



The School and Its Many Pasts

II: Official and Public Memories of School

edited by Juri Meda and Roberto Sani



These volumes contain the official proceedings of the International Conference «The School and Its Many Pasts. School Memories between Social Perception and Collective Representation» (Macerata, 12-15 December 2022), organized by the University of Macerata in partnership with the Catholic University of Sacred Heart of Milan, the University of Florence and the University Roma Tre.

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Introduction

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Premise

These volumes collect the contributions presented at the international conference “The School and Its Many Pasts. School Memories between Social Perception and Collective Representation”, held in Macerata from December 12 to December 15, 2022. This conference is the result of a long process of international research and comes as the conclusion – the most relevant and ambitious step – of the Research Project of National Relevance (PRIN) entitled “School Memories between Social Perception and Collective Representation (Italy, 1861-2001)”, which started in Italy in 2019 and was co-financed by the Ministry of Education, University and Research.

A research project that in these years has benefited from the collaboration and the scientific contribution of more than fifty scholars and young researchers from fourteen Italian universities. A research project that has already produced extremely relevant results, which will be presented – together with others – in these volumes.

We are convinced, however, that the presence at that conference of over 150 speakers from as many as 25 countries and three different continents allowed us to make a real qualitative leap in the in-depth analysis of the object of our research and to give it a truly comparative reading, capable of taking into account a series of contexts and scenarios not limited to a national or even European perspective, but truly open to a global one.

1. *The premises of the research project*

Our research project develops in the path previously traced by the international conference “School Memories. New Trends in Historical Research into Education: Heuristic Perspectives and Methodological Issues” (Seville, 22-23 September 2015), which was organized by the University of Seville in collaboration with the *Centro di documentazione e ricerca sulla storia del libro scolastico e della letteratura per l'infanzia* of the University of Macerata (Italy), the University of Murcia (Spain) and the *Centro Internacional de la Cultura Escolar* of Berlanga de Duero (Spain).

In fact, a significant representative of historians of education coming from all over the world already gathered in that occasion in order to elaborate the epistemological foundations of the historiographical reflection on school memory and elaborated a

first systematic reflection on the topic, defining some general theoretical coordinates, and providing methodological criteria and suggesting possible contaminations with anthropology of education and sociology of cultural processes.

2. The research project

On the basis of these coordinates, our research project focuses on school memory, which is understood as an individual, collective and public practice of recalling a common school past.

School memory is an interpretative category, which has recently been introduced in the historiographical reflection of the historical-educational field at an international level, both in the countries of the Iberian-American area and in the Anglo-Saxon world. This category has also enjoyed prominence in Italy, largely thanks to the studies carried out by the scholars who have adhered to this project in the last five years.

On the basis of new types of sources and a necessarily interdisciplinary methodological approach, the research units who collaborate in the project investigated both the models of school, teaching, learning and school attendance emerging from individual memories and the representation of these models that has been proposed by the world of information and communication and the cultural industry. This research endeavour has conducted from 2019 to this day despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nonetheless, an attempt was made to focus on how school and teaching memory was elaborated in the context of official representations and public commemorations promoted by local and national institutions on the basis of a specific “policy of memory”, or rather a “public use of the past” aimed at acquiring consensus and strengthening the feeling of belonging to a specific community.

The first results of the investigations carried out in these years by the research units involved in the project have been published in about a hundred monographs, essays and articles on magazine and within qualified collections of sources, which are accessible online and are intended for a wider audience than only educational historians.

But further and even more organic and thorough results had been officially introduced during the international conference “The School and Its Many Pasts”, which obtained sponsorships by the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE) and by eight among the most prominent national scientific societies in history of education. The international conference held in Macerata in December 2022 allowed to promote a broad methodological and historiographical confrontation on problems concerning the study of school memory and – at the same time – to start an organic reflection on the same topic in a comparative key.

3. *A new idea of scientific communication*

It was immediately clear that this project would require to spread research results not only through the traditional channels of scientific discussion but also through more innovative ones, based on the digitization of contents, aimed at reaching a wider audience than just the specialized one.

Other elements have subsequently confirmed that this was the correct perspective to frame the research project and the spreading of its results.

The first one of these elements within the PRIN 2017 announcement was the inclusion of a specific article which provided that research units involved in the project had to guarantee free and online access (at least in green access modality) to the results obtained and the research contents, object of peer-reviewed scientific publications within the project.

This is a fundamental fact, which is not possible to ignore, as it forced those who took part in the project to wonder what were the most appropriate ways to comply with this fulfilment in an intelligent way, creating an organic plan of digital and open publication for research contents rather than dividing and publishing them within tools already available, although not necessarily connoted from a scientific point of view.

However, the constraints imposed by the announcement were not the only elements which led us towards one *modus operandi* over another.

Over the last few years, the academic world has, in fact, developed a newfound awareness of the fact that the effective social impact of new know-how produced by scientific research is possible only through the adoption of a new paradigm of mediation that brings the public role of the intellectual back into the discussion.

This new paradigm is embodied by Public Scientific Communication, which – unlike internal communication among members of the scientific community – is the type of communication which occurs between experts and non-experts, between creators and users of knowledge, and it consists of a high-quality scientific dissemination, which is able to mediate the contents of knowledge to a general audience.

This attempts to contrast the dangerous degenerations of a scientific pseudo-dissemination, which has conquered the top of trending topics in social networks and has infiltrated the social fabric in recent years, spreading fake news, misconceptions and stereotypes, and increasing individual skepticism towards science.

The extensive spreading of the increasingly pervasive means of mass communication implies that scientific research results must be effectively communicated through television, radio, world wide web and social media, for which – however – it is necessary to use very different techniques from the ones used in scientific publications. Techniques that can catch and keep the attention of audiences who would otherwise be addressed by so many scammers and charlatans who perfectly master these very same modalities of communications but devote them to the spreading of poor or – even worse – harmful contents.

Besides, the public nature of the funds granted at a national and/or community level to support academic research implies the need for them to be used to produce goods

of public utility, such as knowledge, which is not the exclusive prerogative of either the scientific community who generates it or the publishing houses who disseminate it but belongs to the community as a whole and serves the function of guaranteeing its social development and cultural progress.

4. *Mnemosine software and databases on the forms of school memory*

To these aims, in the first two years of the research project we worked on the design and the implementation of the *Mnemosine* software for cataloguing the forms of memory described in the eight databases developed in collaboration with the Italian company Elicos s.r.l., which assisted and significantly implemented our project from a technological point of view.

The *Mnemosine* software, which we appropriately patented, was used to implement the eight databases that are the heart of this research project. On the one hand, this was done because they collect a considerable amount of data (900 catalogue records and 700 biographical records have been loaded into the website up to this date) made to be searchable and comparable, showing possible interactions among different forms of school memory, whether they are individual or collective. Furthermore, this contributed to effectively disseminate the research results carried out within the project to a public of non-experts, who are difficult to be reached.

Each database has been published by a university press with a Creative Commons license and is provided with an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN). The code configures them as online digital serials in all respects, attested by a refereeing committee made up of well-known experts, who are able to ensure the peer review procedure of the contents published within them.

Moreover, each catalogue record was provided for a Digital Object Identifier (DOI), allowing their unique network identification through the association of their respective metadata.

This made it possible to create real electronic repertories for the publication of research results carried out in open access mode, in accordance with what PRIN 2017 announcement stated concerning the funding of our research.

In this respect, the website www.memoriascolastica.it and the eight scientific databases contained in it became a real research infrastructure. They are able to provide the scientific community of reference with resources and services (scientific data collections, computer systems, communication networks, etc.) in order to carry out research activities and to promote innovation. But they have purpose beyond research initiatives, for example in the context of public education, and to provide teachers with training and updating resources.

For this reason – in anticipation of the closure of the research project in August 2023 – the coordinators of the research units unanimously resolved to sign a framework agreement that guarantees the continuity of this research infrastructure, regulating its

co-ownership, controlling the distribution of ordinary and extraordinary maintenance and management costs and establishing the guidelines to be followed for the permanent updating of the eight existing databases. This extends to the possibility of participating in further national and EU funding announcements in collaboration with individual foreign scholars and research groups, who are interested in working on the same topics in a comparative perspective at an international level.

The letter of intent leading to the signing of this framework agreement was signed by the coordinators of research units during the plenary session on December 15, 2022.

The valuable opportunity for discussion and debate at the highest level on school memory represented by the international conference “The School and Its Many Pasts” offered to all of us the opportunity to enrich our reflection on the theme, to establish valuable synergies and further forms of research collaboration and to give an authentically international breath to the in-depth study of a field of investigation – the one related to school memory – that still has many stimulations and suggestions to offer to the historians of school and education.

Introduction to the Study of School Memory

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In his introduction to these volumes, Roberto Sani framed them within the research project “School Memories between Social Perception and Collective Representation (Italy, 1861-2001)”, presenting its key features. In this introduction, moreover, I will try to frame them instead within a historiographical process developed over the past twenty years, which offered a significant contribution to the redefinition of the heuristic horizon of the history of education.

The taking into account of school memory as a historical object by the historiography of education matured during the first decade of the 21st century, driven by a deep renewal of the epistemological foundations and heuristic goals of this field of study, as well as the growing attention paid by generalist historians to the policies of memory and public use of the past made in modern and contemporary times¹.

In a seminal work published in 2000, António Nóvoa – who concluded the international conference “The School and Its Many Pasts” with his keynote address – indicated the possibility of using images to study the evolution of the public image of teachers between the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries². Nóvoa noted in this regard:

In underlining the idea of public images, I intend to understand the game of social mirrors that marks the teaching profession in an epoch of strong social beliefs and convictions on the idea of school as a central institution for progress and citizenship. Here the conflict between opposing images of teachers and the relationships they provoke both inside and outside the profession becomes more obvious³.

The statement of Nóvoa contributed to widening the heuristic spectrum of our discipline, as it invited historians of education not to analyze the school of the past only “from within” (that is, how the school really was or at least how it represented itself), but also “from outside” (that is, how it was perceived by a given social group or society as a whole), in order to get a more general view of this historical phenomenon.

Nóvoa – it is true – intended to demonstrate the heuristic potential of visual sources, but his discourse could be extended to a wider and more composite set of sources.

¹ E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger (edd.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983; P. Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1984-1992; R. Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis*, London, Cornell University Press, 1993.

² A. Nóvoa, *Ways of Saying, Ways of Seeing: Public Images of Teachers (19th-20th Century)*. «Paedagogica Historica», XXXVI, n. 1, 2000, pp. 20-52.

³ Nóvoa, *Ways of Saying, Ways of Seeing*, cit., p. 16.

The school was therefore not only an institution and a place of teaching practice and educational experimentation, but also became a category of collective imaginary, whose imaginative representations did not necessarily correspond to how the school really was in a given period, but rather reflected the perception of it within a given social group or society as a whole.

Nóvoa also came to notice how the historical relevance of images was testified «by this traffic between individual and collective beliefs, social and cultural representations, memoirs and imagination»⁴.

It is this complex traffic that defines the social meaning of the school, which transcends the literal one, the result of a cognitive definition that attributes to an expression the mental image of the features of the denoted object, formed in the consciousness of the speakers on the basis of their perceptual and cultural experiences. What, then, is school? On the basis of which criteria is school experience classified by each of us and which abstract idea derives from it? Only on the basis of information of educational nature or on the basis of more complex elaborations? Paraphrasing Philippe Ariès, is there a *sentiment de l'école*⁵, that is the attribution of a specific social meaning to the school, understood not as an institution but as a cultural elaboration? How has it evolved over time?

A push in this direction was already given by Dominique Julia, when in 1995 he put the «school culture» at the center of the historical-educational debate, defining its forms and structures⁶. The debate that followed, in fact, produced a quickly evolving within the international scientific community of history of education.

That same year Marc Depaepe and Frank Simon – taking up an expression already used by sociologist Colin Lacey in 1970⁷ – indicated the «black box of schooling» as goal of the historical research in education, focusing attention on the classrooms as places of «evaporated educational relations» from which it was essential to recover every single trace of the educational practices – orthodox or revolutionary, licit or illicit – that had been held there⁸. Consequently, more and more historians of education began to study the school memory as a useful device to explore the content of this “black box”, since – being founded on an empirical school culture – it was able to testify what had really happened within the classrooms. This especially with regard to issues – such as corporal punishment, prohibited teaching practices and other educational taboos – not documented in the official reports, although historically attested. Hence, the flourishing of historical studies in education that widely used diaries, memoirs and autobiographies, as well as oral sources.

⁴ Nóvoa, *Ways of Saying, Ways of Seeing*, cit., p. 15.

⁵ On this historiographical category, see P. Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, Paris, Plon, 1960.

⁶ D. Julia, *La culture scolaire comme objet historique*, in A. Nóvoa, M. Depaepe, E.W. Johannigmeier (edd.), *The Colonial Experience in Education: Historical Issues and Perspectives*, Ghent, Universiteit Gent, 1995, pp. 353-382.

⁷ C. Lacey, *Hightown Grammar: the school as a social system*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1970.

⁸ M. Depaepe, F. Simon, *Is there any place for the history of “education” in the “history of education”? A plea for the history of everyday reality in and outside schools*, «Paedagogica Historica», XXXI, n. 1, 1995, pp. 9-16.

In the following years, the Spanish and French scientific communities were the protagonists of the troubled historiographical process that led to devote more and more attention to school memories, thanks – for example – to the seminal studies of Agustín Escolano, Antonio Viñao and Pierre Caspard⁹.

The use of individual memories as sources for the history of education slowly increased in some scholars the awareness that there was a collective dimension of school memory that could itself become the object of historical research, according to the interpretative categories proposed by Nóvoa.

The memory of the past school, thus, ceased to be only a tool of historical reconstruction and became its object. New interesting researches were started, such as those promoted by the American scholars Pamela Bolotin Joseph and Gail E. Burnaford, that in their pioneering work investigated the evolution of the “public image of the school” and the social perception of the teaching profession, that is the archetypes that pervade society and determine the public status of education¹⁰.

In some way, it is possible to affirm that there are three main types of school: the “legal school”, codified by laws, programs and educational theories; the “real school”, shaped by the real educational practices carried out in the classroom and the material living conditions within the school; and the “ideal school”, shaped by common sense, imagined and represented by the cultural industry and subject to the distortions of individual remembering and collective memory.

Not surprisingly – during the International Symposium “School Memories. New Trends in Historical Research into Education: Heuristic Perspectives and Methodological Issues”, organized in Seville in 2015 with Antonio Viñao and Cristina Yanes – we defined the school memory as the individual, collective and public practice of remembering a common school past, indispensable to give us back the overall cultural dimension of this historical phenomenon, and we tried to study the modes of symbolic representation of school, schooling and teachers over time¹¹.

If personal memories can be studied individually or compared as sources, collective memory can instead be studied only as a process, since it consists in a social reconstruction of the past, which derives from the fusion between the “lived school past” (of which those who remember were actors) and the “imagined school past” (of which often those who remember were listeners, readers and spectators, namely cultural consumers)¹². In

⁹ See A. Escolano, *Memoria de la educación y cultura de la escuela*, in J.M. Hernández Díaz, A. Escolano (edd.), *La memoria y el deseo: cultura de la escuela y educación deseada*, Valencia, Tirant lo Blanch, 2002, pp. 19-42; A. Viñao, *La memoria escolar: restos y huellas, recuerdos y olvidos*, «Annali di Storia dell’Educazione e delle Istituzioni Scolastiche», n. 12, 2005, pp. 19-33.; P. Caspard, *L’historiographie de l’éducation dans un contexte mémoriel. Réflexion sur quelques évolutions problématiques*, «Histoire de l’Éducation», n. 121, 2009, pp. 67-82.

¹⁰ J.P. Bolotin, G.E. Burnaford (edd.), *Images of Schoolteachers in America*, Mahwah, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001.

¹¹ J. Meda, A. Viñao, *School Memory: Historiographical Balance and Heuristics Perspectives*, in C. Yanes-Cabrera, J. Meda, A. Viñao (edd.), *School Memories. New Trends in the History of Education*, Cham, Springer, 2017, pp. 1-9.

¹² On this concept and the risks associated with its use in historiography: C. Shaw, M. Chase (edd.), *The Imagined Past. History and Nostalgia*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1989.

this sense, collective memory descends genetically from the collective imaginary, whose symbolic materials can derive as much from the cultural heritage of a given community as from the new elaborations promoted by the cultural or information industry.

The study of this type of memory allows, in particular, to define the way in which today's people, social groups and public bodies look at it and interpret or re-interpret it. In this sense, school memory is not only of interest as a gateway to the school's past but also as a tool to understand what they know or believe they know about the school of the past and how much what they know corresponds to reality or is influenced by prejudices and stereotypes deeply rooted in common sense.

These volumes aim to address these complex issues and broaden the perspective from which the schooling phenomenon is analyzed in its historical dimension, thanks to the large number of contributions here collected, that will help us to better understand the school and its many pasts.

School Memories and Travelling Iconic Images of Education in the Nineteenth Century

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Introduction: from Print Collection to Image-Based Research

I would like to begin by talking about a project that has occupied much of our adult lives, a project that opened a world of possibilities that we could not even begin to suspect, as well as providing us with some of our greatest intellectual satisfactions in recent years. I speak in the plural because I am referring to a joint project with my husband, Sjaak Braster, a project that is as old as our marriage. In July 1992 we went to Vienna for our honeymoon, and there we discovered that we could buy engravings of educational subjects. We were especially drawn to those depicting the insides of schools, classrooms where we could see the interaction between teachers and students, and iconographic representations of teaching methods that we had only ever read about. During that week we ate very little, spending most of our scarce money on four school prints, one of them being from the *Orbis Pictus* by Comenius. Thus began our collection, which has grown to include several hundred images of schools from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, from all over the world¹.

For many years we collected school prints for two main reasons: to decorate the mostly empty walls of our houses and, in my case, to liven up the classes I taught in History of Education, where I attempted to follow the Pestalozzian ideal of teaching by images, showing the evolution of teaching and of the school in an intuitive way. Beyond these decorative and pedagogical functions, it had not occurred to us that the prints themselves could somehow be the object of historiographical interest². But an academic

¹ S. Braster, *Exhibiting Teachers' Hands: Storytelling Based on a Private Collection of Engravings*, in F. Herman, S. Braster, M.M. del Pozo Andrés (edd.), *Exhibiting the Past. Public Histories of Education*, Oldenbourg, De Gruyter, 2022, pp. 317-320.

² We have started to sense the possibilities that the gravures could offer to the historians of education in 2002, while analysing the images of secondary schools published in a Spanish illustrated journal, also a rich and very neglected iconographical source. M.M. del Pozo Andrés, S. Braster, *Understanding Images of Secondary Education (Spain, Second Half of the 19th century)*. Paper Presented in the 24th Session of the International Standing Conference for the History of Education, ISCHE XXIV, Paris, 10-13 July, 2002, and M.M. del Pozo Andrés, *La Imagen de la Mujer en la Educación Contemporánea*, in T. Marín Eced, M.M. del Pozo Andrés (edd.), *Las mujeres en la construcción del mundo contemporáneo*, Cuenca, Diputación de Cuenca, 2002, pp. 241-301. Later on, we have tried the study of single school images, both paintings and engravings, one of which was exceptionally part of our collection. S. Braster, *The People, The Poor and the Oppressed: The Concept of Popular*

event, in which Juri Meda would be closely involved, would turn our understanding of the collection upside down. The year was 2015, and together with Cristina Yanes and Antonio Viñao, he was organizing a symposium in Seville on *School Memories* as a historical object. The idea was to open new theoretical and methodological paths into a subject of growing interest among historians of education. Juri urged us to do something different, to make this symposium really stand out. On December 31st, 2014, just the day on the deadline for presenting proposals, we had the idea of using our collection of prints as a primary source for exploring the relationship between images and the collective memory. Among the first questions we asked ourselves were the following: Why can we find countless versions of some educational prints published in the nineteenth century? Could their popularity owe to the fact that for certain generations these images brought back memories of their school years? Or was it an attempt to construct a collective memory that transcended time and space?

In this very first work on the topic, we defined the concept of «iconic images of education», by describing the indicators that determine the reception, distribution, and impact of these images. We established five characteristics: 1) «they have been reproduced many times»; 2) «these are reproductions not only of the works in their original form, but also of their many variations»; 3) «they can evoke emotions»; 4) «they have a symbolic meaning that for most observers is immediately obvious», but that «can change over time and ultimately depends upon the context in which the image is framed»; and 5) they «refer to archetypes, have the potential to be archetypes themselves and thus represent more than what is being displayed», making the invisible visible³.

While we have yet to find the answers to many of these previous questions, we have developed a research methodology which we could define as «the biography of an image»⁴. It involves analysing, with the traditional biographical/iconographic method, some of the more singular prints, those which we have good reason to believe enjoyed exceptional popularity, circulation and impact. Upon selecting a print, we proceed to search for the symbolic meaning of the image, to understand its cultural connotations and significance, to reconstruct its underlying messages and its history by tracing the different versions and copies that were made of it as well as testimonies from the time. With this approach we try to establish and understand how the iconic character of certain images of education was constructed.

The third concept for understanding the relationship between educational engravings and collective memory is that of the «travelling images, circulating in time and space around the globe». Art historians have demonstrated the existence of travelling artworks images between the East and the West, which was the result of the circulation of copies of engravings and etching illustrations in printed books. Thus, some eighteenth-century

Education through Time, «Paedagogica Historica», vol. 47, n. 1-2, 2011, pp. 1-14.

³ M.M. del Pozo Andrés, S. Braster, *Exploring New Ways of Studying School Memories: The Engraving as a Blind Spot of the History of Education*, in C. Yanes-Cabrera, J. Meda, A. Viñao (edd.), *School Memories. New Trends in the History of Education*, Cham, Springer, 2017, p. 12.

⁴ M.M. del Pozo Andrés, *The undisciplined child: the image of the rebellious childhood in an age of educational disciplining (1809-1840)*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. 13, n. 1, 2018, pp. 71-72.

Japanese pictorial schools underwent a «process of appropriation of Western visual culture», while some «Japanese woodblock prints reached nineteenth-century Europe», and influenced artists such as van Gogh, Gauguin, Monet, or Degas. We speak of «a complete and circular trajectory of travelling images». The interest of art historians nowadays is focused on finding out «through which specific travelling images, this influence can most clearly be seen»⁵. We can transfer this discussion to the history of education, as we have already begun to explore some «travelling images» of school scenes from the nineteenth century⁶. The composition, the school landscape, the teachers and students gestures, the depicted scenes, the arrangement of objects, the perspective and so on can be thought of as the result of a global circulation of images and their mutual influence. The big open question is the same that worries the art historians, namely, to find the specific «travelling images» that most clearly show this influence.

1. *Social and Cultural Use of Engravings before/during the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*

When you enter into the world of old prints, you are joining a club of passionate enthusiasts of what is considered, quite wrongly, a «lesser» art form. People tend to forget that, as the great art historian and print collector Leo Steinberg wrote, for 600 years gravures contributed to raising «the level of critical visual awareness», serving to visually educate countless generations across geographical boundaries and social classes. During the Renaissance and the following centuries, gravures were «the circulating lifeblood» of pictorial and iconographical ideas – the vehicle through which artists communicated with one another», in the words of Steinberg⁷. Because the crucial idea behind the importance of engravings lies in the word *circulation*, in the fact that because of their physical properties they were easy to transport and could cross borders. Printed images have always travelled from one place to another, reaching countries and cities far from their place of origin. In fact, starting in the Renaissance, artists generally became known not through their original works, but from reproductive engravings. In the words of Alberto Milano, another art historian who was also an avid print collector, «Europe was a common market where images were widely understood, copied, and sold from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century»⁸.

⁵ K. Abe, *Travelling Images in the Global Context: A Case Study of the Short-Lived 18th century Akita Ranga Painting School in Japan*, «Artl@s Bulletin», vol. 10, n. 1, 2021, pp. 44-45.

⁶ M.M. del Pozo Andrés, S. Braster, *An image travelling across Europe. The transformation of «The school in an uproar» into «Le désordre dans l'école» (1809-1850)*, in H. Amsing, N. Bakker, M. van Essen, S. Parlevliet (edd.), *Images of education. Cultuuroverdracht in historisch perspectief*, Groningen, Uitgeverij Passage, 2018, pp. 84-97.

⁷ L. Steinberg, *What I Like About Prints*, «Art in Print», vol. 7, n. 5, 2018, pp. 3, 10, 17, 18.

⁸ A. Milano, *Change of Use, Change of Public, Change of Meaning: Printed Images Travelling Through Europe*, in E. Stead (ed.), *Reading Books and Prints as Cultural Objects. New Directions in Book History*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 139.

The second key word for understanding the importance of engravings is *mass production*. Owing to their reproductive possibilities, engravings became the most democratic aesthetic object in the history of art; they reached all of the social classes, finding their way into «the homes of the poor and the rich, the ruler and the ruled»⁹. At the same time, they circulated and spread about, prints were reproduced with much cheaper materials and techniques, meaning they could be sold for a broad range of prices and reach very different buyers from the originally targeted audience. The consumers of these mass production engravings had neither the access nor possibility of seeing the original work of art, but they could experience it through household objects such as calendars, handkerchiefs, table games or prints for daily consumption. As the British pre-Raphaelite art critic Frederic George Stephens remarked in 1860: «Where the picture cannot go, the engravings penetrate»¹⁰.

We lovers of old engravings have an ongoing battle with the legendary essay written by Walter Benjamin in 1935, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Benjamin asserts categorically that photography broke with the past, due to its being a technique that allowed for «the process of pictorial reproduction», and that this changed society's visual culture. Benjamin laments the loss of what he calls the «aura», that is, the uniqueness and authenticity of the original work in the face of the mechanically produced photograph. He then delves into the classic nineteenth-century dispute regarding the artistic value of painting versus photography¹¹. But what Benjamin failed to take into consideration was that when people at the end of the nineteenth century began to acquire photographs of Old Master paintings, they «were not substituting these photographs for original paintings, but for the engraved copies and chromolithographs that had previously represented them»¹². Only a few lucky individuals had actually seen the original works; the versions that most people had seen and admired were the prints of these works that were circulating. The engravers served as the translators and interpreters of the original works, and a good engraver could turn a mediocre work of art into something of great demand, or, to the contrary, convert a masterpiece into something banal. In fact, a painter's reputation depended not on the success of his original works but on the number of them that were rendered into engravings and the popularity that these enjoyed among the general public¹³.

Consequently, the origin of the «age of mechanical reproduction», to use Walter Benjamin's expression, actually predates by far the popularization of photography, and should be established at around the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. The primary cause for this revolution was the unprecedented boom in the print

⁹ F. Eichenberg, *The Art of the Print: Masterpieces, History, Techniques*, New York, Harry N. Abrahams, Inc. Publishers, 1976, p. 4.

¹⁰ Quoted in R. Verhoogt, *Art Reproduction and the Nation: National Perspectives in an International Art Market*, in J.D. Baetens, D. Lyna (edd.), *Art Crossing Borders. The Internationalisation of the Art Market in the Age of Nation States, 1750-1914*, Leiden, Brill, 2019, p. 322.

¹¹ W. Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, in H. Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, New York, Schocken, 1968, pp. 217-251.

¹² Steinberg, *What I Like About Prints*, cit., p. 25.

¹³ R.K. Engen, *Victorian Engravings*, ed. by H. Beck, London, Academy Editions, 1975, p. 10.

market resulting from the appearance of new engraving techniques such as steel, intaglio, mezzotint, lithography, chromolithography, ..., allowing for thousands of copies to be made of a single image. From a steel plate, for example, up to 30.000 impressions could be made. The cheapest versions of such prints – together with pirated copies – could number in the millions and find their way into any kind of home. People of the middle classes, in addition to becoming massive consumers of what were known as «demi-fine» engravings, began to cultivate a taste that differed from that of the aristocracy. In Victorian England, for example, they did not tend to acquire prints based on Old Master paintings, preferring instead gravures dealing with family subjects and homely scenes of common life created by living artists. Their appetite was for images that stimulated and brought back their own memories, that captured on paper the images they retained in their minds. Painters were quick to adapt to the public's taste and to depict subjects with immediate popular appeal.

This revolution in the print market meant that all social classes suddenly had much easier access to images and could observe a far greater number of scenes than any previous generation. The nineteenth century lived in a sort of what it has been called the «frenzy of the visible»¹⁴. At this moment, the popularity and increased demand for engravings «evolved from a newly urban culture which tried to grasp and classify its experience of world through vision»¹⁵. In the history of visual communication «the nineteenth century was therefore characterized by a hitherto unprecedented production of reproductions, in terms of both quantity and quality»¹⁶, till the point that it has been affirmed «that more prints were produced during the nineteenth century than in all the precedent centuries put together»¹⁷. The engravings market was benefiting from the first consumer boom that struck the globe, even it has been strongly affirmed «that no one in the future should doubt that the first of the world's consumer societies had unmistakably emerged by 1800»¹⁸. And the symbol of this new society was the shop with great glass windows, to which the passers-by, astonished by the images that were offered before their eyes, leaned out.

Many engravings were sold in the elegant stores of the big cities, in shops with huge display windows showing to potential buyers their most recent and striking prints. The shop windows with the latest engravings, lithographs, and etchings, were called «the poor men's galleries», and «were part of the fascinating visual culture of the nineteenth century»¹⁹. It was in this elegant stores – like the Ackermann's Repository of Arts in

¹⁴ Quoted in G. Beegan, *The Mechanization of the Image: Facsimile, Photography, and Fragmentation in Nineteenth-Century Wood Engraving*, «Journal of Design History», vol. 8, n. 4, 1995, p. 257.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

¹⁶ R. Verhoogt, *Art in Reproduction. Nineteenth-Century Prints after Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Josef Israëls and Ary Scheffer*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2007, p. 15.

¹⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁸ N. McKendrick, J. Brewer, J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society. The Commercialization of Eighteenth-century England*, London, Europa Publications Limited, 1982, p. 13.

¹⁹ R.M. Verhoogt, *Free Access to the History of Art: Art Reproduction and the appropriation of the History of Art in the nineteenth-century culture*, in L. Jensen, J. Leerssen, M. Mathijssen (edd.), *Free Access to the Past. Romanticism, Cultural Heritage and the Nation*, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2010, p. 149.



Fig. 1. Travelling print seller showing his commodities to the village children (Nationaal Onderwijsmuseum, Dordrecht)



Fig. 2. Print peddler showing his goods. Published in the cover of the 2^{me} collection de Chansonnettes, Bruxelles, Meynne, c. 1832 (Private collection M.M. del Pozo and S. Braster)

London, with its exclusive tea room²⁰ – that the aristocracy and bourgeoisie acquired their gravures from among the luxury works and «fine art», pieces which, when displayed in their houses, would bring greater social recognition to their owners. But the so-called «cheap prints» or «popular prints»²¹ – produced for the masses – were sold and circulated on a broad scale, in good part by travelling salesmen who went from town to town with their merchandise stashed in boxes, baskets and even in their umbrellas. Some had fixed stalls in marketplaces and local fairs and would display their prints on the walls, the ground or inside their booths; others went from door to door in the towns and villages, showing the villagers the latest acquisitions to arrive from the city (Figures 1 and 2).

In front of the engravings shop windows, it was a gathering of all the social classes. In 1889, the Dutch writer Johan Gram described the spectacle of observing the passers-by looking at the window of a print shop in The Hague:

Everyone that passes by, be they an important magistrate, a fashionable lady or a blushing maid-servant with her basket, stops here to look at all the news, and it is very amusing to slip between them and to listen to the sober or witty comments²².

²⁰ V. Furió, *La imagen del artista. Grabados antiguos sobre el mundo del arte*, Barcelona, Universitat de Barcelona, 2016, p. 88.

²¹ A. Griffiths, *The Dissemination of Popular Prints*, «Print Quarterly», vol. 32, n. 1, 2015, pp. 98-101.

²² Quoted in Verhoogt, *Free Access to the History of Art*, cit., p. 149.

Studies on visual culture have analysed the phenomenon of the print-shop window, which can be seen as a mediating panel between subject-observers and a collection of prints on display. The collection offers a cultural repertoire of images from a world that is foreign to that of the observers, whose ability to interpret the images will depend on their own cultural capital. In other words, these engravings serve to educate, but in order to be understood, the observer needs to have some prior cultural information. One of the most powerful depictions of the interaction arising between observers and prints can be seen in the famous work by MacDuff titled *Shaftesbury, or Lost and Found*, which was reproduced in prints in 1864. The scene shows two children, one a barefoot London street urchin, the other an older child in a London Shoe Black Brigade uniform. The older child has put down his shoe-shining materials and is explaining the prints in a shop window to his young companion. At first glance, we seem to be seeing a representation of the difficulties that the lower classes had in understanding such prints, or even in being able to read the captions. But a closer look shows us that the older boy is pointing at a central portrait among the prints. This figure turns out to be the reformist Anthony Ashley Cooper (1801-1885), 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, co-founder of the London Shoe Black Brigade and founder of the London Ragged School Union. Through these institutions, Shaftesbury rescued and provided homes, education and work to children who were living on the street (Figure 3). The image can therefore be seen as having at least two symbolic meanings. The first of these is the depiction of engravings as powerful tools for the education and acculturation of society's lower classes²³. The other meaning stems from the juxtaposition of "lost" and "found"; the "lost" child still lives on the street, with neither shoes nor education; the "found" child was lucky enough to have been found by Shaftesbury and educated in the



Fig. 3. *A London School-Board Capture, 2.40 a.m.*, engraving taken from «The Illustrated London News», vol. LIX, 9 September 1871, p. 1. The engraving portrays the London Brigade at the moment of capturing homeless children for bringing them to the Ragged Schools (Private collection M.M. del Pozo and S. Braster)

²³ M. Tedeschi, "Where the Picture Cannot Go, the Engravings Penetrate": *Prints and the Victorian Art Market*, «Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies», vol. 31, n. 1, 2005, pp. 9-10.

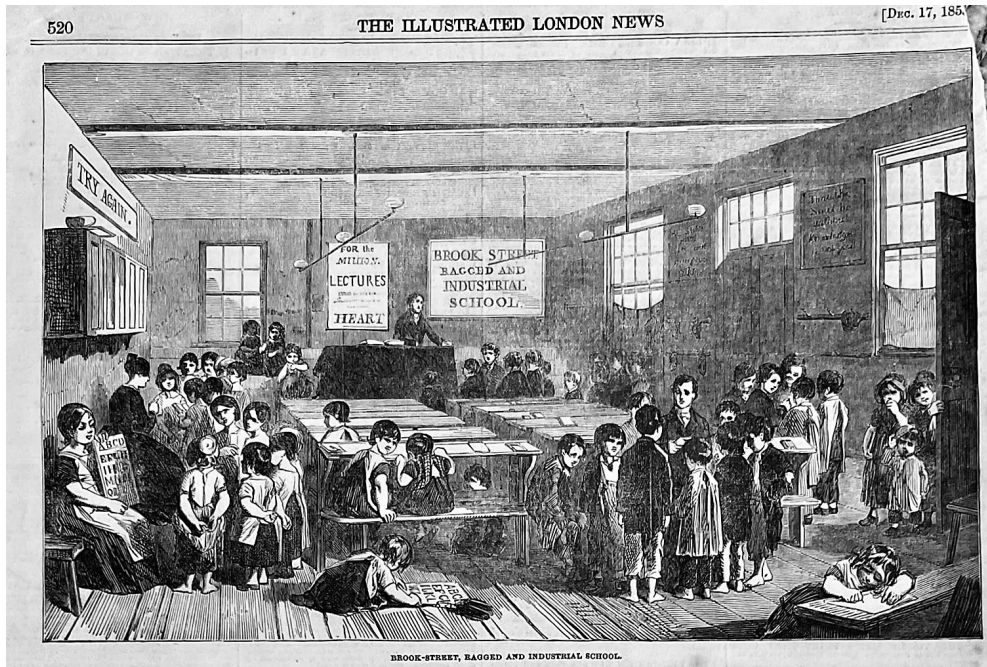


Fig. 4. *Brook-Street Ragged and Industrial School*, «The Illustrated London News», 17 December 1853, p. 520 (Private collection M.M. del Pozo and S. Braster)

Ragged School (Figure 4). Having become integrated into society, he is now able to share his cultural conventions with his less fortunate friend.

Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the manner of conserving and exhibiting engravings also changed. Traditionally they had been handled by experts, or *connaisseurs*, who assembled specialized, technical collections of Old Master prints (Figure 5). They conserved them in portfolios and albums which were only shown on rare occasions, and usually to other experts, but in the nineteenth century they opened their collections more and more to the public with the aim of contributing to the formation of a «well founded national taste»²⁴.

But starting in the mid-eighteenth century, prints began to be used – with the appropriate frames – as decorative furniture in the houses of the bourgeoisie and the middle classes. Prints also made their way into the homes of the working class at this time, where they were more likely to be displayed unframed and unadorned, nailed or tacked to the walls (Figure 6). The inventories of the possessions of British gentlemen, carried out on the occasion of their death or of bankruptcy, show us that engravings tended to be hung in «rooms used for socializing, in particular in the dining room, which was

²⁴ M. Cerón, *Collecting Prints by Giulio Bonasone in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain*, «Print Quarterly», vol. 31, n. 2, 2014, p. 166.



Fig. 5. *Les amateurs d'estampes*, drawing by Honoré Daumier, Paris, Éditions Fouqueux, n.d. (but after 1837) (Nationaal Onderwijsmuseum, Dordrecht)



Fig. 6. House of a poor family (c. 1840) with a religious print hanging in the wall. J. Amades, J. Corominas, P. Vila, *Imatgeria popular catalana. El soldats i altres papers de rengles*, Barcelona, Orbis, 1936, vol. I, p. 54 (Joan Boadas Library)

generally the preserve of men». In the eighteenth century there was a clearly masculine tendency to exhibit prints in the walls, which showed a close association between the engravings and the heads of families, because in general they represented «the family and friends' networks of the householder and his political affiliations and ambitions», but also spoke about his «intellectual and cultural claims [...] as man of letters, familiar with science, literature, music or theatre»²⁵. The new collectors of the nineteenth century, on the contrary, were much more interested in engravings of familiar subjects, with homely scenes of daily life or of their journeys, with a narrative of moral character. Their aim while framing and hanging these reproductive prints on the walls of their homes was subtly different from that in the past century, because «it is intended to serve as a reminder, a souvenir, and to rival the book as a source of knowledge»²⁶. By the end of the century we witness a phenomenon of «domestication of art, which had been large accomplished by the permeation of engravings in every English parlour». As the American painter James Abbott McNeill Whistler had bitterly noted in 1885, «homes have been invaded, their walls covered with paper»²⁷.

²⁵ S. Nenadic, *Print Collecting and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Scotland*, «History», vol. 82, n. 266, 1997, pp. 216 and 218.

²⁶ E. Gombrich, *The Uses of Images. Studies in the Social Function of Art and Visual Communication*, London, Phaidon, 1999, p. 129.

²⁷ Quoted in M. Tedeschi, *Whistler and the English Print Market*, «Print Quarterly», vol. 14, n. 1, 1997, p. 34.

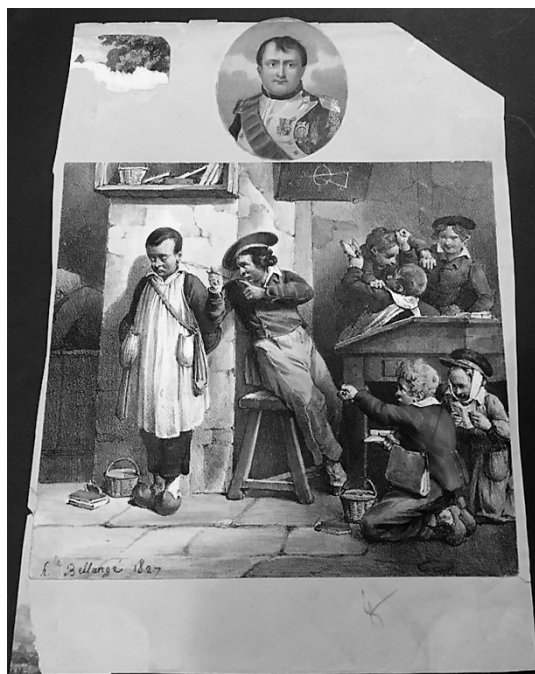


Fig. 7. Cheap prints glued to cheap paper, that once were part of a scrapbook-album (Private collection M.M. del Pozo and S. Braster)

at family gatherings. And while it is true that most of the albums that have reached us today belonged to ladies of the aristocracy, in many print shops we can still find cheap prints glued onto silk paper, which leads me to suspect that this was a common practice among the lower classes (Figure 7).

2. *Memories of Nineteenth-century Schools: Case Studies*

We have now established the importance of engravings in the construction of a visual culture over several generations as well as their prevalence and popularity among people from every social class and geographic origin. This leads us to see educational prints as more than simple artistic objects that represent – more or less faithfully – school life at a given time; they also constitute the physical object that preserves the memory of

Men and women begin at the end of the eighteenth century the practice of putting together albums, which could include texts, pictures, engravings and lithographs. Albums can be thought of as collections of souvenirs that had a special significance for these women and men, constituting an individual memory of sorts, the artifact that protected their autobiographical memories. Organized as *collages* of literary and artistic creations, press cuttings, drawings, and portraits, they also included lithograph prints by European and North American illustrators which often had been cut out of illustrated journals²⁸. Such a gathering of pieces made an album «a virtual portable museum» and a «practical form[s] of memory»²⁹. Women and men found pleasure in collecting and preserving such reproductions and in showing them to friends on private occasions, especially

²⁸ V. Miseres, *Sociabilidad femenina y archivo: lectura de tres álbumes de mujeres en el siglo XIX colombiano*, «Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura», vol. 49, n. 1, 2022, p. 88.

²⁹ B. Leca, *Before Photography: The Album and the French Graphic Tradition in the Early Nineteenth Century*, «Studies in the History of Art», vol. 77, 2011, pp. 33-34.

the school of our predecessors, the icon that encapsulates in the most direct way the classroom atmosphere, the graphic translation of the images retained in their heads, the depiction on paper of a certain memory from their school days. And I believe that this school memories took on the character of a collective memory as a result of the popularity and circulation of a particular engraving and the way in which this particular engraving was received by the public, a public that could very likely change the original message, depending on the school memories that they themselves harboured.

Our discovery of the first engraving that symbolized the school memory of the nineteenth century came about as the result of an inductive process. In our search of old prints this was the image that we came across most often, in a variety of formats and versions and in several European and American countries. We decided to study it from a biographical perspective, that is, to reconstruct the history of the image. This is where the surprises began³⁰.

The original work which our engravings were based upon was a watercolour that was first exhibited in London in the Spring of 1809. Its author, Henry James Richter, was a minor painter who specialized in choosing subjects from daily life that appealed to people's sentiments and were easy to relate to for common people. The work's original title was *Picture of Youth*. And while the connoisseurs did not think much of the artistic merits of the watercolour, they were quite moved by its subject, some proclaiming it to be so evocative that they would never forget it. The scene shows a classroom in «a country school», where the teacher is absent and the pupils are up to all kinds of mischief; the precise instant depicted is that of the unexpected return of the teacher, who catches the students making a complete mockery of him and his teaching. It would be obvious to any observer that they were witnessing the moment just before a severe punishment was about to be inflicted upon the group.

The first observers were moved by this work because it conjured up memories of their school days and awakened school memories. I believe that this was possible because Richter did not paint some anonymous rural school. Rather, he was representing some of his own school memories from St. Martin's Library School and the Soho Academy, the two London centres where he had been educated between 1778 and 1787³¹. In several memoirs written by artists and actors who attended these same schools at the time we find references to similar incidents. These include students parodying and drawing caricatures of their teachers – an activity which, according to his own son, Richter was quite good at – as well as some of the comic school scenes appearing in the picture. Such recollections were shared by several generations of English gentlemen, which helps to explain the work's immediate success, which took the form of continued requests for its reproduction in engravings. While the original work itself has been lost, oil copies still appear occasionally in auction houses. This in itself gives some measure of its popularity,

³⁰ A more extended version of this reconstruction can be found in Pozo Andrés, Braster, *Exploring New Ways of Studying School Memories*, cit., pp. 12-24.

³¹ Pozo Andrés, *The undisciplined child*, cit., pp. 85-91.



Fig. 8. *A Picture of Youth or The School in an Uproar*, engraving taken from *Illustrations of the Works of Henry Richter: First Series*, London, Rudolph Ackermann, 1822 (Private collection M.M. del Pozo and S. Braster)

as it shows that anonymous artists found it worthwhile to copy the subject because there was a demand for this particular school scene.

