rebirth.

This place-based marketing was hardly coincidental, nor was it entirely disingenuous. When my colleague and I went to interview Johnny, I caught sight with my own eyes of a woman sewing on a button that he told us was crafted from the wood of olive trees growing on the hills right above the factory. Tensions between desires for authentic place and necessities for global sophistication shaped this approach. There was something seductive about it—the Gulliver being tied up with tiny ropes by little creatures. The giant slept in a dreamy place, a place of fantasy. The world being created was, at its core, sensual and sexy. The sexiness derived from the tension between things far away and exotic yet
place-based and familiar. There was a back-and-forth at play between the strange and the familiar, the earth and the moon.

*Sorting out value and the roots of the ‘made in italy’ brand*

In some ways, value itself is otherworldly. It is, on the surface, inexplicable. As the grand British anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski observed nearly 100 years ago, value is hardly self-evident. Malinowski set out in 1915 on a voyage to Melanesia to expand understandings of value through a study of “primitive economies.” He subsequently made famous to the Western world the kula, an elaborate form of exchange or gifting. He set out to make sense of the value of what seemed to Western observers to be mere shell trinkets, and yet through their circulation from east to west and west to east, through the hands of seafaring outrigger canoe masters, these trinkets accumulated histories, these histories enhanced their value as well as their *mana*—their spirit, their soul, their supernatural powers.

What made things valuable in non-Western societies of a century past is not so different from what makes things valuable today. The markets are vastly different, to be sure. But ultimately, value cannot simply be reduced to a mathematical formula, market price, or the cost to make it. Nor can it be said to be merely in the eyes of the beholder.

What accounts for value in a globalized economy? What is the story behind how the *made in italy* label acquired value as a generic brand? What can this history tell us about value generally speaking, for now and for the future?

As I was writing this chapter as a fellow at the National Humanities Center and living in Durham, N.C., I happened into a TJ Maxx, the clothing chain that bills itself as
selling designer brands at discount prices. A sign above a round rack of cardigan wool and blended-wool sweaters caught my eye:

be a standout gifter
made in italy

The top part of the sign was rendered in white lettering against a rectangular green background, with the bottom part presenting the white lettering against a larger rectangular black background. The implication of the message to “be a standout gifter” was that the shopper who chose one of these sweaters as a gift would set herself apart from others; the value of a sweater crafted in Italy was somehow superior to sweaters crafted elsewhere, e.g., in China. In presenting the message in lower-case lettering, the marketers were also attempting to create a subtle message. They did not need to shout out this message with all caps or exclamation points because shoppers with taste would know it to be true. For consumers who had forgotten that country of origin might make a difference in quality, the sign offered a gentle and welcome reminder.

As fashion scholars have observed, the made in italy label has become synonymous with good taste, elegance, style, and quality—the latter referring to attention to design, fabrics, as well as craftsmanship. How and when did the made in italy gain its reputation? When did people begin to fetishize it? How did it become an object of fascination? The answer has a good deal to do with Italian fashion during fascism, the postwar Americanization of the economy, and purposeful as well as indirect linkages with the Renaissance in the buying public’s social imaginary.

The birth of modern Italian fashion dates to 1951. It assumed an international profile only in the 1970s. Various historians contrast the exclusive, custom-fit haute couture with an emerging, democratized ready-to-wear clothing industry. Of course, tailors
and designers existed in Italy before its industry’s birth, but they had limited influence or recognition in the world of fashion. They could hardly compete with the dominant Parisian haute couture houses, with their prestige deriving from proximity to the courts of Versailles and their reputation among elites as the go-to place for good taste. Despite a weakened fashion monopoly after the war, Parisian prices were stubbornly high, a fact that “chilled relations with the most important clients, the buyers for leading American department stores.” Furthermore, the future hub of fashion was up for grabs as the symbolic impact of an American lifestyle, especially New York, began to spread. Consumers sought comfort and affordability.

The significance of such a specific birth date can be traced to a fashion show that put Florence on the map as one of the main contenders to follow in the footsteps of Paris. Buyers leaving Paris were lured to Florence for a fashion presentation on February 12, 1951. The brainchild of the event was Giovanni Battista Giorgini, a descendant of a noble Florentine family whose knowledge of the American market derived from his experience as a buyer of Italian artisan products—ceramics, glass, lace, embroidery and straw—for several U.S. department stores. In Giorgini’s words, “the aim of the evening is to “enhance the value of our fashion.” It did so through displaying to its attendees a sort of genetic code of aesthetics that accounted for Italian style.

In 1952, Giorgini organized another show in Florence’s opulent Palazzo Pitti, where a “myth of continuity” with the Renaissance was launched and staged for the world’s most influential fashion trendsetters of the day. The choice of Pitti was no coincidence. What better icon of the Renaissance than a Medici palace? As a former residence of the grand-dukes of Tuscany, with its painting, sculpture and costume collections as well as extensive
Boboli Gardens, the *Sala Bianca*, or White Ballroom, served as an elegant site for the show, and an ideal place to persuade its attendees of the continuity between artistic heritage and modern taste.

