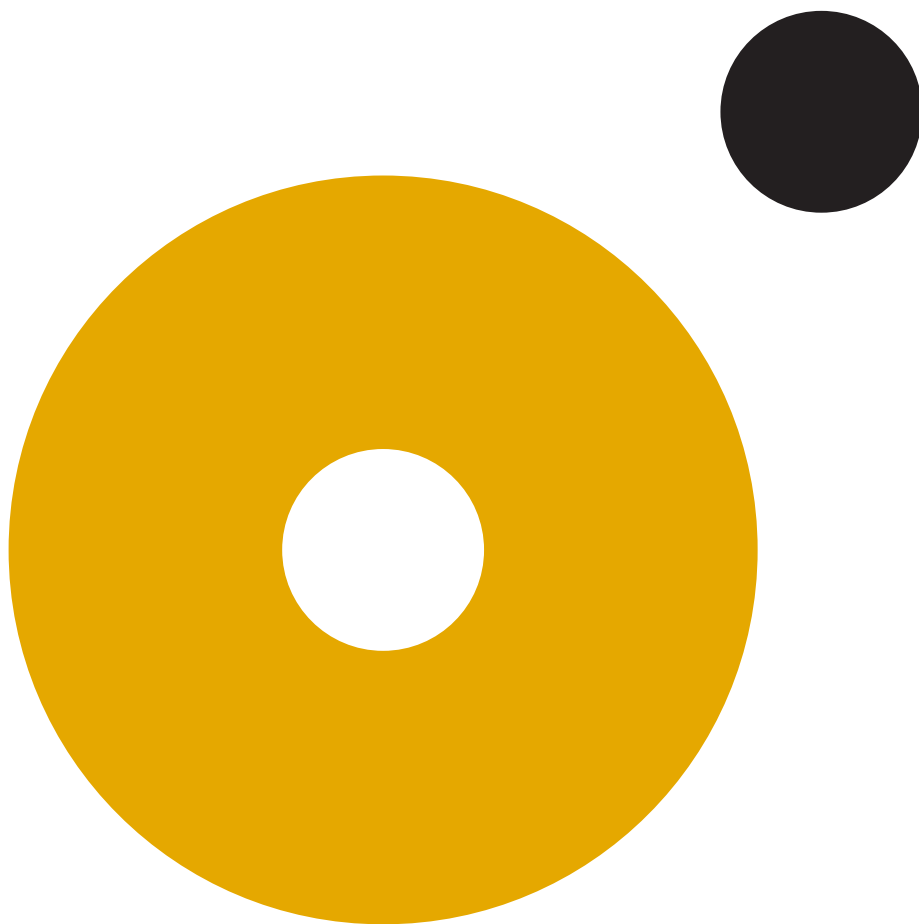


MEMORIA **SCOLASTICA**



# **The School and Its Many Pasts**

edited by Juri Meda, Lucia Paciaroni and Roberto Sani



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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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# Chronicles about School Life between Intimate Diaries and Educational Documentation

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## *Introduction*

Starting from the first half of the 1990s, in the wake of the reflection on school culture proposed by Dominique Julia, there has been an important renewal in the field of historical-educational research, as it is known. According to the French historian, school culture, that is, «the set of rules defining the knowledge to be taught and the behaviours to be inculcated and the educational practices, which are allowed by the recipients of the educational action for their correct transmission and assimilation»<sup>1</sup>, had to be considered as a historical object to be investigated and he assigned to the «history of school disciplines» a prominent role in the field of research areas as it was able to describe the dynamics taking place within a classroom.

This reflection decisively contributed to the paradigm shift in historical-educational research and marked the beginning of an ever-increasing commitment – by educational historians – towards the study of the historical evolution for school disciplines and educational practices related to them. In particular, we remember the studies by the historian André Chervel in France, who precisely specialized in the field of history of school disciplines<sup>2</sup> and the studies by Marc Depaepe and Frank Simon in Belgium, who highlighted the heuristic potential of historical research on school daily life, its space, time and actors<sup>3</sup>; in addition to this research, we can also mention the innovative lines of investigation proposed by the Iberian scientific community, in particular the ones by Agustín Escolano Benito and Antonio Viñao Frago<sup>4</sup>, which were devoted to material

<sup>1</sup> D. Julia, *La culture scolaire comme objet historique*, in A. Nóvoa, M. Depaepe, E. W. Johanningmeier (edd.), *The Colonial Experience in Education: Historical Issues and Perspectives*, Ghent, Universiteit Gent, 1995, pp. 353-382.