Aware of its popularity, Henry Richter finally had his work engraved in 1822 and titled it *A Picture of Youth, or The School in an Uproar*. But he did not actually reproduce the whole picture. Instead, he prepared a portfolio with four engravings – drawn by him on stone – that enlarged, with a zoom technique, parts of the original watercolour. This was accompanied by a cover showing, in the size of a small vignette, an engraved copy of the original watercolour, this being the oldest remaining image of the work (Figure 8). The choice of a portfolio format tells us that these engravings were meant for a public consisting of art critics, *connoisseurs* and persons of considerable culture. Each scene was laden with images appreciable only to a certain kind of influential Londoners of the time. These «secret» allusions ranged from the Masonic symbols carved on the classroom benches – which may well have symbolized the well-known Masonic connections of the Soho Academy – to the crusty old spelling-book by Thomas Dilworth, which countless generations of Brits and North Americans had used to learn grammar; from the references to the Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea to the mention of Goggins in the hangman game, an allusion to the Irishman Thomas Goggins, who had been executed that same year in Cork by this very method.

Despite their being intended for a cultured public, at least two of the five engravings from this portfolio were widely pirated and published as «cheap prints» in the 1830s, with



Fig. 9. *The Village School in an Uproar*, engraving by Charles Turner after painting by Henry Richter, 1825 (Private collection M.M. del Pozo and S. Braster)

no mention of the original work or of the author³². Captions indicated the new meaning being attributed to the images: «the angry schoolmaster» and «the idle scholar», two social archetypes which, in their oversimplification, were easily recognizable to anyone who had attended any type of school. And yet, the illustrated sector of society, in the voice of its art critics, requested insistently an engraving «of the whole», that is, of the complete watercolour, not just parts of it; it was the complete image of the school – they claimed – that «has lived in our memory», from when they first saw it in 1809. The reason for this vivid impression was that the subject was «intimately connected with our early associations»³³, in other words, it evoked their first school memories.

Ritcher put off the conversion of his watercolour into a reproductive engraving for many years because he was not its legal owner, he was not in possession of the copyright, and he had no say over its fate. This led him, in April of 1823, to paint and exhibit a new watercolour titled *A Picture of Youth; or, the School in an Uproar, a second picture on the subject*, presenting it as an exact copy of the original and made «for the express purpose of its being engraved»³⁴. By the hand of an elite engraver, Charles Turner, the first mezzotint engraving of Richter's watercolour appeared in April of 1825, with a title – that would become definitive – *The Village School in an Uproar* (Figure 9). Art critics

³² *Ibid.*, p. 78.

³³ *Fine Arts*, «The London Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences & c», n. 285, 6 July 1822, p. 425.

³⁴ *The Nineteenth Exhibition of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours*, «The European Magazine and London Review», n. 83, June 1823, p. 539.



Fig. 10. *The Royal Academy*, print made by George Cruikshank, published in «The Comic Almanack», May 1844 (British Museum, n. 1978, U.2671)

were quick to praise his excellence as a «translator» of the original work, due to the way he reproduced perfectly the expressions and movements of the characters as well as their underlying emotions. However, Turner not only erased all of the iconographic elements that helped to give a historical context to the picture; he also depersonalized it, eliminating the symbols linking it to the author's biography. In doing this, Turner was ensuring the atemporal nature of the image, enabling its reproduction in different times and settings. Turner was also striving for an intellectual democratization, turning something that was only truly comprehensible to the educated British elite into an object that was relatable to a much broader audience.

The engraving was an instant success, and the British press of the 1830s raved about how *The Village School in an Uproar* was one of the most popular modern prints ever. A first edition likely consisted of some 1500 prints, but many further impressions were made with the same plates. It continued to appear in print publishers' catalogues until at least 1864, and we find the press regularly welcoming it as a «new print». Its use was eminently decorative, hanging on the walls of many a British gentleman's home, where it tended to be displayed in the more private rooms, those reserved for family and close friends. Thousands of people acquired this print for the enjoyment of contemplating the school scene. Other, more caricaturesque versions were also made, in which Richter's

name disappeared, and noticeable changes were made in the characters depicted in order to better connect with the events that were entertaining the public at the time, such as, for example, the education of the Prince of Wales and future King Edward VII, who in 1844 was only three years old (Figure 10)³⁵. And these audiences were wide-ranging indeed, with the image reproduced on puzzles and even on pocket handkerchiefs. From 1853, and at least until 1907, it also made its way into the theatre, where it was presented as a *tableau vivant*, recreating the famous picture *The Village School in an Uproar*. Spectators must have had a good laugh seeing the pictures' characters in flesh and blood. These data lead me to conclude that, when nineteenth century Britons evoked the concept of a school, the image that popped into their heads was most likely Richter's composition or one of its many variations and transformations.

The print's impact was felt well beyond the borders of Great Britain. In 1825 it travelled to France³⁶. At approximately the same time that Turner's mezzotint engraving was published in London, an aquatint engraving titled *Le Vacarme dans l'École*, based on Richter's work, was published in Paris by the engraver Jean Pierre Marie Jazet. Here too it was a resounding success; before the year was out several other versions were published. There was even a sequel; the French painter Charles-Nicolas Lemercier immortalized the moment right after that shown in *The Village School in an Uproar*, the instant that every observer held in their imagination, when the teacher starts unleashing his fury on the pupils. Between 1829 and 1831 the image reached the shores of the United States, where it circulated through the so-called «annuals» which were very popular as Christmas presents. There it seems to have evoked similar sentiments as in the United Kingdom: «We can look at this scene over and over» – says one anonymous columnist – «no explanation is necessary; the whole story is before us»³⁷. And sure enough, one consequence of the engraving's success in North America was a series of stories written about the future life of the picture's figures, character studies based on their behaviour in the scene. In 1876 a German publisher specialized in cheap prints, the Scholz House of Mainz, released a mass-produced lithography on very cheap paper aimed at the working-class public. The title attached to it was *Der Dorfschullehrer* (The Village Schoolteacher) (Figure 11). The multilingual caption – in German, French, Italian and Spanish – is a clear indication of the image's travelling character.

³⁵ The Figure 10 served as illustration of a very long and humoristic poem about the qualities, abilities and knowledge required by the future tutor of the Prince of Wales. *Who shall educate the prince of Wales?*, in A.S. Thackeray, G.A. Beckett, The Brothers Mayhew, «The Comic Almanack, and Ephemeris in Jest and Earnest, containing Merry Tales, Humorous Poetry, Quips, and Oddities», April 1844, pp. 16-17. The possible tutor needed to have a kind of «first rate» encyclopedic knowledge of all the subjects and be able to teach his illustrious student really very fast, «at railroad speed». The poem anticipated the rigorous educational program designed by his parents and supervised by several tutors that the Prince of Wales started at the age of seven years old.

³⁶ See the travel of the image to France and its sequels in Pozo Andrés, Braster, *An image travelling across Europe*, pp. 84-97. Reproductions of these works in pp. 91, 93, 94, 95.

³⁷ *The Annuals*, «Illinois Monthly Magazine», January 1831, p. 177.



Fig. 11. *Der Dorfschullehrer*, in *Vom Christ-Kind*, Mainz, bei Jos. Scholz, 1876 (Private collection M.M. del Pozo and S. Braster)

There is no way that in Mediterranean countries people would have identified this scene with a rural school. In Spain at least, no school memory could be evoked by such an image. But some of the many copies of the engraving *The Village School in an Uproar* did arrive in Spain and ultimately influenced artistic representations of the school. In 1871, what we could consider the Spanish version of the English engraving was published³⁸. The author's inspiration in the original scene seems evident in the scene of the child chasing after an apple, of another sitting on a bench horsy-style, and yet another pupil drawing a caricature of his teacher behind his back. But the author spanishize the classroom by including typically Spanish children's games; by including a blackboard and teacher's desk as symbols of authority; by showing a rebellious child dancing on top of this desk and wearing a paper cap – possibly a burlesque version of the English dunce-cap; and by the writing on the blackboard, an iconotext of sorts, of the first letters of the alphabet, making clear that the students in this school barely knew the most basic rudiments of the alphabet (Figure 12).

³⁸ I. Gil-Díez Usandizaga, *La imagen del maestro español, entre el miedo y la parodia (1876-1931)*, «El Futuro del Pasado», n. 13, 2022, p. 370.

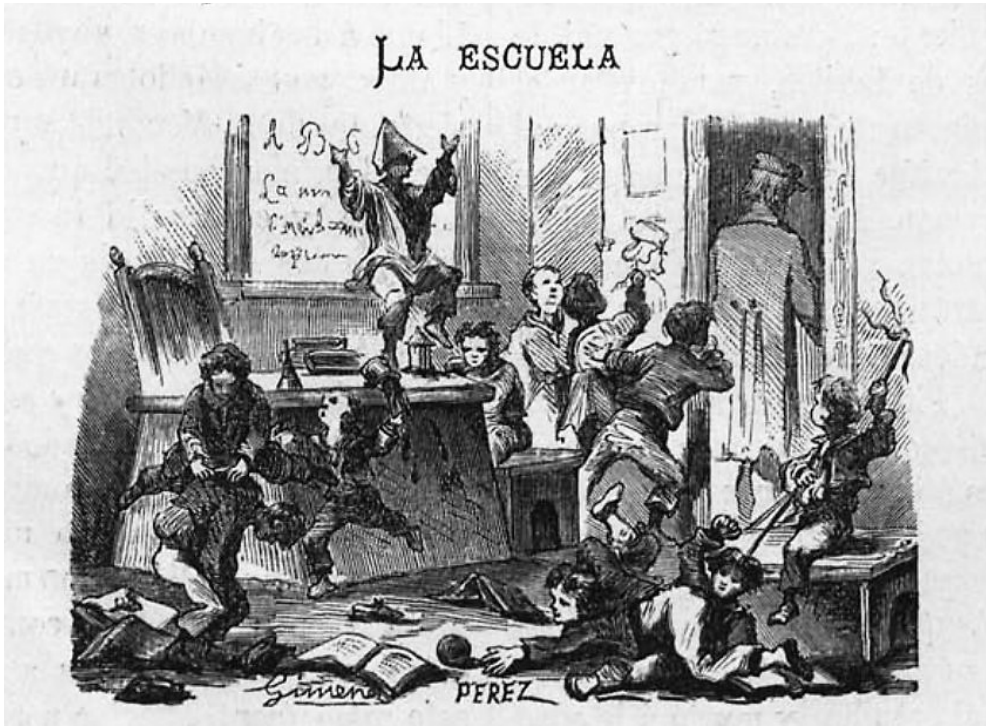


Fig. 12. *La Escuela*, drawing by José Giménez, published in «Los Niños», vol. 4, n. 9, September 1871, p. 136 (Hemeroteca Digital, Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid)

The print *The Village School in an Uproar* exuded masculinity, in both the activities shown and in the characters' body language. This leads us to ask ourselves, Are there not feminine versions of the *School in an Uproar*, ones showing scenes of chaos in girls' schools? The answer is yes, there are indeed paintings of this kind. These were meant to be companion prints to the masculine version. The decorating conventions and aesthetics of the times dictated that in well-to-do homes, paintings and prints should be hung in pairs, creating a kind of dialogue with two contrasting depictions of one same theme. The image of chaos in a girls' school can therefore be seen as simply fulfilling the need to accompany the boys' scene, which was the truly important one. In this case, art was imitating reality.

The first artist to paint one of these scenes was Henry Richter himself, and he only did so because Turner's engraving of *The Village School in an Uproar* was about to be published and he needed an accompaniment to help boost its sales. So, in 1825 he presented a watercolour destined to be associated with the original work. He titled it *The Village School in Repose*, and, when the pair of paintings was exhibited together for the first time, art critics said that the second picture was «not quite so brilliant in its colouring»³⁹.

³⁹ *The Northern Society*, «Leeds Intelligencer», n. 3699, 26 May 1825, p. 3.



Fig. 13. *The Village School in Repose*, engraving by John P. Quilley after painting by Henry Richter, 1825 (Private collection M.M. del Pozo and S. Braster)

Anyway a reproductive print was soon made of it (Figure 13), though the engraver of the new print was not nearly as famous as Turner and his work was considered «a failure», but extensive sales were expected «among those who possess the print with which it is meant to be associated, and which was one of the most popular of modern publications»⁴⁰.

The scene shows a girls' school – not really rural at all – where, while the teacher is having a catnap – her *siesta* [sic]⁴¹ –, the girls are engaged in all kinds of mischief. But they do so silently, so as to not wake their instructress. Here lies the contrast between these two works, the wild, frenetic scene of the boys opposed to Richter's depiction of the quiet and calm of the girls' classroom. Yet this engraving does not seem to have connected with the school memories of men or women. Art critics were of the opinion that Richter had carried out an exercise not of memory but of imagination, and their commentaries show that they were lacking the mental references to understand what they were seeing. One objected that the schoolmistress was not looking like an instructor, but «the bustling mother of a large family»⁴². Where some of them saw «sweet spirited girls»⁴³, other described them as «rude, but merry-hearted tomboys»⁴⁴, that is, girls who were

⁴⁰ *The School in Repose; engraved in mezzotinto by J. Arnold from a drawing by H. Richter*, «The New Monthly Magazine», 1st May 1832, p. 210.

⁴¹ *Society of Painters in Water Colours*, «La Belle Assemblée: or Court and fashionable magazine», May 1825, p. 225.

⁴² *Painters in Water Colours*, «The New Times», n. 8343, 25 April 1825, p. 3.

⁴³ *Society of Painters in Water Colours*, cit., p. 225.

⁴⁴ *The School in Repose*, cit., p. 210.

decidedly *unfeminine*. Others saw a group of very same-looking youth, with no clearly defined personality⁴⁵. Richter had rendered a feminine version of the cocky adolescent from the boys' school, which would seem to mean that she was adopting a provocative attitude towards the napping teacher, that was considered unpleasant by some art critics, while others interpreted her corporal language as an imitation of a dance teacher⁴⁶. And, interesting enough, when both watercolours were exhibited together, probably for the last time, in the South Kensington Museum, and as late as 1875, the art critic found that «in the boys' school the enjoyment of the young imps in the absence of the pedagogue is deliciously natural», and that all the scene was still looking very real; while in the girls' school it was difficult to believe that «now-a-days» the schoolmistress was sleeping, the feminine schools at the moment «are too full of learning and “competitive exams”»⁴⁷.

The engraving *The Village School in Repose* was deemed a failure, although it seemed to satisfy the need for which it was drawn: that of accompanying the famous, successful *The Village School in an Uproar*. While we have no evidence that the picture made it abroad, we do have evidence to the contrary; French publishers came up with their own versions of feminine school mayhem. Late in 1825 Philibert Louis Debucourt drew a somewhat free but recognizable rendition of Richter's work along with its inevitable feminine counterpart, which he called *La Récréation*. Here we see numerous young girls playing all kinds of pranks, undaunted by the fact that their teacher is ready to let loose with her birch. And in 1847 the French publisher Jean Dopter produced a pair of cheap prints meant for mass-consumption by the lower classes. The male print, titled *Le désordre dans l'école des garçons*, repeats the central narrative theme of *The Village School in an Uproar*, that is, the unexpected return of the teacher. It also contains two other secondary themes from the original: the two children drawing a caricature and the fight going on between two other classmates. The most notable difference is the French engravers' incorporation of scenes that are considerably more violent than anything in Richter's work, including the torturing of animals and the handling of arms. The corresponding feminine work, titled *Le désordre dans l'école des filles*, is much gentler. While the teacher naps in the classroom, some of the girls continue with their work, others play with animals and others, the most «rebellious» ones, practice some dance steps and seem to be ready to tickle the teacher with a feather.

The fundamental difference between the masculine and feminine representations of classroom chaos is that in the case of the boys the teacher is absent, while in the girls' classroom she is present, though asleep. This limits the girls' freedom and their chance to do greater mischief in the class. It would seem that the artists, all men, were afraid to explore the potential for feminine transgression, and the art critics were feeling uncomfortable in front of such behavior and preferred to ignore it.

⁴⁵ *Society of Painters in Water-Colours*, in *The Annual Register, or, a view of the history, politics, and literature of the year 1825*, London, Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1826, p. 55.

⁴⁶ *Fine Arts. Opening of the Water-Colour Exhibition*, «Weekly Fleming's Express», n. 105, 1st May 1825, p. 4.

⁴⁷ *Winchester Art Loan Exhibition*, «The Hampshire Advertiser County Newspaper», 23 June 1875, p. 4.



Fig. 14. *En ausencia de la maestra*, wood engraving by M. Weber after painting by Emanuel Spitzer, 1891 (Private collection M.M. del Pozo and S. Braster)

Only at the end of the nineteenth century do we come across an image that would become an icon of the female school – though admittedly this was determined by men as well. The origin was an oil painting by the Austrian painter Emanuel Spitzer (1844-1919), a work that must have been very popular indeed, as evidenced by the fact that copies and replicas by different Austrian authors – as Rudolf Geyling (1838-1904) or Heinrich August Mansfeld (1816-1901) – are still circulating today. But the painting became known by means of its publication in the illustrated press, appearing in various magazines in different countries between 1888 and 1891 (Figure 14). The scene is from a girls' secondary school, possibly a boarding school; the teacher is absent, and we only know that she is about to return because one of the girls is screaming. The students are engaged in all kinds of pranks that we had previously only ever found in depictions of boys, including the transgressive use of educational objects and the caricaturesque drawings of male and female teachers in the blackboard. The American and German versions of the print were titled in a similar way: *The teacher is coming* (1891) and *Die Lehrerin kommt* (1888), whereas in the illustrated Dutch journal «De Katholieke Illustratie», of a Catholic tendency, the caption reads *De eerwaarde moeder komt* (1889) – *The Reverend Mother is coming* –, affirming the school's religious nature.

The Spanish version was titled slightly different as *En ausencia de la maestra* (1891) – «In the absence of the teacher» –, but the strongest difference with the other national

versions lied in the way in which the scene was commented. In the accompanying article the painting was interpreted as an allegory of the youth, explaining how the young girls, compared with cocoons and chrysalis, were in the process of transforming in beautiful flowers and colourful butterflies, a process that was described with a language full of sexual connotations⁴⁸. It is impossible for the image to evoke any kind of school memories in nineteenth-century Spanish society, as there were hardly any boarding schools for girls and hardly any teenage girls went to secondary school.

However, the approach was very different in the articles published in other countries. The common message coming from these journals is the evocative power of the image, which connects to school memories of men as well as women. The Dutch anonymous writer communicated directly with their female readers:

This amusing scene does not need an elaborate explanation; all our readers and especially our female readers will recognize it at the first glance as an image from the happy days of youth. Do you still remember, female readers, from the days when you were a rascal of twelve or thirteen years old sitting on the desks of the boarding school, the exuberant fun when the sister for a moment lifted her heels? What a spectacle that was! It was as if the schoolroom had to be torn down⁴⁹.

In the North American version it was asserted, literally, that it did not matter if it was a boys' or a girls' school, although «girls are a little the worst of the two», «the enjoyment of fun, in the absence of the teacher, seems implanted in boy-and-girl-human-nature», it was a deeply held memory for *any* student *anywhere*, and therefore any man or woman could relate to this scene, «for we've all been there»⁵⁰.

Conclusions

We began our research of school engravings moved by a curiosity to discover the reasons that made certain prints so popular, even when they were not the most esthetically accomplished or the most pedagogically interesting. I am convinced now that some specific, particular engravings came to constitute a global phenomenon over the course of the nineteenth century, and that this only occurred with prints showing chaos and disarray in the classroom when the teacher was absent. The children's mayhem and mischief in these depictions is accompanied by the thrill of those precious moments of freedom.

At the beginning of this chapter, I established as archetypal «travelling images» those that succeeded in connecting the East and the West, that built bridges between Western

⁴⁸ *En ausencia de la maestra*, «La Ilustración Hispano-Americana», vol. 12, n. 579, 6 December 1891, p. 753.

⁴⁹ *De eerwaarde moeder komt*, «De Katholieke Illustratie», vol. 23, n. 50, 1889/90, pp. 396-397.

⁵⁰ *Triple Triumphs: Photogravures From the Original Paintings: The teacher is coming, Plam Sunday, A Trot*, Philadelphia, Gebbie & Co. Publishers, 1891, in History Colorado Online Collection (last access: 1st July 2023).



Fig. 15. Japanese version of *The school in an uproar*. Engraving from the first half of the 19th century (Private collection M.M. del Pozo and S. Braster)

and Eastern culture and allowed the circulation of symbols, conventions and messages that influenced the global art world of the nineteenth century. What I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter is that also in the «travelling images» on the school there was an influence and exchange of codes and representations. The British artist Henry Richter pioneered in 1809 an image of a chaotic school which he called «the school in an uproar» and which circulated widely throughout the nineteenth century in different versions and media. Not only was this image reproduced many times, but it also served as a source of inspiration for other artists in Europe and the United States, who depicted the same subject and copied some of its symbols, which shows me that they were familiar with the original work or with one of its many variations. And the work must also have reached Japan, as we have found prints by Japanese artists that reproduce the same symbols and codes to represent the chaos of a school in the absence of the teacher (Figure 15).

The occupation by the students of the space of authority of the teachers, the use of educational objects in a transgressive manner, and the visible presence of the missing teacher symbolised by a caricature created by a young artist, are three of the elements that appear in all the Western engravings and in Japanese engravings as well. These same elements also would appear in the most popular «travelling images» of chaotic girls' schools at the end of the nineteenth century.

This chapter has proven that in the nineteenth century there were some educational images extremely popular and widespread. Every time it is more obvious that these prints were so popular because they connected with the school memories of many men and women around the world, they made people remember the moments in their youth when they were perfectly happy. The challenge for the future is to discover in which extent these images have contributed to build a nineteenth-century narrative about schooling, or a story told and imagined, that is rather different than the official history of schooling, based on discipline and order. And going a step further, we need to explore what was the role of these stories in constructing a collective memory that crossed borders and nations, and that eventually became the social memory of the school.

SECTION *Official and Public Memories of School*

The International University Games of 1933. The Fascist Regime and the Issue of Commemorative Stamps as a Memory Policy for a “Glorious” Italian University Tradition

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From 1st to 10th September, 1933, Turin hosted the International University Games whose organisation for Italy was entrusted to the Fascist University Groups (better known as GUF – Gruppi Universitari Fascisti)¹. Ten years earlier, Paris had hosted the first World Student Games, which were organized under the aegis of the *Confédération Internationale des Étudiants* in May. The Turin edition of the World University Games was the seventh one in the summer version – the second one in Italy, after the one in Rome, combined with the winter one held in Cortina in 1928 – and it was actually divided into two stages: the summer games in Turin were preceded from the winter ones, held in Bardonecchia from January 29th to February 3rd².

The enhancement and the celebration of this event by Fascism, like many others coming after each other during the 1930s, was part of that process implemented by the regime to also artificially “build” a great precise image of Italian Universities through the organization of a series of official representations and/or public commemorations promoted by the ministry in the wake of a specific memory policy³.

¹ About GUF, please see M.C. Giuntella, *I Gruppi Universitari Fascisti nel primo decennio del regime*, «Il movimento di liberazione in Italia», vol. 107, n. 2, April-June 1972, pp. 4-38; A. Grandi, *I Giovani di Mussolini: fascisti convinti, fascisti pentiti, antifascisti*, Milano, Baldini & Castoldi, 2001; L. La Rovere, *Storia dei Guf. Organizzazione, politica e miti della gioventù universitaria fascista, 1919-1943*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2003; H.A. Cavallera, *La formazione della gioventù italiana durante il ventennio fascista*, 2 vols., Lecce, Pensa MultiMedia, 2006; S. Duranti, *Lo spirito gregario. I gruppi universitari fascisti fra politica e propaganda (1930-1940)*, Roma, Donzelli, 2008; E. Signori, *Tra Minerva e Marte: Università e guerra in epoca fascista*, in P. Del Negro, *Le Università e le guerre dal Medioevo alla seconda guerra mondiale*, Bologna, Clueb, 2011, pp. 153-172.

² On this regard, see P. Dessì, P.P. Zannoni (edd.), *Gli studenti dell'Università di Bologna dal fascismo alla liberazione. Aula Magna dell'Università di Bologna, 21 aprile 2010*, Bologna, Clueb, 2010, pp. 26-27.

³ On this subject, see in particular C. Yanes-Cabrera, J. Meda, A. Viñao (edd.), *School Memories. New Trends in the History of Education*, Cham, Springer, 2017; M. Brunelli, J. Meda, L. Pomante (edd.), *Memories and Public Celebrations of Education in Contemporary Times*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XIV, n. 1 (special issue), pp. 9-394.

Especially thanks to Achille Starace, Giovanni Battista Giuriati's successor at the PNF (Partito Nazionale Fascista) secretariat and a GUF secretary⁴, the university events, which were often linked to sports events as they were able to involve and to animate «Fascist young and courageous men», became the ideal opportunity to recover and to enhance the Italian university traditions, above all the medieval or early Renaissance ones⁵, in order to make them an essential key element in the work of strengthening a national identity.

That «cult of the origins», which ended up being officiated in all the venues and in particular also during the most significant student celebrations and demonstrations, found a concrete application in such precise public situations. However, Fascism did not simply intend to limit to an aseptic commemoration of the past, but to effectively recover that past with its «legendary traditions», in order to seek in them the foundations of that «cultural and civil primacy» of the nation, which constituted the starting point of an age of splendour, such as the one which was started up by Mussolini's regime. Therefore, no collective Fascist manifestation could avoid this inspiring *ratio*.

After all, as recent historiography has well highlighted⁶, parades, public celebrations, organized mass meetings and, more generally, many «spectacular» commemorations organized by the regime ended up developing a real «Fascist liturgy»⁷ whose main purpose was to mould «the new man»⁸ thanks to the fusion between Fascist symbols and rituals and the pre-existing national ones. It is also well known that Fascists boasted several times that they had renewed what was called «mass aesthetics» with their collective rites. As well analysed by Emilio Gentile in his appreciated work *Il culto del littorio*, Fascist celebrations, a precious vehicle of indoctrination for people, could be considered «great choral celebrations» while

‘before Fascism, public demonstrations were extremely unaesthetic. [...] When our processions wind across the streets, pass under the arches, form squares at the foot of bell towers and towers in the squares,

⁴ In the rich bibliography devoted to Achille Starace, PNF secretary from 7 December 1931 to 31 October 1939, please see the works by S. Setta, *Achille Starace*, in F. Cordova, *Uomini e volti del fascismo*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1980, pp. 445-472, C. Galeotti, *Achille Starace e il vademecum dello stile fascista*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2000 and A. Spinosa, *Starace: l'uomo che inventò lo stile fascista*, Milano, Oscar Mondadori, 2003.

⁵ On this subject, see S. Cavazza, *Piccole patrie. Feste popolari tra regione e nazione durante il fascismo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1997, pp. 171-244.

⁶ On this subject, especially see the works by Emilio Gentile, such as: E. Gentile, *Fascism as Political Religion*, «Journal of Contemporary History», vol. 25, n. 2, April 1990, pp. 229-251; Id., *Il culto del littorio: la sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1993; Id., *Le religioni della politica: fra democrazie e totalitarismi*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2001.

⁷ See L. Klinkhammer, *Il fascismo italiano tra religione di Stato e liturgia politica*, in V. Ferrone, *La Chiesa cattolica e il totalitarismo. VIII giornata Luigi Firpo, Atti del Convegno Torino, 25-26 ottobre 2001*, Firenze, L.S. Olschki, 2004, pp. 185-203 (quotation on p. 185).

⁸ About the subject of the fusion between the Fascist symbols and rituals and the pre-existing national ones, see R. Suzzi Valli, *Riti del Ventennale*, «Storia contemporanea», vol. XXIV, n. 6, December 1993 and Ead., *Jugendfeiern im faschistischen Italien. Die Leva Fascista*, in S. Behrenbeck, A. Nützenadel, *Inszenierungen des Nationalstaats: Politische Feiern in Italien und Deutschland seit 1860/71*, Köln, SH-Verlag, 2000. Instead, about the concept of a «new man», see L. La Rovere, *Rifare gli italiani: l'esperimento di creazione dell'«uomo nuovo» nel regime fascista*, «Annali di storia dell'educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche», vol. 9, 2002, pp. 51-77.

they are worthy of our cities, and their beauty increases the beauty of stones and marble', giving people 'brotherly love for civic holidays, which is then love for city, tradition and, therefore, homeland'⁹.

At every anniversary celebrated or every collective holiday, the regime used to emphasize the difference in style and spirit with respect to the rites in the liberal age, which were characterized by their «aboulic patriotism» and the «crowd's terror with a commemorative ceremony addressed to the past». On the contrary,

the scenario of the Fascist rites was composed of squares full of applauding people, men, women and children of all the classes, who celebrate the Fascist glory and its leader in unison, in a mystical exaltation. [...] Fascism claimed to have redeemed the crowd by changing them into a *liturgical mass*, who took part in the celebrations of the regime's rites with joy and faith¹⁰.

Thus, even the Turin University Games and the related and connected Italian university historical Carousel, which had the task of introducing the event and, above all, recovering and celebrating the memory of a renowned cultural past¹¹, ended up becoming targeted propaganda tools, which were used by the regime to the achievement of the objectives mentioned above.

In fact, beyond its purely sporting value, the celebrated event was part of that university operation of «invention of tradition»¹² promoted by Mussolini and blindly implemented by the Fascist ruling class throughout the twenty years¹³ with the aim to recover the Italian «glorious» academic traditions, whether they were true or presumed. In fact, the Duce intended to restore and to enhance the ancient value of Italian universities, underlining their primary vital function as a centre for irradiating culture and a mine for

⁹ See Gentile, *Il culto del littorio: la sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista*, cit., p. 161.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

¹¹ About the Italian university historical Carousel organized in Turin, please see the extensive discussion reported in L. Pomante, *L'Università italiana nel Novecento. Nuovi itinerari storiografici e inediti percorsi di ricerca*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2020, pp. 39-47.

¹² As we know, the reference is obviously to the category of the «invention of tradition» elaborated by Eric Hobsbawm in Hobsbawm, Ranger (edd.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983. Instead, according to a more recent contribution by Roberto Sani, the merit of having applied the historiographical category of the «invention of tradition» should be attributed no longer only to political organizations and state apparatuses in the strict sense, «but also to those social and cultural institutions, which were more invested by the deep and radical changes underway and struggling with the consequent need for a new and more solid legitimation of their role and their prerogatives and functions». And among these social and cultural institutions there were also universities and higher education institutions with regard not only to the ancient colleges of English universities struggling with the changes, which were produced by the industrial revolution in cultural and scientific fields and Hobsbawm mentions, but also very old and new universities, which arose in Germany and France during the nineteenth century, as well as that particular type of «minor universities» widespread in Italy, to which Sani himself turns his particular attention. On this regard, please see R. Sani, *The invention of tradition in the minor Universities of united Italy. The case of the thirteenth-century origins of the Studium Maceratense*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. VII, n. 1, pp. 485-504. Finally, about this subject, please also see the interesting work by D. Bidussa, *A proposito della "invenzione della tradizione"*, «Studi storici», vol. LIV, n. 3, July-September 2013, pp. 591-609.

¹³ Please see Pomante, *L'Università italiana nel Novecento. Nuovi itinerari storiografici e inediti percorsi di ricerca*, cit., pp. 19-53.

the new Fascist ruling class in the hoped and definitive realization of that ideal of «state university», which had been always dreamt, but never concretely realized in previous decades¹⁴.

However, in order to be able to fully implement this plan, a specific apologetic celebration of university «glorious traditions» was necessary. Hence, Fascism invented a mythological tradition, which especially aimed at artfully introducing University as a typically Italian “creation” in a phase when the country was about to be considered the cradle of culture and intellectual development par excellence, underlining the birth of the first university venues in Italy in the late Middle Ages but, however, concealing the real coeval existence of many other prestigious European universities¹⁵. This invention represented the tool which would have allowed the regime to identify a mythical original event destined to mark a clear discontinuity in national history from which to date the “rebirth” of Italian people¹⁶ and was an obligatory step to create a Fascist tradition, which represented «not only a system of ritualized procedures aimed at a symbolic use of mass politics, but [also] a pedagogy for Mussolini’s new Italian people»¹⁷. So, Mussolini more concretely started up a process of ideological reconstruction for a national identity, which was clearly and mainly founded on the recovery of past and tradition.

¹⁴ About Italian University in the first fifty years after unification and the main university policies implemented by the ruling class of that time, please see in particular: F. De Vivo, G. Genovesi, *Cento anni di università. L’istruzione superiore in Italia dall’Unità ai nostri giorni. Atti del III Convegno nazionale CIRSE. Padova, 9-10 novembre 1984*, Napoli, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1986; T. Tomasi, L. Bellatalla, *L’Università italiana nell’età liberale (1861-1923)*, Napoli, Liguori, 1988; G.P. Brizzi, *L’Università italiana fra età moderna e contemporanea. Aspetti e momenti*, Bologna, Clueb, 1991; S. Polenghi, *La politica universitaria italiana nell’età della Destra storica (1848-1876)*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1993; A. La Penna, *Modello tedesco e modello francese nel dibattito sull’università italiana*, in S. Soldani, G. Turi, *Fare gli italiani. Scuola e cultura nell’Italia contemporanea I. La nascita dello Stato nazionale*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1993, pp. 171-212; I. Porciani, *L’Università tra Otto e Novecento: i modelli europei e il caso italiano*, Napoli, Jovene, 1994; F. Colao, *La libertà di insegnamento e l’autonomia nell’università liberale. Norme e progetti per l’istruzione superiore in Italia (1848-1923)*, Milano, Giuffrè, 1995; I. Porciani, M. Moretti, *La creazione del sistema universitario nella nuova Italia*, in G.P. Brizzi, P. Del Negro, A. Romano, *Storia delle Università in Italia*, 3 vols., Messina, Sicania, 2007, Vol. III, pp. 323-379; F. Pruneri, A. Bianchi, *School Reforms and University Transformations and Their Function in Italy from the Eighteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*, «History of Education», vol. 39, n. 1, 2010, pp. 115-136; A. Ferraresi, E. Signori, *Le Università e l’Unità d’Italia (1848-1870)*, Bologna, Clueb, 2012.

¹⁵ In fact, as it is well known, if it is true that some of the most important Italian universities, such as the universities of Bologna, Padua and Naples (Federico II), can trace their founding date back to the period between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, in the Middle Ages, it is equally undeniable that equally prestigious universities, such as the universities of Oxford, Paris, Cambridge and Salamanca, just to name a few, also saw the light in other European countries in the same period of time. About the medieval origins of Italian and European universities, please see the works by J. Verger, *Le università nel medioevo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1982; G.P. Brizzi, J. Verger, *Le università dell’Europa*, 6 vols., Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana Editoriale, 1990-1995 (in particular Vol. I: *La nascita delle università*); A. Romano, *Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medio Evo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Milazzo, 28 settembre-2 ottobre*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 1995.

¹⁶ About this subject, please see C. Tullio-Altan, *Ethnos e civiltà. Identità etniche e valori democratici*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1995 and R. De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista*, 6 vols., Torino, Einaudi, 1966-1970, Vol. I, t. II: *L’organizzazione dello Stato fascista*, pp. 372-377.

¹⁷ See La Rovere, *Storia dei Guf. Organizzazione, politica e miti della gioventù universitaria fascista, 1919-1943*, cit., p. 185.



Figs. 1-4. The four celebratory stamps of the International University Games in Turin (1933)

In order to adequately celebrate the Turin sporting and university event and to underline its role as an important political window-dressing for the country on the international scenario of which to leave «lasting memory» to posterity, the regime also resorted to philately, which had been never involved in the celebration of sporting events so far¹⁸. In fact, the creation of a special series of four stamps with the same iconography, but with different colours (brown, red, purple and blue) and, therefore, with different costs (0.10, 0.20, 0.50 and 1.25 lire) was planned for the Turin Games¹⁹. The series was authorized by Royal Decree no. 945 of July 13th, 1933, and was issued on August 16th; it was on sale until September 15th and remained in circulation for four months until December 31st²⁰. Made by the State Mint and Polygraphic Institute (in the Security Printing Works) with a certain care of carving, the four stamps (24x40mm) were printed with the photocalcographic system on paper with crown watermark. The drawing (21x37 mm) reproduced in them was composed:

of the monolith in Mussolini's Forum with the inscription 'Dux Mussolini' from the ground up and the statue of a football player. At the top there are the words 'Poste Italiane' and the State Coat of Arms, in the middle the indication of the value and at the bottom the caption 'Giochi Universitari Internazionali Torino 1933-XI' in a Roman plaque²¹.

¹⁸ A new sought-after series devoted to the world of sport was released the following year on the occasion of the II World Football Championship, which was played in Italy from 27 May to 10 June 1934, and was won by Italy. It consisted of nine stamps: five ordinary mail stamps and four air mail stamps. Furthermore, for the first time a stamp was designed by a woman, Liana Ferri, who drew some stamps of this series.

¹⁹ About these stamps, please see: F. Filanci, *Il Novellario. Enciclopedia della Posta in Italia*. Vol. III: *Un Ventennio in Posta (1921-1943)*, 6 vols., Milano, CIF editore, 2016, Vol. III, pp. 210-211.

²⁰ Royal Decree no. 945 of 13 July 1933, *Emissione di speciali francobolli in occasione dei Giochi Universitari Internazionali che avranno luogo a Torino*, «Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia», vol. 74, n. 180, 4 August 1933, pp. 3556-3557.

²¹ Royal Decree no. 1531 of 26 October 1933, *Descrizione tecnica dei francobolli commemorativi dei Giochi Universitari Internazionali di Torino*, «Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia», vol. 74, n. 275, 28 November

As rightly observed by Federico Zeri, the series, which was designed by Amedeo Pesci, represented

a very open example of propaganda exploitation: although the games took place in Turin, the (unique) design [strangely] depicted Mussolini's Forum in Rome with the monolith and the marble statue of a *Football Player*, a work by Bernardo Morescalchi²².

Therefore, the event takes place in Turin, but everything in the design speaks about Rome, the *Caput Mundi* with its renewed splendour, where there is Mussolini's Forum with the statue of a football player, a work by Morescalchi, and the monolith with the reference to the Duce²³. Therefore, the primary purpose of the stamps was to celebrate the greatness of Fascism even at risk of overshadowing the intrinsic sporting value of the Turin event, which was acquiring absolute relevance, especially if included in that course of recovery and exaltation of Italian university traditions to which Fascist hierarchies had turned their attention «with wisdom» since the first years of government.

The ideological *ratio*, which inspired the creation and the issue of the four celebratory stamps, was obviously the same one which led Fascism in the articulated planning of the University Games and the related University historical Carousel for whose organization nothing was left to chance in order to be able to achieve the desired objectives in the best possible way.

In fact, on June 7th, 1933, a circular signed by the Minister of Public Education, Francesco Ercole²⁴, had warned Italian university rectors that the International University Games, to which «the intervention of the representative teams from the most important foreign universities» was ensured, would be held in the Piedmontese city during the first half of September. In order to make the official opening ceremony more solemn, it established that there were «Italian university gonfalons, which were escorted by Italian university young people including the Fascist University Groups» with the aim of bringing back the Italian «illustrious university tradition»²⁵. On June 20th, 1933, various local GUF secretariats were informed by the national secretariat that all the venues would have taken part in the inaugural ceremony not only with the gonfalon, but also with a representative of heralds, trumpeters and drummers in perfect medieval clothes, in order to «faithfully reproduce our ancient glorious university customs»²⁶.

1933, p. 5383.

²² F. Zeri, *I francobolli italiani. Grafica e ideologica dalle origini al 1948*, Genova, Il Melangolo, 1993.

²³ Please see F. Giuliani, *I dentelli attorno all'Università*, «L'Arte del francobollo», vol. 80, May 2018, pp. 23-25.

²⁴ About Francesco Ercole, a full professor of History of Italian Law and Minister of Public Education from July 20th, 1932 to January 24th, 1935, please see the biographical profile drawn up by L. Lo Bianco, *Ercole, Francesco*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1993, vol. 43, pp. 132-134, to which to also refer for other bibliographical references.

²⁵ Archivio Università degli Studi di Parma (henceforth, AUP), year 1933, folder 1173, dossier 1, *Circolare del 7 giugno 1933*, n. 9693. *Giocchi universitari internazionali di Torino*.

²⁶ Archivio di Stato di Macerata (henceforth, ASMC), Circolari, years 1921-1935, folder 700, dossier 1933, *Circolare del 20 giugno 1933. Ai segretari dei Gruppi Universitari Fascisti*.

With a subsequent detailed circular dated July 7th, Starace, who was notoriously very careful to external organization of parades and mass public events²⁷, provided the local GUF secretariats and, for information, «the Minister of Public Education, the magnificent rectors and podestas of the cities where universities were located» with further details about the desired correct development of the event and, above all, indications regarding the function and the ideological value, which the regime intended to attribute to it. First of all, as it was the custom of the best medieval ceremonies²⁸, he specified that the representatives of each university had to be composed of a well-defined number of figures, which had to be the same for each venue and specifically composed of «a drummer, four trumpeters with banderols, two standard-bearers with flags in the colours of the city, two men of arms, a major page with the University Gonfalon, who was supported by two valets and, at the end, a variable number of pages». In this way, «while the representatives of young students from all over the world will be gathered in the field of the great «Mussolini» Stadium, Italian university Gonfalons will go by on the track in order to give an augural and welcoming greeting to competitors».

In his circular, Starace underlined that the «glorious millenary university Gonfalons» would precisely have recalled «what a beacon of light Italy was, even in the darkest times», while «new University Gonfalons, which were created by Fascism», would have testified «how much the Italy of the Duce has done even in this field for ten years». All those who were directly or indirectly involved in the event in any case should have contributed to give the demonstration that majesty and that interest, which the regime wished, and, above all, to ensure the perfect realization of the process of recovering the «immortal Italian university traditions»²⁹.

In confirmation of the considerable importance that the regime attributed to the celebration, all the GUFs, who were scattered throughout the national territory, received even more precise and detailed instructions about the rituals and the actions, which the representatives in medieval costumes should have performed in the inaugural ceremony of the Games, with a PNF directive on August 11th, 1933³⁰. In Starace's intentions, the «Italian University Historical Carousel», included in the context of the first day of an international event of this magnitude, should also have achieved that long-desired perfect mixture of medieval and Fascist elements, besides assuming the form of an effective propaganda tool for the regime, as well as a useful means to affirm a precise sense of a

²⁷ About this aspect, please see the interesting journalistic report by C. Galas, *Gli uomini di Mussolini: Achille Starace*, available on the web at <http://www.televignole.it/gli-uomini-mussolini-4-achille-starace/> (last access: 08.01.2022).

²⁸ About the structure and the organization of festivals and ceremonies in the Middle Ages, please see J. Verdon, *Feste e giochi nel Medioevo*, it. transl. by Marina Karam, Milano, Baldini Castoldi Dalai, 2004.

²⁹ AUP, year 1933, folder 1173, dossier 1, *Circolare del 7 luglio 1933*, n. 18. *Achille Starace ai segretari dei Gruppi Universitari Fascisti di Bari, Bologna, Cagliari, Camerino, Catania, Ferrara, Firenze, Genova, Macerata, Messina, Milano, Modena, Napoli, Padova, Palermo, Parma, Pavia, Perugia, Pisa, Roma, Sassari, Siena, Torino, Trieste, Urbino, Venezia; e per conoscenza a S.E. il Ministro dell'Educazione Nazionale, ai Magnifici Rettori delle Regie Università e ai signori Podestà delle città sedi di Università.*

³⁰ AUP, year 1933, folder 1173, dossier 1, *Direttiva dell'11 agosto 1933 dei Gruppi Universitari Fascisti. Carosello storico delle Università fasciste.*

shared national identity. In fact, it was a real rite, which was celebrated on the occasion of a sporting event in this case, an excellent example of how the regime did not limit the orchestration of mass liturgy only to political rites, but it appropriated all the spheres of collective life, bending them to their own purposes and integrating them into a «cult of Fascism»³¹. Along the track in «Mussolini» Stadium, where «the spirit of a new Italy» would have been in the air in the presence of a «stunning and euphoric crowd», as it was typical of the Fascist events of that time³², GUF pennants and athletic teams in black shirts would also have taken turns together with university representatives in medieval costumes, who were led by the representatives of the University of Rome; standard-bearers would have been escorted by their secretary in «regulatory uniform» and, after having declaimed the Oath of Office, «music [would have struck up] Giovinezza, while the games with the flags [would have been] resumed by all the standard-bearers»³³.

Therefore, in this circumstance, the Fascist attempt to recover Italian university traditions, which was started up by Mussolini in the early 1920s, as we have seen, seemed to have reached its peak. Actually, the historical continuity between medieval and Fascist universities, which was supposed by Starace, turned out not to almost exist, at least with reference to the «Historical Carousel». In fact, the preparation of the «millenary university» Gonfalon was more simply a real operation of «invention of tradition» for many universities rather than an intervention for recovering tradition. In fact, as pointed out by Ennio Lazzarini, few venues could really boast a historic Gonfalon to «be brought up again and re-proposed for the occasion»; therefore, most of them were instantly created or even “invented”, very often taking the University Seal or only some of its parts as the main decorative element of the Gonfalon³⁴. However, Starace’s requests ended up pushing academic leaders not to skimp any even significant economic efforts in many universities at all, in order to be able to satisfy the requests of the regime in the best possible way³⁵.

Despite this, the Turin event met the desired echo and was greeted by the entire public opinion and, above all, the press of that time, who was close to the regime, with great emphasis and almost unanimous approval³⁶. In particular, «Il Popolo d’Italia», a

³¹ Please see Gentile, *Il culto del littorio: la sacralizzazione della politica nell’Italia fascista*, cit., p. 50 and pp. 141-142.