The author of this happy ‘invention’ . . . had clearly understood the concept that connecting fashion creativity to the Italian artistic heritage would, besides offering the interesting opportunity to attract the numerous wealthy foreign visitors to the artistic treasures of Italy as clients, also endow the Italian product with an extraordinary cultural legitimization, placing it directly in the centre of a well-known, appreciated, not to say indisputable, tradition of ‘good taste’: that of the Renaissance. Connecting Italian fashion with Renaissance Italy meant in fact introducing a kind of *ante litteram* guarantee of provenance—a ‘country branding’—recognized throughout the world, which, at the same time, evoked the splendor of a period in which Italian taste was a model to follow and imitate . . . (Belfanti n.d.:4)

References to the “Renaissance effect,” as Belfanti notes, have become a part of the story that Italian entrepreneurs and managers tell about themselves; such references have become conventional wisdom. News coverage of those early events, such as in *Life* and the *Los Angeles Times*, seem drunk on Renaissance genius.17 The Palazzo Pitti itself over time “became a sort of factory seal for genuine Italian fashion,”18 writes Settembrini for the catalogue for the Guggenheim exhibition *The Italian Metamorphosis, 1943–1968*. The location was eventually moved elsewhere but the name stuck, as in the *Pitti Uomo* event.
Although hardly anyone contests the magnificence of the artistic and cultural production of the Renaissance, it is the unbroken continuity between Renaissance craftsmanship and Italian fashion that critical historians challenge as being more manipulation than truth—an invention similar to other invented traditions linked to creating a sense of communal brotherhood in nation-states where community can only be imagined.19

Evidence of the discontinuity of great Italian artistry across the centuries can be found in a number of accounts. Belfanti draws on testimony of travellers, especially participants of the Grand Tour, who chose Italy as one of their key destinations for its artistic treasures and agrarian landscape but not for its able craftsmen or refined products. The poet Shelley in 1818 offered this account in a letter: “There are two Italies, one made up of green meadows and a limpid sea, of the mighty ruins of antiquity, or airy peaks and of the warm radiant atmosphere that envelops all things. The other consists in the Italians who live in the present time, in their works and in their manners. The first is the most sublime and pleasing contemplation that may be conceived of by human imagination, the second the most degraded, repellent and disgusting.”20 Nearly a century later, D.H. Lawrence in his Etruscan Places contrasted “a vivid, life accepting people who must have lived with real fullness” with the people living in the area between Tarquinia and Vulci in 1927. Such joyful characteristics of the Etruscans were lost with the Roman empire, he asserted. “It is different now. The drab peasants, muffled in ugly clothing, straggle in across the waste bit of space, and trail home, songless and meaningless.”21 The ugly clothing of these peasants was hardly the material to inspire made in Italy ascendency in the fashion world.
Images of impoverished peasants living in Southern Italy were produced from books such as Carlo Levi’s memoir *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, which portrays the Basilicata region during the fascist period of 1935-36 when he was exiled there, or Edward Banfield’s controversial *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, which argued that untrusting villagers’ lack of morality could explain the lack of a functional civil society. His work was both admired and reviled. Sydel Silverman, an anthropologist who criticized his analysis, suggested these villagers’ values were not simply innate but derived from economic ills connected to overpopulation, underemployment, land hunger, and unproductive agriculture. For Silverman, values were not the basis of society but rather derived from social structure and organization.22

Certain moments of continuity were handily forgotten. Seeds of an “Italian style” were sown during fascism, including tendencies toward “elegance and ease.”23 Eugenia Paulicelli traces this legacy in *Fashion under Fascism: Beyond the Black Shirt*. References to the Renaissance were “countless” in textile trade periodicals and fashion magazines of the era,24 but the Italian reputation for fashion was largely internal to the fascist state. In the interwar period, the Italian economy largely closed to the world under Mussolini’s national project of economic self-sufficiency known as autarchy. Internally, Italian fashion houses began to compete with the French. This was largely a nationalist project. Paulicelli attributes fascism’s preoccupation with fashion to its envy of the French, who enjoyed a strong and unified national identity compared to Italy’s fragmented national sensibility: “French couture and design were the enemy to defeat or, almost in Oedipal mode, the father to kill in order to build an autonomous identity.”25 Paulicelli demonstrates how, in fascism’s ideological plan for progress, fashion was one of the main industries targeted due
to its potential to contribute to “the nation’s sense of self.”

This goal of creating a citizenry who thoroughly identified with Italy—as opposed to individuals more connected to their hometowns than their nation, as referenced in the old term *campanilismo*, or parochialism—was realized in no small part through propaganda, such as posters that portrayed ideal gendered subjects: Italian men were depicted as strong and athletic and contrasted with Italian women who were shown as curvy and fashionable. Newsreels during film screenings were also used to sell Italian fashion and the nationalist idea of *italianità*, or Italian character. Finally, a conscious strategy to expand the textile industry promoted regional handcrafts while also developing new technologies and “intelligent fibers.”