<sup>2</sup> A. Chervel, *Des disciplines scolaires à la culture scolaire*, in *Educational and Cultural Transmission: Historical Studies of Continuity and Change in Families, Schooling and Youth Cultures*, Ghent, Universiteit Gent, 1996, pp. 181-195; Id., *La culture scolaire. Une approche historique*, Paris, Belin, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> 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 Educational Reality in- and outside Schools*, «Paedagogica Historica», vol. XXXI, 1, 1995, pp. 9-16. We can also consider the research carried out by I. Grosvenor, M. Lawn, K. Rousmaniere (edd.), *Silences and Images: The Social History of the Classroom*, New York, Peter Lang, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> The Iberian community has distinguished itself for the attention paid to new trend lines of educational historiography by proposing pioneering research on the history of school material culture. Please, see A. Viñao Frago, *Educación y Cultura. Por una historia de la cultura escolar: enfoques, cuestiones, fuentes*, in C.J. Almuíña

school culture. Viñao Frago introduced to the scientific community of educational historians the heuristic potential of what he defined as *memoria escolar*, «a part of the most general enculturation process, based on interpreting the state educational system as a tool for transmitting social memory in order to consolidate culture and identity»<sup>5</sup>. On the basis of these indications in recent years, educational historians have also begun to start up studies and research on “school memory”, interpreted as a real historiographical phenomenon<sup>6</sup>.

In particular, scholars firstly turned their attention towards individual school memory, made up by the self-representation of oneself, which was provided by former teachers and pupils and other protagonists in the school world within oral testimonies, diaries, autobiographies and memoirs in general. The so-called *egodocuments*<sup>7</sup> were widely used as sources in historical-educational research, as they were considered they were able to reconstruct school history starting from its protagonists’ real experiences rather than from legislative and institutional sources in an attempt to open up what was called the «black box of schooling»<sup>8</sup>.

Teachers and other protagonists in the school world have often felt the need to tell their stories<sup>9</sup>, to leave traces of their school life, the experiences with pupils and the personal educational experiments. This need to tell their stories has come down to us in different forms and ways, which do not only fall within individual school memory, but also within

Fernández (ed.), *Culturas y civilizaciones: III Congreso de la Asociación de Historia Contemporánea*, Valladolid, Universidad de Valladolid, 1998, pp. 165-184; A. Escolano Benito (ed.), *La cultura material de la escuela: en el centenario de la Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios, 1907-2007*, Berlanga de Duero, CEINCE, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> J. Meda, *Memoria Magistra. La memoria della scuola tra rappresentazione collettiva e uso pubblico del passato*, in G. Zago, S. Polenghi, L. Agostinetto (edd.), *Memorie ed Educazione. Identità, Narrazione, Diversità*, Lecce, Pensa Multimedia, 2020, pp. 25-35. We can also see: 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.

<sup>6</sup> Please, see: C. Yanes-Cabrera, J. Meda, A. Viñao (edd.), *School Memories. New Trends in the History of Education*, Cham, Springer, 2017; J. Meda, M. Brunelli, L. Pomante (edd.), *Memories and Public Celebrations of Education in Contemporary Times*, «History of Education & Children’s Literature», vol. XIV, n. 1, 2019, pp. 9-394; P. Alfieri (ed.), *Immagini dei nostri maestri: memorie di scuola nel cinema e nella televisione dell’Italia repubblicana*, Roma, Armando, 2019; J. Meda, *I «luoghi della memoria scolastica» in Italia tra memoria e oblio: un primo approccio*, in A. Ascenzi, C. Covato, J. Meda (edd.), *La pratica educativa: storia, memoria e patrimonio. Atti del I Congresso nazionale della Società Italiana per lo studio del Patrimonio Storico-Educativo (Palma de Mallorca, 20- 23 novembre 2018)*, Macerata, eum, 2020, pp. 301-322.

<sup>7</sup> About the topic of egodocuments, please see: A. Viñao Frago, *Teachers’ egodocuments as a source of classroom history. The case of autobiographies, memoirs and diaries*, in S. Braster, I. Grosvenor, M. del Mar Del Pozo Andrés (edd.), *The Black Box of Schooling: a Cultural History of the Classroom*, Brussels, Peter Lang, 2011, pp. 141-157, but also Id., *La memoria escolar: restos y huellas, recuerdos y olvidos*, «Annali di Storia dell’Educazione e delle Istituzioni Scolastiche», n. 12, 2005, pp. 19-33.

<sup>8</sup> About this concept, please see: Braster, Grosvenor, Del Pozo Andrés (edd.), *The Black Box of Schooling*, cit., 2011. This expression was coined by Marc Depaepe and Frank Simon (1995), taking up the one already used by the sociologist Colin Lacey (1970) to direct the educational historians’ attention to classrooms as places of «evaporated educational relationships», real black boxes of school culture, from which every single trace of – orthodox and revolutionary, licit and illicit – educational practices, which had been carried out there, was essential to try to recover. See Meda, *Memoria magistra*, in Polenghi, Zago, Agostinetto, *Memoria ed educazione*, cit., pp. 25-35 (in partic. p. 28).