³² Please see Suzzi Valli, *Riti del Ventennale*, cit., pp. 1027-1031.

³³ AUP, year 1933, folder 1173, dossier 1, *Direttiva dell’11 agosto 1933 dei Gruppi Universitari Fascisti. Carosello storico delle Università fasciste*.

³⁴ Please see E. Lazzarini, *Università italiane. Stemmi, sigilli, medaglie*, Alessandria, Edizioni dell’Orso, 2002, pp. 32-33.

³⁵ On this regard, please refer to Pomante, *L’Università italiana nel Novecento. Nuovi itinerari storiografici e inediti percorsi di ricerca*, cit., pp. 43-45.

³⁶ About the event, please also see the materials preserved in *Istituto Luce* Archive, in particular “Cinegiornali”, series “Giornale Luce September 1933”, *Trionfo di giovinezza allo Stadio Mussolini di Torino. Ai giochi mondiali goliardici hanno partecipato i rappresentanti di 32 nazioni*, and “Cinegiornali”, series “Giornale Luce September 1933”, *Una rassegna mondiale della gioventù goliardica. I giochi internazionali universitari a Torino* and Documentari, series *Giornale Luce September 1933, Giochi mondiali universitari /Torino Anno XI* (<http://fondoluce.archivioluce.com/LuceUnesco/ricerca/avanzata/esito.html?temi=Giochi%20mondiali%20universitari>; last access: 08.01. 2022).

political newspaper, which was founded by Benito Mussolini in 1914 and later become the unofficial organ of the PNF and the government³⁷, almost daily devoted detailed and enthusiastic articles both to the preparatory and organizational phase of the Games and their development³⁸. The tones used to introduce the event and, above all, to celebrate the «Historical Carousel», which was considered to be an «almost epochal moment» for Italian university history, were obviously highly encomiastic. On September 3rd, on the eve of the inaugural ceremony, which would have been held the next day, «Il Popolo d'Italia» wrote:

Tomorrow we are having the inaugural ceremony of the games for which there is a great attention. [...] The big ceremony is taking place at the Stadium at 3pm. [...] The Carousel will be a great show. It will faithfully reproduce our ancient university customs with trumpeters, pages and men of arms. All the university gonfalons have arrived with spare valets and GUF secretaries. [...] After the ceremony at the Mussolini Stadium, Hon. Starace is visiting the National University Life Exhibition. This is a remarkable and useful initiative of the Turin GUF [...]. All the very interesting documentation about student life with particular regard to war, Fascism and our noble university traditions has been collected in numerous rooms³⁹.

Two days later, Arturo Pianca, a correspondent of the newspaper in the Piedmontese capital city⁴⁰, let further grow the encomiastic dimension of the descriptions supported by the pompous rhetoric, which was typical of Fascism in those years, by introducing readers with an extensive report about the opening day of the Games:

This Sunday in Turin will remain indelible in the eyes and the hearts of the students coming from all over the world and taking part in the International University Games as representatives of the best physical and intellectual part of 32 countries. With the intent of honouring guests, they witnessed a great Fascist day during which all the people shouted their Faith to the Chief thanks to whom Italy, which is a master of civilization today, recalls people from all over the countries under its blazing sun. [...] At the end of the polychrome grouping of teams, the tolls of the Olympic bell were heard and, at that moment, we saw the characteristic groups of student trumpeters from Italian universities, who were preparing to parade in ancient costumes for the historical Carousel, going up two large platforms [...]. The entrance of medieval uniforms had a great choreographic effect and the public

³⁷ «Il Popolo d'Italia» was a political newspaper founded in 1914 by Benito Mussolini, who edited it up to the march to Rome. From the positions of revolutionary interventionism on, the newspaper followed its editor's political evolution. Although it was always inspired by Mussolini, it was edited by his brother Arnaldo after Fascists took power and by his son Vito on his death (1931). From 1922, it became a PNF organ and suspended its publications only on 25 July 1943.

³⁸ Please see in particular the following articles: *L'organizzazione a Torino dei Giochi universitari internazionali*, «Il Popolo d'Italia», vol. 11, August 13th, 1933, p. 9; *Il saluto del "Guf" torinese*, «Il Popolo d'Italia», vol. 11, 31 August 1933, p. 8; *La partecipazione del G.U.F. dell'Urbe al carosello storico di Torino*, «Il Popolo d'Italia», vol. 11, 1st September 1933, p. 10; *La cerimonia inaugurale*, «Il Popolo d'Italia», vol. 11, 3 September 1933, p. 8; A. Pianca, *Olimpiadi universitarie solennemente inaugurate dal Segretario del Partito nello Stadio Mussolini di Torino alla presenza di una folla immensa*, «Il Popolo d'Italia», vol. 11, 5 September 1933, pp. 9-10; *La mostra goliardica di Torino*, «Il Popolo d'Italia», vol. 11, 6 September 1933, p. 8.

³⁹ See *La cerimonia inaugurale*, cit.

⁴⁰ About Arturo Pianca, who was born in Mantua in 1903, a journalist, an editor of «Il Popolo d'Italia» from 1923 to 1943, a head clerk at ANSA Agency from 1945, please see G. Vaccaro, *Panorama biografico degli italiani d'oggi*, 2 vols., Roma, A. Curcio, 1956, Vol. II, p. 1200.

started applauding among continuous acclamations of wonder. [...] At some point, we saw two ranks of graceful pages appearing and carrying long bundles of laurel and university gonfalons immediately appeared with their magnificent escorts behind them. Opening on both sides of the field, the historical procession drew up in a semicircle around the athletes and the solemn inauguration ceremony took place in this superb setting, which was almost unreal.

And more:

When Y.E. Starace came back in the stands, the picturesque parade of the historical Carousel began. The procession was opened by the representatives of the University of Rome to signify the sovereignty of the city in all the fields of human activity. So, all the other universities followed by order of foundation. Each representative was preceded by a page carrying an emblem with the year of foundation, drummers and trumpeters came behind them and launched greeting notes, once arrived in front of the Party Secretary, while standard-bearers rotated their ensigns according to the ancient custom of jousts: the university gonfalon was escorted by men of arms followed by scholars and students. The characteristic styles aroused the exclamations of admiration from the public, many costumes were original and taken from museums and private collections, others had been faithfully reproduced and everything appeared to be neat down to the smallest detail. [...] So, Bologna, which is the oldest Italian university founded in 1088, Padua (1222), Naples (1224), Perugia (1266), Florence (1321), Pisa (1343), Siena (1357), Pavia (1361), Ferrara (1391), Turin (1404), Catania (1444), Urbino (1506) and gradually all the others up to the last ones established by the Fascist government, namely Bari, Trieste and Milan, paraded⁴¹.

Even the Italian University high hierarchies did not miss the opportunity to pay the right tribute to the Turin Games and the intrinsic value, which the regime had intended to attribute to them. The inauguration of the new academic year 1933-1934 represented the ideal official occasion to “celebrate” with emphasis the attention paid by the Duce and his hierarchs to University and, not less, the Fascist project of recovering the «noble» Italian university traditions and strengthening a national identity, which also passed through the organization of events, such as the Piedmontese one, as we have seen. In this sense, the words spoken by the deputy pro-rector of the small university in the Marches, Prof. Paolo Greco, a refined jurist and an esteemed lawyer of that time⁴², in the lecture hall at the Royal University of Macerata on November 11th, 1933 rise to a real “shared manifesto” of the academic thought of that time⁴³:

The past academic year marked a fervent reawakening of Italian university life everywhere. It can be said to be the year when Italian University was definitively ranked among the most active and precious forces of the Fascist Revolution. [...] Among its various aspects, this rebirth of university life, which

⁴¹ Pianca, *Olimpiadi universitarie solennemente inaugurate dal Segretario del Partito nello Stadio Mussolini di Torino alla presenza di una folla immensa*, cit.

⁴² About Paolo Greco, a Professor of Commercial Law, a deputy pro-rector at the Royal University of Macerata from 1st November 1932 to 30 November 1933 and subsequently a rector at the «Bocconi» University of Milan from 1938 to 1945, please see L. Pomante, *L'Università di Macerata nell'Italia unita (1861-1966). Un secolo di storia dell'ateneo maceratese attraverso le relazioni inaugurali dei rettori e altre fonti archivistiche e a stampa*, Macerata, Eum, 2012, pp. 569-570.

⁴³ About the thought and the behaviour of the rectors of those years in the face of Fascism, please see some interesting cues reported in G. Cianferotti, *Le leggi razziali e i rettori delle Università italiane (con una vicenda senese)*, «Le Carte e la Storia. Rivista di storia delle istituzioni», vol. 6, n. 2, pp. 15-28.

took place under the high auspices of the Duce and the impulse of the Minister Ercole and the Party Secretary Achille Starace, had three programmatic cornerstones: increasing the scientific and didactic university industriousness with the call of all the university people, professors and disciples, to a more intense and active fulfilment of their duties; promoting and spreading in the militia, gyms and sports fields physical activity, which does not already reflect or excite only the brute force of human matter, but it reawakens and restores all the young people's energies with a Hellenic conception, which is rooted in the spirit of the Latin race, preparing it for the arduous trials of life; finally, fully re-entrusting to Italian Universities that function of radiating our civilization, which they historically carried out to spread the ideas of the Roman empire and law in the world once, the lights of humanism and science, which was renewed by Leonardo's intuitions and Galileo's observations, later, new regulatory principles of state and civil society, which are expressed by the reconstructive genius of the Duce and Fascism, today.

In this "mission" Fascism also intended to carry out the University Games of September 1933 as a «superb show of physical strength and compact unity of our national soul»⁴⁴; indeed, they had undoubtedly played a leading role, which was appropriately celebrated and made everlasting in the common memory by the issue of a special series of four stamps.

⁴⁴ See *Inaugurazione dell'Anno Accademico 1933-1934. Relazione del Pro-Rettore Prof. Paolo Greco letta nella cerimonia inaugurale dell'11 novembre 1933*, in Pomante, *L'Università di Macerata nell'Italia unita (1861-1966). Un secolo di storia dell'ateneo maceratese attraverso le relazioni inaugurali dei rettori e altre fonti archivistiche e a stampa*, cit. pp. 579-585.

“Educational Italianness”. National Stereotypes and Pedagogical Localism in the Centenary Celebrations of Italian and Foreign Educationalists between the 19th and 20th Centuries

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Introduction

In 1885 in his *La scuola pedagogica nazionale*¹ Antonino Parato – basing himself on the «moral and civil primacy of the Italians» theorised more than forty years earlier by Vincenzo Gioberti² – defended the centuries-old Italian educational tradition, in polemic with the proponents of the positivist pedagogy, whose works were very often based on the educational theories elaborated by foreign thinkers.

In the essays collected in the first part of the volume and consisting of a series of biographies of well-known Italian educationalist, Parato endeavoured to demonstrate how since ancient times Italian culture had created its own original educational tradition, which – as Giorgio Chiosso has already noted – would have been «fine-tuned in its main principles as early as the humanistic culture of the 15th century, [...] gradually developed in a popular sense through the contributions of personalities such as Borromeo, Calasanzio and Miani [and] finally matured in the 19th century with the reflections and indications of Rosmini, [...] Aporti, Lambruschini, Capponi, Gioberti and Tommaseo»³.

Parato was a leading exponent of that Catholic spiritualism that was convinced that it was precisely in the continuity between Classical culture and Christian culture initially conceived by Francesco Petrarca and later shared by other thinkers of the early Italian Humanism that underlay the cultural substratum in which this tradition had been shaped. This in opposition to modern German educational theories, which arising from welding

¹ A. Parato, *La scuola pedagogica nazionale*, Torino, Botta, 1885.

² V. Gioberti, *Del primato morale e civile degli italiani*, Brusselle, dalle stampe di Meline, Cans e Compagnia, 1843.

³ G. Chiosso, *Profilo storico della pedagogia cristiana in Italia: XIX e XX secolo*, Brescia, La Scuola, 2001, p. 63.

between late German Humanism – aimed at a profound renewal of the Church through the recovery of the Christian doctrine of the origins – and the Protestant Reformation.

In those years, Catholic spiritualism was engaged in a heated controversy with the flourishing positivist pedagogy, bearer of the instances of German scientific pedagogy, to which it contrasted – as Roberto Sani already noted in 2001 – «a pedagogical perspective firmly anchored to Christian principles and in line with the addresses of the national educational tradition»⁴.

From a spiritualist perspective, therefore, we can state that the rediscovery of this glorious tradition appeared more functional to the defence of the theoretical framework of the pedagogical thought it bore, rather than consequent to the need to generate a deeper historical knowledge of the educational past of the country, which nevertheless drew a strong impulse from it.

The clash between the spiritualist and positivist educational matrix can also be found within the public celebrations of the centenaries of the birth and death of some great Italian and foreign educationalists, which were promoted in the last two decades of the 19th century and which undoubtedly constituted yet another opportunity to affirm the concept of “educational Italianness”.

In that context, in fact, newly-born Italy – in search of illustrious antecedents and its own cultural traditions – undertook to define the uncertain boundaries of its national identity also in the field of education. So what were the characteristics of such “educational Italianness”? Using speeches pronounced during official celebrations, texts of celebratory epigraphs, commemorative pamphlets and other unpublished sources, we will attempt to dissect this concept, highlighting how it was not always substantiated by scientific evidences but rather by cultural stereotypes and nationalistic metaphors, which had a strong hold on public opinion and filtered very quickly into the common sense.

1. *The Centenary Celebrations of Ferrante Aporti and Friedrich Fröbel: Memory between Chauvinist Tensions and Local Skirmishes*

In 1882, the *Comitato centrale italiano per le onoranze a Friedrich Fröbel* (Italian Central Committee for the Honouring of Friedrich Fröbel) was established on the occasion of the centenary of his birth, chaired by Gabriele Luigi Pecile, who coordinated the numerous initiatives promoted almost everywhere on a national level to commemorate the German pedagogist and founder of the *Kindergarten*⁵, in preparation for the international celebrations in Dresden on 21 April of the same year. The Committee soon found itself defending the Froebelian approach against the accusation that it was «contrary to

⁴ R. Sani, *I periodici scolastici dell'intransigentismo cattolico (1879-1904)*, in L. Pazzaglia, R. Sani (edd.), *Scuola e società nell'Italia unita: dalla Legge Casati al Centro-sinistra*, Brescia, Editrice La Scuola, 2001, pp. 127-169 (in particular, p. 151).

⁵ Cf. A.P. Gualdi Piolti, *Nel centenario di Federico Froebel*, Bologna, Società tipografica Azzoguidi, 1882; M. Gonzenbach, *Pel Centenario di Froebel*, Palermo, Tipografia dello Statuto, 1882.

religious sentiment»⁶ and not suitable for «Italian childhood». The latter prejudice is clearly exposed in the speech given by the lawyer Enrico Sandoni on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of the Modena Kindergarden, in which the speaker relates how some claim that «Fröbel's ideas, yes, they are beautiful, they are rosy but, it is said, they are better suited to the children of blond Germany», because: «There you will easily see patient children, devoting whole hours to folding and weaving, thoughtful and attentive about plants and flowers. But our child has a livelier temperament, the midday sun warms him, his feelings are warmer, his intelligence is earlier...»⁷.

Sandoni then wondered whether indeed – given that the climatic conditions in the countries where that educational method was applied were different – someone felt entitled to question its validity in general⁸. He observed: «Fröbel's glory will not be diminished when the great work he began in Germany is treasured in order to shape it according to the needs of the Italian children»⁹.

While defending Froebelian approach, however, Sandoni emphasised that he had called the German educationalist a «powerful proponent» of modern educational reform, as «the truth and effectiveness of the system that took name from him had already been

⁶ See in this regard the speech given by Gabriele Luigi Pecile in the Senate session of 17 December 1887 («Atti Parlamentari»). See also «I Problemi della Pedagogia», n. 16, 1970, p. 993.

⁷ The same motivation, which evidently had to have a certain circulation at the time, is also found in another article: «If one then wanted to say that Aporti's system is national, because it does not force children to do methodical work like Fröbel's one, which therefore seems more suited to the patient German genius, then one would have to know whether Italianness means a lack of scientific method and critical thinking» («La Nuova Scuola Italiana», 1927, p. 636). Similarly, during a speech in the Rome City Council, councilor Francesco Vitelleschi had stated in this regard: «Every people has its own special genius, which is differently developed in educational methods. The Northern peoples of who have slow though solid and effective development are disposed to seriousness that tends to rigidity, while the Southern ones are as warm as they are early in development. Hence the difference in educational methods. While the Germans replace the slowness of their children's development with a method that involves the frequent repetition of the same concept and temper its rigidity with the habit of various games, in the Italians – on the other hand – the frequent repetition of an idea is unnecessary considering their precocity and the levity of character would almost be encouraged by the variety of childish games» (*Atti del Consiglio Comunale di Roma dell'anno 1886*, Roma, Tipografia Cecchini, 1886, p. 397).

⁸ Actually, fortunately, the differences between Aporti's and Froebel's kindergardens were also identified through more solid arguments, such as Aporti's lack of awareness of the child's spontaneity, while Froebel considered «the free activity of the child as a natural means of its development» and that according to which Aporti had promoted his kindergardens moved to pity at seeing the children of the working classes abandoned and exposed to vice, while Froebel had been «moved to compassion for the way in which young minds were oppressed» (F. Cicchitti-Suriani, *La scienza dell'educazione nelle scuole e nelle riviste italiane*, «Rivista italiana di filosofia», vol. VI, n. 2, luglio-agosto 1891, pp. 3-51; in particular, p. 13). A definition of what is historically meant by «Italian educational method» was recently provided by Fulvio De Giorgi (F. De Giorgi, *I cattolici e l'infanzia a scuola. Il "metodo italiano"*, «Rivista di storia del cristianesimo», vol. IX, n. 1, 2012, pp. 71-88; Id., *Il metodo italiano nell'educazione contemporanea: Rosmini, Bosco, Montessori, Milani*, Brescia, Scholé, 2023), who indicated its main features in the emancipatory tension of the educational commitment – according to a dialectic of freedom/liberation, in reference to the human dignity offended in many contexts – and the attention to the person, integrally considered in all its dimensions (including the religious one), whose full potential needs to be developed, also by stimulating his free creativity.

⁹ *Federico Fröbel e l'educazione dei fanciulli: discorso dell'avv. Enrico Sandoni*, Zanichelli, Bologna, 1883, pp. 23-24.

glimpsed as far back as 1400 by an Italian, by that Vittorino da Feltre whom Italy called: THE school master, [...] of whom prof. Contrucci¹⁰ wrote: SOLEMN EDUCATOR / FOR WISE ORDERS / THAT THEN THE FOREIGNERS / USURPED WITH OUR OTHER PRIDES / AND THAT ITALY FORGOT¹¹. And this I remember, not in order to diminish the value of Fröbel's work, but because I believe it is the duty of every good Italian to always claim the glories of his homeland, very lightly and too often forgotten»¹².

If it was «the duty of every good Italian to always claim the glories of his homeland», in 1891 the Committee for the 1st centenary of Ferrante Aporti's birth was set up and based in Mantua. Scipione Furga Gornini, director of the kindergarden of San Martino dell'Argine, was appointed president. He was supported by the honorary president Giuseppe Sacchi, president of the kindergardens of Milan. It is interesting to emphasise the «Mantuanity» of this initiative, to which we will return, as evidenced by the letter sent in June of the same year by the Mayor of Mantua to the Aportian Committee, in which he announced his willingness to contribute 50 liras to the honours and added that he counted that «the commemoration that will take place in San Martino dell'Argine will be worthy of the Man that the Province of Mantua is proud to count among its most important citizens»¹³. On 15 November 1891 – in fact – the Committee organised a ceremony in San Martino dell'Argine during which there was to be «the inauguration of the commemorative plaque placed by the honourable Municipality of San Martino dell'Argine on the house where Ferrante Aporti was born», followed by a commemorative speech by Francesco Saverio De Dominicis – a leading exponent of Italian positivist pedagogy – from the University of Pavia and finally the award ceremony for the teaching competition for kindergardens of the province of Mantua.

The polemics between supporters of Fröbel and Aporti – fostered by the celebrations – flared up again, somehow turning into – according to Angiolo Gambaro – a «struggle between those [the Aportians] who do not want to break away from traditions and deny the national spirit and those [the Fröbelians] who want to modernise and take the good wherever it is, considering it superior and indifferent to any distinction of nation and race»¹⁴. This in a context in which by now – as Fulvio De Giorgi noted – «the real frontier for a complete victory of Frobelism lay in the conquest of the *asili di carità* (charity kindergardens) and free kindergardens for the children of the lower classes, which were part of the public charitable institutions, stronghold of Aportism because of the lower

¹⁰ He is the well-known Tuscan epigrapher Pietro Contrucci.

¹¹ The full text of the epigraph is reproduced in: *Opere edite e inedite del prof. Pietro Contrucci*, Pistoia, Tipografia Cino, 1841, p. 86 (Epigraph n° XIV). Before the part of the epigraph reproduced here, it is written: «INGEGNO E SALDO VOLERE / DEL POVERO TUGURIO / CONDUSSERO AL SOMMO DELLA SAPIENZA / VITTORINO DA FELTRE / PRIMO IN EUROPA» (Ingenuity and firm will / of the poor hovel / led to the summit of wisdom / Vittorino da Feltre / first in Europe).

¹² *Federico Fröbel e l'educazione dei fanciulli: discorso dell'avv. Enrico Sandoni*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1883, pp. 4-5.

¹³ *Per Ferrante Aporti*, «Il Risveglio Educativo», vol. VII, n. 36, 14 June 1891, p. 157.

¹⁴ A. Gambaro, *Ferrante Aporti e la pedagogia italiana dell'800*, in A. Gambaro (ed.), *Ferrante Aporti nel primo centenario della morte*, Brescia, Centro didattico nazionale per la scuola materna, 1962, pp. 93-105 (in particular, p. 104).

costs this method entailed»¹⁵ and which the Catholic Church intended as a fundamental instrument of moral and religious penetration among Italian youth.

Pietro Nigra – school inspector in Castiglione delle Stiviere – was central to this dispute. In 1890, in order to support the Committee's activities, he had founded the bimonthly bulletin «Il primo centenario della nascita di Ferrante Aporti»¹⁶, in which there were frequent articles by Antonino Parato and Giuseppe Sacchi – fervent supporters of Aporti's method – and a lively polemic with Adolfo Pick¹⁷ devoted to the "fröbelization" of all Italian kindergartens. As Clara Castagnoli has observed, in this bulletin «the validity of the Aportian method and its Italian character is repeatedly affirmed and compared to the Froebelian approach, whose "self-proclaimed supporters" "with disdain and slander would like to banish for replacing it with the arbitrary and irrational institutions and reforms of Aportian mysticism"»¹⁸.

The controversy spread. Lucillo Ambruzzi published an article on the journal «La Scuola Nazionale» in which he invited Italian educators to imitate the German *Kaiser* Wilhelm II, who had declared that he wanted to banish «everything smelled foreign» from German schools¹⁹.

A few weeks later Nigra took up the topic again in the same journal in a polemical article, in which he resumed the controversy with Pick and asked – after demonstrating how even in Germany Froebelian approach was not adopted everywhere and therefore contesting its definition as the «German national method» – how Italian educators could be accused «of making an out-of-place nationalism, a misunderstood love of homeland»²⁰ if they refused to adopt this foreign method. Nigra then added:

Those who study the history of Italian pedagogy without preconceived ideas, and with a wide-ranging and dispassionate mind, know very well how it was Aporti who gave the first and strongest impulse here in Italy to the re-establishment of the national method of education. They also know how this truly Italian method, gradually enriched by the studies and experiences of other distinguished educationalists, can today give a sure guarantee that it will one day reach its maximum perfection through the constant progress of science and educational ideas. Italy indeed possesses so much virtue and so much strength that it can do it on its own, without going begging in others' houses²¹.

¹⁵ F. De Giorgi, *Il tramonto dell'aportismo dal compimento dell'Unità d'Italia alla fine del secolo*, in M. Ferrari, M.L. Betri, C. Sideri (edd.), *Ferrante Aporti tra Chiesa, Stato e società civile. Questioni e influenze di lungo periodo*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2015, pp. 366-383 (in particular, p. 382).

¹⁶ Not to be confused with the «Bollettino del Comitato pel Primo Centenario» (Bulletin of the Committee for the First Centenary), published in Mantua first by Eredi Segna and then by Tipografia Mondovì between April 1891 and July 1892 and edited by Scipione Furga Gornini, which did not enter into educational disquisitions nor took sides in the diatribes that arose in those years between Aporti's and Fröbel's supporters, but limited itself to honouring the memory of the famous educationalist.

¹⁷ Founder in 1868 of the first Froebelian kindergarden in Venice and editor of the journal «L'Educazione dei Bambini» (The Education of Children).

¹⁸ C. Castagnoli, G. Ciaramelli (edd.), *Un secolo di stampa periodica mantovana: 1797-1897*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2002, p. 210.

¹⁹ L. Ambruzzi, *In tedescheria*, «La Scuola Nazionale», vol. II, n. 12, 24 December 1890, pp. 178-179.

²⁰ P. Nigra, *I giardinetti frobeliani e l'on. Gabelli*, «La Scuola Nazionale», vol. II, n. 16, 21 January 1891, pp. 243-245 (in particular, p. 244).

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

Nigra concluded by saying that Italy was already rich in «pedagogical glory» and should certainly not «beg outside its borders» and proposed rather to work «towards the perfection of the national method restored by Aporti»²².

Nigra's violent attack had to provoke the reaction of the Cremonese educationalist Pietro Pasquali, a follower of Fröbel, who published another polemical article in the journal of the positivist pedagogy, in which he stated that «fighting a system because it was devised beyond the Alps, and fighting it in the name of nationality and patriotism» was puerile and that it did not matter «whether Fröbel was born in Germany», but «whether, and to what extent, his method can be applied by us». Pasquali then asked:

In what does the prosperity of the nation consist? And how can the school cooperate in the prosperity and honour of the nation? Perhaps by excluding the pedagogues coming from beyond the Alps? [...] This crusade against foreign ideas is opposed to progress; it is absurd, ignoble, useless, vain, presumptuous, impossible, because the assimilation of thought was always inevitable²³.

But animosities did not only arise between the supporters of the Italian Aporti and those of the Thuringian Fröbel. The “pedagogical chauvinism” descended into heated parochialism, on the basis of which the “small pedagogical homelands” ended up competing – in the best municipalistic tradition – for the origins of certain illustrious thinkers and educationalists, as if the environmental aspects and geographical context could not be disregarded to explain their greatness²⁴.

That same year, indeed, a Cremonese Committee for the honouring of Ferrante Aporti on the occasion of the centenary of his birth, chaired by Luigi Ratti, was also set up, thanks to the contribution granted by the Provincial Deputation of Cremona to the Commission for charity kindergardens of the city. The Cremonese Committee promoted a series of initiatives in the city where Aporti had set up his first charity kindergarden, including an official ceremony held on 20 September 1891 in which the well-known Cremonese educationalist Costantino Soldi delivered a speech²⁵. However, its role in the centenary celebrations was less important than the one played by the Mantuan Committee, contrary to what was to happen in 1927 on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of the foundation of first Aportian kindergarden, which saw the fascist

²² *Ibid.*, p. 245.

²³ P. Pasquali, *Muraglie della china*, «Il Risveglio Educativo», vol. VII, n. 21, I March 1891, p. 163.

²⁴ That said, it should be recalled that the celebrations were not limited to the two cities in Lombardy that contended for the illustrious educationalist. On 20 November 1891, the Turin Kindergarden Society organised a commemoration of Aporti, at which Antonino Parato spoke: *Ferrante Aporti: commemorazione letta da Antonio Parato nel primo centenario della nascita del fondatore degli asili italiani celebrato per cura della società degli asili infantili nel locale della Palestra ginnastica in Torino: 20 novembre 1891*, San Marino, Tipografia Subalpina, [1891]. A copy of the booklet is housed in: Archivio di Stato di Cremona, fond. «Comune di Cremona», series «Carteggio (1868-1946)», Category n. 32 «Oggetti vari», *Cassetta* n. 89, 1811 «Comitato per le onoranze a Ferrante Aporti».

²⁵ C. Soldi, *Ferrante Aporti e gli asili infantili: discorso letto per il centenario della nascita di Ferrante Aporti, solennemente celebratosi in Cremona il 20 settembre 1891*, Cremona, Tip. Interessi Cremonesi, 1891.

Cremona²⁶ – his adoptive homeland – finally take centre stage, while Mantua and San Martino dell'Argine remained on the sidelines.

Esterofilia (foreignophilia) and *esterofobia* (foreignophobia) thus alternated fiercely throughout these centenary celebrations, which revealed to be strongly influenced by feelings of identity and belonging that had nothing to do with the validity or otherwise of the educational theories expressed by the various thinkers and depended heavily on the collective imaginary developed over time within what we have already defined as "small pedagogical homelands", rather than on actual historical reality²⁷.

2. *The Contested Memory of Niccolò Tommaseo's "Dalmatian Italianness"*

Chauvinism and parochialism, however, were not the only sentiments that animated the public celebrations held in the late 19th century to commemorate great Italian and foreign educationalists. There were also cases in which distinct communities, even those far apart geographically, instead of competing for the commemoration of a personality, were able to twin together to promote shared celebrations. This is the case of the eminent linguist Niccolò Tommaseo, Minister of Education in the Provisional Government of the Republic of Venice in 1848-1849, native of the Dalmatian town of Šibenik in Croatia²⁸. Five years after his death, on 2 June 1878, a monument dedicated to him was unveiled in Settignano, made up of a plinth on which rested a marble statue by sculptor Leopoldo Costoli²⁹.

²⁶ In the 1920s and 1930s, Cremona played a central role in Italian political life due to the presence of Roberto Farinacci, one of the most prominent political figures of the Fascist regime.

²⁷ On these issues, in particular, see A. Arisi Rota, M. Ferrari, M. Morandi (edd.), *Patrioti si diventa. Luoghi e linguaggi di pedagogia patriottica nell'Italia unita*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2009.

²⁸ It should be recalled that Niccolò Tommaseo was not the only educationalist to be subjected to a process of Italianisation during his commemorative celebrations, as in the case of Enrico Pestalozzi, whose Italianness Luigi Credaro proved, reconstructing the passage of a branch of the Pestalozzi family from Chiavenna to Zurich through acute glottological inductions and historical investigations (L. Credaro, *L'italianità della stirpe di Enrico Pestalozzi*, «Rivista Pedagogica», vol. XIX, n. 2, February 1926, pp. 177-191).

²⁹ On this ceremony, in particular, see *Settignano e il monumento a Niccolò Tommaseo*, «L'Illustrazione Italiana», vol. V, 23, 9 June 1878, p. 411; G. Poletto, *Inaugurandosi un monumento a Niccolò Tommaseo in Settignano il giorno 2 giugno 1878*, Bergamo, Tipografia Pagnoncelli, 1878; C. Beltrami, *I monumenti che hanno fatto gli Italiani*, in C. Beltrami, G.C.F. Villa (edd.), *Scolpire gli eroi. La scultura al servizio della memoria*, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana Editoriale, 2011, pp. 14-45 (in particolare, pp. 21-23). The history of this monument has been reconstructed in detail in: J. Meda, *Monumento a Niccolò Tommaseo a Settignano (1878)*, «Banca dati delle memorie pubbliche della scuola», vol. II, DOI: 10.53218/2051, published on 30.12.2022 (<https://www.memoriascolastica.it/memoria-pubblica/memorie-pubbliche/monumento-niccolo-tommaseo-settignano-1878>; last access: 17.06.2023).



Fig. 1. Photo postcard *Setignano – Monumento a Niccolò Tommaseo*³², n.d. (private collection of Juri Meda)

On that occasion, Temistocle Pampaloni – Mayor of Fiesole – stated:

This grave³⁰ and this monument make him part of our family; they unite him to us with an indissoluble, eternal bond; his memory, his genius, his glory now belong to us. And we are rightly proud of this, since great and virtuous men even from their graves benefit us, even when they are extinct, they radiate splendid light on all that surrounds them. Thus Setignano is honoured by the glory of that divine genius; for him this humble land will be remembered even by distant peoples; for him it will be celebrated by history; for him all those who hold in their kind hearts affection will make a pious pilgrimage³¹.

On the same occasion, on the facade of the Setignano church, in the square where the monument had been erected, the compatriots of the illustrious Dalmatian thinker and educationalist wanted to place a plaque, whose epigraph was dictated by Vincenzo Miagostovich³³: «THIS PLAQUE / ŠIBENIK / HOME TOWN OF NICCOLÒ TOMMASEO / PLACED ON 2 JUNE 1878 / AS A REMINDER / OF EVERLASTING AFFECTION / TO ITS GREAT CITIZEN / AND OF TRUE GRATITUDE / TO THE PEOPLE WHO VENERATE HIS MEMORY».

³⁰ Reference is made here to the graves of Niccolò Tommaseo and his wife Diamante Tommaseo, located in a chapel in the cemetery of Setignano. The epigraph on his tombstone, dictated by Augusto Conti, reads: «OF NICCOLÒ TOMMASEO / BORN 1802 IN ŠIBENIK / DIED 1874 IN FLORENCE / THE NAME IS ENOUGH / FOR THEM TO REMEMBER / HOW MUCH THEY OWE HIM / MAGNANIMOUS CITIZEN AND WRITER / IMMORTAL GRATITUDE». In the following years, the grave actually became a pilgrimage destination for admirers of Tommaseo (cf. P. Mazzoleni, *Una visita alla tomba di N. Tommaseo*, Zara, Tip. S. Artale, 1912).

³¹ XXXI maggio MDCCCXCVI. *Niccolò Tommaseo e il suo monumento in Sebenico*, Sebenico, Editore Paolo Mazzoleni, 1897, pp. 256-257.

³² On the use of postcards during the 20th century to commemorate illustrious compatriots, enhance local cultural heritage and promote feelings of belonging, also with reference to the world of school and education, see the interesting contribution of M. Brunelli, “Minor Educators”? *Traces of the Public Memory of the School, between the Official History of Education and the Community’s History. The Case of Emidio Consorti (1841-1913)*, *infra*. More generally, on the celebratory and propagandistic function of postcards also in the educational context, see A. Viñao Frago, M.J. Martínez Ruiz-Funes, P.L. Moreno Martínez, *Tarjeta postal ilustrada y educación (España, siglos XIX-XX)*, Murcia, Editum, 2016.

³³ Miagostovich published incognito a detailed account of Setignano’s celebrations in Zadar’s newspaper «Il Dalmata», entitled: *Monumento in Setignano a Niccolò Tommaseo*, published in two issues («Il Dalmata», n. 42, 25 May 1878; «Il Dalmata», n. 47, 12 June 1878).



Fig. 2. Engraving *Settignano. Inaugurazione del Monumento a Niccolò Tommaseo* by Francesco Canedi based on a drawing by Odoardo Borrani; taken from: «L'Illustrazione Italiana», vol. V, n. 25, 23 June 1878, p. 408 (private collection of Juri Meda)

The shared celebration of the “Great Dalmatian” ended with the sending of a parchment by the Municipality of Florence to the Municipality of Šibenik, to thank it for its heartfelt participation in the public honours, on which was written:

To Šibenik, which honours its Niccolò Tommaseo, the City where he lived his last years as a blind seer and where his remains lie; the homeland of Dante and of the national idiom, grateful to the illustrious Dalmatian, who, as an artist and philosopher, lovingly studied the Poet's thought and collected the treasures of the Italian language, sends fraternal greetings in the communion of cherished memories³⁴.

Celebrations continued in the following years. On 22 March 1882 – on the 80th anniversary of his birth – a monument to Tommaseo by the sculptor Francesco Barzaghi was unveiled in Campo Santo Stefano in Venice.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 259.



Fig. 3. Drawing *Venezia – Il monumento a Niccolò Tommaseo (di Barzaghi) inaugurato il 22 marzo* by Emilio Longoni based on a photograph by Paolo Salviati; taken from: «L'Illustrazione Italiana», vol. IX, n. 17, 23 April 1882, p. 1 (private collection of Juri Meda)

On 17 March 1890, a plaque was placed on the house where Tommaseo was born in Šibenik. Finally, on 31 May 1896, the bronze monument by the sculptor Ettore Ximenes was unveiled in his home town³⁵.

On that occasion – as further confirmation of the «communion of cherished memories» already witnessed during the celebrations in Settignano – the *Società Veneziana per l'Industria delle Conterie* (Venetian Society for the Glass Industry) sent the Municipality of Šibenik an artistically executed frame of coloured glass dots, in which – framed by the winged lion of Saint Mark and other friezes – was written:

Of strong wit endowed / Niccolò Tommaseo / honoured / his native Dalmatia / and his new homeland Italy. / He was a man of letters, a poet, a philosopher / who linked his name to history. / Šibenik / with great solemnity / inaugurates a splendid monument / to his worthy son / and of the happy event / to the town hall of the pleasant city / the glassworker's society / of Venice / offers in memory³⁶.

The «communion of cherished memories» – inspired by the historical feelings of brotherhood towards the Dalmatian populations, considered culturally Italian, which found confirmation in the figure of the illustrious thinker who had then elected Florence and Settignano as his adoptive homeland – ceased with the First World War and the Italian Regency of Carnaro. In 1925, in fact, speaking of Tommaseo's «Dalmatian Italianness», the historian of literature Isidoro Del Lungo³⁷ during his speech at the congress organised by the *Associazione Magistrale "Nicolò Tommaseo"* («Nicolò Tommaseo» Teachers' Association) in Zara, held «under the sign of the most unrestrained nationalism and exaggerated exaltation

³⁵ The complex realisation process of the Tommaseo monument in Šibenik is reconstructed in detail in: C. Beltrami, *I monumenti che hanno fatto gli italiani*, in Beltrami, Villa (edd.), *Scolpire gli eroi*, cit., pp. 21-23. On the celebrations held in his home town in 1896, see also *XXXI Maggio MDCCCXCVI. Niccolò Tommaseo e il suo monumento in Sebenico*, Sebenico, Paolo Mazzoleni, 1897.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

³⁷ In 1924 Isidoro Del Lungo dictated the epigraph that the *Pro Dalmatia* Society in Florence, the Dante Alighieri Society and the Folk High School in Settignano engraved on a plaque that was added to the monument in Settignano on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his death.

of fascism»³⁸, stated:

The reality of an intact Dalmatia, which Niccolò Tommaseo would once again invoke from God, but greeting in the new fortunes of the great Latin homeland the Dalmatian Italianness, not only of language, tradition and bloodline, but also of participation – blessed by God – in the life and future of the unified Nation³⁹.

Tommaseo ceased to be a symbol of Adriatic brotherhood and was artificially elevated to an emblem of "Dalmatian Italianness".

Tommaseo's shared Italian-Dalmatian memory ceased to exist at the end of Second World War, when the Adriatic Question entered its most dramatic phase. As the Croatian historian Boško Knežić has effectively reconstructed, in February 1945, the poet Vladimir Nazor – president of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, which joined the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1945 – delivered a speech at the foot of the monument inaugurated in Šibenik in 1896, in which he stated:

The only Italian optant⁴⁰ I can see in Šibenik is behind me. Now man of bronze, cold and hardened, cultured and endowed with various talents, who, however, did not fully share the feelings of the people from which he arose⁴¹.

The monument was demolished a few days later. The commemorative plaque placed on 1890 on Tommaseo's house of birth suffered the same sad fate. In order to confirm the



Fig. 4. Photo postcard *Sebenico – Monumento a Niccolò Tommaseo (dello scultore Ettore Ximenes)*, n.d. (private collection of Juri Meda)

³⁸ A. Dessardo, *L'Associazione Magistrale "Niccolò Tommaseo". Storia di maestri cattolici, 1906-1930*, Roma, Ave, 2018, p. 211.

³⁹ *L'italianità dalmatica di Niccolò Tommaseo. Discorso di Isidoro Del Lungo per il Congresso della Niccolò Tommaseo a Zara*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1925, p. 30.

⁴⁰ Between 1945 and 1946, thousands of Italians fled the cities of Istria and Dalmatia to escape Yugoslavian persecution and seek refuge in Italy. In 1947, the Italians who remained within the Yugoslavian borders were offered the option between Slavic and Italian citizenship. Those who opted for Italian citizenship (i.e. Italian optant) were immediately expelled from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

⁴¹ B. Knežić, *La lapide e il monumento di Niccolò Tommaseo in Sebenico: storia di un'ingiustizia*, «Opinioni», n. 3, June 2019, pp. 28-30; by the same author, see also Id., *"Da Sebenico un figlio vindice nel bronzo ascolta..."*. *Nikola Tommaseo: od književnog uzora do političke ikone*, Zagreb-Zadar, Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada – Sveučilište u Zadru, 2019.

ancient «communion of cherished memories» – swept suddenly away by the rushing wind of history – a hand of the Šibenik bronze statue, the only part of the monument that survived demolition, was stolen and consigned to the Dalmatian School of Saints George and Tryphon in Venice, where it is still exhibited today⁴². The Dalmatian monument, the “twin” of those in Settignano and Venice, has thus become – in spite of itself – a relic with a strong symbolic value, the testimony of a deep wound dug into the memory of the Dalmatian population, which has not even spared the statue dedicated to an intellectual and man of letters, turned over time into an emblem of an “intolerable cultural otherness”.

Conclusions

The public honours paid to an educator or pedagogue on the occasion of the centenary of his birth or death, as well as any other anniversary, serves to immortalise his memory, and – achieving this result – inevitably ends up destoricising him, abstracting him from his time in order to project him into the present and show him to a local or national community, so that they may remember him for what he did, identify themselves with his greatness and draw lessons for their own time⁴³. The centenary celebrations, therefore, lead to the actualisation of the teaching experience of a great teacher or of the educational theories of a great educationalist. Besides celebrating a figure from the past for his/her extraordinariness by publicly remembering him/her, they also lead one to ask – concretely – how to reproduce that educational experience and how to apply those educational theories in the present time.

We know that memory is not history. According to the definition formulated by Maurice Halbwachs, indeed, memory is a reconstruction of the past using data provided by the present⁴⁴. It does not study past events by placing them in their historical context, but rather tends to relate them to the present, to make them examples, providing (often distorting) reading keys to show their topicality and reproducibility.

The centenary commemorations analysed here therefore had two direct consequences: on the one hand, the appropriation of the figure celebrated in order to consolidate the identity of a given community, firmly anchoring it to a more or less extensive place (municipality, province, region or nation); on the other, the actualisation of his/her message, aimed at its projection into the present with the risk, however, of exposing it to considerable distortions and instrumentalisation.

⁴² Knežić, *La lapide e il monumento di Niccolò Tommaseo in Sebenico*, cit., p. 29. This hand is also reproduced in the volume Beltrami, Villa (edd.), *Scolpire gli eroi*, cit., p. 109.

⁴³ More in general, on this topic, see V. Minuto, *Monumental memory of school in post-unitarian Italy*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», XVI, n. 1, 2021, pp. 213-255.

⁴⁴ Cf. M. Halbwachs, *La memoria collettiva*, Milano, Unicopli, 1996, p. 119 (original edition: *La mémoire collective*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1950). More generally, on Halbwachs and his theories, see G. Truc, *Memory of places and places of memory: for a Halbwachsian socio-ethnography of collective memory*, «International Social Science Journal», vol. 62, n. 203-204, 2012, pp. 147-159.

School Architecture as Public School Memory: the Portuguese Case of “Plano dos Centenários”

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1. Plano dos Centenários as school architecture

After 16 years of Republic, having succeeded seven parliaments, eight presidents and thirty-nine Government leaders, Portugal experienced what *Estado Novo* would call a National Revolution. It began in Braga, in 1926, and gave place to a military dictatorship. The new regime presents itself as a most necessary change, in which the idea of revolution perpetuates a project of national resurrection. Its repercussions in primary education are inevitable, as Sampaio points out: «the passage from a democracy to an authoritarian regime inevitably rebounds in orientations on primary education»¹.

The lack of appropriated buildings for good teaching practices², allied to Portugal's illiteracy rate of 60%³, forced the regime to adopt an innovative plan: the general plan of building new Primary Schools. This plan, a for-project⁴ published as the “For-Project Memory of the General Plan of Regional Primary Schools Types to be Built” (from the architect Guilherme Andrade⁵), would give place to *Plano dos Centenários*⁶ (PC), which was a school network of aesthetically unique buildings in the world. Duarte Pacheco, Minister of Public Works and Communication, was the project manager at a national

¹ J. Sampaio, *O ensino primário: 1911-1969. Contribuição monográfica*, Lisboa, Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência, 1976, vol. II, p. 5.

² J. Silva Fêreira, *O Plano dos Centenários: as escolas primárias (1941-1956)*, Master in History of Contemporary Art (Supervisor: Margarida Brito Alves), Lisboa, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, a.a. 2013; P. Tereno, *Grupos escolares construídos ao abrigo do Plano dos Centenários em Lisboa: 1944-1961*, «Sistema de Informação para o Património Arquitectónico», 2016, Last updated: n.d., http://www.monumentos.gov.pt/site/app_pagesuser/SIPAINventory.aspx?id=0e28f969-9077-4e14-9370-8059272e8f3f (last access: 05.02.2022).