Ultimately, according to Paulicelli, the project to nationalize fashion was a failure. She highlights two reasons. First, workers and consumers did not fall into line, proving the regime incapable of creating a unified image of a social body. Second, the imposition of rigid models for dressing was at “loggerheads” with the characteristic of constant change so fundamental to the fashion industry. If it seems strange that the fascist period would have inspired sartorial and industrial creativity it is worth recollecting that fascism offered a good deal of rhetoric even as it inspired cultural production related to its version of modernity. Umberto Eco notes in an essay in the sturdy Guggenheim catalogue that the creative experiments that fascism allowed were not signs of “democratic openness” but rather examples of “ideological confusion.”

The opening of Italy after the war created new opportunities and new vulnerabilities. The Italian economy became somewhat Americanized. The Marshall Plan funneled money into industrial districts and also had a strong hand in shaping the strength
of political parties particularly during the Cold War years. The province of Florence was a major beneficiary. A new industrial district named Macrolotto 1 was created just outside the medieval wall of Prato, known as the “city of rags,” for its historic textile industry that specialized in regenerating wool from second-hand clothes. The economy boomed.

People in search of new possibilities were lured to the factory-city initially from the nearby rural countryside and later from more distant points of origin, suggesting three migratory phases: regional, national, and transnational. After the devastation of world war, peasants abandoned the countryside for the city. They brought with them a desire for autonomy. In Tuscany, they traded a mezzadria, or sharecropping, style of hierarchical family organization for an urban lifestyle of factory work or industrial artisanship and the relative autonomy it promised. Work in an informal economy spread as small family firms proliferated. A peasant ethos persisted—visceral yet mixed memories of the soil, of patron-client relations, of reciprocity, of patriarchal kin relations, of generational conflict.

Residents with this history constitute about 30 percent of the current population. A second phase of migration, in the 1960s, witnessed the arrival of people from Italy's Deep South leaving behind diverse peasant agriculture and often stigmatized as inferior for their habits and dialects. These residents now make up about 12 percent of Prato’s population. In a third phase, especially since the 1990s, transnational migrants have come onto the scene. As of 2012, they comprise about 17% of the population in the city, 15% in the province. The majority originates from China, with most born in Wenzhou of the southeastern province of Zhejiang. These newest immigrants bring networking and labor strategies also moored in a family model and also known for their flexibility.
Meanwhile, three cities competed to become the capital of Italian fashion: Florence, Rome, and Milan. The latter would eventually prevail, in large part, according to economic historians Merlo and Polese, because of three major actors, largely rooted in Milan, who helped exploit the American market to the benefit of Italian fashion: The Association of Clothing Industrialists (Associazione industriali dell’abbigliamento), The American Chamber of Commerce for Italy, and the Milan-based department store, La Rinascente. Italian industrialists found inspiration in the American growth model and the women’s clothing sector, whose strength was “cheap, fashionable clothes whose colors and designs were continually renewed in order to stimulate constant change in women’s wardrobes.”34 The Italian clothing association followed and adopted American marketing strategies both within and beyond Italy.35 Fashion historian Nicola White argues that American postwar financial support, involvement in industrial organization and manufacturing methods, influence of lifestyle, and a keen market were central to the development of an internationally renown Italian style; Merlo and Polese emphasize the potency of the U.S. market to provide the “necessary size and purchasing power to fuel the Italian fashion business.”36 In terms of cultural aspects, strong connections with cinema, with Italian designers working in Hollywood and Rome influencing what viewers saw on the big screen, also held sway. Salvatore Ferragamo is frequently cited as a renegade in forging a reputation for tastefully marrying craft and industrial techniques. As early as 1914 he attracted the patronage of Hollywood residents for his “hand-made, exclusive designs,” returned to Italy in 1927 and set up a shop in Florence within two years.37 In the postwar era, industrial design products from cars to scooters and typewriters to furniture were also gaining purchase.
Even if continuity with the Renaissance was a myth, the Renaissance itself was a necessary and brilliant foil to compete with Parisian prestige. Stylistic and historical references to the Renaissance carried tremendous symbolic capital and ultimately offered an authoritative reference point for the emerging Italian fashion business. At the same time, the social revolution of the late 1960s, according to Settembrini, “amounted to a death sentence for the old concept of fashion” to which Paris was more deeply invested. Vehement anti-fashion sentiments gave way to the success of the *made in Italy* success phenomenon as the hub of Italian fashion migrated from pretty Florence to edgy Milan.

The *made in Italy* mark ascended to the level of national narrative without, somehow, traversing the “very thorny terrain” of national identity, which fascism had emphasized in a particularly “exasperating” way. In part, this is a mystery. In part, the explanation may well rest in a confluence of events, including postwar reconstruction aid, Cold War politics, and a near disastrous turn of events that indirectly strengthened the myth of continuity with the Renaissance. Cementing ties with the Renaissance had the effect of distancing a national brand from the marked sort of nationalism that fascism had imposed on its citizens. The Renaissance was not politically threatening. As such it allowed for a brand image far removed from labor and political struggles that became particularly poignant with the student protests of 1968 and the subsequent popularity of the Italian Communist Party.