Please see: D. Demetrio, *L’autobiografia come cura di sé*, Milano, Cortina, 2006.

the collective one, i.e. that type of memory consisting of multiple representations of school, teachers and school groups, which have been offered by the cultural industry and the world of information over time. Just to cite a few examples among the authors who decided to autobiographically tell the school world, we can mention Leonardo Sciascia, Maria Giacobbe, Lucio Mastronardi, Rosario Naccarato, but we can also think about Don Milani and the school of Barbiana<sup>10</sup>, Mario Lodi and his experiences narrated through the pages in *C'è speranza se questo accade al Vho* and *Il paese sbagliato*<sup>11</sup>, but also Albino Bernardini<sup>12</sup>.

*Egodocuments* are often able to tell us stories, which are not only linked to big names in education, but also to those figures who have been considered less important for a long time, such as so many apparently anonymous teachers, who would rather deserve a particular attention for the fundamental impact, which the practice of their profession had on the life of people and communities where they acted.

Among the projects, which have also tried to give the right space to lesser-known names, we remember the *Dizionario Biografico dell'Educazione*, who was edited by Roberto Sani and Giorgio Chiosso<sup>13</sup> and was precisely born with the desire to add a further element to let us know and understand Italian school, educational and pedagogical history and preserve the memory of its protagonists, adults and especially «children»<sup>14</sup>, «whose activity and commitment, while being almost exclusively carried out in the local context at times, prove to be fundamental to understand the concrete training and cultural dynamics, which have marked the growth and the evolution of Italian society in the last two centuries»<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Please see L. Sciascia, *Le parrocchie di Regalpetra*, Bari, Laterza, 1963; M. Giacobbe, *Diario di una maestra*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1966; L. Mastronardi, *Il maestro di Vigevano*, Torino, Einaudi, 1962; Scuola di Barbiana, *Lettera a una professoressa. Scuola di Barbiana*, Firenze, Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1967; F. Marinelli, *Diario di una maestra*, Milano, R. Archinto, 1988; R. Naccarato, *Le scuole rurali agli inizi del Novecento: S. Caterina di Aiello Calabro*, Cosenza, Klipper, 2008. About this topic, please see: R. Certini, *Bambini e scolari nelle memorie e nei diari di maestri e maestre: tra biografia e racconto*, in C. Covato, S. Ulivieri (edd.), *Itinerari nella storia dell'infanzia. Bambine e bambini, modelli pedagogici e stili educativi*, Milano, Unicopli, 2001, pp. 197-229.

<sup>11</sup> M. Lodi, *C'è speranza se questo accade al Vho*, Milano, Edizioni Avanti, 1963; M. Lodi, *Il paese sbagliato*, Torino, Einaudi, 1970.

<sup>12</sup> A. Bernardini, *Le bacchette di Lula*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1963.

<sup>13</sup> G. Chiosso, R. Sani, *Dizionario Biografico dell'Educazione 1800-2000*, 2 voll., Milano, Editrice Bibliografica, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> See G. Chiosso, R. Sani, *Presentazione*, in Idd. (edd.), *DBE: Dizionario Biografico dell'Educazione*, 2 vols., Milano, Editrice Bibliografica, 2013, Vol. I, pp. VII-X.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

1. *Giovanni Lucaroni: chronicles about school life between intimate diary and administrative documentation*

Among the “little protagonists” in the educational world, it is also possible to include Giovanni Lucaroni<sup>16</sup>, a teacher coming from Marche region whose professional life was reconstructed thanks to the homonymous collection, which is preserved in the Centre for Documentation and Research in History of Textbooks & Children’s Literature of the University of Macerata<sup>17</sup> and was given by his granddaughter Maria Agostina Marzioli in 2012. This collection allowed us to dig into the life of the teacher who has been teaching in Mogliano, in the Macerata hinterland, for over forty years. So, it was possible to discover that his personal and professional events were intertwined with the national scenarios and that «active school» promoted by Giuseppe Lombardo Radice<sup>18</sup>, so much that numerous publications by Lucaroni about the adoption of new programs for primary school and also the importance of the dialect attracted the attention of the scholar from Catania<sup>19</sup>. In fact, the teacher Lucaroni had shown great enthusiasm towards the 1923

<sup>16</sup> J. Meda, *Giovanni Lucaroni*, in G. Chiosso, R. Sani (edd.), *DBE: Dizionario Biografico dell’Educazione*, 2 vols., Milano, Editrice Bibliografica, 2013, Vol. 2, pp. 58-59.