³ J. Pintassilgo, *Analfabetismo e educação popular*, «Público», 31 August 2010, Last updated: 31.08.2010, <https://www.publico.pt/2010/08/31/jornal/analfabetismo-e-educacao-popular-19905476> (last access: 19.08.2020).

⁴ Ministério da Educação, *Muitos Anos de Escolas. Vol. II: Anos 40-Anos 70*, Lisboa, ME/DGEE, 1996; A. Santos Gama, *O Plano dos Centenários*, Dissertação de Mestrado em Arquitectura Departamento de Engenharia (Supervisor: Ana Maria Tavares Ferreira Martins), Covilhã, Universidade da Beira Interior, a.a. 2016.

⁵ F. Beja, J. Serra, E. Machás, I. Saldanha, *Muitos Anos de Escolas. Edifícios para o Ensino Infantil e Primário anos 40-anos 70*, Lisboa, DGEE, 1985, Vol. 2, pp. 317-325; Fêreira, cit.; Tereno, cit.

⁶ Law n. 1983 of 27 December 1940.

scale; the project was named after the third centenary celebrations of the Restoration of Independence and after the eighth centenary of Portugal's foundation, celebrated in 1940 and 1943. In order to accomplish this plan, an organization was created: the Delegation for the Construction Works of Primary Schools. The Regime's leader, António Salazar, intended to teach Portuguese people to read, but mostly to educate them according to the values defended by the new regime, at the same time that he perceived the fact that «school buildings produce a major political impact»⁷. These new constructions would reflect an image of national organization and harmony, as a result of the development of a regime's unique architecture that aimed to break up with the modern architectonic legacy of the previous Republicans.

By demarking itself from modernist lines, *Estado Novo's* architecture, known as *Português Suave*, adopts the state power language: the rhetoric of the monumental, extolling national values in a true ode to archaizing traditionalism, propaganda vehicle par excellence⁸. School buildings didn't escape from that aura, although they are not monumental by themselves. However, monumentality was reflected in the extension of the network that was built and in the tradition of regional cultures. In this way peculiar school architecture was born, one that obeyed to the «regionalization of raw-material application and construction techniques, by allying them with state of the art building processes, with thorough study of solar use and other local characteristics. All projects settled on the repetition of the same functional blueprint»⁹. According to Gama¹⁰, along the 1930's, the type-building construction of the for-project had several interruptions, breakthroughs and setbacks: there was constant restructuring; according to Fêteira¹¹ not only were there budget issues, but also the fact that these buildings were regarded as «unfit to the new school reorganization». Despite these adversities, the architectural typology remained after. Starting in 1944, it kept the regionalization of buildings, although «uniformity traces between different types of buildings are much more manifest». The forecast was the creation of 11.458 classrooms in 6.809 school buildings throughout the country¹².

The network of school buildings with PC architectonic typology is different from building to building only in subtle details related to every region. It must be referred that until the beginning of the XXI century these schools were kept fully operational – this fact allowed a direct association to materialize between education and the characteristics

⁷ P. Pereira Pimenta, *A escola portuguesa. Do "Plano dos Centenários" à construção da rede escolar no distrito de Vila Real*, Dissertação de Mestrado em Educação, Área de Especialização História da Educação e Pedagogia (Supervisor: Alberto Filipe Ribeiro de Abreu Araújo), Braga, Instituto de Educação e Psicologia da Universidade do Minho, a.a. 2006, p. 41.

⁸ I. Bessa, *Arquitetura e memória do Estado Novo ao 25 de Abril: o Liceu Júlio Henriques / João III / José Falcão de Coimbra*, «Revista de História das Ideias», vol. 16, 1994, pp. 135-159.

⁹ Tereno, cit.

¹⁰ Santos Gama, cit.

¹¹ Silva Fêteira, cit., pp. 63-64.

¹² Repositório Digital da História da Educação, *Apresentação*, Last updated: n.d., <http://193.137.22.223/pt/patrimonio-educativo/museu-virtual/exposicoes/os-edificios-escolares-do-plano-dos-centenarios/apresentacao/> (last access: 05.02.2022).

of a physical space for successive generations of the Portuguese population. Such association occurs in the memories of those who attended these school buildings during the dictatorship, as well as those that until today attend them (despite the closure¹³ of more than 13.000 primary schools between 1961 and 2020, many are still functioning).

This school-building memory can be reinforced by any PC building, in any part of the country, by those who attended it and by those who did not. Because this school network has buildings with common architectural lines and specific characteristics, it has become scholastic heritage imbued in collective memory, at the same time that it has become memory by itself.

2. Plano dos Centenários' School: *memorial and patrimonial-building*

Starting from the dictum «a great building, despite its founder goal, is always and in many ways a history book»¹⁴, we perceive that architecture and memory form a metaphysic paradigm, where space and time become one. From this fusion patrimonial buildings with collective stories emerge.

According to Ricoeur¹⁵, there is a narrow parallelism between architecture and narrativity, when he claims that architecture is to space what story is to time. In buildings, however, there is a double constructive and continuous act: the physical and the historical. The physical is based on matter and space – they harbour the construction. The historical is more complex, and develops along two lines: one is temporal, relating with the physical manifestation of the building; the other develops afterwards, and is based on the act of inhabiting: on the life stories related with the construction itself. Therefore, the more a building is inhabited, the larger the history that it can tell.

In the PC case, the thousands of children that attended and still attend these schools took and take part in the historical construction of buildings that in their physical and historical wholeness express human temporality¹⁶. By expressing this human temporality, PC schools report the absent of what once was: they report memories. It must be stressed that these school buildings, by the time they were designed, already aimed to appeal to a nostalgic feeling: «it urged them to be wrapped in memory paper, and memory was called “rustic” (the people's roots) and “joanine” [after king João V] (the roots of power,

¹³ Pordata: Base de Dados Portugal Contemporâneo, *Estabelecimentos nos ensinos pré-escolar, básico e secundário público: total e por nível de ensino: Quantas escolas públicas há no pré-escolar, básico ou secundário?*, Last updated: 01.07.2021, <https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Estabelecimentos+nos+ensinos+pr%C3%A9+escolar++b%C3%A9sico+e+secund%C3%A1rio+p%C3%Ablico+total+e+por+n%C3%Advel+de+ensino-1241-9829> (last access: 01.02.2022).

¹⁴ Herculano (cit. in Bessa, *Arquitetura e memória do Estado Novo ao 25 de Abril*, cit., p. 156).

¹⁵ P. Ricoeur, *Architecture et narrativité*, «Études Ricoeuriennes», vol. 7, n. 2, 2016, pp. 20-30.

¹⁶ E. Calvi, *Projecto y relato: la arquitectura como narración*, «Arquitectonics: Mind, Land & Society», n. 3, 2003, pp. 53-69.

the supreme empire), or, even better, both)»¹⁷. According to Teixeira¹⁸, memories are experiences of the most importance: as starting point memories, they perpetuate places with references to a consecutive return to the past, carrying a variety of feelings that are documented and expressed in stories and reports, in dreams and perceptions.

Thus, we may consider PC schools as mnemonic architecture: they preserve the general memory of the group of buildings in every person in particular. Due to the architectonic characteristics, any of these school buildings will wake in the viewer the same feeling, for they «are schools whose image and name are associated to tradition, keeping its past culture in its existence and image today»¹⁹.

In general, school buildings have always been special places, wrapped in specific rites that give them a sacred configuration: before them students appear as devotees on a daily pilgrimage. Teixeira²⁰ refers to school as a moment of thorough apprenticeship, since youth itself gives relevance to all elements that are then used: standards and values, dress codes, plays, experiences, even the everyday school path, among other things that make sense in social interactions. This is a micro-universe that allows its inhabitants to live a strong psycho-active and sensorial experience²¹, through which individuality can grow²². In its whole, school builds each student; but each student builds historically school in general, and the building in particular. Since all these buildings have the same configuration, this building type will emerge in each individual's memory regardless of the exact location. This shows that «school as a memory place is symbolic and material at the same time»²³.

In this way, we consider the school network buildings that belong to PC as school memory buildings: memory-buildings that became a network of memory places, not in a memorial sense (as the ones that are preserved as a reflection of traumatic moments and/or related to violation of human rights), but in a narrative sense, being a material testimony of education and history of education in Portugal.

According to Silva²⁴, PC schools are linked to tradition by keeping past culture in its own physical reality, but also in the image that they actually have. Once again we

¹⁷ N. Portas, *A evolução da arquitectura moderna em Portugal*, «História da Arquitectura Moderna», Lisboa, Arcádia, 1973-78, vol. 2, chapter 7 (cit. in Bessa, *Arquitectura e memória do Estado Novo ao 25 de Abril*, cit., p. 143).

¹⁸ M. Teixeira, *A escola como lugar de memória*, in *Anais do XXVIII Simpósio Nacional de História «Lugares dos historiadores: velhos e novos desafios» (Florianópolis, 27-31 July 2015)*, Florianópolis, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, 2015 Last updated: 2015, http://www.snh2015.anpuh.org/resources/anais/39/1428380432_ARQUIVO_AESCOLACOMOLUGARDEMEMORIA-MariaLucia.pdf (last access: 21.02.2022).

¹⁹ F. Silva, *Primary school architecture in Portugal: A case study* (cit. in C. Monteiro, *Arquitetura escolar: o valor patrimonial como procura de identidade na reabilitação*, Master in Architecture (Supervisor: André Miguel Guimarães dos Santos), Porto, Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto, a.a. 2020, p. 69).

²⁰ Teixeira, cit., n.p.

²¹ O. Lazzarotti, *Habiter la condition géographique*, Paris, Éditions Belin, 2006.

²² M. Lussault, *Mettre l'expérience extrascolaire en lien avec la pratique scolaire*, «Diversité», n. 191, 2018, pp. 13- 17.

²³ Teixeira, cit., n.p.

²⁴ M. Dallari Bucci, *Arquitetura da Memória: a construção de uma rede de lugares de memória a ditadura militar na cidade de São Paulo*, Trabalho final de Graduação (Supervisor: Renato Cymbalista). São Paulo,

perceive that these are memory-buildings that reflect and report the past, rooting deep in people's collective memory. Santos²⁵ states that «memory, according to Rousseau, is acknowledgement. Is through collective memory that social groups conform, acquiring their individuality and an image of the space occupied by them»²⁶. We perceive a cultural link between architecture and memory reflected in the collective with heritage echoes. Specifically in the PC buildings: these edifications present a particular form of heritage; they reflect different teaching conceptions²⁷ and form a reference of national collective memory.

3. Memory preservation

Emigration in the 1960's and 1970's in Portugal reduced its population, leading to profound demographic changes. An aging population left many communities without children. This decrease brought the closure of many primary schools in the 1990's, and even more at the beginning of the new millennia, especially in the center of the mainland.

Cordeiro, Gama and Barros²⁸ refer to an unbalance between supply and demand, which would have led to a major paradox: «too few students, too many schools in low density regions». Many villages didn't have enough children to make even ten classes of students, which brought to the closure of many schools. Between 2001/2002 and 2005/2006, 370 primary schools were shut down in the district of Guarda²⁹. In 2012, Portugal closed 3 720 school units³⁰, but since 1961 the number of closures totals more than 13.000³¹. Thousands of buildings were deactivated: no longer having a scholastic use, they ended up in the custody of town halls.

Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo da Universidade de São Paulo, a.a. 2015; L. Kharoubi, *Architecture comme Mémoire et Emotion*, Master in Architecture (Supervisor: Christoffel Boghaert), Louvain, Faculté d'architecture, ingénierie architecturale, urbanisme de l'Université Catholique de Louvain, a.a. 2020; V. Riou, *L'architecture du souvenir et l'immatériel-mémorial des lieux*, Last updated: n.d., <https://dpearea.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/v-riou.pdf> (last access: 15.01.2022).

²⁵ J. Silva, *Primary school architecture in Portugal: A case study*, s.l., OECD, 2008 Last updated: n.d., <https://www.oecd.org/portugal/40802346.pdf> (last access: 01.02.2022).

²⁶ N. Marques dos Santos, *Arquitetura e memória. O palheiro como objeto de identidade territorial*, Master in Architecture (Supervisor: Susana Luísa Mexia Lobo), Coimbra, Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia da Universidade de Coimbra, a.a. 2016, p. 117.

²⁷ Repositório Digital da História da Educação, *Apresentação*, Last updated: n.d., <http://193.137.22.223/pt/patrimonio-educativo/museu-virtual/exposicoes/os-edificios-escolares-do-plano-dos-centenarios/apresentacao/> (last access: 05.02.2022).

²⁸ A. Cordeiro, R. Gama, C. Barros, *Reorganização de rede escolar em territórios de baixa densidade em Portugal. Construção de uma matriz de análise*, 2016, Faro, Universidade do Algarve, p. 4.

²⁹ Ordem dos Arquitectos, *Vendem-se escolas*, Last updated: n.d., <https://arquitectos.pt/?no=202015347:012007> (last access: 10.02.2022).

³⁰ *Fecharam 3720 escolas básicas desde 2005*, «TVI Notícias», 24 July 2012, Last updated: 24.07.2012, <https://tvi.iol.pt/noticias/sociedade/tecnologia/fecharam-3720-escolas-basicas-desde-2005> (last access: 9.02.2022).

³¹ Pordata: Base de Dados Portugal Contemporâneo, cit.

In an attempt to seek some kind of social benefit in this heritage, since these school buildings lost their primary use, today they welcome local associations and services oriented to the aged³². Portuguese regions that lost a great number of these schools now instead have Institutions for the elder. There are several reports of this kind of transformation in different places, such as Chaves³³, Montalegre³⁴, Braga³⁵, Barcelos³⁶, Caldas da Rainha³⁷, among others. Another way to monetize these buildings came by public auctions, which lead to different uses, such as social housing, restaurants³⁸, even private homes³⁹ and mortuary houses⁴⁰. Despite these assorted approaches and different objectives, they all share the same goal: to recover the past.

There is a will to rehabilitate and preserve the PC network of school buildings, because there is also a desire to preserve memories, in order to avoid any withering of their identitarian stories. Most closures have happened in the countryside, and that has increased the interest in maintaining these primary schools, since their buildings could be considered the soul of these rural places. We must stress that PC school buildings, in a time when life in most villages withers, are a kind of physical memory of former happy days, when children bustle, whereas nowadays silence seems to thrive. Once deactivated, these structures decay, and memories fade away with them, for according to António Mendes «the closure of any school in the countryside contributes to the destruction of a

³² Ordem dos Arquitectos, *Vendem-se escolas*, cit.

³³ *Chaves: escolas encerradas transformadas em equipamentos para idosos*. «Público», 22 August 2006, Last updated: 22.08.2006, <https://www.publico.pt/2006/08/22/local/noticia/chaves-escolas-encerradas-transformadas-em-equipamentos-para-idosos-1267965> (last access: 08.02.2022).

³⁴ *Antiga escola primária de Padornelos transformada em centro de dia*, «Jornal de Notícias», 17 August 2011, Last updated: 17/08/2011, <https://www.jn.pt/local/noticias/vila-real/montalegre/antiga-escola-primaria-de-padornelos-transformada-em-centro-de-dia-1953469.html> (last access: 08.02.2022).

³⁵ *Antiga escola primária transformada em lar de idosos em Amares*, «O Minho», 17 June 2016, Last updated: 17.06.2016, <https://ominho.pt/antiga-escola-primaria-transformada-em-lar-de-idosos-em-amares/> (last access: 10.02.2022).

³⁶ *Escola primária transformada em “lar inovador” para idosos em Mesão Frio*, «Diário de Notícias», 1st June 2017 Last updated: 01.07.2017, <https://www.dn.pt/lusa/escola-primaria-transformada-em-lar-inovador-para-idosos-em-mesao-frio-8524259.html> (last access: 10.02.2022).

³⁷ *Antiga escola primária de Salir de Matos transformada em centro de dia*, «Jornal das Caldas», 4 May 2021, Last updated: 04.05.2011, <https://jornaldascaldas.pt/2021/05/04/antiga-escola-primaria-de-salir-de-matos-transformada-em-centro-de-dia/> (last access: 08.02.2022).

³⁸ *Escolas transformadas em restaurantes e museus*, «Diário de Notícias», 10 October 2009, Last updated: 10.10.2009, <https://www.dn.pt/dossiers/politica/eleicoes-autarquicas-2009/noticias/escolas-transformadas-em-restaurantes-e-museus-1386398.html> (last access: 10.02.2022); *Elvas: antiga escola primária de Vila Fernando transformada em turismo rural*, «O Digital», 31 May 2021, Last updated: 31.05.2021, <https://odigital.sapo.pt/elvas-antiga-escola-primaria-de-vila-fernando-transformada-em-turismo-rural/> (last access: 08.02.2022); J. Mourão Carvalho, *Escolas desativadas. Os espaços novos que dão vida às aldeias*, «Jornal N», 8 September 2021, Last updated: 08.09.2021, https://ionline.sapo.pt/artigo/745800/escolas-desativadas-os-espacos-novos-que-dao-vida-as-aldeias?secao=Portugal_i (last access: 08.02.2022).

³⁹ A autora deste artigo adquiriu um edifício da rede de escolas do CP para residência própria.

⁴⁰ V. Alevato, *Vila de Rei: antiga escola primária será transformada em casa mortuária*, «Mediatejo.net», 27 February 2017, Last updated: 27.02.2017 <https://www.mediatejo.net/vila-de-rei-antiga-escola-primaria-sera-transformada-em-casa-mortuaria/> (last access: 08.02.2022); Diana fm, *Antiga escola de Arraiolos transformada em casa mortuária*, Last updated: 20.05.2020, <https://www.dianafm.com/antiga-escola-de-arraiolos-transformada-em-casa-mortuaria/> (last access: 08.02.2022).

nation's cultural identity»⁴¹. Reichert, Oliveira and Franzen⁴² refer that identity crystallizes through social relationships and through the feeling of belonging that each individual builds in his social environment. Regarding that, PC schools that have been recovered reinforce this identitarian relationship of belonging locally and nationally: throughout the country there is a feeling that these schools must be maintained. Other than cultural identity preservation, it is important to preserve historical buildings⁴³. As the mayor of Salvaterra de Magos stresses, when he refers to the recovery of a primary school in his country, saying that «it is a centenary building that is important to preserve»⁴⁴. At the same time, Sousel's mayor stresses that «it is urgent to give some dignity to this space, in the village's core, for it has been inactive since the construction of the new School Center»⁴⁵.

Having been born during a dictatorship regime, and having grown in number through decades, the buildings of the PC school network were inhabited by thousands of children. These children lived their school routine, and this routine impregnated them of memories. The very configuration of school buildings helped to cement these memories. Due to this, after the closure of thousands of schools, there was a need to preserve the buildings. We found that identity, heritage and dignity are values that drive the will to recover, rehabilitate, maintain and preserve a collective memory that is stamped in the model blueprint of these schools: «an intervention in built heritage [can] physically bring memories and past traditions»⁴⁶. Rehabilitation in school buildings from the past that dignify the present aims to project themselves into the future as teaching memorials, while their architecture stimulates identity and belonging throughout PC's school network.

⁴¹ *Escola dá vida a aldeia*, «Correio da Manhã», 21 June 2004, Last updated: 21.07.2004, <https://www.cmjournal.pt/portugal/detalhe/escola-da-vida-a-aldeia> (Last access: 08.02.2022).

⁴² B. Reichert, P. Oliveira, D. Franzen, *Arquitetura, memória e identidade: interfaces do património edificado no extremo-oeste catarinense*, «Revista Grifos», n. 43, 2017, pp. 157-190.

⁴³ F. Matias Cristóvão, *Reabilitar o passado para reutilizar no futuro: proposta de intervenção numa antiga escola primária*, Dissertação de Mestrado em Arquitectura, Departamento de Engenharia (Supervisor: Jorge Manuel da Silva Carlos). Covilhã, Universidade da Beira Interior, a.a. 2016.

⁴⁴ Câmara Municipal de Salvaterra de Magos, *Reabilitação da antiga escola primária "O Século" em Salvaterra de Magos*, Last updated: n/d, <https://www.cm-salvaterademagos.pt/informacoes/noticias/item/3983-reabilitacao-da-antiga-escola-primaria-o-seculo-em-salvaterra-de-magos> (last access: 11.02.2022), p. 2.

⁴⁵ *Sousel: Câmara Municipal vai reabilitar antiga Escola Padre Joaquim Maria Fernandes*, «Diário Campanário», 3 March 2020, Last updated: 03.03.2020 <https://www.radiocampanario.com/ultimas/regional/sousel-camara-municipal-vai-reabilitar-antiga-escola-padre-joaquim-maria-fernandes> (last access: 11.02.2022).

⁴⁶ F. Matias Cristóvão, *Reabilitar o passado para reutilizar no futuro: proposta de intervenção numa antiga escola primária*, Dissertação de Mestrado em Arquitectura, Departamento de Engenharia (Supervisor: Jorge Manuel da Silva Carlos), Covilhã, Universidade da Beira Interior, a.a. 2016, p. 2.

Memory and Celebration of the “Heroic Youth”. The Youth Organisations of the Mussolini Regime, School and the Creation of the “New Fascist Man”

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1. *The youth organizations of fascism and the totalitarian socialization of the new generations*

For the totalitarian regimes that emerged in Europe between the two world wars, the matter of the ideological and political education of young people, of their placement in suitable mass organizations designed to «temper their body and spirit» in light of the inspiring principles of the totalitarian ideology, and of their mobilization to support the regime itself was destined to take on special relevance¹.

A somewhat exemplary case, in this respect, is the fascist regime that was established in Italy in the aftermath of the march on Rome of 28 October 1922 and that was destined to remain in power for around twenty years, until 25 July 1943². With specific regard to the Mussolini regime, in fact, some scholars have talked about a sort of «identity relationship that fascism maintained with the notion of youth», which, far from representing a mere age category, was considered to be an «expression of the positive absolute» and the synthesis of «a vast range of civic, moral and aesthetic values at the same time». This led to the fascist regime's political choice to make young people «the focus of its own action and the central point of its organizational system»³.

¹ See A. Klönne, *Jugend im Dritten Reich. Die Hitlerjugend und ihre Gegner*, Dusseldorf-Köln, Diederichs, 1982; D. Caroli, *Ideali, ideologie e modelli formativi. Il movimento dei pionieri in URSS, 1922-1939*, Milano, Unicopli, 2015². With specific reference to Italian fascism see R. De Felice, *Mussolini il duce. Gli anni del consenso, 1929-1936*, Torino, Einaudi, 1974, p. 235 ff.

² On the origins and development of the fascist regime in Italy there is a considerable amount of studies and research. We will just recall here: R. De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista. Vol. 1: La conquista del potere, 1921-1925*, Torino, Einaudi, 1966; Id., *Mussolini il fascista. Vol.2: L'organizzazione dello Stato fascista, 1925-1929*, Torino, Einaudi, 1968; Id., *Mussolini il duce. Vol. 1: Gli anni del consenso, 1929-1936*, Torino, Einaudi, 1974; Id., *Mussolini il duce. Vol. 2: Lo Stato totalitario, 1936-1940*, Torino, Einaudi, 1981; P.G. Zunino, *L'ideologia del fascismo. Miti, credenze e valori nella stabilizzazione del regime*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1985; E. Gentile, *Storia del Partito Fascista*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1989; Id., *Le origini dell'ideologia fascista (1918-1925)*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1996; Id., *La via italiana al totalitarismo. Il partito e lo Stato nel regime fascista*, Roma, Carocci, 2001.

³ L. Malvano, *Il mito della giovinezza attraverso l'immagine: il fascismo italiano*, in G. Levi, J.C. Schmitt (edd.), *Storia dei giovani. Vol. 2: L'età contemporanea*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2000, pp. 311-314.

It is no surprise that, with reference to fascism, a sort of «youth ideology»⁴ emerged which was based on the conviction that Italian youth itself, having survived the trenches of the First World War, created and was the authentic protagonist of the birth of the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* – the political movement founded in Milan by Benito Mussolini on 23 March 1919 – and of the real national revolution – culminated with the March on Rome of 28 October 1922 – which led to the dissolution of the liberal, bourgeois «old Italy» and to the creation of the totalitarian fascist state⁵.

In view of these considerations, it is easy to explain the emphasis with which fascism, right from the beginning, took charge on the one hand of operating a sort of totalitarian socialization of the younger generations through the mobilization and placement in the regime's mass youth organizations, and on the other to promote the emergence of a new political class based on a systematic program of political and ideological education designed to imbue the new Italian youth with the fascist spirit.

To this end, already as of January 1920 the first youth organization of the Mussolini movement had been formed. It was the Student Avant-garde of Italian fascist combat bands which – after the extension of its membership only to students but also to “young people in the factories and in the fields” – the following year assumed the more comprehensive title of *Avanguardia Giovanile Fascista* (Fascist Youth Avant-garde)⁶. During the same year 1920, the University Fascist Groups were officially formed, bringing together university students who, since 1919, had been joining the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* first and, later, the National Fascist Party⁷.

In the period immediately after fascism obtained power, in particular after its transformation into a totalitarian regime (1925), the matter of the placement and the ideological and political training of young people took on a special urgency and was made the subject of a series of systematic interventions⁸. With the Law No. 2247 of 3rd April 1926, first of all, the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* was set up for the aid and the physical and moral education of young people, bringing together young people of both sexes between 8 and 17 years old⁹. Subsequently, for the purposes of completing the process

⁴ See M.A. Ledeen, *Italian fascism and youth*, «The Journal of Contemporary History», vol. IV, n. 3, 1969, pp. 137-154.

⁵ L. La Rovere, «Rifare gli italiani: l'esperimento di creazione dell'«uomo nuovo» nel regime fascista», «Annali di storia dell'educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche», n. 9, 2002, p. 53.

⁶ See P. Nello, *L'avanguardismo studentesco alle origini del fascismo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1978.

⁷ See B. Garzarelli, *Un aspetto della politica totalitaria del PNF: i Gruppi universitari fascisti*, «Studi storici», vol. 38, n. 4, 1997, pp. 1121-1161; L. La Rovere, *Storia dei Guf. Organizzazione, politica e miti della gioventù universitaria fascista, 1919-1943*, Torino, Bollati-Boringhieri, 2003.

⁸ See, in this regard, the lively debate on young people and the problem of the formation of a new authentically fascist ruling class held since 1927 on the columns of «Critica Fascista», the magazine directed by Giuseppe Bottai, and the speech by Benito Mussolini *Punti fermi sui giovani*, published in the same magazine on 1st February 1930. See P. Nello, *Mussolini e Bottai: due modi diversi di concepire l'educazione fascista dei giovani*, «Storia Contemporanea», vol. VIII, n. 2, 1977, pp. 335-366; L. Passerini, *La giovinezza metafora del cambiamento sociale. Due dibattiti sui giovani nell'Italia fascista e negli Stati Uniti degli anni Cinquanta*, in Levi, Schmitt (edd.), *Storia dei giovani*, cit., pp. 386-421.

⁹ See N. Zapponi, *Il partito della gioventù. Le organizzazioni giovanili del fascismo, 1926-1943*, «Storia Contemporanea», July-October 1982, pp. 569-633; C. Betti, *L'Opera nazionale balilla e l'educazione fascista*,

of orientation of the Italian youth in the regime's organizations, on 8 October 1930 the *Fasci Giovanili di Combattimento*, designed to welcome boys and girls between the ages of 18 and 21, were established¹⁰.

A further and more effective intervention on this front occurred in the second half of the 1930s, following the conclusion of the war in Ethiopia and the proclamation of the Empire. With the Royal Decree of 27th October 1937, Benito Mussolini established the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio*, the «unitary and totalitarian organization of the youth forces of the fascist regime», which «responded directly to the Secretary of the National Fascist Party», into which both the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* and the *Fasci giovanili di Combattimento*¹¹ merged. Among the designated aims of the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* were in particular «the spiritual, sporting and pre-military preparation» of the Italian youth and the «teaching of physical education in elementary and junior high schools»¹².

Starting especially from the second half of the 1920s, in parallel with the development of organizational and institutional aspects and the launching of initiatives for the diffusion and establishment of fascist youth organizations through the peninsula, the Mussolini regime undertook to anchor such training offer to a veritable *mystique of duty and heroism* to be promoted through specific publications directed to the Italian youth. The aim of such publications was to instill in the new generations the «fascist spirit» destined to turn them into «new Italians», that is to «redo not the appearances of the human life, but its content, the man, the character, the faith»¹³.

2. *The origins of the «pedagogy of the fascist exemplarity»: the cult of the origins and the mystique of duty and heroism*

As already mentioned, the dissemination among the ranks of the Italian youth of an educational perspective inspired by a sort of “mystique of duty and heroism” was entrusted to a series of publications destined to circulate both in school rooms – in the form of «additional readings» together with schoolbooks – and in the local premises of

Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1984.

¹⁰ See R. De Felice, *Mussolini il duce. Vol. 2: Lo Stato totalitario, 1936-1940*, Torino, Einaudi, 1981, pp. 126-135. For further interesting documentation, see A. Starace, *Fasci giovanili di combattimento*, Milano, Mondadori, 1933.

¹¹ See Zapponi, *Il partito della gioventù. Le organizzazioni giovanili del fascismo, 1926-1943*, cit., pp. 569-633. For an extensive documentation, also see A. Starace, *Gioventù italiana del Littorio*, Milano, Mondadori, 1939.

¹² R.D.L. 27 ottobre 1937, n. 1839 – *Istituzione della Gioventù italiana del Littorio*, «Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia», XVI, n. 267, 12 November 1937, parte prima, pp. 4057-4059. Cf. E. Gentile, *Il culto del littorio. La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1993, p. 159.

¹³ P. Piovani, *Funzione educativa del Fascismo*, «Politica nuova», 1-5 November 1941. See also G. Pini, *I giovanissimi*, «Il Popolo d'Italia», 5 February 1927. For an authoritative confirmation of what is being said, see B. Mussolini, *Messaggio per l'anno IX (27 ottobre 1930)*, in Id., *Opera Omnia*, edited by E. e D. Susmel, Firenze, La Fenice, 1951-1980, 36 vols., XXIV, p. 283.

the youth organizations of the regime – as tools of «moral and political education» of the members.

It is the case, first of all, of texts such as *Giovinazza* (1922), *I vincitori continui. Per una traccia ideale dell'Avanguardismo fascista* (1926) and *Balilla* (1927) by Asvero Gravelli¹⁴, one among the first and most committed leaders of the student groups within the National Fascist Party and, from 1923, secretary of the *Fascist Youth Avant-garde*. His works were destined to begin this peculiar line of publications and to inspire a great deal of the following literary production of the same kind¹⁵.

It is also the case of publications such as *La storia e l'opera del fascismo* (1931) by Luigi Pratesi, *Giovinazza eroica* (1931) by Giuseppe Di Sandro¹⁶, and of the booklets *Vita fascista. Per i Balilla e le Piccole Italiane* (1932, 2 voll.) and *Vita fascista. Per le Avanguardie, per i Giovani e le Giovani Italiane* (1933) by Piero Domenichelli, promoter and director of the well known series «Quaderni di propaganda fascista per i giovani e per il popolo» by the Florentine publisher Bemporad¹⁷. Other examples are Giuseppe Sangiorgi's *Balilla* (1934) and the homonymous text given to the press in the same year 1934 by Pietro Camporilli, with which the Roman publisher Ardita inaugurated the collection of books for the fascist youth «Collana di monografie sull'ardimento italiano in ogni tempo. Gioventù eroica»¹⁸.

Finally, there are also later publications belonging to the same thread like *Giovinazza in marcia* (1937) by Ottorino Paraninfo and *Giovinazza Eroica* (1938) by Renzo Bianchi¹⁹.

There is a series of booklets distinct from the official publications of the Central Presidency and the Provincial Committees of the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* and, later, of the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* (statutes, regulations, collections of fascist hymns and chants, brochures and manuals of physical and premilitary education, etc.), which were generally issued by teachers, journalists and party officials directly involved in the activities of youth organizations. They are written with a plain language and are of modest typographical and editorial style but nonetheless rich of illustrations in black and white and in color, and their low cost was meant to encourage a wider distribution, which is testified by their frequent reissues and reprints.

The aim of such educational publications was to perpetuate in the younger generations «the memory of those who managed to increase the power and the glory

¹⁴ A. Gravelli, *Giovinazza. Opuscolo di propaganda fascista*, Roma, Direzione del P.N.F., 1922; Id., *I vincitori continui. Per una traccia ideale dell'Avanguardismo fascista*, Roma, Editrice Libreria del Littorio, 1925 (2^a ediz. 1926); Id., *Balilla*, presentazione di S.E. Benito Mussolini, Milano, Edizioni Alba, 1927.

¹⁵ See M. Canali, Gravelli, Asvero, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Roma, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960-2009, 73 vols., vol. 58, 2002 (available online at: www.treccani.it).

¹⁶ L. Pratesi, *La storia e l'opera del fascismo. Corso di cultura fascista per la nuova gioventù italiana*, Livorno, Tip. Benvenuti e Cavaciocchi, 1931; G. Di Sandro, *Giovinazza eroica*, Milano, Liber Editrice, 1931.

¹⁷ P. Domenichelli, *Vita Fascista. Per i Balilla e le Piccole Italiane*, Firenze, Bemporad, 1932, 2 vols.; Id., *Vita Fascista. Per le Avanguardie, per i Giovani e le Giovani Italiane*, Firenze, Bemporad, 1933.

¹⁸ G. Sangiorgi, *Balilla. Asterischi dedicati all'educazione della gioventù italiana*, Bari, Tip. Giuseppe Favia, 1934; P. Caporilli, *Balilla*, Roma, Ardita, 1934.

¹⁹ O. Paraninfo, *Giovinazza in marcia. Appunti di cultura fascista*, Milano, Optima, 1937; R. Bianchi, *Giovinazza Eroica*, Roma Gioventù Italiana del Littorio, 1938.

of the Homeland»²⁰. In other words, their purpose was to instill in the young people of the youth organizations of the regime the «intimately fascist» spirit and the warlike virtues of the generation «tempered by the fire of the battles on the Karst» and of the «glorious maniples of the Black Shirts» that had saved Italy from the «Bolshevik fury» in the immediate post-war period:

We must create – said Mussolini in this regard in October 1926 –; we of this age and this generation, it is up to us, I tell you, to make the face of the homeland physically and spiritually unrecognizable in ten years. In ten years, comrades, Italy will be unrecognizable! We will have transformed it, we will have made something else of it. [...] We will create the new Italian, an Italian that will not resemble that of yesterday. These are the generations of those who made the war and are therefore intimately fascist. Then will come the generations of those whom we educate today and create in our image and likeness: the legions of the *balilla* and the *avant-gardists*²¹.

These instructions were the inspiration behind the first and most significant of the booklets dedicated to the Italian youth mentioned above: *Balilla* by Asvero Gravelli – published in Milan in 1927 with an authoritative presentation written by Mussolini himself –, which was to actually be the real ‘manifesto’ of the education focused on the *mystique of duty and heroism*.

From the very beginning, Gravelli stated the aim of his text: it was to make «the hope and the dream to give a unified and fascist name to all the Italian youth» come true, to promote «the fascist spirit in young people, giving them ideal guidance»:

The generation that faces life today – he wrote –, is the generation of the sun, and instinctively aimed at courageous actions. It is necessary to prepare the Homeland for her people of the future, her heroic people, to mark her destiny; to give her a clear sense of existence, and pride, loyalty, disinterest, courage, tenacity, probity as the custom of the new Italian wants. Young people are the heralds of a will for conquest and victory. [...] Fascism will teach them to meet every glorious work with the one cry: «Further beyond! Further beyond!»²².

Therefore, it was necessary «to create and arouse in young people the heroic passion, [...] to imprint in the hearts of children the educational norms based on hierarchy and discipline»:

Fascist children – as the author went on – must grow in the school of honesty, rectitude, boldness and with a faith capable of eternalizing the Fascist era. [...] Young people are the driving force of Fascism and their spirit is pervaded by a deep mysticism that knows only duties²³.

This work of formation of consciences, however, could not be achieved through the proposal of the old and now worn-out rhetorical formulas of traditional pedagogy, even

²⁰ A. Starace, *Fasci giovanili di combattimento*, Milano, Mondadori, 1933, p. 27.

²¹ B. Mussolini, *Al popolo di Reggio Emilia (30 ottobre 1926)*, in Id., *Opera Omnia*, edited by E. e D. Susmel, cit., vol. XXII (1926), p. 246.

²² Gravelli, *Balilla*, cit., pp. 9-10.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

less by referring to empty and inconsistent models of behavior inspired by bourgeois individualism.

In order to instill in the young generations «the need to believe, to fight for an ideal, even if it costed them to sacrifice completely»²⁴, it was necessary to educate them to «the myth of Mussolini [...] model of the virile, moral and physical qualities of the fascist man» and, at the same time, point out for them the cult of the origins through «the epic transfiguration of the memory of war and squadristism»²⁵.

Hence the exaltation of the «war» and the reference to the «sublime and melancholic sense of dying» that should have inspired the fascist youth and nourished their heroism and passion for great ventures:

War – said Asvero Gravelli –, the spirit of war, the echo of it [...] in the soul of many adolescents, the images of Glory lit in their Hearts, the desire to be something, to do something, and the pride of a heroic feat from an instinctive mystical sense of their young life and incited by the example of fallen peers [...], the need to express [their] energy through strong and violent actions²⁶.

But also the constant reference to the «myth of Mussolini» and his role as «guide and supreme leader of the Fascist Revolution»:

Benito Mussolini – as we read in *Balilla* –. His Name and his story already resonate as legendary. He was followed by men and children, a small handful at first, then, through heroism and sacrifice, a cohort and a legion, finally a people, a redeemed people who sang and knew how to die because they wanted to win. So many children fell like this, facing the sun, among the wheat spikes, or in the ambushes! Because only the young know how to die!²⁷.

In the rest of the treatise, Asvero Gravelli stressed the specific virtues that should have inspired the children in the youth organizations of the regime on several occasions:

Child, you rise to a school of heroism and shape your soul, you base your life on many sacrifices. [...] You must prove yourself worthy to wear the fascist uniform: you must feel the pride of being better than others. The Black Shirt means daring, and the courage that is given by the honesty and purity of the soul must be your first virtue. [...] The beauty and joy of feeling Italian and fascist must shine in you. You are the man of tomorrow and the Homeland will be entrusted to your heart and its greatness will be your victory. [...] You must be the new Italian. [...] The new generations have the sacred duty to guard jealously the legacy of virtue and heroism inherited from our great ones and to be at the forefront of every movement that leads us to a superior greatness of our Italy²⁸.

At the same time, the author highlighted the «heroic spirit» and the «common ideals» that should have bound indissolubly the new generation of Balilla and Avant-gardists «to the Martyrs of Fascism fallen in the radiance of their youth»:

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁵ La Rovere, «*Rifare gli italiani*»: *l'esperimento di creazione dell'«uomo nuovo» nel regime fascista*, cit., p. 62.

²⁶ Gravelli, *Balilla*, cit., pp. 10-11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-31.

Your Saints – wrote Gravelli to the young fascists, quoting Mussolini – are Balilla and Mameli, the adolescents Curtatone and Montanara, Oberdan and Rismondo, and the countless others that from the '15 to the '18 left the classrooms for the trenches, went to the assault shouting: *Long Live Italy!* And today they rest in small, forgotten cemeteries. Italian youth of all the schools and all the worksites, let the Homeland not miss her radiant future: let the 20th Century see Rome, center of the Latin civilization, ruler of the Mediterranean, as the beacon of light for all the peoples²⁹.

The need «for a serious spiritual orientation for young people» and for an education of the consciences inspired by the *mystique of duty and heroism* necessarily implied a reference to the example «of the Fallen and the Martyrs of the Fascist Faith», whose deeds, specifically narrated and made the object of a real cult, should have inspired the thoughts and choices of the children and the young men of the regime.

It is not surprising that, especially since 1926 – year of the foundation of the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* – the *pedagogy of the fascist exemplarity* advocated in *Balilla* by Asvero Gravelli has found a systematic and growing reception in the varied educational publications for the youth referenced above.

To avoid unnecessary repetition, we will now examine the work that can in all respects be considered most representative of this *pedagogy of the fascist model*, namely the already mentioned volumes on *Vita Fascista* for the new recruits in the youth organizations of Mussolini by Piero Domenichelli, printed between 1932 and 1933 by Florentine publisher Bemporad.

The two booklets *Vita Fascista. Per i Balilla e le Piccole Italiane* were a collection of tales of war and heroism («*Racconti per i Balilla*»), and of biographical profiles of the heroes and the martyrs of the First World War and the fascism of the origins («*Giovinezza eroica dell'Italia guerriera*» and «*Martiri della Rivoluzione Fascista*»), whose purposes were to build a Balilla «of few words, of cold courage, of tenacious industriousness, of blind discipline»; a young Italian «unrecognizable for the Italians of yesterday, as wished by the Duce»³⁰.

Among the countless «heroic young boys» of the Great War narrated by Piero Domenichelli we find first of all Vittorio Montiglio, whose biography of «fighter and martyr of the Italian and fascist cause» allowed the author to establish a direct connection and a close link between the generation that had fought in the trenches of the First World War and the one that had become the protagonist of the fascist revolution culminated with the march on Rome of 28th October 1922:

The figure of the young hero Vittorio Montiglio has something legendary [...] He had two brothers at the front [in the Great War], two heroes decorated several times, and burned with the desire to reach them for his own honor [...], he was just fourteen years old. [...] His war life is a succession of heroic acts and serene disregard for danger. [...] The war was over for everyone, except for Vittorio Montiglio. The March on Ronchi and the period of Fiume came. He fled to Fiume and became a legionnaire. He took part in the whole D'Annunzio venture. [...] On 8th September 1924, while he was traveling to the Aviation Camp of Ghedi, he was attacked by some communists who were terribly annoyed by

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁰ Domenichelli, *Vita Fascista. Per i Balilla e le Piccole Italiane*, cit., I, p. 29.

his heroism and his great love of the Homeland, and he was badly wounded. [...] The young hero, decorated with a gold medal at seventeen, is the living symbol of the fiery youth who fought the war, of those child soldiers who with their passion gave Italy the greatest victory against Powers prepared and armed to the teeth³¹.

The narration of «indomitable courage», of «heroic deeds», and of the glorification of the choice to sacrifice «for the good and glory of the homeland» was also the focus of the rapid biographical profiles of children and young people such as *Il Caporalino* of Pieve Tesino, in the Valsugana valley, «the eleven-year-old boy who wore the glorious uniform of the Italian soldier» and gave his life for his homeland «like a true soldier»³²; or the very young squadrista *Antonio Strucchi*, «who died in the ambush of Casale, slaughtered by the Bolsheviks»³³.

More articulated and rich in details was the narration of the deeds of the two heroic children *David Marcello* and *Aldo Sette*, whose unconditioned dedication to the Italian cause had made them martyrs. The first one, *David Marcello*:

Inspired by the ardor and the boldness of the Italian soldiers, he felt as strong and bold as they were and asked to fight. [...] so David Marcello became soldier and was able to fulfill his duty until the sacrifice of his life. *An example of heroism to Italian children, who will learn from him the firmness and the courage to fight against all the difficulties of life for the good and the glory of the Homeland*³⁴.

Whereas the other one, *Aldo Sette*:

He was seventeen years old and was one of the Avant-gardists of the Fascio di Greco Milanese. It was the sad period of 1921 when the communist madness completely dominated the spirit of the people. In Milan, the ruthless struggle against the fighters and those who still loved the Homeland was stronger than elsewhere. [...] In the afternoon of 20th March 1921, a small group of fascists from Greco Milanese who took part in the commemorative ceremony of the Five Days of Milan were returning home singing, accompanied by militants from Milan who wanted to escort their companions. [...] The young fascists were largely unarmed, and the opponents, aware of this, came upon them and began to beat them. The young Aldo Sette was the only one who remained on the spot, standing straight, he defended himself by throwing rocks at his assailants, who were firing everywhere. To the young hero who, with his hair in the wind and his gaze firm and serene, was defending Italy with stones from the disturbance of the red madness, the comrades shouted: – Sette, pull back, they are going to kill you! – Never again! – answered the boy. – Come forth, my companions! Long live Italy – and he threw a stone as last defense. A rifle shot to the head left him dying. After a few minutes, Aldo Sette died³⁵.

The third volume of *Vita Fascista. Per le Avanguardie, per i Giovani e le Giovani Italiane*, printed in 1933 by Piero Domenichelli and mainly addressed to older boys, had a different angle compared to the first two volumes. It included a large collection of texts signed by journalists, writers and prominent members of the National Fascist Party, and

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-110.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 117-119.

³³ *Ibid.*, 138-139.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-135.

a series of Mussolini's speeches and anecdotes related to heroic episodes and significant events of the First World War and the origins of fascism. Their purpose was to recover the memory of the Italian youth that had sacrificed on the battlefields and to recall the «sacred duty» that united the young heroes of yesterday to the new generations of fascists, who were training in the youth organizations of the regime – veritable «gymnasiums for bravery» – to take up their legacy by taking in the «mystique of extreme sacrifice for the Homeland» that had animated and guided their «fathers and elder brothers»³⁶.