*The value of a flood*

To this postwar history of the *made in Italy*, I would like to add a watershed event (no pun intended): the devastating flood of November 4, 1966, when the Arno River surged
over its banks after two days of torrential rainfall that equaled one-third of the normal for a year. In just 48 hours, nineteen inches of rain fell. Some 35 miles upstream from Florence, at Lévane Dam, engineers opened strained floodgates. Muddy waters deluged 1,300 works of art and millions of books, manuscripts, and archival materials. All of this was reported widely in the international media and the popular U.S. press. Ultimately, the dramatic events of the flood, and the groundswell of fundraising and rescue efforts that followed, served as an unintentional marketing campaign for the value of things Italian. The related discourses and activity bolstered associations between the generic Italian brand and its continuity with the Renaissance, not only for elite women and men but also for average American consumers who, by the 1960s, were increasingly shopping in department stores and buying ready-made clothing.

Evidence for the popularization of things coming out of Italy, and later the Italian brand itself, can be found in periodicals from the period. The flood was documented within the year in numerous trade and popular publications: *ArtNews, The Burlington Magazine*, *National Geographic, Newsweek, Reader’s Digest, The Saturday Review*, among others, featured articles about the flood and its aftermath. One reviewer described *A Diary of Florence in Flood* (Simon and Schuster), published the next year, by as “concise, unassuming, authentic. In spirit and form it is admirably Florentine... It is a tribute to man, that strange, beauty-loving animal.”

In October 1967, the inside cover of *Reader’s Digest* boasted a readership of “over 28 million copies bought monthly in 13 languages.” That same issue featured a story about the flood, “Up from the Mud—A Second Renaissance for Florence.” The article begins, “With last November’s disastrous flood, this treasure house of Western civilization found itself,
overnight, a morass of ruined landmarks, defaced heirlooms and battered masterworks. But, with help from all over the world, the fabled city is swiftly returning to greatness.”

Early on, the article quotes Elizabeth Barrett Browning who had described the Arno as “a crystal arrow in the gentle sunset.” The article reports how, just hours before the river crested, the city’s mayor, Piero Bargellini, was attending a dinner for industrial workers in the “fashionable” Grand Hotel, where they were shown a film about the Mississippi River. How ironic, or prescient, that the mayor quipped, “The Mississippi is a great river. But if our Arno continues to rise, it will be an even greater one. “ Reportedly, the crowd had chuckled appreciatively. Little did they know that a flood nearly as bad as the one of 1333 was about to rip through their city.

When it did, damage was savage. In case subscribers of Reader’s Digest did not know the significance of the devastation, they would soon receive an education. The article’s author wrote: “‘All Florence is a work of art,’ ” Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower had cautioned his commanders as they approached the Renaissance city in World War II. Here Leonardo da Vinci painted some of his masterpieces and Michelangelo carved his immortal David. Here Galileo improved the compound microscope and Dante wrote his first love poems to Beatrice. Now the treasures spared by war were assaulted by the flood.” Even the Nazis recognized certain things of value in the city: Hitler called Florence “the jewel of Europe” and gave orders that “retreating Germans should limit their destruction to the Arno bridges, all save the Ponte Vecchio,” the charming 600-year-old bridge lined with jewelry shops. “And so Florence was spared.”

The mayor, initially marooned in the Palazzo Vecchio with about 45 others, including a just-married couple and a convict, soon put out an international call for help.
The world responded: German, Austrian and American supplies, English powdered milk and vaccines, Scottish blankets, Soviet Union relief aid, Dutch water-decontamination equipment. In the United States, prominent art historians from Brown University and Harvard were leading the way to form a Committee for the Rescue of Italian Art (CRIA). By Nov. 8, 1966, the committee sent two experts to Florence and Venice to assess the situation and officially incorporated on Nov. 14, moved its offices to New York City, formed subcommittees and set a goal to raise $2.5 million to restore and repair damaged works of art. And who was appointed as its honorary president? None other than the American queen of style, Jacqueline Kennedy Onasis.\(^47\) Committee members must have been extremely well connected to succeed in appointing someone as prominent as Jackie Kennedy to serve as its honorary president. CRIA also moved quickly. Initial allocations were made in December. Within a month fifty branches of the committee had formed across the country.\(^48\) Within 10 months, the committee had grown to 65 chapters and raised nearly $2 million.\(^49\) Some evidence will need to be gathered, but I would like to suggest that the flood, together with Jackie Kennedy’s appointment and the plea for aid and subsequent international awareness of the value of Italian art, were enormously significant in terms of spreading love for things Italian and the Renaissance.

Jackie Kennedy reportedly appeared at a gala event in May 1967 for “The Italian Heritage” exhibit, which Newsweek described as the rescue committee’s “most interesting benefit so far.” The exhibit was held at New York’s Wildenstein gallery. The exhibition director, Charles Seymour Jr. of the Yale Art Department, once again reminded the reading public of the significance of Italy to the Renaissance: “For four centuries all of Europe was influenced by the Italians, who had generated what may have been the most revolutionary
and far-reaching intellectual and artistic movement in Western Europe.” In July, *National Geographic* featured a 43-page spread on the flood and its aftermath and continued the crash course: “It is fair to say that much of what we know today of painting and sculpture, or architecture and political science, of scientific method and economic theory, we owe to the artists, politicians, statesmen, bankers, and merchants of the Renaissance—that explosion of intellectual artistic energy in Italy between 1300 and 1600.”