<sup>17</sup> About the Centre for the Documentation and Research on the history of textbooks and children’s literature at the University of Macerata and its documentary and bibliographic heritage, please see: M. Brunelli, *The «Centre for the documentation and research on the history of textbooks and children’s literature» in University of Macerata (Italy)*, «History of Education and Children’s Literature», vol. IV, n. 2, 2009, pp. 441-452; A. Ascenzi, E. Patrizi, *Inside School Lives: Historiographical Perspectives and Case Studies. Teachers’ Memories Preserved at the Centre for Documentation and Research on the History of Schoolbooks and Children’s Literature*, «Espacio, Tiempo y Educación», vol. 3, n. 1, 2016, pp. 343-362.

<sup>18</sup> About Giuseppe Lombardo Radice, please see: I. Picco, *Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1967; G. Cives, *Giuseppe Lombardo Radice: didattica e pedagogia della collaborazione*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1970. There are also some recent studies: L. Cantatore, *Vita mortis meditatio. Il breviario pedagogico di Giuseppe Lombardo Radice*, «I problemi della pedagogia», vol. LXVI, n. 1, 2020, pp. 107-124; Id. (ed.), *Giuseppe Lombardo Radice. Lezioni di didattica e ricordi di esperienza magistrale*, Roma, Edizioni Conoscenza, 2022; E. Scaglia (ed.), *Una pedagogia dell’ascesa. Giuseppe Lombardo Radice e il suo tempo*, Roma, Studium, 2021; G. D’Aprile, *Memorie di una inedita corrispondenza. Lettere di Giuseppe Lombardo Radice ad Adolphe Ferrière*, Pisa, ETS, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Although personal archives are extremely important for historical-educational research, they are not always easy to be found, often because families do not keep those “old” documentary deposits and, if lucky, one has to rely on the sensitivity of those who decide to preserve and to give entire archives belonged to the protagonists of the past school to the institutions in charge. This is a fundamental documentary heritage for this research and, for this reason, it is advisable to launch specific awareness campaigns on the topic so as not to lose precious sources for historical-educational research forever. Among the researches which stand out because of their systematicity and completeness, we remember Mirella D’Ascenzo about Alberto Calderara (M. D’Ascenzo, *Alberto Calderara. Microstoria di una professione docente*, Bologna, CLUEB, 2011); Michela D’Alessio who carried out research on the Lucan educator Arturo Arcomano, using his private archive, but also school registers and chronicles about school life in order to reconstruct the history of the new school created in Basilicata in the 1950s (M. D’Alessio, *I diari e i quaderni scolastici quali fonti per lo studio delle pratiche educative del passato. L’esperimento didattico del maestro Arcomano nella «scuola nuova» di Basilicata a metà del Novecento*, in S. González, J. Meda, X. Motilla Salas, L. Pomante (edd.), *La Práctica Educativa. Historia, Memoria y Patrimonio*, Salamanca, FahrenHouse, 2018, pp. 1022-1033). We can also think about the rich material belonged to Maria Maltoni, whose collection – after a donation – is now preserved in the municipal library of Impruneta and, even, the reconstruction of Elvira Bono’s activity carried out by Maria Cristina Morandini, using handwritten



school programs and had been the author of numerous publications where he tried to make Lombardo Radice's "new school" known and understood.

The research on the teacher Lucaroni's biography was also carried out within the school archive at the "Giovanni XXIII" Institute of Mogliano where it was possible to consult all the class newspapers starting from his first teaching year in 1910 until 1956, when he was retired, and his personal file. This contribution intends to draw attention on the columns of the registers devoted to the chronicle about school life and the observation on pupils, which become a sort of space between intimate diary and administrative documentation – based on the use the teacher makes of them –, even if they do not fall within those sources, which we consider individual school memory. Therefore, it is believed that they can decisively contribute to reconstruct what really happened inside a classroom and which were the educational practices adopted and the teachers' opinions on different school aspects.

As it is known, under art. 27 of the ordinance of January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1924 – containing regulatory standards for the application of the Royal Decree no. 2185 of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1923 –, the teacher was required to fill in the class diary, the prospectus of pupils who were classified into groups according to their ability, the educational program, the final report and the school chronicle among the documents<sup>20</sup>.

Art. 27 indicated that news and data on the pupils' attendance, the teacher's absences and any "didactic handing-over" to the supply teacher, the state of teaching aids, the supplementary works, the visits, the trips, the school parties, the visits by superiors and the notable episodes of city life in relation to school had to be included in the school chronicle. Furthermore, the Ministry had published clarifications concerning the regulatory provisions in circular no. 7 of 1924<sup>21</sup>. About Art. 27, it was specified that the chronicle did not have to be a collection of compositions about the main events of school life during the year, but it had to be really a chronicle about school life «because it was lively, but sober and such that it could be re-read with utility and satisfaction even after years»<sup>22</sup>.

Moreover, in the circular, Minister Gentile hoped that collection of annual chronicles could have given valuable elements for reconstructing the events of educational activity in every Italian Municipality in the future; for this reason, he had foreseen that the chronicle files were kept in the school library<sup>23</sup>.