It is no coincidence that, alongside the interventions and contributions of personalities such as Paolo Orano, Margherita Sarfatti, Nazareno Padellaro, Arnaldo Mussolini, Tommaso Marinetti, Italo Balbo, and Orio Vergani, in the third and last volume of *Vita Fascista* by Domenichelli there was a wide section entitled «I nostri Martiri» celebrating the memory of the young Black Shirts fallen during the revolution that led to the victory of Fascism in Italy:

And you, the avant-gardists of today – the author wrote –, the young fascists who are getting ready with meditation and awareness and with the outward exultation of the gatherings [...], to follow up in the ranks of the militia. [You] have the duty to look for the names of our heroes and martyrs, the countless names that must join the few ones that are remembered here; and [to look for] the deeds of each one of them for the ideal book to draw from as well as from the purest and most sacred sources of the Revolution and of the Fascist Homeland, of the Fascist Life to which we are tied by bonds of blood that will never break. Gather them, ideally, our martyrs, in the luminous vision of your eyes, in the incessant and total re-enactment, in a Sublime Legion, which was the truth of the Avant-gardism from which the one of today, which is yours, derives, carries out, moves forward³⁷.

And in what was in all respects a sort of *martyrology of fascist youth*, Domenichelli's text proposed to the reader a dozen profiles of «young heroes of Mussolini», whose deeds were recalled according to the classical canons of the *pedagogy of the fascist exemplarity* already widely applied by the author in the two other volumes of *Vita Fascista. Per i Balilla e le Piccole Italiane*.

Thus, in recalling the «sacrifice» of *Federico Florio*, the young avant-gardist «who died on 17th January 1922, hit by a communist revolver», it was emphasized how he «being just a young man revealed himself to be a Hero with an ardent soul, a vigorous spirit, a very noble heart. Indomitable and desperate fighter». And the reader was urged to imitate «the sublime beauty of his bold deeds» to «honor Italy highly»³⁸.

Likewise, in celebrating some of the «most radiant and purest martyrs» of the heroic «days of the '21, dear to the nostalgic memory of the squadristo», the multitude of «undefeated heroes» was honored: for «the victory of the blessed Cause», «contemptuous of the danger and careless of the enemy». They had not hesitated to go towards the extreme sacrifice and to make of death «a sign to scornfully carry on their chest». Among them was *Luigi Platania*, and it was exactly the bravery of his endeavors, his total «consecration» to the «Cause of the Homeland», his being an «enthusiastic and heroic

³⁶ Domenichelli, *Vita Fascista. Per le Avanguardie, per i Giovani e le Giovani Italiane*, cit., pp. 7-8.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

fascist», that made the ex-fighter and squadrista «fallen on the field of glory» an authentic model and standard for the youth of Mussolini: «The life of Luigi Platania is sacred – wrote the author, moved –, sacred to the Homeland, sacred to Fascism!»³⁹.

Similar tones, even though in the face of sometimes very different events and experiences, can be found also in the other profiles of the «young heroes and martyrs of the Fascist Revolution» proposed in the third and last volume of *Vita Fascista*.

The wide section of the work of Piero Domenichelli dedicated to the celebration of «I nostri Martiri», that is to say the presentation of the exploits of some of the young squadristi who stood out for their «heroism and disregard for danger» and who had «given their lives in extreme sacrifice for the homeland» during the «Revolution of the Black Shirts», ended with a collection of speeches by Benito Mussolini. The speeches effectively proposed the key orientations that inspired fascism in regard to the education of the young Italians in the youth organizations of the regime. At the same time, it reiterated the choice to feed such education to an actual *mystique of duty and heroism*:

Young generations belong entirely to us and there are no exceptions to this very firm fundamental rule. They must be raised with the spirit proper to the fascist discipline and it is, therefore, necessary that they diligently and regularly attend the institutions set up for them by the Regime. [...] This masculine and warlike education is necessary in Italy because for many centuries the military virtues of the people could not stand out. The war fought from 1915 to 1918 is the first one, since the wars during the Roman Empire, that has been fought and won by the Italian people.

Moreover:

There must be the Italians of Fascism, as distinctive as the Italians of the Renaissance and the Italians of the latinity. Only by creating a lifestyle, a way of living, we will be able to remain in the pages of history and not only in the chronicle. And what is this way of life? Courage, first of all; the fearlessness, the love for the risk, [...] always being ready to dare both in the individual and the collective life, to abhor anything that is sedentary; [...] the pride of being Italian at every hour of the day, the work discipline, the respect for the authority [...] The movement I created will keep carrying on, long after me. Who are the Balilla? They are the fascists of tomorrow. The future of Italy is safe in their hands. Even though Italy is not entirely fascist today, it will be so, when the young of today become adults⁴⁰.

3. *The turning point of the early Thirties: the birth of the myth of the «Heroic youth» grown up «in the shade of the Littorio»*

It was in the early Thirties that the strategy pursued until then on the ideological and political education of the new generations within the youth organizations of the regime was destined to experience a real breakthrough.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-80.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-109.

In 1932, the text *Giovinazza eroica*, edited by the Central Presidency of the *Opera Nazionale Balilla*, was published in order «to remove it from the ephemeral life of newspapers and preserve it as a noble example of masculine education». It collected the memory of «the actions of today». In total, there were around 161 «heroic facts» having as protagonists 181 among Balilla and Avant-gardists, to whom it is necessary to add another 60 names of «young fascists» who distinguished themselves during great catastrophes (landslides, floods, etc.) for their «heroic sacrifice» and their commitment towards the community⁴¹.

The ultimate purpose of the publication, repeatedly reissued until the fall of fascism⁴², was to make manifest, «regardless of any official recognition», the «heroic value of the gestures, that the Presidency of the Opera pointed to the admiration and the example of all the young Black Shirts».

In other words, the choice to bring to the attention of the Italian youth in the organizations of the regime «this long theory of names and facts, the Golden Register of the Opera Nazionale Balilla» had a dual purpose: on the one hand, to reiterate «that the newest generations of the Littorio had not taken the Name only from the heroic Genoese young boy, nor the robe only from the daring squadristo of the first hour»; on the other hand – and this is certainly the most relevant aspect –, to prove how an institution such as the Opera Nazionale Balilla, which from its origins (1926) had made «the bravery and disregard of danger its own educational norm», had already fully succeeded in the immense and colossal task of transfusing «in our young people those virtues of the Latin race, which, dormant for some time, have found in the pure and vivifying atmosphere of Fascism a new bloom and new life»⁴³.

In this regard, if the already mentioned works of Asvero Gravelli and Piero Domenichelli, like those of the many other writers placed in the so-called line of the *pedagogy of the Fascist exemplarity*, had the purpose of instilling in the youth of the regime the «fascist spirit» and the «warrior virtues» of the generation «tempered by the fire of the battles on the Karst» and the «glorious and heroic maniples of the Black Shirts» that had brought to completion «the Fascist Revolution», the new publication – with the meaningful title *Giovinazza eroica* – intended to represent a sort of implicit confirmation of the effective success of the Mussolini project to create in the Balilla and the Avant-gardists «the new integrally fascist Italian». At the same time, it aimed at ensuring that the Italian youth «shaped in the image and likeness of the Duce» by the youth organizations of the regime would provide a model and a reference point for generations to come.

Therefore, the volume *Giovinazza eroica* was placed at the crossroads between the celebration of the «Italian virtues», too long set aside and now finally placed by fascism at the base of the ideological formation of the Italian youth, and the exaltation of the

⁴¹ Opera Nazionale Balilla, *Giovinazza Eroica*, Roma, Presidenza Centrale dell'O.N.B., 1932, pp. 3-4.

⁴² The Central Presidency of the Opera Nazionale Balilla also printed two other editions of the work that had been updated and enriched with further examples, respectively in 1934 and 1937. Later, the General Command of the Gioventù Italiana del Littorio took charge of the new editions that came out in 1940 and 1942.

⁴³ Opera Nazionale Balilla, *Giovinazza Eroica*, cit., pp. 3-4.

characteristics and qualities of the «new Italian» grown «in the shadow of the Littorio» and constantly guided by the example of the Duce and his reprimand to «live dangerously». The volume was supplied free of charge to all the members of the male branches of the Opera Nazionale Balilla and made the subject of reading and collective reflection not only in the classrooms (generally as an additional teaching aid to be added to the Single State Text in primary and public schools)⁴⁴, but also during the meetings and the local gatherings of the fascist youth organization. In essence, it was a collection of short narratives of episodes of civil heroism, of tales of protection of fascist institutions and defense of the established order and the social coexistence that had as protagonists Balilla and Avant-gardists of different ages, social status and geographical origin. Their generalities and data relating to their militancy in the youth organizations of the regime were provided, as well as a full-length or half-length photograph, mainly in uniform or, in rare cases, with at least the badge of the Opera Nazionale Balilla, which intended to highlight the «bold and daring spirit» and the «martial traits» of the children and young people who became protagonists of the «heroic enterprises».

Through the analysis of the synthetic but precise accounts of the «episodes of heroism» reported in the publication, the analysis of the language used and the study of the type of «virtuous facts» selected to be exalted and celebrated, it is possible to highlight how the myth of the «heroic youth», forged by the youth organizations of the regime according to the principles of Mussolini's ideology (virile education, boldness, love of sacrifice, disregard for danger, etc.) is a fundamental chapter of the most comprehensive project of building the new fascist man. Namely, this was an attempt to promote – through the memory and celebration of the «heroic youth» through the school and associationism – a civil and political education of the young Italian generations entirely inspired by Mussolini's ideal.

Focused, as already mentioned, on acts of civil heroism, on the protection of fascist institutions and on the defense of social coexistence and of the established order, the episodes narrated in the pages of *Gioventù eroica* concern, first of all, the rescue of people in danger of drowning, the extinguishing of large fires or the intervention in favor of the victims of major tragedies and natural disasters.

Thus, the thirteen-year-old Giuseppe Airaghi from S. Stefano Ticino (Milan), Balilla belonging to the 161st Legion, had been awarded the bronze medal of civil value for having jumped «with generous enthusiasm in the deep waters of a canal to the rescue of a little girl, who after falling accidentally, carried by the current, was about to drown» and «having reached her, he managed with considerable effort to rescue her»⁴⁵.

Similar recognition was given to the young Ambrogio Brivio from Maderno (Brescia), Balilla of the 44th Legion, who «on the morning of 8 September VI [1928], seeing a

⁴⁴ See A. Ascenzi, R. Sani, *Il libro per la scuola nel ventennio fascista. La normativa sui libri di testo dalla riforma Gentile alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale (1923-1945)*, Macerata, Alfabetica Edizioni, 2009, pp. 135-136.

⁴⁵ Opera Nazionale Balilla, *Gioinezza Eroica*, cit., p. 5.

six-year-old boy fall into the water, contemptuous of the danger he was facing, he threw himself completely dressed into the water and managed to rescue him»⁴⁶.

Remarkable «courage» and «disregard for danger» were also shown by Oliviero Cattarini, Trieste, Avant-gardist of the 298th Legion, who «in the night of 17 August VI [1928] in the Port of New York, with grave danger and in extremely difficult conditions, saved the life of a woman, Assunta Esposito, honoring the Italian name abroad with his gesture, his value and his modesty»⁴⁷.

There were also rescue episodes that saw the heroic rescuer succumb to the fury of the waters and the sudden loss of forces, as in the case of the thirteen-year-old Pierino Bertiglia from Brusaschetto (Alexandria), Balilla of the 382nd Legion, who, «shining example of courage and contempt for danger», after diving into the Cervo stream to rescue «a companion who accidentally fell where the water was deep», caught by «a sudden sickness, immediately fell to the bottom and miserably perished victim of his generous soul»⁴⁸.

Also for what concerned the fires, very frequent especially in the small rural villages, Balilla and Avant-gardists stood out for their commitment and for the courage with which they faced the flames and came to the aid of the people. As is the case of the very young *Romeo Alessio*, originally from Calanna (Reggio Calabria), Balilla belonging to the 231st Legion, who «on the occasion of a very violent fire that destroyed three houses in his village, despising every danger, participated with courageous enthusiasm in the work of extinguishing the flames and saving», earning the applause and admiration of everyone present and of the «Soldiers of the M.V.S.N. [Voluntary National Security Militia]», who had arrived to bring rescue⁴⁹.

Similar acts of courage and self-sacrifice had characterized other young people such as Nicolò Mangiaracina from Palermo, Avant-gardist of the 183rd Legion, or like the Milanese Sandro Manzoni, Virginio Tagliabue and Alfredo Geffert, who also belonged to the 158th Legion, who, among the mountains of Madesimo in Valle Spluga (in province of Sondrio), «with courage and contempt for danger», had worked «in the arduous work of extinguishing a fire that developed in one of the houses in the village»⁵⁰.

Actually, the «episodes of youthful heroism» and the situations of «grave danger» in which Balilla and Avant-gardists had proved themselves enough to acquire merits and awards for Civic Valor were numerous. The fourteen-year-old war orphan Secondo Ugo Castellucci, Avant-gardist of the 101st Legion in Forlì, for example, was given a public commendation for having come to the aid of an injured man during a very serious car accident who was «about to be crushed by the rear wheels of a heavy truck» and for having «rescued him [...] with serious personal risk», putting his own life in danger⁵¹.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Finally, a large group of Balilla and Neapolitan Avant-gardists of the 167th Legion had received an official commendation «for having distinguished themselves in the valiant work of rescue given on the occasion of the great landslide that occurred in Via Arenella» in Naples, during which the young fascists had not hesitated to risk, with «true disregard for danger», their very lives⁵².

Alongside the numerous cases of civil heroism, particular attention was paid, in the pages of *Giovinezza eroica*, to the episodes related to the fight against crime and the repression of subversive activities carried out by the «enemies of the Homeland». Particularly risky, on this side, were the feats carried out by many other young fascists, as in the case of the fifteen-year-old Antonio De Lorenzo, from Praia d'Arienta (Catanzaro), Avant-gardist of the 67th Legion, who «on 13th September VI [1927], with courage and disregard for the danger, leaped in pursuit of a dangerous criminal armed with a revolver who was captured after a bitter fight»⁵³.

Likewise, Corrado Pacini, hailing from Monsummano (Pistoia), Avant-gardist of the 212th Legion, «[after] witnessing the act of violence that took place on 6th May VI [1927] in the hamlet of Monsummano Alto, in which the Black Shirt Beretti Vittorio found his death, with noble intent he launched himself unarmed in pursuit of the murderer Palamidessi Armando, regardless that, in the meanwhile, the latter stopped and shot him with repeated gunshots»⁵⁴.

The same heroism had guided the actions of Cirillo Tempini, from Edolo (Brescia), Avant-gardist of the 44th Legion, who had «courageously assisted the Financial Guard Scaletti Emilio of the Edolo brigade who was struggling with five rebel rascals», who later turned out to be dangerous subversives who were preparing attacks in the area⁵⁵.

A well-deserved reward for civil valor, finally, had been won by the Avant-gardists of the 31st Legion Michele Seneca and Pellegrino Leonardis, both originally from Molinara (Benevento), who, with «absolute disregard for danger», «on 6th October VI [1927] met six rascals armed with rifles and weapons. They confronted and disarmed them, driving them back to the barracks and thus facilitating the work of purging of the RR. CC. [Reali Carabinieri]»⁵⁶.

In this case as well there had been «the young fascist martyrs» who, in showing themselves among «the most daring followers of the commandment of the Duce 'live dangerously'», had paid with their lives the choice to «fulfill their duty all the way»⁵⁷.

The publication in the early Thirties of the booklet *Giovinezza eroica* (1932) aimed, as was already mentioned, at providing vivid evidence of the full and substantial success of Mussolini's project to turn the Balilla and the Avant-gardists into «the new Italian[s], entirely fascist». It was also destined to arouse a sort of redefinition of the theoretical

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-91.

cornerstones of that «pedagogy of fascist exemplarity» which had found in the «mystique of duty and heroism» its primary reference and its most organic and incisive dimension.

It is certainly true that the call to heroism and self-denial of the generation that «sacrificed herself for the Homeland in the trenches of the Great War» and «of the young Black Shirts who had given their blood tribute to the Fascist Revolution» would have continued to inspire the educational work of the youth organizations of the regime. It is equally true, though, that this work would have found a further and even more incisive reference point in the sudden awareness that the children of the *Opera Nazionale Balilla*, who grew up «in the shadow of the Littorio», constituted at the same time the complete expression of the «new wholly fascist Italian» and the true model and reference point for the generations to come of the peninsula.

School Jubilees as an Opportunity for the Implementation of New Instruments of Memory Building: the Case of the 150 Years of *Scuola Magistrale* in Locarno (Switzerland)

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Introduction

This paper is being written while preparations for the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the School for teacher education in Canton Ticino¹, Switzerland (in Italian: *Scuola magistrale*, opened in November 1873) are underway. In the paper's second part I will try to read this anniversary as a Public history experience, using some parts of the *Manifesto della Public History of Education*² as an interpretative framework. Since the anniversary and the main events have been realized in autumn 2023, this paper differs from the version presented at Macerata. I am deeply grateful to my Italian colleagues for the interesting discussions during the Congress and for different suggestions I received for the project.

As we know, national school systems have deeply changed from what they were in the 19th century – when they used to be an integral part of public administration in the context of nation-building projects – to what they have become in the second half of the 20th Century, i.e. a part of complex multileveled education systems. The evolution may explain why in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, school jubilees have been very important in multilingualistic and multicultural Switzerland. This is particularly apparent in the last quarter of 19th century, when aggressive nationalism in neighboring countries became a threat to the Confederation's independence, as well as in the period around World War II, when commemoration was also a form of national education and “teaching into democracy”. However, it must also be considered that in

¹ The school's Italian name is *Dipartimento formazione e apprendimento della Scuola universitaria della Svizzera italiana* (DFA-SUPSI), the official website is www.supsi.ch/dfa (last access: 25.03.2023).

² The Manifesto's version we cite is that of September 2022, findable here: <https://aiph.hypotheses.org/il-gruppo-di-lavoro-sulla-public-history-of-education> (last access: 25.03.2023).



Fig. 1. Exhibition for the 100 years of the Cantonal Education Society (1938)

federalist Switzerland, a “federation of teaching states”³, commemorations have always been focused on cantonal histories in a process of local and cantonal identity-building.

For these reasons we can easily find, in the history of Italian-speaking Switzerland, initiatives remembering the foundation of Schools and Education societies. A booklet for the 50th anniversary of the Cantonal School of Commerce (a school for commercial employees), published in 1945, quotes:

Since the proposals were immediately accepted by the cantonal education board, the initiatives were quickly prepared, concerning: I. the preparation of a commemorating exhibition; II. an exhibition about didactics and schooling; III. the public commemoration on 22-23 September 1945⁴.

In 1938, the foundation of Ticino’s Educational Society (*Società Demopedeutica*) was also commemorated with an exhibition that stressed the role of Ticino’s “father of public education” and Federal Councilor Stefano Franscini (Figure 1).

As these examples show, educational jubilees or commemorations of persons (teachers, headmasters) usually take one of the following forms:

- Exhibitions, commemorative plaques, or monuments (Figure 2)
- Public events such as conferences and congresses
- Commemorative books

³ R. Hofstetter, *La Suisse et l’enseignement aux XIXe-XXe siècles. Le prototype d’une «fédération d’États enseignants»?*, «Histoire de l’éducation», n. 134, 2012, pp. 59-80.

⁴ *Il cinquantenario della Scuola cantonale di commercio, relazione sul biennio 1943-1944 e 1944-1945*, p. 5 (our translation). The document can be downloaded here: <https://fondo-gianini.supsi.ch/444/> (last access: 25.03.2023).

In rare circumstances, we find initiatives diverging from the main path and pursuing charitable objectives aimed at the development or improvement of schools. A good example is what happened in 1902 in the village of Tesserete, where in occasion of the 50th anniversary of the upper primary school new benches were purchased by a committee of teachers and citizens⁵.

However, while preparing this paper we have uncovered that in the second half of the 20th century anniversaries did not appear so important in all moments of history. For example, the 100th anniversary of the School for Teacher education at Locarno in 1973 was not at all celebrated, neither was there a public debate about the centenary. We could not find any information in newspapers, pedagogical reviews etc. (year 1973), and when interviewing alumni, they confirmed their ignorance of the anniversary.

1. *Point of departure: a dividing history, forgotten stories*

The institution that will be celebrated in November 2023 is thus the Cantonal Teacher Education School founded in 1873. This school was sometimes called *Scuola magistrale* and sometimes *Scuola Normale*, in line with the Swiss and European tradition of teacher education⁶. Until 1878 the school was located in the village of Pollegio, it was then relocated to Locarno where it has remained since then, causing a high impact on the local society and culture. Until 1942, it was a vocational post-elementary school (ISCED 3), it then evolved into a higher secondary school with vocational goals (ISCED 3) partly similar to the Italian *Istituto Magistrale* (with male and female sections). It



Fig. 2. Epitaph in the cloister of San Francesco Monastery, now DFA-SUPSI (Locarno)

⁵ O. Monti, *Osservazioni sulle visite alle scuole del Locarnese da parte di alcuni studenti della Normale Maschile di Locarno*, in W. Sahlfeld, Y. Cook, R. Falcade, O. Monti, F. Targhetta, *Leggere vecchi quaderni scolastici. Un'introduzione con letture di quaderni di allievi e maestri (1880-1920)*, Locarno, DFA-SUPSI, 2023, pp. 29-38, <https://www.supsi.ch/it/web/dfa/leggere-vecchi-quaderni-scolastici>.

⁶ L. Criblez, *Das Lehrerseminar. Zur Entwicklung eines Lehrerbildungskonzeptes*, in L. Criblez, R. Hofstetter (edd.), *La formation des enseignant(e)s primaires. Histoire et réformes actuelles. Die Ausbildung von PrimarlehrerInnen. Geschichte und aktuelle Reformen*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2000, pp. 299-338; H.-U. Grunder, *Scuole magistrali*, in *Dizionario Storico della Svizzera*, Last update: 09.08.2012, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/028711/2012-08-09/> (last access: 28.08.2023).

must be mentioned that over this period it was the only upper secondary school in the region of Locarno (Ticino's only grammar school was in Lugano, and the Commercial upper secondary school for commercial employees was in Bellinzona), with the result that many young people attended the school but did not necessarily want to work as teachers. Students still lived (until 1986) as free pensionaries in the cloister of the ancient monastery that housed the school. Tensions due to what was perceived as poor curricular and institutional framework exploded in 1968 when Switzerland's first student rebellion began in Locarno⁷. In 1986 the *Scuola magistrale* became a post-secondary vocational school (ISCED 5) to be attended by students with a grammar school diploma.

The last important change was the transformation into a University of Teacher Education (ISCED 6) in 2002. It is highly symbolic that the name was changed in that moment, from *Scuola magistrale* to *Alta scuola pedagogica*⁸, a fact that was acknowledged but not accepted by the school's faculty. Many teachers left the school at that moment. The integration of the University of Teacher Education into the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI) was decided by the cantonal government with the aim of a better integration into the Swiss universities landscape⁹ and higher performances in research and development.

This brief historical recount may explain why, even before launching the first celebratory initiatives, it was known that there was not a consensual interpretation of Locarno Teacher school's recent history. The following problems were especially known:

- the controversies about the curricular reforms at the end of 20th century with the end of the post-secondary not academic Teacher school (ISCED 5) and the opening of the Teachers University (ISCED 6) in 2002 has never been really accepted by many of the teaching staff, with the result of strong conflicts between the rector and the faculty. Those conflicts are still fresh in the memory of many faculty members;
- the controversies about the integration into SUPSI as a result of a political decision was rejected by other faculty members who left the school in that moment.

This meant that it had to be determined if and how to make the Jubilee a dialogue between different points of view without reopening recent conflicts. The question was political, ethic, and scientific, and we thought Public History could be a way to manage these elements. The Italian Public History manifesto could help to achieve this goal:

It is essential for Public Historians to consider the public, whether specialized or not, both as privileged interlocutors and as potential protagonists of original research practices, contributing to the restitution

⁷ F. Fiero, *La scuola siamo noi. Aula 20 tra passato e futuro*, Locarno, DFA-SUPSI, 2018.

⁸ The question may become clearer if we remember the French and German terms: *Scuola magistrale* = *École normale* = *Lehrerseminar*, *Alta scuola pedagogica* = *Haute école pédagogique* = *Pädagogische Hochschule*. The German word *Hochschule* clearly means University, and the word *Seminar* was also used for the schools of the clergy education. On the other hand, the French words *École normale* and *Haute école* clearly belong to a terminological tradition introduced in France by Napoleon, and mean the first a secondary vocational school for teacher education and the latter a specialized university (e.g. for engineers or architects).

⁹ <https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/organisation/bodies/chamber-of-universities-of-teacher-education/member> (last access: 03.24.2023).

of a central role to historians and history in the interpretation of contemporary society¹⁰.

It was also known that new forms and means of communication could not be ignored, such as audio, video and other multimedia content, websites, social networks and social media. That's why the whole project is realized as a collaboration between the professor of history of education (Wolfgang Sahlfeld), the school's librarians and the communication service. Integrating the different points of view in the process is very helpful. We also wanted the process to be a participatory project, not entirely realized by the project steering committee.

2. *A process-oriented approach*

From the very beginning, the idea was to realize more than one event, in order to “walk together” on the path to November 2023 (month when the anniversary occurs). The result of this process is, while we are writing this paper (March 2023), the following:

- since September 2022, a monthly article about events or persons in the history of DFA-SUPSI is published by the professor of history of education in the internal bulletin;
- the project's website (<https://150magistrale.supsi.ch/>) is online since February 2023;
- an exhibition with books and exercise books from the archive of DFA-SUPSI (from 8 February to 17 February 2023) was organized in the same week when the website was launched;
- in May 2023 we published a textbook addressed to the school's students entitled *How to Read an Exercise Book*, with analysis of historical exercise books coming from the DFA-SUPSI archive, as a contribution to the historical research about teacher education and the practice of teaching;
- in June 2023 a class of students who attended the Scuola magistrale from 1969 to 1973 remembered the anniversary of their primary teacher diploma, and they did it in a meeting with Prof. Wolfgang Sahlfeld and with the head of our primary teacher Bachelor curriculum, Francesca Antonini;
- a public event, open to all interested persons, was organized for 15 November 2023. This event should be open to everybody and very interactive, with workshops about the history of teacher education, meetings between our students and alumni, public debates about the future of teacher education etc.;
- an international seminary about the history of teacher education in Switzerland was organized for 24 November 2023;
- other events will follow in the year 2023-2024 (150 years after the school's first year 1873-1874), as for example a seminary about Ivo Monighetti's experiences in psychology and written language acquisition.

¹⁰ *Manifesto della Public History italiana*, <https://aiph.hypotheses.org/3193> (last access: 03.24.2023).

3. *New discoveries due to the process-oriented approach*

Although we were conscious that records and memory are not the same for everybody in our community, we were surprised by some facts that were uncovered after launching the project's website and calling for testimonies:

- in 1969 a second Teacher education school had opened in the city of Lugano, eventually becoming completely autonomous in 1977. This second Teacher education school was closed already in 1985 due to the opening of new upper secondary schools (which made useless the second school) and the Teacher education's first academic upgrading from ISCED 3 to ISCED 5. Many faculty members of the Lugano school perceive their experience as a forgotten one and now ask us to reconstitute it in more depth;
- in the period 1985-2000, important studies about children's acquisition of reading and writing skills had been realized by the school's director at the time, the psychologist Ivo Monighetti (1938-2008). This important chapter of our history has been almost completely forgotten, although several faculty members took part in these experiences.

The contacts with those "unforeseen stakeholders" of our history led to some misunderstandings. We learned from those experiences that is very important to share the aims and the methodological decisions of the project with the public, as it is very well said in the Italian Manifesto:

Public Historians strive to ensure that the results and the methodologies of historiographical research are known by a wider public and experiment with practices of communication and research that can also lead to new and original developments in historical knowledge through interaction with the public¹¹.

Another interesting effect of our process-based approach is that we can re-discover forgotten facts and people of our history during the processes. A good example is what happened when we constructed the website's timeline and searched information about all headmasters. During the archive research, we discovered that no picture exists, and only one document remains, about the first head teacher of the female section of the *Scuola magistrale*, Martina Martinoni. However, she seems to have been an important innovator in Swiss pedagogy, a follower of Tuiskon Ziller's method she had learnt about in the Canton of Grisons. Before this research, we had always believed that transfers of pedagogic ideas between Grisons and Ticino had not been possible¹², but this has been, as we now see very clearly, an error due to the fact that we had not considered Martina Martinoni's role in the female Teacher education school at Locarno, where she taught Ziller's method for at least twenty years to all female teachers of Canton Ticino. It must be said that we found only one archive source (in a booklet about women in Ticino from

¹¹ *Manifesto della Public History italiana*, cit.

¹² Cf. W. Sahlfeld, *Federalismo: motore di innovazioni e transfert pedagogici? Il caso della svizzera*, «Annali di storia dell'educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche», n. 23, 2016, pp. 19-21; Id., *Pädagogische Kulturtransfers Italien-Tessin (1894-1936)*, «Rivista svizzera di scienze dell'educazione», n. 1, 2018, pp. 49-66.

1928) and that even the archives for Women's studies in Lugano¹³ have not published a notice about her. We published this discovery in the DFA-SUPSI internal bulletin, and different individuals reacted to it enquiring why women are, in current recounts of "traditional" history of education, less considered than their male colleagues.

4. *Is our Jubilee inspired by the principles of Public History?*

In the following chapter, we will try to discuss our initiatives using the *Manifesto della Public History of Education*¹⁴ as a framework for a critical analysis. The first interesting point I would like to stress is the question of "social needs".

2) *Public History [...] moves from social needs and tries to create forms of co-construction of knowledge, leaving the traditional idea of vulgarization, dissemination, and transmission of historical knowledge.*

Only when thinking about the real meaning of "social needs", we discovered the importance of this point. For example, we were very surprised about the exhibition's success: among the visitors many elderly persons told us they had come to see it because they had been students of the school.

It was only when we launched the idea of a seminar about Monighetti's book *La lettera e il senso* (published in 1994)¹⁵ to be held in the spring of 2024, that several colleagues began to tell about their experience as collaborators of Monighetti. Our wish is that the seminar may become a real opportunity to formalize and record their memories, allowing students to discover an important part of their school's recent history.

5) *Public History in educational and caregiving professions may be used as a powerful instrument for vocational training, for initial training as well as for lifelong learning.*

We have always been sure that the history of education can be a tool of "professional empowerment" for young teachers. In 2020, we coordinated the publishing of a publication aimed at providing students with a theoretical introduction into research in history of education and some examples of good practices, which could be helpful for those who wanted to write a Bachelor or Master thesis on the subject¹⁶. The textbook seems to be a really helpful tool for students who have never applied a historical approach to school and education related topics. As previously mentioned, in the year of the anniversary we will publish a second similar volume, focused on the use of historical school exercise books as a source for studies in the history of education. A theoretical

¹³ <https://www.archividonneticino.ch/> (last access: 03.24.2023).

¹⁴ *Manifesto della Public History of Education*, cit.

¹⁵ I. Monighetti, *La lettera e il senso: un approccio interattivo all'apprendimento della lettura e della scrittura*, Scandicci, La Nuova Italia, 1994.

¹⁶ <https://www.supsi.ch/dfa/pubblicazioni/quaderni-didattici/storia-scuola/formare-e-formarsi-con-la-storia-dell-educazione> (last access 03.24.2023).

introduction about school exercise books as a source has been written by prof. Fabio Targhetta (University of Macerata). As an example of good practice, an interdisciplinary research about mathematic exercise books written by an expert for didactic of matematic and a historian of education will also be included. This contribution is based on exercise books written by students and teachers of the *Scuola magistrale* (end of 19th century) found in the school's archive. Another contribution focuses on exercise books of a student of the *Scuola magistrale* dating back to 1916-1920.

7) *Schools, museums, libraries and local authorities are the natural partners of Public History initiatives.*

From our point of view, one of the most powerful resources of the whole project is the collaboration of the school's librarians (since 2016). They take part in an interdisciplinary team for research, conservation and digitalization of sources for the history of education¹⁷. This is particularly helpful in a University for teacher education deprived of a school museum (they are instead very frequent in Italian universities). On the other hand, DFA-SUPSI is a small institution and without the librarians, research in history of education would not have a sufficient critical mass. The advantage of involving the librarians in the project is also another one: they have very good contacts to other archives and libraries, and interested parties (for example those who could donate us old exercise books) trust them more easily than they would a university professor (for example when bringing us old exercise books from their family's heritage). This brings us to another interesting point of the *Manifesto della public history of education*, the question of contact with the public.

6) *The activities of Public History will prefer the direct contact with the concerned persons, but they will also develop the use of communication and information technologies, based on the idea of glocalism and social empowerment. From the technological point of view, this means that Open source resources and Open access policies should be chosen.*

Concerning the question of Open access policies and Open resources, we could base our project on several existing infrastructures of the laboratory for history of education (coordinated by Wolfgang Sahlfeld). For example, on the website's timeline the user can directly access digitized versions of relevant historical documents, this is possible because these assets have been digitized, stocked in a repository¹⁸ and published in an Open access mode across the laboratory's website for sources and documents about Swiss history of education¹⁹.

¹⁷ <https://www.supsi.ch/dfa/ricerca/laboratori/rccd> (last access: 03.24.2023).

¹⁸ <https://fondo-gianini.supsi.ch/> (last access: 03.24.2023).

¹⁹ <https://storiascuola.supsi.ch/fonti-2/> (last access: 03.24.2023).

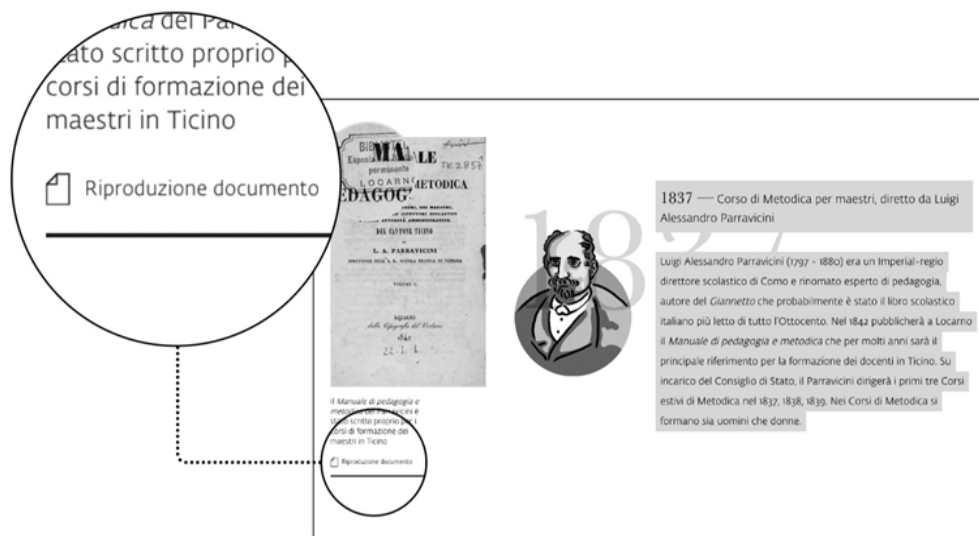


Fig. 3. detail from the website's timeline (<https://150magistrale.supsi.ch/mostra-150-anni/>). Thanks to Adamo Citraro (DFA-SUPSI communication service) for the graphic elaboration

Once the website was finished, a section inviting members of the public to contribute their personal accounts was added²⁰. Among the reactions to this initiative, we found particularly interesting that several ex-teachers of the Lugano Teacher education school (as previously mentioned) wanted to contribute their accounts, which had not really been our focus so far. In June 2023, I met the already mentioned group of alumni who attended the *Scuola magistrale* from 1969 to 1973, and in November they participated in the public event by contributing their memories and life experience (most of them have been primary school teachers for many decades). These are only some of many examples I could bring about the importance of personal contact and involvement of actors.

Conclusions

I hope that this contribution, focused on a local academic jubilee, can be useful for the debate about public memory of school. I do not think I discovered something

²⁰ <https://150magistrale.supsi.ch/racontaci-la-tua-storia/> (last access: 03.24.2023).

completely new to valorize school memory, but I hope that our experience, based on “learning by doing” and the use of a theoretical framework such as the *Manifesto della Public History of Education* will help to bring about significant ways to share memories and to create a shared understanding of the past while involving the local community in the experience.

The Public Representation of Schools in Philately

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Introduction

This paper could have been titled *Ipotesi di una sconfitta* (Hypothesis of a Defeat), borrowing the title of the acclaimed 2017 novel by Giorgio Falco for Einaudi. I had been carelessly drawn to the subject of philately by a feeling of nostalgia towards adolescence and those fleeting passions, as all-encompassing as often as they were ephemeral: I had inherited from an uncle a modest collection of stamps, of no value, but nevertheless rich. Those coloured rectangles from many different countries of the world had led me to consume geographical atlases and the famous *De Agostini Atlas Calendars*, so packed with statistics, data and cartographic information. However, it would be better not to confuse sentiment and historiographical rigour, and it is one thing to have personal memories, and quite another to conduct historical research on public memory.

When I was confronted with this issue, the first things I asked myself – as is always the case when it comes to undertaking research of a historical nature – were, as usual: what are my research hypotheses? How do I intend to interrogate the main sources of this work, namely stamps? Where the latter is of course directly related to the former. These are not idle questions; rather, let this incipit of mine not be idle, for it is intended to bear witness to the difficulties I encountered when faced with a subject that was entirely new to me and for which I could find little supporting bibliography to suggest possible avenues of research.

I therefore initially turned my attention to the effects of the representation of schools and education in philately from the point of view of public memory, but – I must confess – I soon came to very meagre conclusions. On the one hand this is due to the objective difficulty in assessing the importance not so much that a stamp may have had as an object in itself in public memory, but a specific theme reproduced in some (admittedly few) stamp series. In short, even in the face of quantitative data on the number of specimens produced, I would have had to proceed along a path fraught with fragile conjecture, precisely because it was so difficult to verify. How to assess the impact that a handful of stamps issued in the space of half a century had in the public memory? It seemed to me a vain undertaking, as well as decidedly pretentious.

So I changed my perspective: I was to no longer try to determine the effect actually achieved, but the effect the commissioner had wished to achieve. Therefore, not the end

result, but the expected result. Because the fact that issuing a commemorative stamp was not a neutral operation, but on the contrary that repercussions were expected, especially on the collective imagination, was always very clear to the commissioner.

1. *When stamps celebrate power*

To give a concrete example, consider the stamp issued on 3 May 1991 dedicated to the “Azuni” High School in Sassari¹. It was part of the fourth issue of the *Scuole d'Italia* series, which had started three years earlier with a postage stamp dedicated to the “Ennio Quirino Visconti” High School in Rome². The institute has 19th century origins and since 1865 has been named after Domenico Alberto Azuni, a distinguished specialist in commercial and maritime law³. Now, while it is true that the order of issue of the stamps in the *Scuole d'Italia* series need not necessarily follow a hierarchical order of the national resonance of the institute being celebrated, it is equally true that it is interesting to understand – or at least to hypothesise – the reasons that prompted the Postal and Telecommunications Administration to make a selection among all the Italian schools of ancient lineage and to assign a certain ranking in the order of issue. In that case, why was this Sassari high school included in this very small circle? Certainly for its prestige, for having been a point of reference for the city and regional ruling class, as the then headmaster, Giuseppe Bazzoni, and the then mayor of the city, Francesco Borghetto⁴ wrote in the «Bollettino illustrativo». And reading the list of illustrious students, names that have left their mark on the national cultural and political world immediately leap to the eye, from Salvatore Satta (who is cited as a ‘storyteller’, forgetting an entire career as a great jurist, but deciding to value an enduring career as a writer due to the posthumous publication of his masterpiece, *Il giorno del giudizio* (*The Day of Judgment*), and here too there is food for thought) to Antonio Segni, Palmiro Togliatti, Enrico Berlinguer. And Francesco Cossiga. That Francesco Cossiga – who in 1991 was the President of the Italian Republic. Now, even without being too mischievous, a question arises spontaneously: was it, in the intentions of the commissioner, that the school be celebrated in this case, or was it also a bit for the president? In this case, the elaborate machine of public memory was set in motion not so much to perpetuate power as to pay homage to the existing

¹ Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Decree of 7 June 1991, «Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica italiana», vol. CXXXIII, n. 4, 7 January 1992, p. 10; F. Filanci, *Il novellario. Enciclatologo della posta in Italia: francobolli, interi postali, bolli-franchi, storia, servizi bollature & relative valutazioni*, vol. 5: *La prima Repubblica in Posta, 1949-1993*, Milano, Cif/unificato, 2018, p. 324.

² *Ibid.*, p. 303. Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Decree of 4 March 1988, «Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica italiana», a. CXXX, No. 23, 28 January 1989, p. 7.

³ F. Liotta, *Azuni, Domenico Alberto*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Roma, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1962, vol. 4, pp. 751-752.

⁴ Post and Telecommunications Administration, *Emissione di un francobollo ordinario appartenente alla serie tematica “Scuole d'Italia” dedicato al Ginnasio Liceo D.A. Azuni di Sassari*, «Bollettino illustrativo», n. 11, 3 May 1991, p. 2.

elites and to guarantee the ruling classes' immortality. As Bauman has written, «the lives of rulers “transcend mere everydayness”. Their biographies become history»⁵. And this power to orient the judgments of posterity from the traces of history is ensured for the ruling classes by their role and control of the mechanisms with which they can intervene in public memory, glorifying certain names and/or episodes, dropping the veil of silence on others that may be inconvenient or divisive. In this sense, Mario Isnenghi teaches us that «absences, historical gaps, are as valid as choices as presences»⁶.

Similar considerations can be made about the stamp dedicated in 1999 to the Scuola Superiore Normale in Pisa, attended, as also reported in the «Bollettino illustrativo», by the then President of the Republic Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, as well as former President Giovanni Gronchi.

These stamps are part of the *Scuole d'Italia* series (later renamed *Scuole e università*) which started in 1988 with an issue celebrating the “Visconti” High School in Rome. It was, as explained in the «Bollettino illustrativo» by the President of the *Accademia dei Lincei* Francesco Gabrieli, himself a former student of Visconti, the «first Italian secondary school in Rome, with a chronological primacy that soon extended to the didactic and moral field, and still endures today». An important investiture, for an institute – the first secular one in the capital, no longer just of Christianity – that represented the scholastic venue favoured by the Roman upper middle class and by the «new allogenic elements (read: coming from Piedmont and Lombardy) that assimilated into it».

The following year, 1989, it was the turn of the “Giuseppe Parini” High School in Milan, alongside the stamp of the University of Pisa⁷. This was an important novelty for Italian collectors: for the first time, in fact, a thematic serial featured two different graphics⁸. In this case, too, the choice fell on a prestigious institute, frequented by the city's upper middle class – the school was close to the editorial office of the «Corriere della Sera» – which made the headlines in 1966 for the famous case of the school newspaper «La Zanzara», which made a significant contribution to the change of social customs in post-miracle Italy, an episode also mentioned in the «Bollettino illustrativo» in the text edited by the then headmaster, Giorgio Porrotto, and the head of the school's historical archive, Mariacarla Motta.

But what are these «Bollettini» that I have mentioned several times? Numismatic enthusiasts will certainly be familiar with them. They are sheets published to comment on the issue of a stamp. In the first part, all data are given analytically, from the colours to the watermarks, the print run, the ministerial decree, the name of the designer, the value, the series to which it belongs, etc. The second part, on the other hand, and the one that is most interesting for our purposes, reproduces in lengthy texts, signed by illustrious

⁵ Z. Bauman, *Il teatro dell'immortalità. Mortalità, immortalità e altre strategie di vita*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1995, p. 82.

⁶ M. Isnenghi, *Alle origini del 18 aprile*, in M. Gervasoni (ed.), *Mappe dell'immaginario. Per una storia culturale del contemporaneo*, Milano, Unicopli, 1999, p. 173.

⁷ Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Decree of 11 November 1999, «Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica italiana», vol. CXL, n. 284, 3 December 1999, p. 56.

⁸ Filanci, *Il novellario*, cit., p. 309.

personalities – from the Minister of Education to eminent figures from the world of culture and pedagogy up to and including the headmasters of celebrated schools – the official reasons that inspired the production of the stamp. Through analysis of the excerpts it is possible to grasp, reading between the lines, the gap between history and memories and the political nature of the choices or certain biographical reinterpretations. These texts, moreover, respond to a specific grammar, codified over decades of publications by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications: a short piece of writing with an eminently hagiographic slant, aimed at magnifying, without excessive critical investigation, the figure of the commemorated or honoured institution, with a not always rigorous attention to historical reality – I am speaking of objective data, not interpretative theses – and a tendency to draw a veil of impartial approval. In the case of schools, moreover, the impression is that, on the whole, the intention was to celebrate, with the institution, the educational tradition of that specific city and, by extension, of the whole of Italy.