Another phenomenon that helped to spread ideas about the value of Italian art was the student volunteers who hailed from across Europe, the United States, and Canada. Giorgio Batini’s *Arno in Museo*, published simultaneously as *The River Arno in the Museums of Florence* within the year, recounts how hitchhikers converged on Florence. “Wonderful youth. Call them beatniks, call them long-haired pansies, call them what you will. . . . They asked for nothing in return for their labour: they came, as they aptly put it, ‘to save culture’.” Referred to as mud angels, muddy angels, or blue angels—after the blue jeans that became covered with mud—they were said to provide “perhaps the greatest lift of all.” Several American Universities with programs in Florence were among those whose students volunteered: Harvard, Stanford, Smith, Syracuse, Florida State and Gonzaga. Through their toils, they also received a crash-course in the value of art and undoubtedly returned home to spread the word.

The full extent of the damage was reported as 100 people drowned, hundreds of horses and farm animals killed, 4,000 families left homeless, 11,000 citizens with serious losses, 6,000 shops and 700 restaurants, bars and trattorie destroyed, 1,500 works of art, 18 churches, and millions of priceless books and manuscripts damaged or ruined. “Single greatest loss to art” was how *National Geographic* described the damage done to Giovanni
Ciambue’s “Crucifix,” which was painted around 1280 and hung in the Church of Santa Croce, where invading water reached 20 feet and left “a greasy film of nafta—thick, black furnace oil flushed from the city’s fuel tanks.” Both National Geographic and Reader’s Digest made sure to mention the plans that Leonardo da Vinci had drawn for an “intricate system of dams, lakes and locks designed to prevent a recurrence of floods like the one of 1333” as if to reinforce the genius of that Renaissance man and others like him and perhaps lament the sorry lack of such intellect in the modern age.

In accounts that followed the flood’s aftermath, the artwork is continuously anthropomorphized. The language choices animate the paintings, sculptures, and frescoes in numerous ways. Health metaphors are rampant. The cleanup is referred to as a “rescue” mission. The huge limonaia, or lemon house, in the Boboli Gardens was converted into a “hospital for paintings,” including about 340 paintings on panels treated with rice paper and a gradual diminishing of humidity. The damaged works of art were referred to as “i feriti,” a term typically used to refer to injured or wounded persons. The Burlington Magazine reported, “The return to health will be slow and laborious.” A sponsor from South Africa “adopted” Santa Maria del Fiore and other museums and monuments and works of art later found “foster parents.” The recovery itself was called a “miracle.” The repeated use of such metaphoric language for the art objects contributed to infusing them with a certain magical quality.

Ultimately, the flood had a humanizing effect on art. The Renaissance treasures were not beyond the pale. They might have resided in marble palaces and churches, but they were not beyond the reach of nature’s most destructive forces. Works of art, too, were
vulnerable to injury. They, too, had a certain mortality. They, too, could be the subjects of a rescue mission. And in all of this, these works of art had a spirit.

Links to the fashion world were not without mention. In the memoir *Diary of Florence in Flood*, Taylor makes frequent reference to fine clothes and accessories. She points to the “enduring virtue of Florence”: “in a mechanized century they keep alive the practice of craftsmanship, of the finest handwork in gold and silver, in leather, copper, onyx and marble, enameled wood, copies of antique furniture, embroideries, fabrics, and high fashion.” Her descriptions undoubtedly fomented desire for quality goods. It is unclear, however, how readers might have reacted to her description of being “overawed, even shaken, and certainly bewildered among the thousands of elegant shops, which offer a choice of treasures of artisan make that she finds just too much for her.”

If all girls could have such troubles! The *Reader's Digest* article also made reference to Italian fashion. It had this to say about the “indomitable Florentines” and their work ethic: “Famed fashion designer Emilio Pucci lost more than 150,000 yards of fabric to the flood. Yet he and his 1000 employees were back at work the moment the waters receded.” The article concluded with the idea that the “universal response” to the disaster “imbued the old city with a new spirit” and closed with a quote from Pucci himself: “It’s a new Renaissance in which the whole world has shared.”

Fifteen years earlier, when Giorgini launched the Pitti fashion show, the *made in Italy* mark became identified with luxury products. The devastation of the flood had the unintended consequence of popularizing art, of making it available to a broad public, through mainstream magazines, news reports, newspapers, documentaries, letters home.
and other firsthand accounts. The news coverage and fundraising communicated the significance of the value of art to the much of the world.