Regarding the meaning to be attributed to the "teacher's chronicle", Giuseppe Lombardo Radice had intervened in an exasperated tone – in an article published

and printed material concerning the procedures for employing and pursuing the career of the teaching staff, which is preserved in the Historical Archive at the Municipality of Turin (M.C. Morandini, *La maestra in Italia tra Otto e Novecento: il caso torinese di Elvira Bono*, «Rivista di storia dell'educazione», n. 1, 2018, pp. 173-190).

<sup>20</sup> *Ordinanza contenente le norme regolamentari per l'applicazione del Regio Decreto 1° ottobre 1923, n. 2185*, «Bollettino Ufficiale del Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione», n. 3, 15 January 1924, pp. 53-64.

<sup>21</sup> *Circolare n. 7, Chiarimenti circa le norme regolamentari per l'applicazione del Regio Decreto 1° ottobre 1923, n. 2185*, «Bollettino Ufficiale del Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione», n. 6, 5 February 1924, pp. 359-366.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

in «L'Educazione Nazionale»<sup>24</sup> in March 1926 –: according to him, educators and headmasters went from obsession to obsession making the simplest things complicated. Among these obsessions, he also counted the chronicle. According to Lombardo Radice, there were even those who had become the inventors of modules for chronicles, diaries, skill groups, which he considered «a real offense to teachers and a great shame for the good name of the school»<sup>25</sup>. Lombardo Radice commented like this:

What is this teacher's chronicle? It is such a concise note about didactically interesting events of the school year in school or classroom. The teacher judges about the interest of things. A teaching staff reunion; an educational exhibition; a school party; the events of school attendance in relation to health conditions; the library purchases in relation to the program; the visits to museums; the workshops; the exploration trips into the countryside in relation to the program; the characteristic results of a new teaching experience; some memorable episodes of the internal school life and the relationships with families and so on.

According to Lombardo Radice, what counted was the fact of not making it an external obligation of daily teaching confessions, as the old diary was instead<sup>26</sup>, «a real mortification of the teacher»<sup>27</sup>, but it had to become a private teacher document.

Giovanni Lucaroni punctually filled in those columns in his school registers and the reading and the analysis of those pages are able to bring us back to his classroom and to help us to decipher the activity of that teacher who always questioned himself on poor class results or too undisciplined pupils and demonstrated a deep resilience in the face of difficulties. From his chronicle, it is possible to reconstruct so many aspects related to everyday school life and the material school life, but also the personal reflections on his pupils, the changed teacher-pupil relationship compared to the past and his role as a teacher. Those columns of the register represent a very important space from which personal confessions and ideas on topics such as the mixed classes, the obligation of a uniform and the Single State Textbook emerge. Furthermore, it is also possible through them to reconstruct many other aspects of school life in that period, when work came first for families and then class attendance.

For example, the teacher wrote on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1927:

<sup>24</sup> G. Lombardo Radice, *La cronaca della scuola*, «L'Educazione Nazionale», March 1926, pp. 26-27. With this letter, Lombardo Radice replies to Mr. A. Perfetti who had intervened in the Piacenza newspaper «La Libertà» on 15 January 1926.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>26</sup> The regulation – approved by the Royal Decree of 6 April 1913 – concerning the juridical status of the teachers from primary schools, which were administered by School Boards, provided in art. 86 that the teacher had to keep a register in order, where he wrote down the pupils' absences and points of merit both for study and for conduct and in art. 87 the teacher's task of filling in the school diary in accordance with the instructions given to him by the competent authorities. Furthermore, art. 92 indicated that the teacher was required to hand out to the deputy inspector the registers, but also a detailed report about the teaching given, the pupils' attendance, their diligence and the profit obtained. The regulation concerning the juridical status of the teachers from primary schools, which were administered by Municipalities, provided for the same provisions in artt. 84-85-90 («Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia», n. 137, 13 June 1913, pp. 3563-3679, in partic. pp. 3660-3661, 3673-3674).

<sup>27</sup> Lombardo Radice, *La cronaca della scuola*, cit., p. 27.

September, which has been consecrating to holidays, trips in the country, journeys and hunting for a long tradition, is not too propitious for a serene restart, especially for rural centres devoted to the grape harvest, which no pupil wants to sacrifice to school<sup>28</sup>.

In fact, pupils were often busy in farm work at the expense of their studies. We also find a reference to it in the register of the 1924/25 school year: in the school diary, Lucaroni judged the student Giuseppa Piccinini to be intelligent, but she did not probably study «for lack of time, because she needs to work at home. She could do much more; but she is assiduous and this is so»<sup>29</sup>.

Every year, the teacher was aware that it was necessary to wait for the end of the grape harvest to have all the students back in the classroom and, in his chronicle of September 1927, he commented how school was the last thought for parents, but also for municipal administration, despite the fact that times had changed, and he wrote:

I set to work with the good intention of still giving all that care I will be able to school in general and my class in particular<sup>30</sup>.