With the third issue, November 1990, we go to southern Italy and find the University of Catania and the “Bernardino Telesio” Classical High School in Cosenza⁹. In this case, the «Bollettino» is of great interest because it reveals part of the motivation behind Telesio’s candidature. Its headmaster, Giuseppe Ciacco, in describing the area of the city where the institute is located, wrote of the need to initiate a work of recovery and revitalisation of the old town centre, calling it an initiative of pressure and stimulus to which, in his opinion, the commemorative postage stamp could have made a valuable contribution¹⁰. In short, a socially useful outcome of an action, that of public memory, usually aimed at strengthening a sense of identity. In this case, we can speak of strengthening the sense of belonging to a community with the aim of producing concrete effects on the very urban fabric of that community.

2. *Which school do they want to celebrate?*

But let us return to the choice of the commemorated schools. The institutes chosen to be celebrated in the *Scuole d’Italia* series share two significant characteristics: firstly, high schools (and in one case a high school for science) of ancient lineage were chosen, confirming the pre-eminence historically assigned in our country to humanistic studies. Secondly, and I would say closely related to the first point, the status of elite schools, attended by the upper middle class and destined to train the future ruling class. In short, the public memory, if we are to refer to the issuance of commemorative stamps with a school theme, in the intentions of the commissioner must be cemented around very precise identity symbols: not the school of all, the popular one, but the one attended by a

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 322. Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Decree of 20 November 1990, «Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica italiana», vol. CXXXII, n. 118, 22 May 1991, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰ Post and Telecommunications Administration, *Emissione di due francobolli ordinari appartenenti alla serie tematica “Scuole d’Italia” dedicati all’Università degli Studi di Catania e al Liceo Bernardino Telesio di Cosenza*, «Bollettino illustrativo», n. 21, 5 November 1990, p. 3.

specific social class. Institutes with their own tradition, often pre-dating the unification of Italy, with their own internal rituals, state-run but exclusive high schools, to use a trendy term. It seems to me the perfect snapshot of a school, the Italian one, for a long time elitist and selective.

I have so far spoken of high schools or universities which, however prestigious or linked to illustrious students, do not represent a singularity on the national scene. However, the case of the Nunziatella Military School in Naples¹¹ and the State Institute of Art in Urbino¹² is different. Both are two unica: respectively one of the oldest military training institutes, not only in Italy, and the other, founded in 1861, was transformed in 1924 into the first and only National Institute for Book Decoration and Illustration.

The norm of high schools with an excellent student body and ancient lineage had thus been broken, but only to celebrate unique schools, also exclusive in their own way and, in any case, destined to train excellences. Excellences to be promoted and entrusted to public memory because they are able to play a pedagogical role and to set an example.

Instead, the postage stamp issued on 15 October 1955 to celebrate the centenary of vocational education in Italy, which was intended to coincide with the centenary celebration of the “Girolamo e Margherita Montani” Industrial Technical Institute in Fermo, which took place on 14 and 15 October and was attended, among others, by the then President of the Republic Giovanni Gronchi, falls into another category, that of the invention of tradition¹³. The choice, without in any way detracting from the Marches institute, was entirely arbitrary and did not take into account older school experiences that had arisen in areas with greater industrial vocation (I am thinking, to give just one example, of the San Carlo Industrial Technical Schools in Turin, founded in 1848). It was Mario Pantaleo, Director General for Technical Education at the Ministry of Public Education from 1948 to 1958, who wrote the «Bollettino illustrativo»¹⁴, defining the Fermo institute as «the most effective example and model for the realisation and consolidation of other initiatives that were being undertaken at that time in the field of professional education»¹⁵. In this case it is a double bind – the attribution of a primordial role to the Fermo school and the postponement of the centenary by a year, given that it had been founded in 1854 – probably determined by the need, once the theme of vocational education had been established, to find a concrete element to anchor the celebrations to, so as to give substance to a concept (vocational education, to be precise)

¹¹ Post and Telecommunications Administration, *Emissione di un francobollo celebrativo della Scuola militare Nunziatella, nel 2° centenario della fondazione*, «Bollettino illustrativo», n. 17, 14 November 1987. See also Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Decree of 15 October 1987, «Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica italiana», vol. CXXIX, n. 211, 8 September 1988, p. 10.

¹² Post and Telecommunications Administration, *Emissione di due francobolli ordinari appartenenti alla serie tematica “Scuole e Università” dedicati all’Istituto Statale d’arte di Urbino e alla Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa*, «Bollettino illustrativo», n. 34, 27 November 1999.

¹³ E.J. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger (edd.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Torino, Einaudi, 1987.

¹⁴ See the biographical entry in G. Chiosso, R. Sani (edd.), *DBE. Dizionario Biografico dell’Educazione 1800-2000*, Milan, Editrice Bibliografica, 2013, vol. II, pp. 277-278.

¹⁵ Post and Telecommunications Administration, *Emissione di un francobollo commemorativo del centenario dell’istruzione professionale in Italia*, «Bollettino illustrativo», n. 12, 15 October 1955, p. 3.

that would otherwise be abstract. The impression is that in this case they wanted to look for the occasion and a real reference to be fixed in the public memory.

Even the postage stamp for the “Cavour” Scientific High School in Rome, issued in 2001¹⁶, in the search for reasons to support its eminence on the national scene, contains a historical forgery: in the «Bollettino», the then school headmaster Gian Giuseppe Contessa described the Cavour as the «first scientific high school to be founded in Rome and perhaps in Italy»¹⁷. Now, since the first teaching was started in the 1926-27 school year, it is not really possible that it was the first scientific high school in Italy, having been established by Giovanni Gentile in 1923, the year in which the Nievo Scientific High School in Padua was founded, to mention just one case.

3. *Memory manipulation*

Another example of the invention of tradition applied to philately is the one featuring Vittorino da Feltre. Issued on 10 May 1978, on the occasion of the sixth centenary of his birth, the stamp depicts Rambaldoni in profile, wearing a banded cap on his head¹⁸. His legacy was outlined in the «Bollettino» by Mario Pedini, the Christian Democrat Minister of Education, who referred to the ethical-religious foundation of the Feltre pedagogue’s educational *magisterium*:

a man of culture, educator of young people, a pedagogue, strongly committed to realising the principles of the unity of culture at the school he established, which has since remained exemplary, Vittorino infused young people – patricians, nobles and poor commoners who attended it – with the stimuli that came to him from a Christian outlook on life, exercised through continuous inner conquest and expressed in faith and deeds¹⁹.

The attribution of an Italian pedagogical supremacy, identified in the figure of Vittorino da Feltre, had a way of expressing itself, as Valentino Minuto has well identified in his research²⁰, not only in philately, but in monuments, epigraphs and commemorative speeches, all aimed at reaffirming Italian superiority in the art of pedagogy.

¹⁶ Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Decree of 20 September 2001, «Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica italiana», vol. CXLII, n. 263, 12 November 2001, pp. 28-29.

¹⁷ *Il libro dei francobolli d'Italia. Valori postali 2001*, Roma, Poste Italiane, 2001, pp. 82-85.

¹⁸ Filanci, *Il novellario*, cit., p. 219.

¹⁹ Post and Telecommunications Administration, *Emissione di sei francobolli ordinari appartenenti alla serie ordinaria “uomini illustri”*, «Bollettino illustrativo», n.n., 10 May 1978, pp. 2-3. See also Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Decree of 27 April 1978, «Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica italiana», vol. CXIX, n. 355, 21 December 1978, pp. 9143-9144 and Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Decree of 28 June 1978, «Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica italiana», vol. CXX, n. 58, 28 February 1979, p. 1904.

²⁰ I refer to the doctoral thesis by V. Minuto, *Memoria e potere. I monumenti a personalità della scuola dall'Unità agli anni '70 del Novecento*, Università degli Studi di Macerata, PhD course in Education, Cultural Heritage and Territories, 35th cycle, a.y. 2022-2023, and in particular section 3.1 entitled *Vittorino da Feltre. Il monumento al Principe degli educatori* (Vittorino da Feltre. The monument to the Prince of Educators), pp. 88-119.

This Christian-based interpretation provided by Minister Pedini to the Vittorino da Feltre postage stamp arrived in 1978, at the height of the season of historic compromise (indeed, issued the day after Aldo Moro's body was found). In this regard, it is good to remember how public memory of personalities from the past, even the rather distant past, changes according to alterations in power structures, as Halbwachs recalls:

the image of a dead person is never fixed. As it sinks into the past, it changes, as certain features fade and others re-emerge, depending on the point of view from which one looks at it, that is, depending on the new conditions in which one finds oneself when turning towards it²¹.

Another school-themed stamp stands out for its religious references, the one issued on 2 May 1992 to mark the third centenary of the foundation of the *Istituto Maestre Pie Filippini*²². The vignette reproduces two distinct episodes from the life of St Lucia Filippini, taken from the decoration of the altar of the saint's crypt in Montefiascone, in the province of Viterbo. In the first, Lucia is seen taking her vows and receiving a large crucifix from the hands of a high prelate. In the scene depicted immediately below, on the other hand, the nun is shown giving a lesson, with a book on her knees, to a small group of six girls. The impression one gets is that of a consequentiality between the two events: first Lucia receives Christ's message and then she becomes His spokeswoman. It is no coincidence that the portrait drafted in the «Bollettino» by Sister Renata Tariciotti, Superior General of the *Istituto Maestre Pie Filippini*, closes with the words that the foundress used to say: «I for my sake would like to multiply myself in every corner of the earth, to be able to shout from everywhere, and say to all peoples: Love God, love God!»²³. The interpretation given of Filippini is therefore interesting: an educator who fought for the advancement of women through «instruction and education for work», at a time when women «lived on the margins of society, often the victim of rampant misconduct». This work to improve women's status was expressed in the training of girls of an «awareness of their own dignity and their role as bride and mother. The School, with its educational purposes, aimed at the restoration of the family and thus of society». A vision that is anachronistic at the end of the second millennium and that seems to have remained unscathed by the revolution of customs that has taken place in Italy since the 1960s.

This stamp, the only one to celebrate a private and Catholic school, is therefore linked to a world that is now outdated, but at the same time it is the forerunner of a trend, brought to its climax by late twentieth-century neo-liberalism, aimed at rediscovering the role of non-state schools, and especially religious schools. We are in the handover period between the seventh Andreotti government and the Amato government; it was shortly

²¹ M. Halbwachs, *La memoria collettiva*, Milano, Unicopli, 2001, p. 148.

²² Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Decree of 17 June 1992, «Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica italiana», vol. CXXXIII, n. 300, 22 December 1992, p. 4.

²³ Post and Telecommunications Administration, *Emissione di un francobollo celebrativo del 3° anniversario della fondazione dell'Istituto delle Maestrie Pie Filippine*, «Bollettino illustrativo», n. 9, 2 May 1992, p. 2.

to be the Berlusconi government that took up these stirrings and brought them to their peak.

Right at the height of Berlusconi I, in November 1994, the stamp dedicated to Giovanni Gentile was issued, on the 50th anniversary of his death²⁴. The Minister of Posts and Telecommunications was Giuseppe Tatarella, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and exponent of the National Alliance-MSI – a party, for the benefit of my foreign colleagues, which was the direct heir of the fascist one. In the climate of mainstreaming the (post)fascist fringe, both politically and culturally, the choice of Gentile is not so much interesting as are the words used in the «Bollettino illustrativo» by Vincenzo Cappelletti, vice president and scientific director of the Italian Encyclopaedia. Gentile's deep merits in the cultural sphere, his scientific output, the prestigious positions he held, and the «tragic death» that put an end to a life «that had given itself the criterion and style of supreme choices and the risks they humanly entail»²⁵ were all listed, in practice listing his adherence to fascism as a supreme and risky choice. The latter was prompted – the only explicit concession to fascism in the long text – by Gentile's interpretation of fascism as «the continuation of the resurgent right and the promise of a return to a strong and responsible statehood». Words that only a few years earlier would have seemed difficult for the political and cultural world to agree with and that were part of the successful revisionist trend that was gaining strength in those very years.

The closing is emblematic in this regard:

The speculative height of Gentile, his conviction of a vital relationship between culture and society, the creative fecundity of his work and the extreme and sacrificial symbol of his death, are looked upon with reverent respect by those who hope and prepare today for a definitive fulfilment of the Risorgimento, in the arrival of the Italian tradition and the country in all its present, creative reality, in its consolidated freedom and in the fervour of its civil dialectics²⁶.

Another example of a sugar-coated interpretation of the past comes from the «Bollettino» illustrating the postage stamp²⁷ issued in August 1970 to mark the centenary of Maria Montessori's birth²⁸. Maria De Unterrichter Jervolino, president of the Opera Nazionale Montessori, did not spend a single word on the fascist and Italian ostracism of Montessori and her method, preferring to refer generically to «contrasts and difficulties

²⁴ Italian Post Office, Decree of 23 March 1995, «Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica italiana», vol. CXXXVI, n. 108, 11 May 1995, pp. 38-39.

²⁵ Post and Telecommunications Administration, *Emissione di un francobollo commemorativo di Giovanni Gentile, nel 50° anniversario della morte*, «Bollettino illustrativo», n. 30, 21 November 1994, p. 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Decree of 16 September 1970, «Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica italiana», vol. CXII, n. 64, 12 March 1971, pp. 1504-1505.

²⁸ For an iconographic overview of all philatelic initiatives in the world dedicated to Maria Montessori I refer to G. Nuti, F. Bertolino, M. Filippa, *Una microstoria iconografica di Maria Montessori a 150 anni dalla nascita: figurine, monete, francobolli...*, «MeTis. Mondi educativi, temi, indagini, suggestioni», vol. 11, n. 1, 2021, pp. 113-140 and F. Bertolino, M. Filippa, G. Nuti, *L'immagine di Maria Montessori nel mondo filatelico: sguardi pedagogici*, in P. Trabalzi (ed.), *Sensi immaginazione intelletto in Maria Montessori. Dimensione estetica ed espressione di sé*, Roma, Fefe, 2020, pp. 189-209.

[also in the pedagogical sphere, of course], criticism and fanaticism», without tying them to the national context. The closing, in this sense, is somewhat paradoxical, when she reports her death in Holland and the condolences of the entire Italian political world: «by now a citizen of the world»²⁹ and, precisely for this reason, one of «the most eminent women in the history of Italy», as if there were a consequential link between the choice of exile and becoming one of the most important women in Italy³⁰. The choice of the vignette to illustrate the stamp is also very curious: on the left is the figure of the pedagogue from the Marche region, while in the background is a group of children who, led by a teacher, perform «gymnastic movements of the Montessori pedagogical system» outdoors, even though the rendering is that of a small group of children sitting on the ground with their knees crossed and arms outstretched. In short, in the face of the wealth of Montessori materials and their recognisability, the choice of outdoor exercises seems to me to be unacceptable, if for no other reason than the difficulty, to those who are not familiar with the subject, of attributing them to Maria Montessori.

To conclude this brief report, it seems to me that we can speak of a common thread, of a common tendency that binds all the philatelic production with an analysed school-celebrative theme (therefore up to the year 2001), that is, the evident manipulation of the past also through revisionist interpretations, or rewriting of history, with celebratory purposes and exalting the entire country through the figure of illustrious personalities or historical schools, thanks to a mechanism that aimed to link the formation of a common feeling to the entrenchment of the national past in shining symbols.

²⁹ Post and Telecommunications Administration, *Emissione di un francobollo commemorativo di Maria Montessori nel centenario della nascita* (Issue of a postage stamp celebrating the 100th anniversary of the birth of Maria Montessori), «Bollettino illustrativo», n.n., 31 August 1970, p. 2.

³⁰ The note in the *Bollettino* also contains an inaccuracy when it attributes to Maria Montessori the title of the first woman to graduate in medicine in Italy.

Ambrosian School Memories. Milan City Council's Construction of Its Own Glorious Educational Tradition from the Italian Unification through the Aftermath of World War II

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Introduction

During a sitting of Milan City Council on 11 March 1954, at which the budgetary forecast for 1954 was up for discussion, then-Councillor for Education, Lino Montagna shared a report of the Council's interventions in the field of education, including measures aimed at addressing the serious impact of the recent world war on local schools¹. The data showed that the schools infrastructure situation was still problematic². Nevertheless, the Councillor pointed out, with legitimate pride, that major efforts had already been made on this front, as well as at the economic level more generally, by the various Councils that had been in office since Liberation³. In presenting his report, he introduced a nuance that

¹ Cf. *Cronache del Consiglio Comunale. Bilancio di previsione per l'anno 1954*, «Città di Milano», vol. 71, n. 4, April 1954, pp. 151-182.

² *Ibid.*, p. 170, p. 180. By the end of the war, 1,602 classrooms out of 2,052 had been destroyed or seriously damaged (Comune di Milano, *9 anni di amministrazione democratica, 1951-1959*, Quaderni della «Città di Milano», 1960, p. 202). In 1954, Montagna noted that in some primary schools it was still necessary to schedule two shifts due to a lack of space, although the repair of the damaged buildings had been completed. Given that no schools had been newly built or extended since before the war, the number of classrooms had now become insufficient. This was also because many were in use as shelters for the homeless and war refugees. The Council finally managed to resolve this issue by constructing new school buildings beginning in the mid-1950s. On the renovation and design of school buildings in this period, see I. Giustina, *L'architettura pubblica nella città: cultura, istruzione, assistenza*, in G. Rumi, A.C. Buratti, A. Cova (edd.), *Milano ricostruisce 1945-1954*, Milano, Cariplo, 1990, pp. 257-288. It should be noted that the situation in Milan was in line with an equally critical situation at the national level: Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *La scuola italiana dal 1946 al 1953*, Roma, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1953, pp. 131-133, p. 266.

³ For further historical background on Milan between the final stages of the Second World War and the post-war period, see at least Rumi, Buratti, Cova (edd.), *Milano ricostruisce 1945-1954*, cit.; *Storia di Milano*, Vol. XVIII: *Il Novecento*, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1995 (especially the essays by M. Tesoro, M. Punzo, A.M. Chiesi, A. Martinelli).

was not necessarily to be expected: a prominent local Christian Democrat, who would continue to be associated with the management of the city's educational affairs for many years thereafter⁴, Montagna invoked «the glorious past traditions of Milan's elementary schools» and, recalling that responsibility for primary education had been transferred from municipal authorities to the central state in 1933, he appealed for the «full and complete» handing back of the elementary schools to the City Council⁵.

The City Council had already expressed its desire to take back responsibility for primary education in 1950, under the mayorship of Antonio Greppi, an authoritative and esteemed exponent of local reformist socialism⁶. It seems strange, while the city was grappling with the many and serious challenges involved in reconstruction and undergoing a transformation that would make it an engine of economic recovery and industrialization, as well as a magnet for migratory flows from Southern Italy, that the councillors should have been insisting upon this point. Their appeal seemed to take the schools debate back in time, to the beginning of the 20th century and the height of the deliberations surrounding the nationalization of elementary schools, which became a reality with the Daneo-Credaro Law of 1911⁷. Undoubtedly, their position was driven by the desire of the city and its political leaders to distance themselves as far as possible from a measure deployed by the fascist regime to centralize education in the hands of the state, and to recover the independence that Milan, like the other provincial and district capitals, had enjoyed until the early 1930s; just as it was surely motivated in part by a parochialist attitude. However, it was also rooted in a more complex phenomenon, which was touched upon by Montagna in his speech, when he referred to the glorious past of Milan's schools: the Councillor meant to invoke a cultural tradition that had been progressively built up by the City Council since Unification, in parallel with a tireless commitment to investing in education.

Now, recent theoretical work has pointed up the ongoing heuristic salience and value of the local dimension of historical educational inquiry: specifically, it is by investigating the local dimension that we can assess how national education policies were received in practice, thereby transcending the «external» perspective offered by the history of institutions⁸. This essay applies such an approach to the study of memory, examining how local school memories were constructed and became stratified over time, contributing

⁴ Cf. F. Chiappa (ed.), *Lino Montagna e la sua Milano*, Milano, Associazione per l'Abbazia di Mirasole, 1998. Montagna was a member of an Executive Council that remained in office from 1951 to 1956, comprised Christian Democrats, Republicans, and Social Democrats, with the external support of liberal councillors, and was led by the social democrat Virgilio Ferrari.

⁵ *Cronache del Consiglio Comunale. Bilancio di previsione per l'anno 1954*, cit., p. 169.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 176. On 19 June 1950, the Council unanimously ratified a motion calling for the city's elementary schools to be handed back to the municipal authorities, characterized as «determined to resume a moral and civic tradition that [had earned] the city so much prestige and recognition»: *Attività del Consiglio comunale nei mesi di maggio-giugno 1950*, «Città di Milano», vol. 67, n. 7-8, July-August 1950, p. 147.

⁷ Cf. C. Betti, *La prodiga mano dello Stato. Genesi e contenuto della legge Daneo-Credaro (1911)*, Firenze, Centro Editoriale Toscano, 1998.

⁸ A. Barausse, C. Ghizzoni, J. Meda (edd.), «Il campanile scolastico». *Ripensando la dimensione locale nella ricerca storico-educativa*, special issue of «Rivista di storia dell'educazione», 1/2018.

in their turn to the building up of national school memories. In relation to the school policies implemented by Milan City Council from 1861 onwards, a topic that has already been studied in part⁹, this study homes in on the image of these measures that was put forth by the Council itself, from Unification to the period following the Second World War. It documents the efforts of the local authority to publicize the objectively impressive results achieved thanks to its educational policies, and to represent Milan as a city that was actively engaged in the education sector. This is a preliminary investigation, in which it is possible to analyse only some junctures in this lengthy historical period and only a selection of the rich sources available (such as articles in periodical publications by the Council, records of debates during Council meetings, booklets brought out by the Council on education topics, and various Councils' reports of their work).

1. *In the aftermath of Unification*

The political and intellectual elites of Milan viewed the Unification of Italy with a certain degree of ambivalence: while the members of the Milanese leadership class had strongly supported the cause of the Risorgimento movement, they were concerned about the city's downgrading from the capital of a large region to a city like any other within the newly established Kingdom of Italy¹⁰. This explains the references to education projects undertaken by Turin City Council in documents from the early post-Unification period, especially in the reports of the *Commissione civica degli Studi* (Civic Commission on Education), a body that had been set up to implement the goals assigned to local authorities under the Casati Law¹¹. In comparing itself to Turin, Milan was displaying its determination to carve out a new national role for itself, not second to that of Turin, including in the field of education¹². In other words, the Milanese ruling class was doing its utmost not only to build, but also to gain recognition for, a school system designed to surpass both the shortcomings of the Hapsburg system, though retaining its strengths¹³,

⁹ There is no shortage of studies on the history of schooling in Milan and the City Council's role in this history (and many of these are cited in later footnotes), but there is no single work that offers a comprehensive overview of the topic. Nevertheless, the following essays remain valuable works of reference: L. Mapelli, G.B. Curami, *Milano. Istruzione comunale*, in A. Martinazzoli, L. Credaro (edd.), *Dizionario illustrato di pedagogia*, Milano, Vallardi, s.d., Vol. II, pp. 697-711; C.A. Mor, *Istruzione elementare pubblica in Milano. Cenni storici e statistici. A cura della Commissione ordinatrice del VI Congresso dell'U.M.N. 11-12-13 settembre 1906*. Milano. *Omaggio ai congressisti*, Milano, Pallestrini & C., 1906.

¹⁰ Cf. M. Meriggi, *Lo "Stato di Milano" nell'Italia unita: miti e strategie politiche di una società civile (1860-1945)*, in D. Bigazzi, M. Meriggi (edd.), *Storia d'Italia. Le regioni dall'Unità a oggi. La Lombardia*, Torino, Einaudi, 2000, pp. 5-49; E. Colombo, *Come si governava Milano. Politiche pubbliche nel secondo Ottocento*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2005.

¹¹ Cf. G. Ghizzoni, *Scuola e lavoro a Milano fra Unità e fascismo. Le civiche Scuole serali e festive superiori (1861-1926)*, Lecce-Rovato (BS), Pensa Multimedia, 2014, pp. 27-31.

¹² In this regard, in addition to the work cited in the previous note, see L. Finocchi, *Edilizia scolastica a Milano dal 1860 al 1885*, «Storia urbana», n. 6, 1978, pp. 88-129.

¹³ Further background on this topic may be found in works by S. Polenghi, including her edited volume:

and the limitations of the system then being put in place for the new Kingdom of Italy. The latter system was viewed as inadequate for the socio-economic and cultural needs of the nation – and especially for those of the Lombardy region – by many illustrious Milanese intellectuals, including Carlo Tenca, Mauro Macchi, Ignazio Cantù and Giuseppe Sacchi¹⁴.

Milan's emphasis on education was evident from the years immediately following Unification. An emblematic example was the distribution of prizes to students at municipal schools on *Constitution Day* (Festa dello Statuto), a holiday introduced in 1861 and set on the first Sunday in June¹⁵. Famously, the most high-profile event of the day was the opening military parade. However, the Constitution Day legislation also provided for the occasion to be marked by school prize-giving ceremonies. This was clearly intended to draw attention to the role of schools, complementary to that of the army, in constructing national identity. As I have documented elsewhere¹⁶, in 1862, Milan City Council decided that Constitution Day prizes should be given out to deserving students enrolled on post-primary courses at the city's municipal night schools. These courses had been introduced by the Council the year prior, although they were not provided for under the terms of the Casati Law. The courses targeted young people who had completed their elementary school studies and were obliged to go to work, but who nevertheless wished to further their education and enhance their future employment prospects.

The ceremony took a ritual form that remained unvaried over the years. In the presence of the highest city and school authorities, initially at the Town Hall and later in selected schools, the event began with a speech by either a Council representative or a teacher. It was no coincidence that the post-primary night school students were initially singled out to receive the Constitution Day prizes, while the distribution of awards to elementary school students took place at other times of the year. By making this distinction, the Council set out to encourage youths and adults who, at undoubted personal sacrifice, had decided to resume their education. It is clear from the speeches delivered on these occasions that the prizes were also intended to enhance these student-workers' sense of belonging to the newly established nation and to instil in them a love for the country which, by investing in their education, was proving its concern for them. A similar bond was meant to be forged between the students and the local authority, which was caring for their future as scrupulously as a parent.

Through the ritual of the award ceremony, the speeches given, and the participation of the students and their parents together with authorities and teachers, the Council was

La scuola degli Asburgo. Pedagogia e formazione degli insegnanti tra il Danubio e il Po (1773-1918), Torino, SEI, 2012.

¹⁴ Cf. M.C. Morandini, *Scuola e nazione. Maestri e istruzione popolare nella costruzione dello Stato italiano (1848-1861)*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2003, pp. 331-340.

¹⁵ Cf. I. Porciani, *La festa della nazione. Rappresentazione dello Stato e spazi sociali nell'Italia Unita*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1997.

¹⁶ C. Ghizzoni, *Building the Nation. Schools and Constitution Day in Milan in the aftermath of Italian Unification*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. X, n. 2, 2015, pp. 23-45.

attempting to reinforce the unity of local school communities¹⁷, offer a positive image of the local school system to the citizenry, nurture a sense of national identity and, finally, celebrate its own role in education provision. In short, the Council's commitment to education was combined with an emphasis on developing symbolic devices and rituals that leveraged schooling to generate a sense of belonging to the city and to its educational communities¹⁸.

2. Milanese schools on display: from the Exhibitions of the late 19th century to the Dizionario Illustrato di Pedagogia

During the same historical period, Milan, like other leading Italian cities, strove to “show off” the positive outcomes it had attained in the field of education, at a range of Exhibitions (including universal, national, and especially education fairs). Only recently has Italian historical-educational research focused on how education was displayed at the 19th- and 20th-century Exhibitions¹⁹, a line of inquiry that got underway earlier in other countries²⁰. These events represent a valuable source that can help us to reconstruct not only the material dimensions of schools – the aspect most investigated to date within Italian scholarship – or their evolution from the infrastructural or educational- methodological points of view, with respect to the broader patterns of scientific, technological, and

¹⁷ On this theme, see the essays collected in C. Yanes-Cabrera, J. Meda, A. Viñao (edd.), *School Memories. New Trends in the History of Education*, Cham, Springer, 2017 and in the special issue J. Meda, L. Pomante, M. Brunelli (edd.), *Memories and Public Celebrations of Education in Contemporary Times*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XIV, n. 1, 2019.

¹⁸ Cf. B. Bracco, *Tendenze educative e istanze politiche della classe dirigente milanese: i luoghi dell'identità nazionale nella toponomastica del capoluogo lombardo dall'Unità alla Grande Guerra*, in L. Cavazzoli, C.G. Lacaita (edd.), *Riforme e istituzioni fra Otto e Novecento*, Manduria, Lacaita, 2002, p. 404, who, in reference to the organization of urban spaces, place naming and the occupation of symbolic spaces, emphasized the «awareness of their pedagogical role» displayed by successive City Councils in Milan during the first decades following Unification.

¹⁹ The salience of this theme is drawn out in J. Meda, *Mezzi di educazione di massa. Saggi di storia della cultura materiale della scuola tra XIX e XX secolo*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2016, pp. 156-158, and is treated even more extensively in these subsequent studies: A. Barausse, *Mostre didattiche, musei pedagogici e musei scolastici in Italia dall'Unità all'ascesa del fascismo. Nation building tra processi di scolarizzazione, modernizzazione delle pratiche didattiche e relazioni transnazionali*, in A. Barausse, T. de Freitas Ermel, V. Viola (edd.), *Prospettive incrociate sul patrimonio storico-educativo*, Lecce-Rovato (BS), Pensa Multimedia, 2020, pp. 109-150; M.C. Morandini, *All'insegna dell'innovazione: la scuola all'Esposizione generale di Torino del 1884*, «Pedagogia oggi», vol. XIX, n. 1, 2021, pp. 116-123; F.D. Pizzigoni, *Tracce di patrimonio. Fonti per lo studio della materialità scolastica nell'Italia del secondo Ottocento*, Lecce, Pensa Multimedia, 2022, pp. 142-227.

²⁰ The following studies were the first to investigate this theme, while further background may be found in works cited in the previous footnote: M. del Mar del Pozo Andrés, *Presencia de la pedagogía española en las exposiciones universales del XIX*, «Historia de la Educación», n. 2, 1983, pp. 165-172; M. Lawn (ed.), *Modelling the Future. Exhibitions and the Materiality of Education*, Oxford, Symposium Books, 2009; K. Dittrich, *Experts Going Transnational: Education at World Exhibitions during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century*, PhD Thesis, University of Portsmouth 2010, 2 vols.; A. Escolano Benito, *La educación en las Exposiciones Universales*, «Cuestiones Pedagógicas», n. 21, 2011/2012, pp. 149-170.

artistic progress within which they were showcased. Rather, analysis of education exhibits (in terms of their organization, the layout of spaces, or patterns of prize-giving) also sheds light on the image of schooling that they were intended to transmit and on the actors who contributed, through their presence and through the contents of their displays, to disseminating this image and thus to generating collective school memories.

Milan City Council enthusiastically accepted the invitation of the Ministry of Public Education to send documentation on its schools to the Paris International Exhibition of 1867²¹. «Patria e Famiglia», the press organ of the Milanese Pedagogical Society, directed by Giuseppe Sacchi, described the material dispatched to the World Fair in the following terms: there were the reports of the Civic Studies Commission, «a series of magnificent albums» containing «the best essays» produced by the elementary school students, copies of the schoolbooks then in use, «the splendid photographic images of Italy's chief artistic masterpieces [customarily] given as school prizes», and «drawings of new school buildings and gymnasiums illustrating the health-related improvements made to [the city's] schools». To the great disappointment of the Italians and of the journal's editorial staff, none of this material was actually put on display at the Fair. Rather, it was thrown «haphazardly» under tables, to make room «for a musty collection of wild pines from the Apennines». The disconcertment of the authoritative publication was not assuaged by the bronze medal given «like the last relic that slipped off a banqueting table» to the Milanese drawing schools, nor by the medals of honour awarded to the Milanese institutes for the blind and deaf-mutes as well as to the Pedagogical Society itself²².

The Society went about compensating for the mortifying treatment of the Milanese and Italian exhibitors in France through its participation in the fifth National Education Congress in Genoa in 1868, which included Italy's first ever education fair²³. A significant number of the 517 exhibitors at this event were from Milan, representing the city's civil society, publishing, and schools network. Milan's contribution to advances in education, as showcased in Genoa, won the recognition of the Jury: out of 79 medals of honour awarded, Milanese institutions received 27. Of these, four were awarded to municipal schools and one to Milan City Council itself for «the outstanding organization of its primary schools»²⁴.

The following year, at the Exhibition held in parallel with the Turin education congress, Milan, as one of the participating cities, obtained further recognition of its efforts to provide education to the working classes, again receiving a medal for its contribution to advances in elementary schooling²⁵. It is beyond the scope of this essay to comprehensively

²¹ Cf. *La pedagogia italiana innanzi all'Esposizione universale del 1867*, «Patria e Famiglia» (henceforth PeF), vol. VI, 1866, pp. 428-439; *Gli istituti educativi d'Italia all'Esposizione universale di Parigi*, *ibid.*, vol. VII, 1867, pp. 97-99; *Gli istituti educativi d'Italia all'Esposizione universale di Parigi*, *ibid.*, vol. VII, 1867, pp. 129-130.

²² *Milano all'esposizione didattica di Genova. Relazione pubblicata a nome della Società Pedagogica Italiana*, *ibid.*, vol. IX, 1869, pp. 3-21 (citation on pp. 3-4).

²³ Cf. G. Sacchi, *L'Esposizione pedagogica a Parigi Lettera I^a*, *ibid.*, vol. VII, 1867, pp. 187-190.

²⁴ *Milano all'esposizione didattica di Genova. Relazione pubblicata a nome della Società Pedagogica Italiana*, *cit.*, p. 6.

²⁵ Cf. F. Palladino, *Medaglia Premio VI Congresso pedagogico italiano-Comune di Milano (1869)*, «Banca

review the participation of Milan and its schools in subsequent Exhibitions, including educational ones. However, one further Exhibition worth highlighting is the Universal Exhibition held in Vienna in 1873, where unlike in Paris, Milan performed more than satisfactorily. At this event, one of its best schools was awarded, namely the Secondary School for Girls, which in 1869, had been held up by the Ministry of Public Education as a model to be followed by all local authorities. The Jury awarded this institution with the Progress Medal for compositions in Italian and two honourable mentions for drawing and needlework²⁶.

The National Exhibition of Arts and Industries held in Milan in 1881 served to further confirm the image of education that the city wished to project, in this case by virtue of the positivist and entrepreneurial culture that drove the event. Milan was no longer competing so much with nearby Turin, but rather with the foreign cities that had hosted the international Exhibitions (first and foremost Paris and London). Through this Exhibition, Milan consolidated its image as the «moral capital», «perhaps the most powerful identity-related myth expressed by Italy's bourgeois industrialist class»²⁷, and sought to be recognized as a model of efficiency and enterprise, in contrast with Rome, the «legal capital».

The Milanese intellectual class and bourgeoisie set out a new path for the forthcoming industrialization, which – in light of lessons learnt from other countries where a capitalist economy had been established for longer – could resolve the social conflict generated by the industrial development model. This pathway attempted to combine a strong «work ethic» with «municipal welfare» for the poorest classes. Thus, it has been observed that: «Milan may be defined as a “moral capital” insofar as promotion of the individual is accompanied by the efforts of an exemplary local authority that sees to the needs of the entire community»²⁸. Welfare, charity, and education were the «urban sectors» where the inevitable social inequalities could be remedied²⁹. This project informed the organization and layout of the Milanese exhibition. Of the fair's eleven sections, one was entirely dedicated to *Education, technical instruction, welfare, and charity*; the Hall assigned to

dati delle onorificenze conferite a esponenti e istituzioni del mondo della scuola e dell'educazione», DOI: 10.53219/1856, published on 05.06.2022 (<https://www.memoriascolastica.it/memoria-pubblica/onorificenze/medaglia-premio-vi-congresso-pedagogico-italiano-comune-di-milano>; last access: 23.08.2023).

²⁶ Cf. *Nel XXV anniversario della fondazione della Scuola Superiore Femminile di Milano 1861-1886*, Milano, Bernardoni, 1886, p. 25. On this school, which would later be named after Manzoni, see at least M. Fugazza, *L'istruzione secondaria a Milano e l'inchiesta Scialoja*, in C.G. Lacaia, M. Fugazza (edd.), *L'istruzione secondaria nell'Italia unita*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2013, pp. 235-257.

²⁷ S. Onger, *Le esposizioni di arti e industrie*, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/le-esposizioni-di-arti-e-industrie_%28Il-Contributo-italiano-alla-storia-del-Pensiero:-Tecnica%29/ (last access: 15.02.2023); cf. also E. Decleva, *L'Esposizione del 1881 e le origini del mito di Milano*, in *Dallo Stato di Milano alla Lombardia contemporanea*, Milano, Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1980, pp. 181-211; I.M.P. Barzaghi, *Milano 1881: tanto lusso e tanta folla. Rappresentazione della modernità e modernizzazione popolare*, Cinisello Balsamo (MI), Silvana Editoriale, 2009; G. Rosa, *Il mito della capitale morale. Identità, speranze e contraddizioni della Milano moderna*, Milano, Bur, 2015.

²⁸ G. Rosa, *Il mito della capitale morale. Letteratura e pubblicistica a Milano fra Otto e Novecento*, Milano, Edizioni di Comunità, 1982, pp. 106-107.

²⁹ Rosa, *Il mito della capitale morale. Identità, speranze e contraddizioni della Milano moderna*, cit., pp. 119-120.

the exhibiting schools and welfare agencies was located near the Work Gallery and the Machine Room³⁰. This layout would have led visitors to immediately and vividly grasp the contiguity and complementarity of the cornerstones in the myth surrounding Milan.

Analysis of the exhibitors at the Milan Fair suggests that this agenda was only partially successful, however. First, educational methodology was not initially included among the categories of exhibit³¹, given that the event had originally been conceived as exclusively industrial in nature. Second, the teaching aids on display showed Italy to be lagging other countries and were out of step with contemporary trends in Italian education, which in reality were more dynamic than the Milanese exhibits suggested. Nevertheless, examination of the 1881 Exhibition in relation to its portrayal of ongoing progress prompts a somewhat different judgement concerning the image of schools and education that it conveyed. For example, we can draw valuable insights from a series of the works that were published in parallel with the exhibition, and which offer a snapshot of various aspects of city life: namely, *Mediolanum*, a work in four volumes published by Vallardi³², *Milano 1881*, brought out by Ottino³³, and *Milano e i suoi dintorni*, issued by Civelli³⁴. Specifically, *Mediolanum* included an extensive essay on education by Benedetto Prina, a secondary school teacher, poet, and history expert, and one on schools for working-class students by Pietro Ravasio, also a teacher and author of history textbooks³⁵. The two pieces described the school system in Milan following a layout that was shared by all the essays in the four volumes: first a historical reconstruction, beginning with classical antiquity (because, as Prina pointed out, if historical background is lacking, it is impossible to grasp the peculiarities of social institutions and interpret their purpose); next, statistical data on developments in education; and finally, a presentation of the state of the art. Both authors repeatedly praised the enterprising spirit of Milanese society and of Milan City Council and its school system. However, in keeping with the ethos of the 1881 Exhibition and the positivist culture underpinning it, «the rhetoric of words was [counterbalanced] by the solidity of figures»³⁶. And so, Prina quantified the municipal elementary schools, the funding allocated to elementary education by the City Council, the number of pupils and teachers, and the delivery of teacher training.

This cultural outlook, with its emphasis on figures and outcomes, including in the domain of education, was not abandoned following the Exhibition, but drove further and lasting efforts on the part of the City Council. Beginning in the 1884-1885 school year, the Council published a «Yearbook» on the municipal schools³⁷. From a simple list of the

³⁰ Cf. *Guida del visitatore alla Esposizione Industriale Italiana del 1881 in Milano*, Milano, Sonzogno, 1881, p. 111.

³¹ Cf. Pizzigoni, *Tracce di patrimonio*, cit., pp. 156-179.

³² *Mediolanum*, Milano, Vallardi, 1881.

³³ *Milano 1881*, Milano, Giuseppe Ottino, 1881.

³⁴ *Milano e i suoi dintorni*, Milano, G. Civelli, 1881.

³⁵ B. Prina, *L'istruzione in Milano*, in *Mediolanum*, cit., Vol. II, pp. 328-358; P. Ravasio, *Scuole popolari*, *ibid.*, pp. 373-386.

³⁶ Rosa, *Il mito della capitale morale. Identità, speranze e contraddizioni della Milano moderna*, cit., p. 53.

³⁷ The following are the different titles under which the yearbook was published over the years: «Scuole comunali di Milano. Personale docente» (from 1884-85 to 1887-88); «Scuole comunali di Milano. Docenti»

elementary schools, with their locations, the names of the teachers, and the number of their pupils, the publication gradually evolved into a thick volume, which continue to be produced until 1933, with information on the public education department, the number of pupils, the number and names of the school inspectors, headteachers, teaching staff, and the services offered by individual schools (meals, showers, hot water, etc.).

In keeping with the approach that had flanked the 1881 Exhibition, the industriousness of the City Council was not only documented in terms of figures and organizational charts, but also by articles published in another periodical produced by the Council itself, namely «Città di Milano», which ran from 1891 until the 1970s³⁸. Many informative articles appeared in this journal over time: there were both quantitative and qualitative analyses, with a focus on leading projects, figures, and events in the life of Milanese schools, including in past years and centuries. While the contributors sought to trace the roots of the city's educational tradition to periods that long preceded Italian Unification, they also invited the reader to envisage the future and the goals to be pursued to further improve education in the city.

The City Council's drive – from Unification, and then, increasingly effectively, from the 1880s onwards – to generate a shared identity around the city's school system and to gain recognition for it outside of the local context – in short, to «invent» a tradition – won a key national-level endorsement thanks to the publication, in the period spanning the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, of the famous education encyclopedia *Dizionario Illustrato della Pedagogia*, edited by Luigi Credaro and Antonio Martinazzoli and published by Vallardi. Specifically, the second volume of this work contains an entry entitled: *Milan. Municipal education*, edited by Leonida Mapelli and Giovanni Battista Curami. The *Dizionario* devoted no other entries to Italian cities and the editors' reasons for featuring Milan alone are laid out in the opening lines of the entry in question:

Given that we cannot offer an account of the peculiar features of municipal education in all, or even in the largest cities, some of which boast most glorious ancient and modern traditions, we wish to at least mention Milan, the moral capital of Italy, whose wealth, industriousness, and enterprise have borne exemplary fruit in all periods. And we mainly cover education for the working classes, which was and is, the special responsibility of the municipal authorities. As we draw closer to the present day, the tendency towards uniformity, which is a consequence of the increasing influence of the central government, is making the different cities more similar to one another. It follows that the reader, based on our description of Milan, will be able by analogy to also formulate a rough idea of the current dynamics and trends shaping education for the working classes in the other cities of the Kingdom³⁹.

Milan was therefore presented as a city that combined ancient traditions with modern efficiency and as an ideal model not because it was to be emulated, but because

(from 1888-89 to 1903-04); Comune di Milano – Riparto Istruzione «Annuario» (from 1904-05 to 1925-26); Comune di Milano – Ripartizione dell'educazione «Annuario» (from 1929-30 to 1932-33).

³⁸ Cf. Comune di Milano, «Città di Milano. Bollettino municipale mensile di cronaca amministrativa e statistica» (1891-1927); the monthly bulletin then continued to be published under the title «Milano» (1928-1943) and from 1947 was brought out as «Città di Milano. Rassegna mensile del comune e bollettino di statistica».

³⁹ Mapelli, Curami, *Milano. Istruzione comunale*, cit., p. 697.

it illustrated how education was developing or would shortly develop in other Italian cities. Standardization was underway by virtue of national education policies and of modernization process induced by developments in educational theory, which were being disseminated throughout Italy thanks to the work of education journals and specialised publishing houses, a sector in which Milan was then one of the leading powerhouses⁴⁰.

The Milanese school system described in the authoritative *Dizionario* was the same as that portrayed at the time of the 1881 Exhibition. Curami explicitly stated that he had drawn extensively on the previously cited essay by Prina in *Mediolanum*. It should be remarked that Curami's piece, minus some passages celebrating the local authority and prejudicially hostile towards the Habsburg policies in place during the Restoration period, remains a broad and well-documented overview, with the additional merit of being backed up by detailed statistical summaries of the state of Milanese schools across the second half of the 19th century.

3. *The continuation of the "tradition" in the Twentieth century*

It is beyond our scope here to offer a detail analysis of the first two decades of the twentieth century. Suffice it to say that, during this period, Milan confirmed its status as an international player by hosting the Universal Exhibition of 1906⁴¹, while the City Council, led by a diverse range of political coalitions (from the popular councils of Giuseppe Mussi and Giovanni Battista Barinetti to the moderate-Catholic council of Ettore Ponti to the socialist councils of Emilio Caldara and Angelo Filippetti between 1914 and 1922⁴²), continued to reinforce and improve the school network, striving to ensure that its positive attainments were known both within and outside the city.