It might seem bizarre to suggest that the rise of the made in Italy brand might have emerged from murky floodwaters. But the level of international hailing and concern generated from the tragic event created an international discourse on beauty, and as Batini reported, “In Florence, beauty is an industry.”63 Indeed, the flood coincided with an economy that was booming with particular sonorous quality, and migrants from the South were descending on Northern cities, such as the industrial district of Prato, then in the Province of Florence, to partake in the so-called economic miracle. Hence the influx of art aid was happening coterminous with intense economic growth and the most stylish, jet-setting woman in America turning her attention to be the spokesperson for saving Renaissance treasures. Jackie Kennedy was nothing if not an icon of good taste. Given the strong connection that had already been made between the Renaissance and contemporary things Italian, it is worth suggesting that in saving Renaissance art rescue workers were saving the spirit of good taste.

historical sentiment as value

In 1915, when Bronislaw Malinowski set out to study “primitive economics” in Melanesia, he had a full agenda. His project inevitably led him to contemplate value. First, however, he sought to demonstrate that the field of economics was not a universal science with relevance everywhere, and that its theories of the history of modern economic institutions were blinded by arrogance. Alternatives to modern economic systems existed. He believed that his study of non-westerners would provide evidence that these
alternatives could not simply be written off as irrelevant because of being stuck in a “pre-economic stage.”

He went to great lengths to challenge the prevalent and ethnocentric European idea that non-westerners’ economies were simple. His research ignited a body of scholarship devoted to scientific as well as political projects of finding other possibilities to the cold, calculating species of *homo economicus* so dear to capitalism and its free market disciples.

Economic scholars of the day had not taken the islanders’ exchange practices seriously; indeed, Malinowski in a 1921 essay in *Economic Journal* argues with a colleague named C. Buecher who claimed that the “savages” were in a pre-economic stage. Malinowski viewed this as nothing short of rubbish. His ammunition was the nitty-gritty features of economic production. This included rites, roles, ceremonial objects, relations with divine spirits, rules governing gardening and other activities, networks of reciprocal relations, gifts and counter-gifts.

Extensive detail was offered in his classic *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. Malinowski described a system of circular trade known as the *kula*. This inter- and intra-tribal movement of goods, also referred to as gift exchange, involved the ongoing circulation of necklaces and armshells over thousands of miles in the Trobriand Islands, an archipelago to the south and east of New Guinea. Necklaces moved in a clockwise direction and armshells in a counter-clockwise direction. The practice, he observed, “looms paramount in the tribal life of those natives who live within its circuit, and its importance is fully realised by the tribesmen themselves, whose ideas, ambitions, desires and vanities are very much bound up with the Kula.”
The kula was anything but precarious or random. Rules shaped the tenor of its many public and ceremonial transactions. He demonstrated two main principles: “that the Kula is a gift repaid after an interval of time by a counter-gift, and not a bartering” and “that the equivalent rests with the giver, and cannot be enforced, nor can there be any haggling or going back on the exchange.” Ultimately, kula was a form of “primitive exchange...rooted in myth, backed by traditional law, and surrounded with magical rites” (Malinowski 1921:85). To outsiders, all the fuss seemed silly. What could possibly be the value of all those shell trinkets? Western economists and missionaries couldn’t figure out what all the fuss was about over shells that, in their view, traveled willy-nilly in different directions between different islanders. And why should they care?

Malinowski was determined to find a reasonable motive that accounted for individual actions. He was set on explaining how what he half-jokingly described as “two meaningless and quite useless objects,” which passed from “hand to hand,” became the foundation of an extensive institution that encompassed numerous islands and their inhabitants. The objects in kula were not owned but in a sense lent. They moved in constant circulation. Apparently, many were too small or too large even to be worn. Why then, Malinowski asked, were these objects valued? He drew a bold parallel as he was trying to break the kula code.

He made astute observations about value. He offered these in a number of ways throughout *Argonauts*, but his first attempt was by way of an experience with something familiar: the crown jewels at the Edinburgh Castle. He recounts the significance of a sightseeing trip in Europe after six years in the South Seas and Australia. In a charming and memorable moment of self-reflection, he writes:
The keeper told many stories of how they were worn by this or that king or queen on such and such occasion, of how some of them had been taken over to London, to the great and just indignation of the whole Scottish nation, how they were restored, and how now everyone can be pleased, since they are safe under lock and key and no one can touch them. As I was looking at them and thinking how ugly, useless, ungainly, even tawdry they were, I had the feeling that something similar had been told to me of late, and that I had seen other objects of this sort, which made a similar impression on me.\textsuperscript{71}

The other “ugly, useless, ungainly, even tawdry” objects were those very shell trinkets of the Trobriand Islands. This comparison between Trobriand shells and Scottish crown jewels led Malinowski to propose that the two objects share something profound: “historical sentiment”—in other words in both cases it is not an intrinsic value per se but the fact that the object has “figured in historical scenes and passed through the hands of historical persons” that creates in that object the possibility to serve as a “vehicle of important historical associations.”\textsuperscript{72} In both cases, these associations had value. The same type of mental attitude that allowed Europeans to value their heirlooms allowed the people of New Guinea to value their \textit{vaygu’a}, those shell valuables that circulated in the kula. In each case, the objects served as potent symbols of power and prestige.