We read in the chronicle that September «uselessly runs away»<sup>31</sup> but, finally, on October 1<sup>st</sup>, Lucaroni took up the teaching of the fourth male class, made up of some third-class pupils to whom he had taught the previous year, some pupils coming from rural schools and remedial students. A few days later, he already defined them as «good guys, even if many of them are not adequately prepared for the fourth class and have only very little intelligence», but the teacher did not lose heart and, in fact, he commented: «We will see to love each other and to help us as much as possible»<sup>32</sup>.

In the chronicle, Lucaroni respected the provisions of the government regulation and, therefore, he reported news and information on his absences, visits, trips, school parties, but also visits by superiors and notable episodes of city life in relation to school. The teacher was punctual in describing the headmaster's visits, also indicating the topics dealt with and some «good and fatherly advice»<sup>33</sup> received.

However, Lucaroni also used those columns to open his heart about the aspects he did not like about school. For example, at the beginning of the 1928/29 school year, he had been in charge with a mixed fifth class, made up of 11 boys and 11 girls. He immediately compared them, highlighting the girls' superiority in language and reading against the boys' superiority in arithmetic. According to the teacher, this difference could be generalized for almost all the school groups. In fact, according to Lucaroni, the class

<sup>28</sup> *Cronaca ed osservazioni dell'insegnante sulla vita della scuola*, in Archive of the *Istituto comprensivo "Giovanni XXIII"* in Mogliano (hereinafter: ASICM), series «Registri di classe», folder «Registri di classe 1927/28», Register of Giovanni Lucaroni for 1927/28 school year.

<sup>29</sup> *Cronaca ed osservazioni dell'insegnante sulla vita della scuola*, in ASICM, series «Registri di classe», folder «Registri di classe 1924/27», Register of Giovanni Lucaroni for 1924/25 school year.

<sup>30</sup> *Cronaca ed osservazioni dell'insegnante sulla vita della scuola*, in ASICM, series «Registri di classe», folder «Registri di classe 1927/28», Register of Giovanni Lucaroni for 1927/28 school year.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

was quite homogeneous and with excellent attendance, despite it was the harvest season, even if he was convinced that he would have found it difficult to carry out scientific subjects for which «girls always have a certain revulsion, not being too suitable by their very nature»<sup>34</sup>, but he was ready to adapt the program according to their needs.

However, a few years later, Lucaroni expressed his opposition to mixed classes right within the chronicle of the 1932/33 school year. In fact, Lucaroni explained that he appreciated the advantages «which theoretically justify it from the point of view of a more male and less unilateral social education; but in practice I have not found it very useful, while I have always found enormous difficulties in adapting the program»<sup>35</sup>.

In the chronicle and the observation of school life during the 1933/34 school year, he reiterated his hostility towards mixed classes, especially the upper classes,

The much-praised advantages of promiscuous education have never convinced me, and in practice I have only found... obstacles, inconveniences and... damages. Not to mention that the program must undergo multiple adaptations, which are not so easy to be realized<sup>36</sup>.

In the chronicle, the teacher always devoted a lot of space to the observation of his class, which was described as slack and undisciplined most of the time, but he always proved to be determined and ready for new challenges. For example, in the school register of the 1933/34 school year<sup>37</sup>, Lucaroni, who was in charge with a third class, immediately defined it as «very undisciplined». The teacher's reaction was not to immediately consider the class «bad», because children of 8-9 years old could not be like this, but they were undisciplined as they were used to «chattering without purpose, leaving their seats without permission»<sup>38</sup> and being inattentive, as he wrote. In the face of this problem of discipline, Lucaroni was ready for a month of deep work in order to «seize their heads, wills, intelligences and – slowly, slowly – bend to... a lot of work, which the class requires for its demanding program»<sup>39</sup>.

Some of his positions on aspects of the internal school life, such as the obligation to wear a school apron, are also evident from the columns of the teacher Lucaroni's chronicle. He wrote in the chronicle of October 1932:

There are no funeral school aprons yet and school is joyful like a carpet of flowers! The eye sails there with pleasure. I try to read impressions and expressions in their eyes. I have reason to be satisfied with some smart faces<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Cronaca ed osservazioni dell'insegnante sulla vita della scuola del 15 settembre 1932*, in ASICM, series «Registri di classe», folder «Registri di classe 1932/33», Register of Giovanni Lucaroni for 1932/33 school year.

<sup>36</sup> *Cronaca ed osservazioni dell'insegnante sulla vita della scuola del 12 settembre 1933*, in ASICM, series «Registri di classe», folder «Registri di classe 1933/34», Register of Giovanni Lucaroni for 1933/34 school year.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Cronaca ed osservazioni dell'insegnante sulla vita della scuola del 22 settembre 1933*, in Register of Giovanni Lucaroni for 1933/34 school year, cit.