Hobsbawm observed that processes of «invention of tradition», in this case of educational tradition, and the defence of invented tradition, typically come more clearly to the fore at times of change⁴³, as we saw in Milan following Unification and at the early stages of industrialization. And these dynamics recurred later, at further key junctures. For example, when the municipal authority lost its autonomy in the educational sphere by virtue of the Royal Decree of 1 July 1933, which centralized control over elementary schools in the hands of the State, completing the process of nationalizing primary

⁴⁰ Cf. G. Chiosso, *Giornali e giornalisti per la scuola nel secondo Ottocento*, in Id. (ed.), *I periodici scolastici nell'Italia del secondo Ottocento*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1992, pp. 7-44; E. Marazzi, *Libri per diventare italiani. L'editoria per la scuola a Milano nel secondo Ottocento*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2014.

⁴¹ Cf. P. Audenino, M.L. Betri, A. Gigli Marchetti, C.G. Lacaíta (edd.), *Milano e l'esposizione internazionale del 1906. La rappresentazione della modernità*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2008.

⁴² It is beyond the scope of this essay to review the literature on the governance of Milan in the historical period under study. Regarding education, cf. I. Giustina, *Scuole, teatri, ospedali. I luoghi della promozione dell'uomo*, in G. Rumi, A.C. Buratti, A. Cova (edd.), *Milano nell'Italia liberale 1898-1922*, Milano, Cariplo, 1993, pp. 237-265.

⁴³ Cf. E.J. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger (edd.), *L'invenzione della tradizione*, Torino, Einaudi, 1987 (I ed. *The invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, University Press, 1983), especially p. 7.

education that had been initiated in 1911. In 1934, the Council signed an agreement with the central state for the following five-year period, relating to the “Caterina da Siena” and “Rosa Govone” vocational schools for girls and a series of other elementary and vocational schools applying innovative methods or serving special educational needs⁴⁴: the “Rinnovata” School run based on the Pizzigoni method, the “Umberto di Savoia” and “Duca degli Abruzzi” open-air schools, the “Giulio Tarra” school for students with impaired hearing and speech, the “Zaccaria Treves” school for the mentally abnormal, and the “Sofia Carmine Speroni” School for the “lame, mutilated, and rickety”⁴⁵. The agreement specified which items of expenditure would be covered by the municipal authority to enable these schools, which stood out on the Italian education scene due to their specific aims and methods, to function as effectively as in the past. A few years later, in 1937, the Municipality also published dedicated monographs, with rich photographic illustrations, with the aim of documenting the history of these schools and the uniqueness of their educational offerings⁴⁶.

In the same period, the Council also printed a photograph album on the “Umberto di Savoia”⁴⁷ open-air school, again with a view to publicizing, but also to pictorially celebrating, the modernity and educational approach of this institution. The open-air school was originally the brainchild of the socialist Council led by Caldara (1914-1920). It was first opened on an experimental basis in the summer of 1918. After the fascists rose to power, they immediately grasped the educational value of the open-air format and invested in the school to ensure that its architectural structure and layout could be preserved over the following years. Undoubtedly, the multipronged effort by the City Council to play up its achievements in the field of education, as we have just briefly reviewed, also served the propagandistic ends of the fascist regime. Nevertheless, the fact that this effort was made precisely when the municipal authority had lost its autonomy in the domain of primary schooling suggests that it was in continuity with the policies of

⁴⁴ This law (cf. Articles 27-34) provided for the stipulation of special agreements between the State and local authorities concerning the functioning of special schools: R.D. 1st July 1933, n. 786, «Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia», Parte prima, 13 July 1933, n. 161, pp. 3153-3159.

⁴⁵ *Convenzione tra il Ministero della Educazione Nazionale ed il Comune di Milano, per l'applicazione del R.D. 1° luglio 1933, n. 786, relativamente alle Scuole Speciali*, in Archivio Civico del Comune di Milano, fond «Storico», series «Beneficenza pubblica», folder 7, file 4.

⁴⁶ Comune di Milano, *Monografia della regia scuola speciale già comunale “Caterina da Siena”*, Milano, Stucchi, 1937; Id., *Monografia della regia scuola speciale già comunale “Rosa Govone”*, Milano, Stucchi, 1937; Id., *Monografia della regia scuola speciale già comunale “Rinnovata”*, Milano, Stucchi, 1937; Id., *Monografia della regia scuola speciale già comunale “Umberto di Savoia” (Scuola all'aperto)*, Milano, Stucchi, 1937; Id., *Monografia della regia scuola speciale già comunale “Giulio Tarra” per sordomuti e logopatici*, Milano, Stucchi, 1937; Id., *Monografia della regia scuola speciale già comunale “Zaccaria Treves” per l'assistenza medico-pedagogica dei fanciulli anormali psichici*, Milano, Stucchi, 1937; Id., *Monografia della regia scuola speciale già comunale “Gaetano Negri” per rachitici, storpi e mutilati*, Milano, Stucchi, 1937.

⁴⁷ Cf. Comune di Milano, *Scuola all'aperto “Umberto di Savoia” per alunni gracili*, [Milano], n.d. [while this document is undated it is certainly from the 1930s], in Archive of the National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (INDIRE) in Florence, fond «Fototeca storica». On this Milanese institution, cf. C. Ghizzoni, *La scuola a Milano durante la Grande Guerra*, «Archivio Storico Lombardo», 2005-2006, pp. 307-358 (especially pp. 320-322); *La Scuola del Sole. Cent'anni del Trotter a Milano tra sperimentazione educativa e impegno sociale*, Milano, La Città del Sole-Amici del parco Trotter ODV, 2022.

the previous decades. Once more, the Council's aim was to consolidate and perpetuate the Milanese educational tradition, by keeping public attention focused upon it.

It is therefore not surprising that, as reflected in the words of Councillor Montagna at the earlier-cited Council meeting of 1954, the defence of this tradition should again have been resumed after the war, when, despite the diligent efforts of the Council to aid in the reconstruction of the city's schools, the Ministry appeared deaf to its request for greater decision power in relation to primary education. Notably, on that occasion, as at other previous and subsequent sittings of the Council, the demand for autonomy was also supported by representatives of different political forces including the opposition, who, while critical of the Council in office, were convinced that the municipal authority should be in charge of education⁴⁸; this position was often backed up by data concerning concrete measures, such as the experimental timetables launched in some primary schools to meet the needs of working parents, new forms of welfare, investment in school buildings, and the implementation of innovative teaching-learning methods under the banner of activist pedagogy.

These frequent calls throughout the early 1950s for greater autonomy for municipal authorities in the primary education sector would go unheeded, as we know. Nevertheless, Milan's efforts in this field and the «glorious tradition» evoked by Councillor Montagna in 1954 would once again earn recognition outside of the local area and, this time, from the highest authority of the Italian state. In 1955, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Public Education, the President of the Republic awarded the gold medal for outstanding achievement in culture and education to the Municipality of Milan⁴⁹. This prestigious award served to acknowledge the city's contribution to advances in education and schooling and to further nurture the «glorious tradition» that it had painstakingly built up over the course of a century.

⁴⁸ In addition to the earlier-mentioned Council Meeting of 19 June 1950, other budget debates in 1954 and 1955 included motions on autonomy in the field of education, as recorded in: *Cronache del Consiglio Comunale. Bilancio di previsione per l'anno 1954*, cit.; *Cronache del Consiglio Comunale. Bilancio di previsione per l'anno 1955*, «Città di Milano», vol. 72, n. 5, May 1955, pp. 304-328 and n. 6, June 1955, pp. 373-388.

⁴⁹ L'Assessore all'Educazione, *La medaglia d'oro dei benemeriti della cultura al Comune di Milano*, «Città di Milano», vol. 72, n. 11, November 1955, pp. 615-617.

Representations of Disability in the Great Turin Exhibitions at the Turn of the Twentieth Century (1884-1911)

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The article examines three exhibitions: the first held in 1884, the only date that does not coincide with a special event in Italian history; the second in 1898, fifty years after the coming into effect of the *Statuto Albertino*; and the third in 1911, which was staged in Rome as well as Turin, celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy¹.

The multiple sources consulted include: the official documentation produced by the organizing committee (programmes and circulars, catalogues and lists of exhibitors, newsletters and periodic updates, records of prizegivings)²; press coverage and articles in specialized journals; material held at Turin institutes for the disabled that participated in one or more of the exhibitions.

This theme has not previously been investigated within history of education research. The aim of the paper is to address the resulting gap in the literature by offering a chronological and comparative account based on the analysis of a set of novel sources.

1. *A rich and diverse participation*

The catalogues of the three different editions of the Exhibition show that disability featured in these events as a richly composite theme, not only in terms of the different types of disabilities represented, but also in terms of the plurality of perspectives and angles brought to bear upon them: alongside educational institutes for deaf-mutes, the blind, rickety, and mentally retarded, the exhibitors included private individuals, inventors of methods and tools for the study of various disciplines, societies set up by the disabled themselves, and local associations and bodies that ran projects for persons with disabilities as part of a broader charitable-welfare programme. By way of example,

¹ On this topic, see U. Levra, R. Rocca (edd.), *Le Esposizioni torinesi 1805-1911 specchio del progresso e macchina del consenso*, Torino, Archivio storico della Città di Torino, 2003.

² Some of these documentary sources may be consulted online. Cf. <https://www.museotorino.it/site/media/books> (last access: 06.02.2023)

the machines for teaching Braille presented by a teacher, Antonietta, from the Casa di Bologna, which were awarded the silver medal for the education section in the 1884 Exhibition, fell under the heading of “disability exhibit”³; as did the Society for Mutual Aid among the Deaf-Mutes of Lombardy⁴, or the Ligurian Committee for the Education of the People and the Teaching League of Verona, which provided education to rickety children⁵. Disabled pupils also took part in fringe events organized around the exhibition: the international gymnastics competition for schools held in parallel with the 1911 Turin Exhibition is a representative example⁶.

Due to space constraints, and for the purposes of this essay, I restrict my analysis to the participation of institutions for the care and education of disabled persons. A look at the available data enables us to quantify the presence of such bodies at the exhibitions. In 1884, 20 institutes for the disabled took part in the event: an almost equal number of these were devoted to care of the deaf and the blind, respectively (10 versus 8), with a far smaller number dedicated to rickety children (just two). The absence of any reference to the mentally retarded is not surprising: institutions for this group only began to appear in Italy during the 1890s. The overall number of institutes for the disabled at the 1898 edition was slightly higher: 23, with the participation, for the first time, of the institute for phrathenics directed by Gonelli Cioni, which we shall return to later, and a disproportionately high number of schools for the deaf and dumb (13 compared to six for the blind and three for the rickety). This preponderance is presumably explained by Italy’s longer tradition of education for the deaf.

Fewer institutes for the disabled took part in the 1911 exhibition compared to the two earlier editions: a mere 15 altogether, comprising five institutions for the deaf, six for the blind, three for rickety children, and only one for the mentally retarded⁷. This fall-off seems even more marked if we consider that six of the participating institutes were based in Turin itself. It was likely due to the international character of the 1911 event, which was logistically more extensive and with a far more diverse range of exhibitors than either the 1884 or 1898 fairs⁸, and thus less suited to promoting the work of Italian

³ L’Esposizione generale italiana in Torino nel 1884. *Catalogo ufficiale. Divisione II. Didattica*, Torino, UTET, 1884, p. 57 and *Premi conferiti agli espositori secondo le deliberazioni della Giuria. Torino 1884*, Torino, Stamperia Reale, 1884, p. 46.

⁴ L’Esposizione generale italiana in Torino nel 1884. *Catalogo ufficiale. Divisione IV. Previdenza ed assistenza pubblica*, Torino, UTET, 1884, p. 133.

⁵ L’Esposizione generale italiana in Torino nel 1884. *Catalogo ufficiale. Divisione II. Didattica*, cit., pp. 67-68 and *Premi conferiti agli espositori secondo le deliberazioni della Giuria. Torino 1884*, cit., p. 54.

⁶ This gymnastics competition, organized by the Italian Federation in conjunction with the Office in charge of coordinating all the European gymnastics federations, was held in Turin on 11-14 May 1911. Many educational institutions for persons with disabilities took part in the event, winning prizes and accolades. The weekly magazine «La domenica del sordomuto» reported on the participation of «Forza e Parola», a team representing the deafmutes of Bologna, who won gold and silver medals in several different events.

⁷ The fifteenth institution was a School for the Dumb and Deafmutes based in Paotinfou (Tchéli) in China. Cf. *Catalogo ufficiale dell’Esposizione internazionale di Torino 1911*, 3 Vols., Torino, Fratelli Pozzo, 1911, pp. 36, 761 and 1096.

⁸ Special issue F. Evangelisti, A. Pes (edd.), *Le Esposizioni: propaganda e costruzione identitaria*, «Diacronie», vol. 18, n. 2, 2014.

institutions for the disabled. The Turin institutes were the only ones to participate in all three exhibitions, largely because they were locally based: these were the Institute for the Blind, the Royal Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, and the Prinotti Institute, which was also for the deaf⁹. With regard to geographical location more generally, the participating institutes came predominantly from Northern Italy (64%) rather than from the centre (21%) or south (14%) of the country. This breakdown is in line with the distribution of such institutions, which were concentrated in northern areas where private benefactors and municipalities/provinces were more likely to have the resources to finance them by sponsoring free places¹⁰.

The material exhibited was extremely varied: from documentary outlines of the origins, history, and administrative and educational systems of individual institutes (statutes, regulations, budgets, statistics, monographs, photographs, curricula) to displays of the students' handwriting and drawing. There was no shortage of handicraft produced by the pupils themselves: while in the case of deaf students, the products on display were typically the output of their shoemaking, dressmaking, and woodworking activities, in the case of blind students they were more likely to take the form of rush weaving and wickerwork. Sometimes demonstrations were held so that some of the disabled could show off their manual skills to visitors. The institutions also made a significant contribution to the festivities organized as part of the exhibitions: for example, the Milan Institute for the Blind offered a series of concerts at the 1884 edition¹¹.

2. *The civil society perspective*

The circulars sent by the organizing committee to the political and schools authorities, as well as the descriptions of the various sections of the exhibitions to be found in the catalogues, reflect a tendency to situate the contribution of educational institutes for the disabled in one of two domains: education and private or public welfare. In relation to the 1884 and 1898 editions, the documentary sources contain explicit references to educational works for the blind, deaf and dumb, and rickety in terms of school buildings and furnishings on the one hand, but on the other hand, also in terms of methods and textbooks, including in Braille, for reading, writing, geography, music and vocational learning. While the materials from the 1911 exhibition no longer explicitly describe

⁹ The Royal Institute for Deafmutes had been set up in 1838, thanks to funding from the monarchy among other sources, while the Royal Institute for the Blind, whose founding was driven by the Turin city councillor with responsibility for public education, Ernesto Riccardi di Netro, had been inaugurated in 1879. The work of the priest, don Lorenzo Prinotti, encompassed a series of projects for the deaf (from an educational institute for poor women deafmutes, to a parish-based spiritual and recreational centre, a kindergarten, and a free service assisting the deaf and dumb with finding employment and handling workplace issues).

¹⁰ R. Sani, *L'educazione dei sordomuti in Italia prima e dopo l'Unità. Itinerari, esperienze, discussioni*, in Id., *L'educazione dei sordomuti nell'Italia dell'800. Istituzioni, metodi, proposte formative*, Torino, SEI, 2008, p. 25.

¹¹ On the concerts that took place on 18-19 May 1884, cf. «Gazzetta Piemontese», vol. XVIII, n. 135, (15 May) 1884, p. 2 and n. 138, (18 May) 1884, p. 1.

institutions for the disabled in these terms, the criteria for assigning awards and honours make it clear that they continued to be included under multiple categories of vocational training. Thus, the Prinotti Institute for poor deaf-mutes in Turin received a prize for both the “industrial education” category and the “special and advanced training schools” category, while the Vittorio Emanuele Institute for blind children in Florence won a gold medal in the category «works furthering industrial, commercial and agricultural education by the government, provinces, city and town councils, companies and other public and charitable bodies»¹².

This difference between editions may be explained, at least in part, by evolving perspectives on the presence and significance of the schools-education sector at this kind of event. Tellingly, the title of the education section went from *Mostra Didattica* (Education Exhibition) in 1884 to «Vocational education and teaching. Schools-advanced training workshops and laboratories» in 1911, with an explicit shift to focusing on schools whose goal was to «prepare the youth among the common people for economic struggles and success in the workplace and to provide industry with an educated and expert workforce with the capacity for self-improvement and for improving its work tools and methods»¹³.

Institutions for the disabled could also apply to exhibit in the social security and public welfare section¹⁴, which was first introduced at the 1884 Exhibition in response to a positivist climate that held science to be an instrument of progress, including in terms of improving society. Further evidence for this outlook is provided by a questionnaire that was distributed to the exhibitors with a view to systematically collecting data on the state of welfare in Italy, in keeping with a new approach which, as the expression of a secular philanthropy, was destined to replace the charitable works of Catholic organizations. This approach is expressed by Daneo in his report on the exhibition:

A dispassionate examination [...] of Italy's charitable works and institutions might prompt changes, even radical changes, to many of them, and likely a logical and coordinated general reorganization of all of them, and – eradicating the humiliating almsgiving approach that still prevails in very many them – might find, among the rich resources of public welfare, immense scope for salvation from the miseries that still afflict a considerable proportion of Italian communities and areas. Spontaneous, slow, and gradual transformation is already actively underway. The display panels of the exhibiting institutes [...] and the many recent amendments to their statutes and regulations proved the extent and dynamic nature of the – previous and ongoing – accomplishments of the winds of revolution in this field, which once seemed so conservative¹⁵.

¹² Esposizione internazionale delle industrie e del lavoro, *Elenco generale ufficiale delle premiazioni. Torino 1911*, Torino, Momo, 1912, pp. 2-3.

¹³ Esposizione internazionale dell'industria e del lavoro, *Relazione della Giuria. Torino 1911*, Torino, Officine grafiche STEN, 1915, Vol. I, p. 301.

¹⁴ At some of the exhibitions, the students' productions were put on display in the regional pavilions. For example, at the 1898 exhibition, the work of pupils at schools for the disabled in Cagliari – the main city in Sardinia – were showcased in the Sardinian pavilion. On the participation of the Cagliari Institute for Deafmutes at the 1898 event, cf. A.I. Argiolas, *I sordomuti di Cagliari all'Esposizione di Torino. Relazione sull'Istituto pei Sordomuti della Città di Cagliari presentata al Comitato provinciale per l'Esposizione di Torino*, Cagliari, Tip. Muscas, 1898.

¹⁵ E. Daneo, *Esposizione italiana in Torino 1884. Relazione generale*, Torino, Stamperia Reale G.B. Paravia

In the pavilion devoted to societal problems, institutions for the deaf and dumb, blind, rickety, and mentally retarded were included among the other educational and care institutions for children and youth.

Although institutions for the disabled were given the opportunity to choose between two different sections of the exhibition, it is equally the case that – as they were conceptualized and perceived by the organizers – their «natural venue, in light of their charitable character and aims»¹⁶, was thought to be the welfare pavilion.

This interpretation was in line with the view of the contemporary Italian political class, whose members tended to see institutes for the disabled as solely charitable works and, therefore, as falling under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior. Not surprisingly therefore, proposals to extend compulsory education to deaf and blind children, which had been brought repeatedly before Parliament since the 1870s, had never been acted upon¹⁷. Furthermore, some of the main promoters of the Turin Exhibitions were also authoritative national leaders: first and foremost, Tommaso Villa (1832-1915), a parliamentarian with the Historic Left who served as President of the Chamber of Deputies and several times as government minister¹⁸.

In any case, the participation of educational institutions for the disabled in the exhibitions was highly valued by the committees with responsibility for organizing the exhibitions. In both 1884 and 1898, almost all the institutes listed in the official catalogue received an award of some kind, whether a certificate of honour, a medal (gold, silver, or bronze), or honourable mention. In 1911, the proportion of institutions to receive prizes decreased but remained significant, at around 50%. Numerous institutes even received multiple awards at the same edition: for example, in 1898, the Genoa Institute for Deaf-mutes won three silver medals in three separate categories (education, graphic arts and related industries, and public welfare)¹⁹.

The reasons given for awarding these prizes provide us with insight into the meaning and value attributed to institutions for the disabled and to their role in providing for socio-economic needs in their local areas. Many and various were the merits highlighted by the juries called to assess their work. First, the adjudicators emphasized the ground-breaking nature of some of the institutes, which were to be emulated both in Italy and beyond. The adjudication sheet in support of an award given to the director of the Institute for Phrenasthenics in Vercurago, a town in the province of Lecco, conveyed this sentiment as follows:

e C., 1886, Vol. I, p. 118.

¹⁶ *Assistenza Pubblica. Circolare d'invito ad esporre*, «Bollettino ufficiale. Esposizione generale italiana. Torino 1898», n. 13, (25 July) 1897, p. 3.

¹⁷ On the evolving legislation on education for the deaf and dumb, cf. Sani, *L'educazione dei sordomuti in Italia prima e dopo l'Unità*, cit., pp. 30-37.

¹⁸ Cf. S. Montaldo, *Patria e affari. Tommaso Villa e la costruzione del consenso tra unità e grande guerra*, Torino, Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento italiano, 1999.

¹⁹ Cf. *Esposizione d'arte sacra antica e moderna, Premi conferiti agli espositori secondo le deliberazioni della giuria. Torino 1898*, Torino, Fratelli Pozzo, 1898, pp. 36, 92 and 187.

Cav. [Sir] Gonelli Cioni has won a battle: he has managed to secure acceptance for the setting up of schools for phrenasthenics and to prove that these are necessary.

In Italy, there were already institutes for the blind, for the deaf and dumb, for petty delinquents or youths in need of reform, and even for the insane; there was absolutely no form of asylum for idiots, for the feeble-minded.

He has filled this gap, he has offered practical evidence of how phrenasthenics may be educated, and of what improvement may be expected of them; he has rescued many unhappy people from being ridiculed on the streets. His merit is special and most great²⁰.

The adjudication sheets also focused on the excellent/good/fair outcomes attained in the teaching of school subjects and of manual skills, which were attested to by the depth, quality, and variety of the students' work, and which reflected the deployment of the most recent teaching practices (for example, the use of the oral method in the education of deaf-mutes). This explains the awards to organizations that made a particular contribution to the dissemination of new methodologies via the publication of specialized journals: from «L'educazione dei sordomuti» (The education of deaf-mutes) brought out by the Pendola Institute of Siena (gold medal winner) to «Rassegna di pedagogia e d'igiene per l'educazione dei sordomuti e la profilassi dei sordomutismi» (Review of pedagogy and hygiene for the education of deaf-mutes and the prevention of hearing and speech impairments), published by Prof. Ernesto Scuri, director of the Institute of Naples (silver medal recipient)²¹.

Much was made of the social contribution of projects that, in addition to filling gaps in the charity system and enabling the inclusion of disabled individuals in the employment sector, also offered welfare services to the community: just as the Prinotti Institute in Turin housed poor deaf women «who due to a lack of education and old age are in need of a place of refuge»²² and set them up with jobs through its employment service, so the Genoa Institute for the blind took in older men who had lost their sight on the battlefield, and Turin's Institute for the Rickety offered free medical examinations and advice to the community at large.

Praise was also lavished on the skilful administration of the institutes as well as on the considerable energy and resources invested by private individuals in setting up and maintaining them, in accordance with the policy agenda of the liberal state which – due to cultural factors, political considerations, and budgetary constraints – typically delegated to civil society the task of providing support for disadvantaged groups²³.

Some of the language used reveals a “do-gooder”, pitying kind of attitude: from

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²¹ For a more in-depth treatment of these two journals, cf. L. Gobbi, *Tommaso Pendola e la rivista «Dell'educazione dei sordomuti in Italia» (1872-1884)*, Tesi di Laurea, Facoltà di Magistero, Milano, Università Cattolica del S. Cuore, a.a. 1994-1995; R. Sani, *Rassegna di pedagogia e igiene per l'educazione dei sordomuti e la profilassi dei sordomutismi*, in G. Chiosso (ed.), *La stampa pedagogica e scolastica in Italia (1820-1943)*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1997, p. 531.

²² *Premi conferiti agli espositori secondo le deliberazioni della Giuria. Torino 1884*, cit., p. 197.

²³ On the policies of the liberal state in the welfare sector, cf. F. Della Peruta, *Le opere pie dall'Unità alla legge Crispi*, in *Problemi istituzionali e riforme nell'età crispiana*, Roma, Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano, 1992, pp. 195-250.

“unhappy” rickety children to “poor” deaf-mutes to “unfortunate” blind people before whom “the soul is naturally moved”. Similar feelings are described in the article *La mostra didattica* (The education exhibition), which appeared in one of the official publications on the 1884 exhibition. The anonymous author tells of the compassion that he experienced, while visiting the «sorrowful work-themed gallery», at the sight of blind people reading rapidly in Braille from a slate, writing and counting “with special tools”, weaving mats, doing crochet, and knitting; he asks himself whether it is right to «almost make their infirmity into a spectacle» for an increasingly large audience²⁴. This sentiment, mixed with wonder and amazement, tugs at the heartstrings:

Who – the writer asks – could walk by these objects, which have been produced by such diverse groups of the underprivileged and derelict, without feeling moved? [...] It seems virtually impossible that some of these works were produced by those whose minds are not assisted by their eyes²⁵.

A similar reaction may be observed on the part of the general public, as for example, in commentaries published in the newspaper «Gazzetta Piemontese» on the two earlier-mentioned concerts given by the students of the Milan Institute for the Blind at the 1884 Exhibition. An article by the Turin music critic, Giuseppe Ippolito Franchi-Verney di Valletta, is particularly emblematic. Franchi-Verney masterfully describes the quick succession of inner emotions experienced by the audience, from their arrival in the concert hall to the performance of the various pieces on the concert programme:

Among those who entered the concert hall on Sunday, how many truly expected an artistic result from this experiment with the blind? Only a tiny few, I am ready to wager – says the critic – and it may well be that none of the listeners could swear in conscience that they had not been prompted to attend by a sentiment of commiseration. [...] All those who had come with the sincere but modest intention of acting on their feelings of charity towards the unfortunate found themselves, by mid-concert, confronted with a truly artistic event: the tearful, melancholic mood shifted to a joyful, I would almost say glorious one, and a thousand palms clapped enthusiastically for a group of poor unhappy outcasts, who were now leading them to experience new, most sweet emotions²⁶.

The critic himself cannot conceal his excitement and wonder at the skill and level of excellence attained by the blind performers: from the orchestra that proved its ability to play music of all kinds, to the choir, which he defines as «absolutely the most perfect» he had heard in the course of his career. A performance that was all the more astonishing in light of the singers’ physical imperfections, such as the «weakening of the vocal cords» and «weakness of the chest» that are caused by blindness.

²⁴ Naturally, Turin’s own Institute for the Blind was present at the Exhibition, offering a demonstration of the art of Braille printing. Cf. *I ciechi all’Esposizione*, «Gazzetta Piemontese», vol. XVIII, n. 166, (17 June) 1884, p. 2.

²⁵ A.A., *La mostra didattica*, «Torino e l’Esposizione italiana del 1884. Cronaca illustrata», n. 30, 1884, p. 235.

²⁶ G.I. Franchi-Verney della Valletta, *Concerti dei ciechi milanesi*, «Gazzetta Piemontese», vol. XVIII, n. 141, e (21 May) 1884, p. 2.

3. *Self-representation*

All the exhibitors at the great fairs, including educational institutions for persons with disabilities, were required to mark on the application form the sector of the exhibition in which they intended to take part. This was a meaningful choice that reflected how exhibitors perceived their own identity and role, including in relation to the specific context of the event. Scrutiny of the official catalogues of the three editions suggests that the educational institutes for the disabled were more inclined to position themselves in the field of welfare: there were 27 applications for this sector compared to 20 for the education sector. In the absence of further information, we may assume that each institute opted for the category that best matched its own aims and characteristics or the type of material that it planned to exhibit. The display of large numbers of artifacts produced in the vocational workshops suggests a keenness to point up the institute's positive impact, in terms of fostering the social integration of their students by helping them to learn a trade. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the main overall purpose of the exhibitions was to showcase the degree of well-being and economic development achieved by the Italian nation, including – by 1911 – in comparison with other European countries.

The pattern of self-categorization just outlined was likely further influenced by the aforementioned tendency of the political leadership to view educational institutions for the disabled as purely charitable organizations, again, in keeping with the sentimental, “do-gooder” approach that typically characterized attitudes towards persons in this category. Finally, it should be emphasized that registering for the event as charitable institutes meant paying lower participation fees.

The data prompt still further observations relating to the different types of disability. For example, only among the institutions for the deaf do we find cases of dual participation (both education and welfare sections). This is not surprising considering that in relation to deafness in particular, from the 1870s onwards, specialized journals and conference motions had been at the forefront of a systematic and sustained campaign for recognition of deaf persons' right to education and of the educational value of interventions for the hearing-impaired. Nor is it surprising that almost all the institutions for rickety children applied to exhibit in the welfare section: these organizations were clearly more healthcare-oriented than the others. Even the Turin institute, which had been founded in 1872 with a view to offering an effective combination of education and medical treatment, subsequently underwent a process of progressive medicalization during the 1880s²⁷.

Also worthy of note is the – minimal – impact of the great exhibitions in specialist journals with a focus on education for the disabled. Only in their respective, variously titled, news columns, where they habitually reported on key current events with implications for the disabled, did they briefly touch upon the participation and awarding

²⁷ On the background to, and history of, this project, cf. M.C. Morandini, *Tra educazione e assistenza: la scuola speciale per ragazzi rachitici di Torino*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. 7, n. 2, 2012, pp. 241-257.

of the institutes at the various editions of the Turin fair. The reasons for this were made clear by Giovanni Battista Anfossi in an article published in 1884 in «Dell'educazione dei sordomuti» (On the education of the deaf and dumb):

I will not neglect – he says – to let the teachers of the deaf and dumb know what our great Turin Exhibition has gained from the various institutes. And I will gladly fulfil this task, both to serve these institutes the praise that they deserve and also to better publicize the rich life that underpins the flourishing of our Italian institutes²⁸.

In several cases, the details provided to the journals' readers had been drawn from local press coverage, as though to emphasize the positive consequences for local communities of the awards received by the institutes at national/international events. Emblematic of these news stories was the write-up in «La Nazione» of Florence on the conferring, in 1898, of a gold medal upon the Tommaso Pendola Institute of Siena and of silver medals upon Vittorio Banchi and Giulio Ferreri, who were head and deputy head of this institute, respectively:

The honours won at the Turin Exhibition are of special importance because they reveal the scientific merit of the director and teachers at our Institute, given that the R. Istituto Pendola did not send work produced by its students [...], choosing instead to exhibit key educational and scientific publications by its heads and teachers [...], and the monthly journal «L'educazione dei sordomuti» (The education of deaf-mutes). It is the great merit of this periodical [...] to have demonstrated the superiority of spoken language over signing²⁹.

This kind of self-referential logic was less evident in popular magazines whose readers were benefactors, the disabled, and their families: indeed, the illustrated periodical «Giulio Tarra», as well as «La Domenica del Sordomuto», offered more general information about the exhibitions, concerning, for example, the total number of visitors and the prize-giving ceremonies³⁰.

The Turin institutes of education for the disabled have conserved “traces” of their participation in the 1888, 1894, and 1911 Exhibitions. It is evident from the documentary sources that part of the original material has been lost. A prime example is the missing status of gilded bronze facsimiles of the 1898 medals commissioned by the Institute for the Deaf and Dumb for affixation to the diplomas issued by the Exhibition jury³¹. Nevertheless, this institute is the only one which, currently still in operation in the local area albeit under a different name and organized differently to the past, holds a substantial

²⁸ G.B. Anfossi, *L'Esposizione nazionale italiana*, «Dell'educazione dei sordomuti», vol. XIII, n. 4, 1884, p. 80.

²⁹ *Il R. Istituto Pendola pei Sordo-muti in Siena premiato all'Esposizione di Torino*, «La Nazione», vol. XL, n. 282, (9 October) 1898, p. 1.

³⁰ In 1911, the weekly magazine «La Domenica del Sordomuto» covered the king's visits to the Exhibition in a couple of short articles. Cf. n. 38 (17 September), p. 303 and n. 42 (15 October), p. 334.

³¹ Cf. Minutes of the meeting of 11 March 1899 (n. 669), in Archivio dell'Istituto dei sordi di Torino (Archives of the Turin Institute for the Deaf, henceforth ARIST), series «Verbali delle adunanze», m. 22, f. 1, pp. 2-3. The material concerning the Exhibitions includes posters featuring rubber labels and pictures of various kinds of medals.

archive that includes the collected minutes of the institute's board meetings as well as a set of files catalogued under the heading *Conferences, Lotteries, Exhibitions, Competitions*. On the one hand, the archived minutes, letters, and forms offer detailed information on the complexities involved in registering for the exhibitions³²; on the other hand, they provide us with insight into the image that the institute set out to present to visitors. A first key emphasis was on retracing and showing off the historic memory of the institution, via the preparation of a monograph³³ and the production of pictures of the building.

A large advertisement placed in the official 1911 catalogue, which cost the institute 35 lire (indeed, four lines of text per exhibitor were free of charge, after which each line cost one lira), allows us to deduce the type of information that was intended to constitute the institute's "calling card" and to illustrate the effectiveness and quality of the education it provided to its students: from a description of the workshops offered (tailoring, shoemaking, and carpentry in the male section; sewing and embroidery in the female section) to a long list of medals and awards received³⁴. The will to persuade visitors of the positive outcomes attained on both the educational and medical fronts is also reflected in the reports of the board of directors of the Turin institute for rickety children. The 1898 report, which contains a list of the documents and artefacts presented at that year's exhibition, not only cites statistics and examples of the students' work, but also refers to clay casts modelling both the deformed limbs of pupils selected for treatment and their straightened and healed limbs following intervention³⁵.

I have not set out, in this brief presentation, to offer an exhaustive account of the topic in hand, but rather to offer a starting point for a new and promising line of inquiry aimed at reconstructing the strategies and initiatives deployed to spark communication, dialogue, and exchange between the sphere of disability on the one hand and political leaders and civil society on the other.

³² For further details, cf. *Concorso Esposizione Torino 1898*, in ARIST, *Conferenze, lotterie, Esposizioni, concorsi*, m. 24, f. 4/2.

³³ This was the same monograph that had already been presented at the Milan Exhibition of 1881 with the addition of a letter outlining the main changes that had taken place in the intervening period in the moral, intellectual and financial running of the Institute.

³⁴ *R. Istituto Sordomuti*, in *Catalogo ufficiale dell'Esposizione internazionale di Torino 1911*, cit., p. 702, n. 2426. Cf. *Esposizione Internazionale di Torino pel 1911*, in ARIST, *Conferenze, lotterie, Esposizioni, concorsi*, m. 24, f. 4/3.

³⁵ *Relazione morale* (8 June 1899) in Istituto per rachitici Regina Maria Adelaide in Torino, *Verbale, Relazioni. Revisione dello Statuto organico. Cariche sociali. Elenco dei soci onorari*, Torino, Tip. Eredi Botta, 1899, p. 10.

Procession to the “Honorable Son”: Memory and Representations in the Funeral Rites of Felipe Tiago Gomes (Brasília/DF and Picuí/PB – Brazil, 1996/2011)

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Introduction

Certainly, acts of commemoration should not be limited to religious and patriotic celebrations; praise and funeral pomp are also celebrations; I would say that they developed in the time of relatives and friends, halfway between private memory and social memory [...] Every time we pronounce or write the phrase: “in memory of...”, we inscribe the names of those we bring to memory in the great book of co-memory, which in turn is inscribed in the greater time¹.

Thinking about the death of an individual as an object of History was a new exercise for the authors of this text. In this writing, we opted to condense theoretical and methodological aspects of the studies we had developed so far and make a discussion based on tensioning elements of life, death and sensibilities. Thus, the object of this study is the death rituals of a character strongly linked to the field of education in Brazil: Felipe Tiago Gomes. This individual was the subject of a broader research, which was based on the perspective of historical biography² to take the life of such a character as an object of analysis.

In that study, different nuances of the existence and trajectory of Felipe Tiago were addressed, however, no attention was paid to the outcome of these. In the epigraph at the head of the paper, Ricoeur³ emphasizes that «praises and funeral pomp are also celebrations» and concludes his idea by exposing that when we use the phrase «in memory

¹ P. Ricoeur, *A memória, a história e o esquecimento*, Campinas, Editora da Unicamp, 2007, p. 60 (translated from the Portuguese version).

² F. Dosse, *O desafio biográfico: escrever uma vida*, São Paulo, Universidade de São Paulo, 2015.

³ Ricoeur, *A memória, a história e o esquecimento*, cit.

of...», we register the names of subjects in the memory of a wider time. Inspired by this philosopher's assertions, the objectives of this article are to investigate the procedures adopted in relation to the conduct of the funeral of Felipe Tiago Gomes, scrutinize the forms of appropriation and representation in relation to the honored person, identify and analyze the feelings and sensitivities manifested during the funerals. Funeral ceremonies performed for the character and, finally, discuss the contribution of these ceremonies to the mythmaking of the character.

1. "Don Quixote of Brazilian education": Felipe Tiago Gomes and the National Community Schools Campaign

Felipe Tiago Gomes was the founder of the educational sponsor *Campanha Nacional de Escolas da Comunidade* (National Community Schools Campaign), an institution that has been active since 1943 and is responsible for different educational establishments in Brazil. Having become aware of a Latin American educational movement, Felipe decides to promote something similar among law school students who accept the idea and begin to devise ways to put it into practice. Thus, the Poor Gymnastics Campaign (CGP) was created, which aimed to assist those who did not have the opportunity to attend school, especially at the junior high level. Over the years, the institution expanded and gained new contours, being named the *Campanha Nacional de Escolas da Comunidade* (CNEC).

In addition to the adoption of a supposedly non-political and non-partisan position, Felipe's devotion to Saint Francis of Assisi⁴ contributed to the construction of representations that configure him as a kind of saint or even a martyr of education. As a devotee of this saint, Felipe renounced material goods and the accumulation of income and possessions. Throughout his career at the CNEC, he obtained as little as possible for himself, having in his name only what was necessary to live. He did not even have money in reserve for health expenses, a fact that was always remembered and mentioned by those who lived with him. More than once, Felipe had to undergo heart surgeries, which were funded by friends and members of the CNEC, since he had nothing in store for himself. Due to his advancing age, Felipe starts to accumulate some savings, however, these are used to cover Campaign expenses, such as compensation for teachers and employees, when the sponsor goes through a serious crisis, in the mid-1990s. The weakening of the institution during this period is pointed out as one of the causes of the deterioration in the health of the founder, who faces situations of anguish and discouragement with the directions of the maintainer.

But despite his health limitations, his... the precariousness of his health, the professor did not give up being present in all the facts, establishing guidelines, defining strategies and seeking ways to achieve

⁴ Saint Francis of Assisi was a friar of the Catholic Church, founder of the *Regra dos Frades Menores*, a mendicant order characterized by vows of poverty and material abnegation.

this, which has always been his greatest battle and which I believe, which all Brazilians believe, was the most striking example of... acceptance of challenges little understood, except rhetorically in this country that transforms this challenge into a magnificent work, this campaign that spreads throughout Brazilian society has generated public men, citizens of the greatest magnitude, based on this dream, this... that is Don Quixote of Brazilian education⁵.

In September 1996, Felipe Tiago died due to heart complications. His departure took place in the midst of the financial crisis of the sponsor, which, at that moment, ran the risk of no longer being able to maintain itself. Felipe was always too close to one of his sisters, Maria Gomes, who accompanied him during most of his career, being considered a mainstay for the man who lived in the midst of travel and negotiations. Both did not consolidate affective relationships with spouses, nor did they have children. Maria was in poor health, a situation that worried him and which is also pointed out as one of the factors for his weakening and illness. However, he ends up passing away before his sister, and the latter arrives to accompany his funeral ceremony, but dies quickly, just a few weeks after her brother's burial.

2. *The finitude of life as an object of history: theoretical and methodological discussions*

The theoretical contributions that support the discussion proposed in this text are linked to Cultural History, a field of History that allows themes such as death, the rituals and practices involved in it, to be objects of research. On this aspect, Ariès⁶ states that it is surprising that "the sciences of man" have been so discreet about death, an inherent aspect of human existence whose treatment varies according to the socio-historical context, as pointed out by the books of the mentioned author⁷. Ariès's studies on death and what it awakens in human beings contemplate perspectives and practices adopted and developed in the West, especially in Western Europe, from antiquity to contemporary times, so that the relationship of other societies and context are not addressed by the author. We emphasize this, because the writing presented here is based on this perspective regarding the finitude of life, its rites, feelings and sensations, but we understand that they are not the only manifestations regarding death developed by human beings.

The farewell to life is apprehended in different ways by human beings, and this moment is seen in a very singular and subjective way. Death, as well as other stages of life, awakens human sensitivity, through feelings, emotions and sensations particular to each one who says goodbye, such as sadness, longing, fear, faith, loneliness, gratitude, among others. These feelings are expressed through the body and the senses, either by crying or smiling, by the feeling of cold or heat, or by looking into the distance and silence, or by

⁵ P. Gustosa, *Despedida*. Brasília/DF, Daniel Vídeo-Produções, 1996 (original VHS; edited by Sebastião Garcia de Sousa; recording time: 3h52; translated from the Portuguese version).

⁶ P. Ariès, *História da morte no Ocidente*, Rio de Janeiro, Nova Fronteira, 2017.

⁷ P. Ariès, *O homem diante da morte*, São Paulo, UNESP, 2014; Id., *História da morte no Ocidente*, cit.

screaming, lamenting or words of remembrance involving the deceased. They are distinct and diversified behaviors, however, that explain the way which each person faces death.

On this subject, Pesavento and Langué⁸ explain that sensations and emotions are ways in which sensibilities are manifested in our daily lives. This occurs when our senses encounter reality and are affected physically or psychically. Although death is a physical phenomenon, which causes the disruption of the life of a being in relation to others, it ends up psychically affecting those who continue in life, which allows the emergence of different emotions and their different forms of manifestation. Thus, one of the ways of dealing with the pain of loss can be to conduct increased ceremonies, posthumous tributes or the production of material objects that seek to immortalize the memory of the lost person. These actions end up having a double meaning, that of honoring those who left and that of satisfying those who remain.

Regarding the practices of death rituals, Elias⁹ points out that there is a “social convention” that standardizes the behavior of people in funeral acts, both in gestures and in words and expressions to be said. These adopted behaviors were created in order to help people to pass more easily through this moment of finitude of life and overcome the loss of someone with whom they lived. However, there are contradictions in the use of these expressions, especially by the younger population, as they understand this behavior as old and outdated, often not expressing the real feelings and emotions that human beings wish to express on these more delicate occasions.

In order to analyze the processions of the “honorable son”, we will resort to specific concepts of cultural history, such as practices and rituals, problematizing the ways in which society relates to death. We understand that these practices and rituals are carriers and producers of representations, mythologizing, sensibilities and feelings in relation to death, building a memory of the being who says goodbye to life. In Figure 1, we present a scheme with the concepts and theorists that underlie this research.

For the construction of the empirical collection, we resorted to documents mobilized in previous research on the character and the educational supporter founded by him. Thus, the materials mentioned in items *a* and *c* of Figure 2 already belonged to the personal archive of one of the authors of the text, so they were resumed, read and cataloged according to the cut presented here. The empirical material mentioned in line *b* consists of the audiovisual reproduction of stages of the funeral of Felipe Tiago, which took place in 1996. The material, now archived in digital media, was originally produced on VHS on the initiative of the deceased’s family, which, as it seems, hired a production company to capture images and testimonies during the rite. Thus, the referred material is around 3 hours and 50 minutes long, where photographs of the deceased in ceremonials and Campaign schools are interspersed, family moments and testimonials from friends, CNEC members and family.

⁸ S. Pesavento, F. Langué (edd.). *Sensibilidades na história: memórias singulares e identidades sociais*, Porto Alegre, UFRGS, 2007.

⁹ N. Elias. *A solidão dos moribundos*, Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar, 2001.