The links between “historical sentiment” and value can be extended to the prestige of the \textit{made in Italy} label. The myth of continuity with the Renaissance serves as a symbolic resource in terms of satisfying certain desires at the point of consumption but also in terms of generating ideas related to conditions at the point of production. For consumers, the link
to the Renaissance is partly about beauty and the potential such authenticated beauty has for self-enhancement. This is, after all, one of the primary ways in which clothing and the fashion industry work.\textsuperscript{73} The clothing industry invests in fashion and design innovation and then in marketing through brands and image creation. In *The Fabric of Cultures*, anthropologist Jane Schneider observes how the industry’s “heavily promoted logos and labels, especially when mixed with seductive evocations of the sexual being beneath . . . the clothes, convey a kind of spiritual power—a resource for self-enhancement.”\textsuperscript{74} The idea here is that consumers seek to enhance, or energize, their attractiveness or mark their affiliation with certain social groups through what they wear.

The significance of the links between the myth of continuity and the value of historical sentiment extends to the conditions of production: the kinds of associations that a consuming public has between the Renaissance and artisans. In a discussion of the history of cloth across societies, Schneider describes artisans as “a fortunate lot.” Compared with factory workers, they have historically garnered “the respect of elites who value their talents, they also enjoy relative equality in the workplace . . . and [they] benefit in the production sphere from the treasured condition of autonomy.”\textsuperscript{75} The historical attachment to the figure of the artisan serves to distance consumers from thinking about actual relations and conditions of production, and the ongoing global inequalities and tragedies so prevalent in the apparel industry. As the *National Geographic* story noted, “Florence is probably the last European city where an economy rests so heavily and happily upon handcraftsmen and small manufacturers, many of them using the tools and techniques handed down through the generations.”\textsuperscript{76} Similarly, the authors of a *Saturday Review* article characterized Florence as a “city of small artisans and shopkeepers,” and attributed
recovery to “the remarkable spirit of the Florentines—the spirit of the Renaissance 500 years dormant.”

Artisans were by 1966 facing competition from industry. It is worth noting the number of textile firms that existed in the city of Florence as well as its province (which then included Prato), according to data from the census years before and after the flood: in 1961, there were 6,794 firms with 44,197 employees in the province, as compared with 167 firms in the city with 2,813 employees, numbers that increased in 1971 to 9,525 firms and 51,229 employees in the province and 179 firms but with only 1,923 employees in the city.

Just as those Trobriand shell trinkets accumulated histories, and those histories enhanced their value as well as their spirit, so too did the myth of continuity with the Renaissance enhance the spirit of things labeled *made in Italy*. The international aid effort and rescue activities surrounding the disaster generated and intensified historical sentiment. Simultaneously the strengthening of linkages with the Renaissance was safe: it distanced those objects from a more recent past, the turbulent years of fascism, as well as the present. On a nearly worldwide scale reportage on the flood and served indirectly to boost the association that the public had between the value of Renaissance art and things crafted in Italy. In other words, the flood and the subsequent rescue effort indirectly fueled the myth of continuity, connecting Renaissance art to the idea of Italian good taste.

While the value of Italian style had been legitimated in America, among specialized buyers as well as middle-class consumers, these associations were meaningless in non-Western parts of the world, such as in Mao’s China.

The Chinese might as well have been on the moon.
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3 Author’s fieldnotes, 2013_01_08 re-connecting, party, gli amori difficili.
4 In Italian: "Perché il modo di, diciamo, svilupparsi dei cinesi è proprio a livello di metastasi, nel senso che crescono, crescono e annientano tutto perché a livello di prezzo nessuno poi può competere, no?" Interview, 3 April 2013, Province of Prato.
5 Interview, 3 April 2013, Province of Prato.
6 Author’s translation.
7 Author’s photo of billboard at airport in Florence, 2011, advertising “Daniele Fiesoli Italia” clothing. Takatli calls such strategies “enhancing reality” to refer to the “building of myths by brand-owning firms, not only around their products but also around their products’ geographical associations.” (Tokatli 2013:240)
9 Perhaps the worst of Malinowski’s flaws was loathing the natives with whom he lived and about whom he wrote, and this was all made public with the publication of his private diaries, a tarnishing to the discipline that Clifford Geertz painfully and thoughtfully reflects upon in his award-winning book-length essay, Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author (Geertz 1988).
A number of historians of fashion or economics use these adjectives to describe qualities associated with the made in Italy brand. See for example (Belfanti n.d.), (Paris 2010) (Paulicelli 2001) (White 2000).

Belfanti, n.d., (Merlo and Polese 2006), (Segre 1999), (Settembrini 1994), (Steele 1994)

Settembrini, p. 484.

Merlo and Polese, p. 420.


Belfanti, p. 5. This event is also discussed in Settembrini, pp. 485-487.

Belfanti, pp. 18-19, offers detailed description of the press accounts.

Settembrini, p. 488. The Italian Metamorphosis, 1943–1968, was sponsored by Moda Made in Italy at the Guggenheim Museum in 1994-95, and as Ugo Calzoni, Chairman of the Italian Trade Commission expressed in the catalogue’s frontispiece, these decades marked a “great period of production . . . that gave rise to the phenomenon ‘Made in Italy,’ in which fashion and design have been the standard bearers” (Celant et al. 1994).