<sup>40</sup> *Cronaca ed osservazioni dell'insegnante sulla vita della scuola del 16 settembre 1932*, in Register of Giovanni Lucaroni for 1932/33 school year, cit.

But, on September 19<sup>th</sup>, the school image as a “carpet of flowers” disappeared for Lucaroni in order to be replaced by «the gloom of black sackclothes», which «has almost completely invaded the classroom»<sup>41</sup>. In 1931, Lucaroni’s aversion to school aprons is also evident in a publication of his where he commented: «Why those black sackclothes of penance? Whom do the young sparrows who are putting their wings and the skylarks who learn to weave their nests for hiding their happiness there mourn for?». In fact, according to him, «uniform is a law according to which you are no more than...*the one who has the duty to be*: a soldier who accepts with a smile on his lips and performs with devotion of sacrifice all the duties, which it symbolizes and combines»<sup>42</sup>.

Starting from the late 1920s, references to Duce and Fascism began to appear in the chronicle. In fact, school time was marked by Fascist anniversaries and the chronicle about school life is full of descriptions of these events.

As regards the anniversary of the March on Rome, Lucaroni indicated in the school register of the 1928/29 school year that pupils had written about it in the diary, after speaking about it together with the teacher, and this had been carried out on State order. Almost annoyed, Lucaroni commented: «We would have talked about it anyway, there is no doubt about it!»<sup>43</sup>.

Lucaroni also referred to State orders in the chronicle of September 1928, expressing a certain malaise for extra-curricular occupations, which could refer to the position he held as the president of the local organization Opera Nazionale Balilla in those years:

In my opinion, however, I have to confess that excessive extra-curricular occupations steal precious time from me both in terms of preparation and necessary rest – and this seriously worries me. It is bad that political authorities overemploy teachers in positions and jobs, which can dissuade or distract them from their work! Discipline imposes it on me and I obey: but I would be much happier if I could be entirely and only in charge with school. I want to hope that I will be soon freed from this excessive weight<sup>44</sup>.

The political chronicle has intensified starting from the mid-1930s. The image of a school at the service of the regime’s ideological propaganda emerges among the columns of Lucaroni’s registers; for example, on October 1936, on the occasion of the Anniversary for the great Fascist gathering, he described pupils, who quivered with enthusiasm, as

<sup>41</sup> *Cronaca ed osservazioni dell’insegnante sulla vita della scuola del 19 settembre 1932*, in Register of Giovanni Lucaroni for 1932/33 school year, cit.

<sup>42</sup> G. Lucaroni, *A fior di labbro. Fantasie*, Montegiorgio, Tipografia Editrice Carlo Zizzini, 1931, pp. 145-146. For a deep examination on the topic of school uniforms, please see: I. Dussel, *Historicising Girls’ Material Cultures in Schools: Revisiting Photographs of Girls in Uniforms*, «Women’s History Review», vol. 29, n. 3, special issue, 2020, pp. 429-443; Ead., *School Uniforms and the Disciplining of Appearances: Towards a History of the Regulation of Bodies in Modern Educational Systems*, in T.S. Popkewitz, B.M. Franklin, M.A. Pereyra (edd.), *Cultural History and Education. Critical Essays on Knowledge and Schooling*, New York – London, RoutledgeFalmer, 2001, pp. 207-241; K. Stephenson, *A Cultural History of School Uniform*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2021.

<sup>43</sup> *Cronaca ed osservazioni dell’insegnante sulla vita della scuola del 5 novembre 1928*, in ASICM, series «Registri di classe», folder «Registri di classe 1928/29», Register of Giovanni Lucaroni for 1928/29 school year.

<sup>44</sup> *Cronaca ed osservazioni dell’insegnante sulla vita della scuola del mese di settembre 1928*, in Register of Giovanni Lucaroni for 1928/29 school year, cit.

The Duce, the omnipotent, the omnipresent, is for children and adults. Love for Him is able to perform any miracle. Well. Italian people have really merged into a single block, including these children, who move with their excitement for things so far from their evaluation!<sup>45</sup>

Lucaroni spoke about a «school which was never absent», when it dealt with the Duce<sup>46</sup> and, on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1936, he wrote that school lived on these dates to celebrate Fascism<sup>47</sup>.

However, there are some attacks and critical issues on choices, such as the adoption of the Single State Textbook. For example, he wrote in the school register of the 1932/33 school year:

Those State books will – unfortunately – come in a few days and I think about them with a weight... as if they fell on my stomach. What will I do with them, what will the guys do with 600 or more pages of treatises, which make up their primary school book? When will they decide to cut  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them?<sup>48</sup>

On other occasions, the teacher Lucaroni will return to attack the Single State Textbook – not only through the chronicle in the register, but also in some publications –, defining these books «stuffed, crammed, inadequate, voluminous and expensive, condemned for their disproportion since they first appeared and now officially decreed for rewriting them *ab imis*»<sup>49</sup> and demonstrating how he has not always hidden his own disagreement towards the choices of the Fascist government, despite a formal adherence to Fascism.