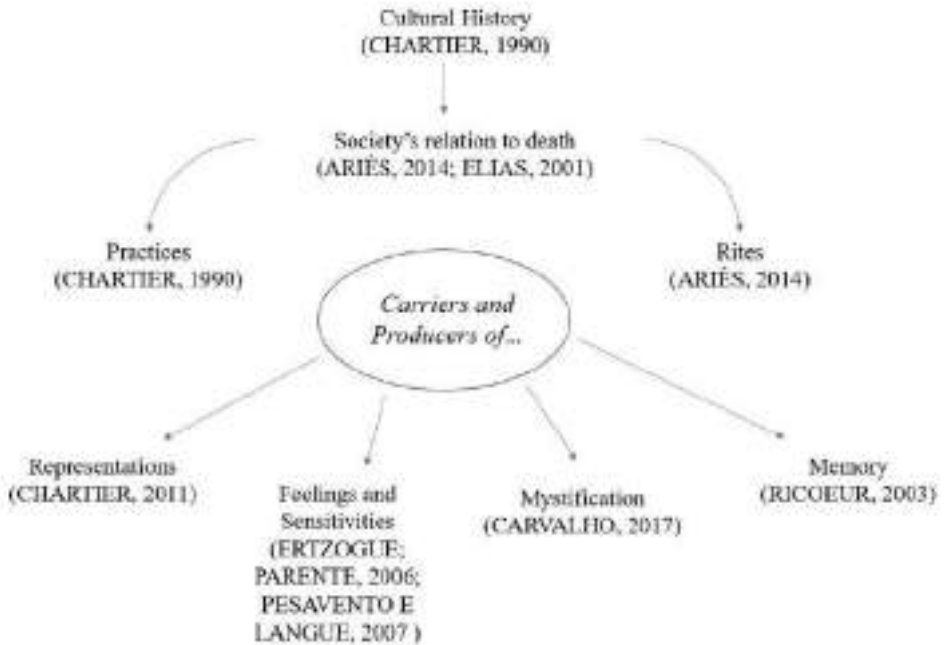


Fig. 1. Theoretical scheme

Document	Localization	Tipology	Characteristics
a) Book: "A Campanha: Felipe Tiago Gomes".	Distributed in cenequista schools.	Institutional book.	Work organized on demand by journalist Gisele Macedo, allusive to CNEC's 75th anniversary.
b) Video produced when Felipe Tiago died in 1996.	Material provided by Felipe's family.	Audiovisual material.	Professional audiovisual production. It presents the funeral rites of Felipe Tiago, as well as testimonials from friends, family and CNEC members.
c) Photographs.	Obtained in different spaces and repositories.	Imagical content.	Selection of photographs and images referring to the two funeral rites performed for Felipe Tiago Gomes, the one from 1996, on the occasion of his death, and the one from 2010, when his remains were transferred to his hometown. This collection is composed of 15 images.

Fig. 2. Table with the list of investigated documents

The recording presents the testimonies collected at the funeral itself, some of them having been uttered in the presence of the coffin with the body of the deceased, all of these were transcribed, totaling a document with 27 pages. The pronounced content does not seem to have been prepared in advance, but rather spontaneously. We highlight this because, certainly, this influences the way the dead person is remembered, as well as the feelings manifested in relation to him, since, as Pesavento and Langue¹⁰ pointed out, our sensitivity is touched upon and feelings and emotions are manifested, from the reality we face. In this case, we noticed that the interviewees were immersed in their emotions that were incited by the entire context that the moment encompassed, and their reports were full of nostalgia, longing, gratitude and praise for the deeds of the deceased, a practice highlighted by Ariès¹¹.

As for the photographs mentioned in line *c*, they were collected in previous research to produce data on the character in question. Some of them were captured during a visit to the memorial organized in honor of Felipe Tiago in the city of Picuí/PB, while the others were gathered on internet sites.

After discussing the theoretical and methodological references that underlie our writing and presenting the systematized empirical evidence, we move on to the analysis of the Felipe Tiago rituals conducted in Brasília/DF, 1996, and Picuí/PB, 2010.

3. *Procession to the "honorable son": the funeral rituals for Felipe Tiago Gomes Rite of 1996 – Brasília/DF*

Felipe, who had suffered from heart problems for years, died of a heart attack on 21 September 1996, after a period of hospitalization. As Ariès¹² points out, the 20th century and its increments caused the treatment of diseases and illnesses to leave the domestic environment, for the space of asepsis, hygiene and hospital discipline. In this case, Felipe's hospitalization and its outcome occurred after a period of structural changes and financial problems that led the sponsor to a serious crisis, a fact that may have been an aggravating factor for his health. In addition, the health of his sister Maria Gomes also worried him, and such concerns were added, as his nephew recalls:

[...] I mean, he was worried about that situation, the other day I went back, I even offered him the help he needed, he wanted to urinate and the nurse, that protocol, I went there and, as his nephew, I had a freedom, you know, I helped him because he was diabetic and, but then unfortunately he died on the Saturday that there was one, a great recognition of every ceneicist in Brazil. Brasília even stopped at his funeral because I already had a certain knowledge, both the police and military police scouts in Brasília, when a car with a fireman, the same thing we did for the transfer from Campina Grande to Picuí¹³.

¹⁰ Pesavento, Langue (edd.), *Sensibilidades na história: memórias singulares e identidades sociais*, cit.

¹¹ Ariès, *O homem diante da morte*, cit.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ V.S. de Maria, *Interview*; interviewer: Ariane dos Reis Duarte; Brasília/DF; July 2017; recording time: 1^h45 (translated from the Portuguese version).

An interesting aspect to be highlighted in this narrative is the fact that the commotion experienced in Brasília, the country's capital, was not exactly spontaneous. The death of the founder of CNEC did not arouse the consternation of the people and their demonstration in the streets. The funeral procession through the city, pulled by a fire engine, is possible through the nephew's contacts, who mobilizes them in favor of holding a ceremony that he considered worthy of his uncle's greatness. With that, we want to emphasize that the commotion surrounding Felipe's death, although intense, does not transcend his circle of family members and CNEC members. Although the sponsor has a national scope, the character in question is not someone popularly known, not even when mentioning those who worked in favor of education in the country. There is no space for such questions to be discussed in this text, however, it is important to mention that there is, in his funeral procession, an attempt to produce a commotion that transcends the ceneclist circle.

Although there was an effort for the figure of Felipe to be propagated on the day of his funeral in the city of Brasília and to encourage emotion in the wider public, his rite of passage had a more intimate connotation and was carried by emotions translated into gestures, actions and words as we had the opportunity to observe in the video recording made at the time. The facial and body expressions in front of each other and beside the coffin, the chants and prayers performed by the participants, as well as the testimonies of those who accompanied him for many years in life, express the sensibilities of those present, reproduced by the feelings and emotions of goodbye.

Oliveira *et alli*¹⁴ draws attention to the fact that structures of feeling do not affect all people in the same social circle in the same way. We understand this statement, since feelings are a subjective order and, therefore, of each individual. Although sadness was present among the deceased's friends, family members and colleagues in the Ceneclist network, words of gratitude, faith and hope permeated the narratives of those present: «[...] we are all very sorry, but as spiritualists that we are, we know that the seed has to die in order to produce more fruit, Felipe is a new seed that is born today»¹⁵; «[...] God could solve everything, and God solved it in the best possible way, transforming it into the seed [...]; the seed that will certainly bear fruit»¹⁶. The words of hope, in the form of a seed left by Felipe Tiago to Brazilian education, are also found in the testimony of Marcos Maciel¹⁷ (September 1996), a former student of the ceneclist network and, at the time, vice-president of the Federative Republic of Brazil:

¹⁴ M.A.T. de Oliveira, L.C.B. Oscar, J. Gregório, G.H.G. Lacerda, *Referenciais teórico-metodológico nas pesquisas em história da educação: para uma história das relações entre sensibilidades, tempo livre e formação*, in K. Braghini, K. Munakata, M.A.T. de Oliveira (edd.), *Diálogos sobre a educação dos sentidos e das sensibilidades*, Curitiba, Editora da UFPR, 2017.

¹⁵ C. Augusto, *Despedida*. Brasília/DF, Daniel Vídeo-Produções, 1996 (original VHS; edited by Sebastião Garcia de Sousa; recording time: 3h52; translated from the Portuguese version).

¹⁶ L. Vieira. *Despedida, Despedida*. Brasília/DF, Daniel Vídeo-Produções, 1996 (original VHS; edited by Sebastião Garcia de Sousa; recording time: 3h52; translated from the Portuguese version).

¹⁷ Brazilian politician, Vice President of the Republic between 1995-2003, when he was affiliated with the extinct Liberal Front Party (PFL). Like other political personalities in Brazil, he was a student of the sponsor founded by Felipe Tiago.

That's why I leave here in this moment of pain, in this moment of sadness with the passing of Professor Felipe Tiago Gomes, I want to leave at that moment, also my certainty, that his journey will not be interrupted, and certainly wherever he is and will be in good place, faith in God, he will certainly be able to verify that the seed he left planted here, [will continue] to germinate, thus bearing much fruit, so that we can build more social justice in our country, through education¹⁸.

It is possible to see that the consternation caused by Felipe's departure gives rise to the desire that his existence continues to influence posterity, so that his life does not end with his death. This attempt to make Felipe present even after his death will gain more specific contours when his nephew decides to transport the remains of his uncles, Felipe and Maria Gomes, to the family's homeland. One of the factors that motivated him to take the decision to take his "honorable son" back to Picuí was precisely the fact that he did not allow his uncle to be forgotten by the city that had helped him so much. In this way, he works to get his uncles removed from the Campo da Esperança cemetery in Brasília/DF, where he was lying with his sister in a wing destined for the authorities (Figure 3). Thus, in the following section, we will analyze the rites developed in this second ceremonial.

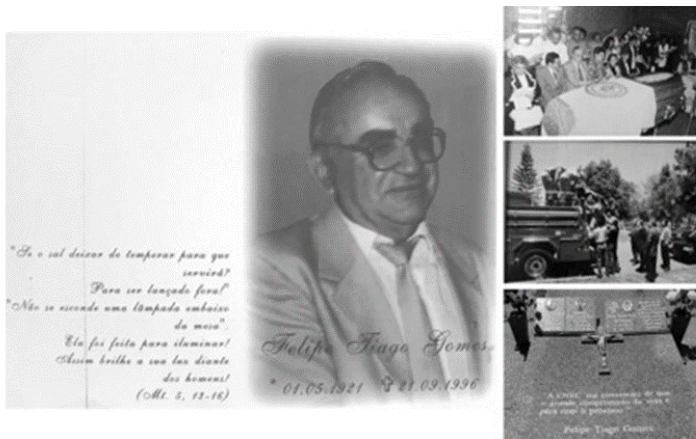


Fig. 3. Tributes to Felipe Tiago in Brasília/DF, 1996 (private collection of the author)

¹⁸ M. Maciel, *Despedida, Despedida*. Brasília/DF, Daniel Vídeo-Produções, 1996 (original VHS; edited by Sebastião Garcia de Sousa; recording time: 3h52; translated from the Portuguese version).

4. Rite of 2011 – Picuí/PB

In 2010, Mr. Valdemiro Severiano manages to implement one of his ideas to honor his uncle, the creation of a memorial in the house where the Gomes family lived. This venture was organized and financed by his nephew, who took it upon himself to honor and keep his uncle's memory alive. Following these steps, the then mayor of Picuí, a former CNEC employee, mobilized public power to build a statue on a promontory overlooking the city (Figure 4). The following year, in order to mobilize the local population around his uncle's memory, Dr. Miro organizes a referendum to assess the residents's wishes regarding the transport of the remains of Felipe and Maria Gomes to their homeland. With this, a meticulous effort is evident so that Felipe's life is constantly remembered, as the plebiscite does not arise from a spontaneous demand from the countrymen of that character. However, the representations about the event construct it in a different way, as we can see in the excerpt from Macedo's¹⁹ paper about the transfer.

[...] in a surprising vote, more than 99% of those who participated in the election voted 'yes'. At the will of the people, on 15 January 2011, in the presence of authorities, residents, relatives and ceneclist collaborators, a historic ceremony was held to receive the mortal remains of the two famous sons of Picuí.

[...] Arriving in the city, the convoy was received by a warm audience, to the sound of Filarmônica Coronel Antonio Xavier, which presented the Brazilian National Anthem, sung in chapel by all those present.

The caravan continued to Memorial Dr. Felipe Tiago Gomes, on *Avenida 24 de Novembro*, where several tributes were paid, and the remains were taken to the pedestal of his statue, installed at the top of the city of Picuí, after the pronouncement of the authorities and famous ceneclists²⁰.



Fig. 4. Tributes to Felipe Tiago in Picuí/PB, 2010 (private collection of the author)

¹⁹ G. Macedo, *A campanha: Felipe Tiago Gomes*, Uberaba, CNEC Edigraf, 2018.

²⁰ Macedo, *A campanha: Felipe Tiago Gomes*, cit., p. 191 (translated from the Portuguese version).

The above excerpt allows us to perceive the meticulousness with which the second funeral ceremony was organized. The procession began with the disembarkation of the funerary urns at the city's airport from Campina Grande, which is 120 km from Picuí, which were traveled in a fire truck, so that not only the people of Picuí were mobilized with the ceremony, as a transfer of this type certainly does not go unnoticed on the streets. Here, in addition to the attempt to keep the memory of Felipe Tiago alive, it is possible to observe the feeling of the nephew, positioned on the right in the first photo of figure 4, for the deceased uncle who shows gratitude and nostalgia. This figure also makes it possible to understand how the city received the procession of the Gomes brothers, as well as the position of the memorial statue that received the remains of both. The funerary urns were taken to the statue, where, after a celebration, the mortal remains were left. In the days before the ritual, the local press invited countrymen to receive the «most honorable countryman»²¹.

After the ceremony, the urns used to transport the remains became part of the memorial collection organized in honor of Felipe Tiago. Thus, even an accessory used on a temporary and punctual basis became part of the apparatus of praising the “honorable son”.

Conclusions

This study had, among other objectives, to investigate the procedures adopted in relation to the funerals of Felipe Tiago Gomes, founder of CNEC – Campanha Nacional de Escolas da Comunidade. Despite having established a large network of schools and being diligently active in the area of education, Felipe was not known outside his educational circle. In this environment, he received great prestige, being represented and nominated by colleagues as a teacher, educator and pedagogue, activities that he never conducted. His death provoked a strong commotion in the cenecist community, which mobilized in order to build and maintain a memory around the character. In view of this, two funeral celebrations were dedicated to Felipe Tiago, one on the occasion of his death, in September 1996, in the city of Brasília/DF, and another one in 2010, when his remains were transferred to the character's birthplace, Picuí/PB, located in the northeast.

In the ritual conducted in Brasília, the family was organized to hire a film crew to record scenes from the ritual, as well as testimonies from people about their relationship with the deceased, as well as aspects of his life and work. The analysis of the narratives enabled us to identify the syncretism that permeates religious practices in Brazil. Furthermore, the testimonies provided revealed the feelings and emotions expressed by the sensitivity of each one who had the opportunity to follow the trajectory of Felipe Tiago at the CNEC. The research related to the funeral ceremonials for Felipe Tiago also allowed us to investigate other practices carried out in order to create this *post mortem*

²¹ Based on information from the blog «Picuí é notícia», available on 03.07.2023.

memory of the character, such as the procession with the mortal remains in a fire truck through the city in both rituals, the tributes carried out through of flowers and wreaths, memory of mourning, applause, prayers and songs dedicated to the deceased, the walk organized by family members and CNEC members with banners and sayings in gratitude to its founder. In the city of Picuí, particularly, there is also an organization of the local population to receive their "illustrious son", a kind of public adoration of the deceased, with the construction of a large monument, in order to make him a mythical being of local education.

In this way, we understand that such practices demonstrate an effort by this community of memory to keep the character present in the imagination of his countrymen and the CNEC educational circle. In addition, it is possible to observe rites and practices that refer to the religious syncretism existing in Brazil, where, among other manifestations, public characters are worshiped and honored with an almost religious devotion, becoming a kind of martyr of their segment.

Metamorphosis of School Memory: the Case of Adelfo Grosso between Individual, Collective and Public Memory

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Introduction

Today, school memory studies have been consolidated both nationally and internationally, as witnessed at the conference held in Seville in 2015 and more recently in Macerata in 2022, the result of a Project of Relevant National Interest entitled “School Memories between Social Perception and Collective Representation (Italy, 1861-2001)”¹ which investigated and catalogued the various forms of school memory – individual, collective and public – in an online portal². Generally, the study of public memory has already demonstrated how street and building names are assigned by the ruling classes, who select personalities deemed as exemplary models for the community, consistently with their vision of the world, for naming streets, plaques and buildings³. The public memory of schools also falls within this field of study, describing the representation

¹ International Symposium “School Memories. New Trends in Historical Research into Education Heuristic Perspectives and Methodological Issues”, Seville 22-23 September 2015, which was followed by the publication of the book of abstracts and of the book edited by C. Janes-Cabrera, J. Meda, A. Viñao (edd.), *School Memories. New Trends in the History of Education*, Springer, 2017. This contribution elaborates, also in the title, the report presented at the International Conference “The School and its Many Pasts” organized in Macerata (12-15 December 2022).

² <https://www.memoriascolastica.it/> (last access: 29.12.2022).

³ M. Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1950; J. Le Goff (ed.), *La nuova storia*, Torino, Einaudi, 1977, pp. 347-399; P. Nora (ed.), *Entre Mémoire et Histoire*, in Id., *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. I, Paris, Gallimard, 1984; P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989; B. Tobia, *Una patria per gli italiani. Spazi, itinerari, monumenti nell'Italia unita (1870-1900)*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1991; M. Isnenghi, (ed.), *I luoghi della memoria. Simboli e miti dell'Italia unita*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1996; Id., *La storia nelle vie e nelle piazze*, in M. Petrantoni (ed.), *Memorie nel bronzo e nel marmo. Monumenti celebrativi e targhe nelle piazze e nelle vie di Milano*, Milano, Federico Motta Editore, 1997, pp. 39-49; J. Assmann, *La memoria culturale. Scrittura, ricordo e identità politica nelle grandi civiltà antiche*, Torino, Einaudi, 1997; A. Huyssen, *Present Pasts. Urban palimpsests and the politics of memory*, Stanford, Stanford University, 2003; J. Assmann, *Cultural memory and early civilization. Writing, remembrance, and political imagination*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011; A. M. Banti, *Sublime madre nostra. La nazione italiana dal Risorgimento al fascismo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2011; C. Mancuso, *Miti del Risorgimento a Palermo. Spazi urbani e simbologie patriottiche (1860-1911)*, «Mediterranea Ricerche storiche», n. 11, 2007, pp. 545-576; U. Fabietti, V. Matera, *Memorie e identità. Simboli e strategie del ricordo*, Milano, Meltemi, 2018.

and idea of school and education promoted by the ruling classes and consecrated in an inscription on the wall⁴. So what therefore is the subject of a memory expressed on a plaque or the name of a school or a road? The reasons often appear in the wording of the inscription, but this is also the point of arrival of a much longer process that may last years or even decades before reaching the public memory, which therefore represents the peak of cultural intentionality that transforms the individual and collective emotional impact of the news of a death into a publicly visible, perpetual memory written on the walls. It is therefore interesting to dig into the archaeology of school memory, reconstructing the path, figures and reasons of a possible passage from the individual to the collective and public memory of the school, in order to understand the metamorphoses of the subject of that memory. To this end, we will look at the case of Adelfo Grosso, director of the male Normal School in Bologna after Unification, who remains in the perpetual memory of the city's public spaces on a stone plaque, while a classroom, park and three schools were named after him following a long and intense process of construction of the school memory, today destined for oblivion.

1. *A stone plaque for Adelfo Grosso: but who was he?*

Adelfo Grosso was born on 24 February 1831 in Pinerolo, in the province of Turin, where he taught in the upper primary schools, was head and teacher at the technical school, and was appointed *maestro di Lettere italiane* (teacher of Italian literature) by the Minister Quintino Sella without having to sit the state exam⁵. When the need arose

⁴ P. Cunningham, *Making Use of the Past: Memory, History and Education*, «History of Education Society Bulletin», vol. 66, 2000, pp. 68-70; M. D'Ascenzo, *Creating Places of Public Memory through the Naming of School Buildings. A Case Study of Urban School Spaces in Bologna in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, «El Futuro del Pasado», vol. 7, 2016, pp. 441-458; A. Ascenzi, R. Sani, «Oscuri martiri, eroi del dovere». *Memoria e celebrazione del maestro elementare attraverso i necrologi pubblicati sulle riviste didattiche e magistrali nel primo secolo dell'Italia unita (1861-1961)*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2016; M. D'Ascenzo, *Collective and public memory on the walls. School naming as a resource in history of education*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XII, n. 1, 2017, pp. 633-657; Janes-Cabrera, Meda, Viñao (edd.), *School Memories*, cit.; M. Brunelli, J. Meda, L. Pomante (edd.), *Memories and Public Celebrations of Education in Contemporary Times* (special issue), «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XIV, n. 1, 2019; J. Meda, *The "Sites of School Memory" in Italy between memory and oblivion: a first approach*, *ibid.*, pp. 25-47; C. Venturelli, *A stone on the wall. Collective and public memory of an eclectic primary teacher*, *ibid.*, pp. 223-237; D'Ascenzo, *Remembering teachers and headmasters. Funeral memories as source in history of education between nation building and collective memory*, *ibid.*, pp. 279-294; V. Minuto, *L'educazione al patrimonio monumentale della scuola*, in A. Ascenzi, C. Covato, G. Zago (edd.), *Il patrimonio storico-educativo come risorsa per il rinnovamento della didattica scolastica e universitaria: esperienze e prospettive. Atti del II Congresso Nazionale della Società italiana per lo studio del Patrimonio Storico-Educativo (Padova, 7-8 ottobre 2021)*, Macerata, eum, 2021, pp. 151-168; Id., *Monumental memory of school in post-unitarian Italy*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XVI, n. 1, 2021, pp. 213-255; Id., *Memorie di scuola a Campo Verano. I monumenti funebri a Erminia Fuà Fusinato e a Carlo Belviglieri*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XVI, n. 2, 2021, pp. 527-553.

⁵ On Adelfo Grosso, see M. D'Ascenzo, *La scuola elementare in età liberale. Il caso Bologna 1859-1911*, Bologna, Clueb, 1997, pp. 100-102; F. Fabbri, *L'insegnamento di agricoltura nella Scuola normale maschile di*

to open the male Normal School to train primary school teachers in Bologna, at the initiative of the Province of Bologna soon after Unification, Minister Sella proposed to appoint Grosso as director, describing his characteristics

he is currently director and professor at the Administrative Technical School in Pinerolo; for his doctrine and commitment, the High Council of the Ministry granted him a teaching diploma for Italian literature, history, geography without having to sit the exam; for several years he taught in some upper primary schools, where he gained that experience of the best educational disciplines that constitute the main quality of those who have to manage an educational establishment, throughout his career he has constantly demonstrated his upright character and common sense, as well as his courteous ways⁶.

And so, Adelfo Grosso came to Bologna and managed the male Normal School until 1888, overseeing the organisation, coordinating the teaching staff and expanding the range of subjects. His cultural actions extended beyond the school, participating in local civil society, in educational debates and initiatives, defending the Piedmont school policies for which he clearly represented the standard bearer in the city. Indeed, during the discussion on the contents of the primary school reform in Bologna proposed by the mayor Gioacchino Napoleone Pepoli (1867-1868), he publicly intervened in writing, referring to the need for a formal and substantial application of the Casati Law, thus in favour of absolutely free schooling for the whole primary school, which had been challenged by Pepoli's proposal. Adelfo Grosso, who from 1862 also exchanged letters with the poet and teacher Giosuè Carducci, whom he affectionately referred to as «dear Carducci»⁷, promoted a number of educational and cultural initiatives in the city, particularly from 1870. For instance, in the years when gymnastics was being introduced into schools, Grosso adopted physical education in the male Normal School even before it became mandatory by law in 1878. He appointed Emilio Baumann, one of the main exponents of gymnastics in Italy, who taught an experimental course in the primary schools and other secondary institutes in Bologna⁸. From 1872 to 1875, Grosso was vice-chairman and later chairman of the "Virtus" gymnastics society founded by Baumann, offering a significant contribution to the organisation of the V Italian Gymnastics Congress held in

Bologna 1866-1888, in M. Tozzi Fontana, G. Dragoni (edd.), *Interpretare l'innovazione*, Bologna, Il Nove, 1997, pp. 252-267; F. Delneri, *Educare gli educatori. La Scuola normale maschile provinciale di Bologna e i suoi luoghi*, «Strenna Storica Bolognese», 2009, pp. 175-199; M. D'Ascenzo, *Alle origini delle attività sportive in Italia: la ginnastica "razionale" di Emilio Baumann (1860-1884)*, in R. Farnè (ed.), *Sport e infanzia. Un'esperienza formativa tra gioco e impegno*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2010, pp. 194-215; F. Fabbri, *Diventare maestri: la Scuola Normale maschile di Bologna*, in M. D'Ascenzo (ed.), *Tutti a scuola? L'istruzione elementare nella pianura bolognese tra Otto e Novecento*, Bologna, Clueb, 2013, pp. 55-70; M. D'Ascenzo, *Grosso Adelfo*, in G. Chiosso, R. Sani (edd.), *Dizionario Biografico dell'Educazione DBE* (thereafter: *DBE*), Milano, Editrice Bibliografica, 2013, vol. I, p. 692.

⁶ Historical Archive of the Metropolitan City of Bologna, General Archive of the Province of Bologna, Year 1861, Title 23, Folder 248, Letter from Minister Quintino Sella dated 15 April 1861.

⁷ Casa Carducci, Correspondence, Box LXII, File 45 "Adelfo Grosso", Letter dated 4 November 1862.

⁸ D'Ascenzo, *Alle origini delle attività sportive nella scuola italiana: la ginnastica razionale di Emilio Baumann (1860-1884)*, cit.

the city in 1874⁹. He also collaborated with the Municipality of Bologna to recruit and train teachers, and with the local Teachers' Society, helped to revise the curricula and text books used in the primary schools. Grosso took part in the cultural and scholastic life of the city with a passion, also refusing the prestigious appointment as director and general inspector of all the primary schools in Turin in 1869¹⁰, in order to remain in the city where he had built his career and many strong friendships, also after he was widowed¹¹. He was popular among colleagues and students alike. In 1871, for his birthday, they had organised a small two-act performance in his honour; written by vice-headmaster Luigi Savorini with music by his colleague Federico Parisini, the text was published by the students with an emblematic dedication of their fondness, gratitude and esteem

To the illustrious professor
 CAV. ADELFO GROSSO
 Director of the Normal School
 of the province of Bologna
 for his honesty and zeal towards good
 he is second to none
 and on XXIV February MDCCCLXXI
 the anniversary of his birth
 his college students
 as a sign
 of gratitude, affection and esteem
 indelible
 have published this at their own expense
 and wish to dedicate it to him¹².

He was clearly very popular in his position at the Normal School among both colleagues and students, with whom he continued to correspond even after they had finished their studies and begun to teach in the schools, as emerges from the archive documents. This was a type of activity that went way beyond his institutional tasks but bears witness to the paternal and fraternal care Grosso expressed in his way of being director, evidently recognised by his students also after his death.

⁹ M. Negroni, "Virtus" *Società di educazione fisica in Bologna* *Notizie storiche* MDXXXLXXI-MCMXXXI, s.l., s.n., n.d. (but 1931), pp. 18-42.

¹⁰ *Grosso Prof. Cav. Adelfo vs. Province of Bologna*, Bologna, Stabilimento Tipografico Zamorani e Albertazzi, 1890, p. 3.

¹¹ Casa Carducci, Correspondence, Box LXII, File 45 "Adelfo Grosso", cit., Obituary of his wife Maria Repetto who died on 26 December 1876.

¹² *Una burla farsetta in due atti di Luigi Savorini musicata dal maestro Federico Parisini da rappresentare nel Convitto Normale maschile della Provincia di Bologna il carnevale del 1871*, Bologna, Tip. Mareggiani all'insegna di Dante, 1871.

2. *Adelfo Grosso, between individual memory and collective memory*

Adelfo Grosso died in Bologna on 21 January 1892. Two days later, on the evening of his funeral, Gustavo Guazzaloca, former student of the Normal School and teacher in the city for some time, as well as a key member of the Teachers' Society in the province of Bologna¹³, gave a commemorative speech also in the name of other ex-students and friends, which was then published at their expense for the memorial service a month after his death. He spoke in the first person, driven by the «profound emotion afflicting me in this saddest moment alongside this coffin [for] the supreme farewell to our dear and beloved teacher»¹⁴. Guazzaloca described Grosso as being from a «remarkable Piedmont family»¹⁵ and coming to Bologna thirty years before «in the flower of his youth»¹⁶, called by the Ministry of Public Education to manage the Normal School «with the noble aim of procuring teachers for our municipalities, conforming to the needs of these new times»¹⁷ and, precisely thanks to «his burning zeal and most special talents, led the school [...] reputed to be one of the best in Italy»¹⁸. Guazzaloca then turned to his ex-colleagues and students remembering Grosso's moral and intellectual qualities

oh companions, let us bow reverently to his memory, to the memory of a man of simple customs, an honest gentleman with no hypocrisy, an upright and honouring citizen, a learned teacher of fluent, committed eloquence, an active and diligent director with no wrath¹⁹

along with the «moderation of affections and the generosity of sentiments»²⁰ and what we may today define as empathy towards their inexperienced and frightened students

and that exceptionally exquisite, delicate and never diminishing feeling that, by nature, he was dispensed with, and was particularly manifested in us, poor unexpert youths hungry for the knowledge required to continue our studies in the Normal Schools, most of them coming from the peak of the high mountains and the far ends of the Province. To overcome our lacking culture, he doubled his efforts and incessantly surrounded us with the most fervent care, a patient and loving brother who strove to incite them and help them in their first, arduous studies²¹.

¹³ Gustavo Guazzaloca (1847-1919) was vice-chairman of the Emilia Teaching Federation in 1894, promoter of new educational curricula for the city's primary schools, the female professional schools and the Secular Sunday school initiated by Luigi Bombicci, as well as author of texts on school hygiene and propaganda against alcoholism. Cf. M. D'Ascenzo, *Guazzaloca Gustavo*, in *DBE*, cit., vol. I, p. 697; S.A., *In memoria di un educatore, Raduno di vecchi insegnanti ed antichi scolari della Scuola Normale Maschile di Bologna*, «Il pensiero dei maestri», vol. IV, n. 6, 15 June 1922, p. 3.

¹⁴ *Omaggio alla memoria del cavaliere e professore Adelfo Grosso nel trigesimo della sua morte. Discorso improvvisato dal maestro Gustavo Guazzaloca la sera del 23 gennaio 1892 ai funerali del professore cavaliere Adelfo Grosso in nome degli insegnanti usciti dalla scuola normale e pubblicato per cura di amici e di allievi del defunto*, Bologna, Stabilimento Tip. Zamorani e Albertazzi, 1892, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Guazzaloca remembered Grosso's efforts to ignite the students' enthusiasm towards a career, that however was painted in its most negative aspects, due to its meagre satisfactions

a career, strewn with infinite trials and tribulations, that offers only light, sterile compensation for the untiring efforts, the forced excitement, which attacks and weakens the strongest fibres, wears down and destroys the most vigorous energies²².

The former student briefly described the director's physical appearance, his solemn gait, his high forehead, his smile, his deep blue eyes intent on comprehending the soul of his students, severe yet understanding towards them, little more than adolescents. Then he clarified the pedagogic and educational foundation that exhorted them to discern well between the real and presumed innovations of the time, and to solidly base their own pedagogy on the «glorious tradition of Italian schools that produced great teachers: Romagnosi, Rosmini, Gioberti, Capponi, Aporti, Rayneri and many other illustrious writers and pedagogists»²³. For these reasons, Guazzaloca recalled the diffidence towards the new forms of «education science» of the positivism for which Grosso was attacked as a

stick-in-the-mud by foolish scribblers, as the Sicilians well defined them, who, stealing with a vengeance here and there, citing several languages and knowing none of them, manipulating curricula with neither head nor tail, spend their lives stuffing books and booklets and memorials with clumsily styled, insignificant and empty ideas swollen with words²⁴.

Moreover, Guazzaloca talked of Grosso's work in local society as a battle against the Pepoli's proposed school reform of 1867 «which would have irreparably ruined our primary schools»²⁵, the presidency of the Gymnastics Society and the civil employees' club. The former student was sure that «the love of your disciples will never die, that sweet memory of the venerated teacher will never fade»²⁶, that teacher then defined as «an untainted, fearless knight, an honourable gentleman of the good old days»²⁷, hoping that beyond the grave he would meet with Enrico Sassoli who had strongly supported the male Normal School and with «your dear idealism that was Father Girard»²⁸, defined as the inspiration behind Adelfo Grosso's cultural and pedagogic action. The individual memory added up, progressively overlapping the collective memory linked to common youth, a profound emotion shared by all, while the language used tells of a very strong bond with «our dear, beloved teacher»²⁹, «patient and loving brother»³⁰ consigned to memory like a soldier wearing a laurel wreath and wrapped in the flag

²² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

farewell friend; farewell brother; our affection and grief follow you; go, into the kingdom of death like a wounded soldier, crowned in laurel, wrapped in the flag in the name of which you fought long and bravely for your whole life³¹.

3. *Adelfo Grosso from individual and collective memory to public memory*

In the following years, the traces of the memory of Adelfo Grosso were lost, both in the archives and in the bibliographies, at least as far as the current state of research finds. Only thirty years after Grosso's death, in April 1922 an article in a local teaching journal referred to a "Gathering of former students of our male Normal School", at the *Casa del Maestro* (Teacher's Society House), «who organised a lovely ceremony»³². Behind the initiative was no longer Guazzaloca, who had since passed away, but another and younger former student of Adelfo Grosso's, Ettore Mattiuzzi, at that time director of the local primary schools and author of school texts. The gathering was an opportunity for meeting with friends united by a «cordial fellowship of old classmates»³³ from which the desire emerged to «re-establish a male Normal School in Bologna, for which there is a strong need»³⁴, as it had been closed in 1888, transferring the men's Normal School to Forlimpopoli, further away in Romagna.

It was precisely Mattiuzzi, along with the teacher Edmondo Chelli and the more famous Ernesto Cappelletti, one of Grosso's former students and at that time the central director of the municipal primary schools³⁵, again on behalf of a "Gathering of former students of the Normal School", submitting an application on 3 May 1922 to the Municipal Education Department for a rectangular stone plaque, in Verona marble, to commemorate Adelfo Grosso, affixed in via Santo Stefano 116³⁶, the last site of the male Normal School in Bologna³⁷. The proposed epigraph was dictated by Giuseppe Lippardini, local poet and professor, then lightly amended with the agreement of the author, as declared by the former students themselves in a subsequent note dated 8 May 1922³⁸.

It is interesting to analyse the final text of the epigraph carved into the marble stone at the former site of the male Normal School. While in Guazzaloca's speech of 1892 the

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³² S. A., *Riunione di ex allievi della Scuola Normale maschile*, «Il pensiero dei maestri», vol. IV, n. 4, 15 April 1922, p. 3. The "Casa del Maestro" (note the capital M) was in De' Foscherari street in Bologna.

³³ D'Ascenzo, *Mattiuzzi Ettore*, in *DBE*, cit., vol. II, p. 137.

³⁴ S. A., *Riunione di ex allievi della Scuola Normale maschile*, cit.

³⁵ M. D'Ascenzo, *Cappelletti Ernesto*, in *DBE*, cit., vol. 1, pp. 269-270.

³⁶ Historical Archive of the Municipality of Bologna, Administrative papers, Year 1924, Folder 918, Title V, Sect. 3 Municipal buildings, Sect. 1 Buildings, File "Plaque to Adelfo Grosso", Letter dated 4 May 1922.

³⁷ Delneri, *Educare gli educatori. La Scuola normale maschile provinciale di Bologna e i suoi luoghi*, cit.

³⁸ Historical Archive of the Municipality of Bologna, Administrative papers, Year 1924, cit. On the stone plaque see M. D'Ascenzo, *Lapide ad Adelfo Grosso e agli insegnanti della Scuola Normale Maschile di Bologna (1922)*, «Banca dati delle memorie pubbliche della scuola», DOI: 10.53218/1906, published on 30.08.2022 (last access: 23.08.2023).

protagonist was Adelfo Grosso, described physically, in his humanity and culture and in the role he played in the city, here the subjects of the stone were both Grosso and his patrons, i.e., the former students. The wording of the epigraph is clearly divided into three parts, joined by the memory of Adelfo Grosso whose name lies at the centre in larger characters than the rest of the text

HERE STOOD THE FIRST MALE NORMAL SCHOOL
 THAT THE PROVINCE OF BOLOGNA MAGNIFICENTLY ESTABLISHED
 AND MAINTAINED FROM THE YEAR MDCCCLX TO THE YEAR MDCCCLXXXVIII.
 THE FORMER STUDENTS, IN MEMORY OF THE BELOVED TEACHERS
 LED BY ADELFO GROSSO FROM PINEROLO,
 A GREAT MIND AND PATERNAL HEART, LAID THIS MEMORY
 AS A CELEBRATION OF THE HUMBLE, DAILY HEROISM
 OF THE ITALIAN SCHOOL AND ITS TEACHERS.
 YEAR MCMXXII³⁹.

The first three lines remembered the site of the male Normal School established by the province of Bologna, which ran from 1860 to 1888: therefore *in primis* the place and promoter of the school, that is, the Province of Bologna.

The next three lines remembered the former students as the promoters of the stone itself in memory of their teachers («the former students in memory of the beloved teachers») and their head, the director Adelfo Grosso, with information on his origins and moral and intellectual characteristics, “great mind” (high, supreme) and “paternal heart” (with the love of a father).

The third part gave the last reason for the plaque, «the celebration of the humble, daily heroism of the Italian school and its teachers», the daily fatigue of the teaching profession, defined as heroic.

The stone therefore firstly celebrated the place, then the former students as patrons, the teachers of the school and their director, finally emphasising the difficulties of teaching as indeed a heroic task. It seemed almost a cry of pain, a public, evidently shared confirmation of the tough condition of the teacher, a condition not sufficiently appreciated by the community, as in fact had been reported in the pages of the teaching periodicals and trade associations for decades. Here, in this epigraph, the former students defined Grosso as the “head”, using a language befitting the time of war and the political debate that followed, marked by profound animosity that then led to the rise of Mussolini.

The plaque was unveiled on 4 June 1922. The speed with which the stone was proposed, laid and inaugurated – less than one month – is quite amazing. Probably the idea had already been taken on board some time before, the collective consensus was unanimous and moreover, among the promoters was also Cappelletti, a former student of Grosso and at that time the central director of the city’s primary schools, who had helped to complete all the authorisations needed in the municipal administration. The unveiling of the plaque was accompanied by a public ceremony organised by the former students,

³⁹ The first text read as follows: “Wise and beloved teachers” rather than beloved teachers; most beloved mind rather than “great mind”.

who gathered «to manifest their fellowship and remember their director, Adelfo Grosso and their teachers»⁴⁰. The inauguration was quite complex, and also strange. Many students came also from various parts of Italy, as well as the municipal and state civil authorities, including the Prefectural Commissioner Vittorio Ferrero and the Director of Education, with the support of the *Cassa di Risparmio* and the Province of Bologna. Around 70 former students gathered that morning in front of the “Carducci” primary school in Via Dante, then walked the short distance to the home of the poet Giosuè Carducci, welcomed by Albano Sorbelli, director of the museum, in front of which they laid a laurel wreath as a tribute. From there, the group moved to Via Santo Stefano 116, in front of the site of the former Normal School, received by Prof. Di Tizio, and then returned to the “Carducci” School, where in the hall, adorned with plants and tricolour trophies, the former students welcomed the authorities. Short speeches were made by Mattiuzzi, Lipparini, the former student Enrico Fornioni, now director of the primary schools in Piacenza⁴¹ – who talked of his time at Grosso’s Normal School – and finally Francesco Bonatto, educational director of Bologna, representing the Municipality of Pinerolo from where he, like Grosso, came⁴². Precisely while they were at the “Carducci” School, the stone plaque was unveiled in Via Santo Stefano, a spatial leap of around 300 metres

in the meantime, the memorial stone on the wall beneath the arches was unveiled, and a postcard bearing a portrait of Prof. Grosso was distributed⁴³

quite an unusual fact and told in just three lines, preceded on the other hand by the great emphasis on a kind of feast of schools and teaching, with almost goliardic tones (toasts, lunch in a restaurant, etc.) which evidently had the function of a collective school memory aiming to re-establish a male Normal School in the city of Bologna «because Bologna, the centre of education, cannot and must not be lacking in a seedbed for primary school teachers»⁴⁴.

The focus of the story of the inauguration of the plaque was no longer Adelfo Grosso in person but rather the desire to strengthen the identity of the students around their teacher and restore a new male Normal School to the city. The intensity of the individual and collective memory of the first few days following the death of Grosso, to whom little space was devoted in the article, appeared faded. The passing time, thirty years, had soothed the pain, the stone celebrated the former teacher but in fact celebrated the whole teaching profession with all its difficulties. This is confirmed by another later public event, when once again Mattiuzzi, commemorating Vittorio Savorini, former teacher at the male Normal School in Bologna who later moved to become headmaster in Teramo,

⁴⁰ S. A., *Raduno di vecchi insegnanti ed antichi scolari della Scuola Normale Maschile di Bologna*, «Il pensiero dei maestri», vol. IV, n. 6, 15 June 1922, p. 3.

⁴¹ D’Ascenzo, S. Spadea, *Fornioni Enrico*, in *DBE*, cit., vol. 1, p. 570.

⁴² D’Ascenzo, *Bonatto Francesco*, in *DBE*, vol. 1, cit., p. 584.

⁴³ S. A., *Raduno di vecchi insegnanti ed antichi scolari della Scuola Normale Maschile di Bologna*, cit.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

remembered precisely that inauguration ceremony for the plaque named after Adelfo Grosso

the former students of the former Normal School, around 35 years after the school had closed [...] gathered together by their colleagues from Bologna, came from all over Italy and, respectful and moved, laid a stone outside that glorious school so that it and its teachers could be rightly remembered⁴⁵.

A few months later, on 27 November 1922, a group of former students wrote to the Prefectural Commissioner asking to name a school after Adelfo Grosso and

choose the school (to be named after the worthy Educator) in an important place in the country (Corticella, S. Viola etc.) to remind how He, with such special love and rare wisdom, trained the rural schoolteachers⁴⁶.

On 5 February 1923, the Prefectural Commissioner Vittorio Ferrero issued a decree stating that the new school in Via Libia would be named after Adelfo Grosso, considering the road to be part of the rural area. The new municipal council, led by the Mayor Umberto Puppini, revoked the previous prefectural decree because – as reported by the former students – Via Libia was not a rural area – and approved the naming of the primary school in the rural area of Arcoveggio, in the former Villa Ronzani bought from Cavalier Alessandro Ronzani by the council, after Adelfo Grosso. It was 18 April 1924.

Conclusions

From these findings, Adelfo Grosso was the subject of school memory for a long time, more than thirty years after his death, considered a kind of “guiding star”, a bright light that slowly faded and today has waned completely, fallen into the oblivion of local and national school memory and history, despite the traces of public memory on the city walls: in fact, the school in former Villa Ronzani is still named after him, and today is a nursery and preschool, with a classroom at the front named “Adelfo Grosso” standing in the park of the same name: the primary school was moved to a new and more suitable site in the mid-70s, keeping the same name.

The school memory of Grosso remained vivid at least as long as his former students were alive, gathered around a kind of archetypal figure of the educator, father and brother and a model of virtue, before whom they defined themselves “former students”, “companions” and “classmates”. It is not surprising, as memory is linked to people, it survives time only when written and/or impressed on the walls. What appears relevant from this case study

⁴⁵ R. Istituto Tecnico “Comi” di Teramo, *Vittorio Savorini commemorato dai suoi alunni e dalla sua Scuola nel VI anniversario dalla morte*, Teramo, Tipografia Cioschi, 1932, p. 24.

⁴⁶ Historical Archive of the Municipality of Bologna, Decrees of the Prefectural Commissioner, 5 February 1923. It was not possible to recover the letter of 27 November 1922 due to incomplete documentation.

is the passage of the forms of memory from individual and collective to public. In this case, there was a sort of metamorphosis of the memory over the thirty years between his death, the plaque and the naming of the first school. While Guazzaloca's commemoration in 1892 was full of references to Grosso's physical appearance, educational and professional talents and to the former student's state of mind, with a brief mention of the difficulties of the teaching profession, in 1922 the figure of the director was less evident, faded between the celebration of the place of the male Normal School, the community of teachers and former students in their everyday heroism. Perhaps the time that had passed since Grosso's death progressively weakened the emotion of remembrance and his memory, in favour of a plurality of figures including the patrons who, celebrating the founder, also celebrated themselves, in a kind of highly identitarian collective ritual, hanging on the nostalgia of youth and the subtle denunciation of the teaching category, crushed between the "duty to be" and the harsh reality of everyday school work, as denounced elsewhere in school journals and political and social battles from the late 19th century. The memory of Grosso became hazier, while the central issue became the social criticism of the teachers' condition because, as indicated by Halbwachs

remembrance is in very large measure a reconstruction of the past achieved with data borrowed from the present, a reconstruction prepared, furthermore, by reconstructions of earlier periods wherein past images had already been altered⁴⁷.

In the passage of the school memory of Grosso from individual to collective and finally to public, therefore, the subject of the memory slowly changed: the person remembered is no longer only Adelfo Grosso but the patrons, i.e., the teachers, who are described as hanging between an ideal "duty to be" and the hard, tiring, everyday heroism. It is in this way that studying the collective and public memory of school offers further elements for understanding the representation of schools and their teachers, bringing a profession hanging between promised honours and allotted burdens back to the fore.

⁴⁷ Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, cit., p. 69.