Belfanti, p. 4. See for example the scholarship generated from influential books such as The Invention of Tradition (Paris 2010), Imagined Communities (Anderson 1991), or The Great Arch, (Corrigan and Sayer 1985), or the landmark article “Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State” (Abrams 2009).

Cited in Belfanti, p. 8.

(Leone 1957:72, 94). For a discussion of the historic image of the peasant in Italy, and the stigma associated with the peasant past, there is ample literature (Krause 2005), (Levi 2000), (Banfield 1958), (Silverman 1968).

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For the adoption of American methods of production, see Vera Zamagni (Zamagni 1995).

There is a rich literature on Prato’s economic history, and I cannot begin to do it justice in this chapter. Particularly valuable is the work of Italian economist Giacomo Becattini. For the postwar period, see the fourth volume of Prato, stori di una città (Becattini 1997). See also the classic volume on the subject (Becattini 2001) as well as (Absalom et al. 1997).

According to official census data, as of 2012, resident foreigners in the Comune di Prato total 31,277, or 16.7% of the total population. Chinese residents total 15,029, or 45.3% of the total registered foreigners in the city. The total population in the city 187,159. Comune di Prato, 2012.


Merlo and Polese, p. 436.
35 Merlo and Polese, p. 434.
36 Merlo and Polese, p. 446.
37 White, p. 36.
38 Settembrini, p. 487
39 See Merlo and Polese on the geography of fashion and how Milan became the hub.
41 Judge, p. 6, Reddy, p. 206, Taylor, p. 126.
42 The Burlington Magazine, more than 100 years old, bills itself as the “journal of record for all those who want to keep up with new ideas and thinking on art and art history.” http://www.burlington.org.uk/. Accessed January 13, 2014.
44 Reddy, p. 208.
45 Cronin, p. 24.
47 (Bradford 2000)
48 The papers of the Committee to Rescue Italian Art are held in several different locations. See the following archives: the Committee to Rescue Italian Art (CRIA) Records, 1966-1968, Kentucky Digital Library. http://kdl.kyvl.org/catalog/xt7wdb7vn346/guide
51 Judge, p. 2.
52 (Batini 1967a) (Batini 1967b) Batini, p. 30.
54 Many American students have spent a semester or more of their young adulthood in Italy learning about the Renaissance and while there getting quotidian lessons on food and fashion. In 1984, I too was one of those students, having participated in the “Arts of London and Florence” program, sponsored by the Associated Colleges of the Midwest. When my parents came to visit, my mother was so taken by the beauty of Florence that she subsequently enrolled in an art program back home, and graduated at age 60 with a B.F.A in painting. By 2003, Italy was the second leading destination of study abroad students and remained in the No. 2 position in 2011-12, Institute of International Education, “open doors 2013 ‘Fast Facts’,” http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?p=69735. Accessed January 17, 2014. The leading destination country was England, which means that Italy was the leading non-English language destination for study abroad. See Kelly Jones’s novel The Lost Madonna, based on how experience as a mud angel influenced a character’s life and career (Jones 2007).
55 Nearly all of the accounts mention Cimabue’s “Crucifix.” This passage is from Judge, p. 4.
56 Reddy, p. 206.
57 Batini, p. 90.
58 Velen, p. 56.
60 Batini, p. 84.
63 Batini, p. 83.
The most influential book was Marcel Mauss’s *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, originally written in the early 1920s but originally translated and published in English in 1950 (Mauss 1990). Graeber’s insightful discussion of value devotes a great deal of attention to Mauss and the scholarship as well as activism that his work generated (Graeber 2001). Godelier offered new insights in his reading, focusing on sacred objects that are not exchanged (Godelier 1999). A number of feminist anthropologists also embraced a gendered lens to revise Malinowski’s observations (Strathern 1988) (Weiner 1976). In a separate scholarly direction, Herzfeld has proposed the concept of a “global hierarchy of value,” in connection with artisan production in Greece (Herzfeld 2004). These texts will be discussed in the book’s introduction.

References to kula goods as gifts appear frequently in Malinowski’s discussion (p. 91, pp. 95-96).

For a re-reading of Malinowski’s work and a discussion of its significance to the discipline of anthropology, see (Sykes 2005), especially Chapter 3, “Gathering Thoughts in Fieldwork,” pp. 38-58.

Malinowski, 1922, p. 2.
Malinowski, 1922, p. 98.
Malinowski, 1922, p. 86.
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Merlo and Polese, p. 427. Source of the data is ISTAT, Censimento generale dell'industria e del commercio, Rome. Even though it is well known that many small firms operated al nero, in other words, without being officially registered, or without registering everyone who lent a hand, the numbers are a good indication. Many small firms registered through the artisans’ union, and these might best be described as class of industrial artisans operating mechanized and computerized looms in workshops.

The Cultural Revolution was officially underway in 1966, and Mao’s aim was to destroy the “Four Olds”: customs, culture, habits, ideas. Repercussions to the Cultural Revolution resonate as interest in Confucius philosophy gains official party and unofficial popular appeal as discussed in a “Letter from Beijing” in *The New Yorker* (Osnos 2014).