### *Conclusions*

Therefore, the chronicle about school life has proved to be an important source, which is able to give us valuable information for historical-educational research on what happened inside the classroom and the way the teacher Giovanni Lucaroni thought and acted. It is not a real intimate diary, but it is possible to define it as «a semi-public autobiographical space»<sup>50</sup>, re-using Quinto Antonelli's definition.

Despite an apparent political alienation – also due to numerous positions he held within Fascist organizations<sup>51</sup> –, it is believed that the deep analysis on the life of the

<sup>45</sup> *Cronaca ed osservazioni dell'insegnante sulla vita della scuola del 2 ottobre 1936*, in ASICM, series «Registri di classe», folder «Registri di classe 1936/37», Register of Giovanni Lucaroni for 1936/37 school year.

<sup>46</sup> *Cronaca ed osservazioni dell'insegnante sulla vita della scuola del 24 ottobre 1936*, in Register of Giovanni Lucaroni for 1936/37 school year, cit.

<sup>47</sup> *Cronaca ed osservazioni dell'insegnante sulla vita della scuola del 28 ottobre 1936*, in Register of Giovanni Lucaroni for 1936/37 school year, cit.

<sup>48</sup> *Cronaca ed osservazioni dell'insegnante sulla vita della scuola del 24 settembre 1932*, in Register of Giovanni Lucaroni for 1932/33 school year, cit.

<sup>49</sup> G. Lucaroni, *Premessa*, «Toga Praetexta», 1934, pp. 367-368.

<sup>50</sup> M.T. Sega, *Introduzione*, in Ead. (ed.), *La scuola fa la storia. Gli archivi scolastici per la ricerca e la didattica*, Portogruaro, Nuova dimensione, 2002, p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> In fact, besides being a member of the Directory of the Fascio in Mogliano in 1924 and 1929 and

teacher Lucaroni – which was investigated through the lines of his school chronicles, but also using other sources, such as his personal archive – leads us to place him in that circle of teachers, who tried to demonstrate «a silent resistance against the regime»<sup>52</sup>.

Chronicles about school life represent an area to be still largely explored and it would be certainly interesting to start a large campaign of “excavations” within school archives by proceeding with a collection of the chronicles contained in the registers. There are still many school stories, which are preserved in school archives and can help us to add numerous details to educational historians’ research. Undoubtedly, these are sources, which are difficult to be found – also considering the difficulty of accessing school archives – but they are also not easy to be interpreted: it is obvious that we can wonder about how much chronicles are the result of a free reflection or a constraint imposed by the State. We can answer to this question through a close examination of the source considered and an intertwining of different types of sources, which allow us to reconstruct the teachers’ stories, such as the one by Giovanni Lucaroni, who was not only a teacher of a small village in the Macerata hinterland, but also «a clear writer about school matters and a technician inured to the school of experience»<sup>53</sup>, as Alfredo Saraz defined him.

an Extraordinary Commissar of the Fascio in Mogliano in June, July and August 1929, Giovanni Lucaroni founded the autonomous Balilla Group (1924-1928), he was the first president of the National Balilla Organization (from 1928 to 1930 and, then, in 1934 again) and a G.I.L. deputy commander from 28 October 1937. Lucaroni was also the Eighth Cohort B Commander and the Centuria Av. Commander, but he was also the first president of the National Afterwork Club (1927/28). Giovanni Lucaroni is also the author of the text *Sulle orme. “Ai Balilla”*, Montegiorgio, Tip. Editrice Carlo Zizzini, 1929, where there are examples of goodness, love, abnegation, constancy, heroism, sacrifice of adults and children. In fact, the names of those who have distinguished themselves in history are reported, such as Giotto and Donatello or Carlo Goldoni and Vittorio Alfieri, but also Massimo D’Azeglio, Giuseppe Garibaldi, Vittorio Emanuele III and Benito Mussolini and many others. There are also examples of young Balilla people who have distinguished themselves for exemplary feats, some of whom were even decorated with medals.

<sup>52</sup> About this topic, please see G. Chiosso, *Il fascismo e i maestri*, Milano, Mondadori, 2023. The relationship between the teacher Lucaroni and Fascism was deeply examined in: L. Paciaroni, *Il maestro di Mogliano. Vita e opera di Giovanni Lucaroni (1891-1980)*, Venezia, Marcianum Press, 2023.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from Alfredo Saraz to Giovanni Lucaroni dated 25 March 1924, in Archive of the Centre for Documentation and Research in History of Textbooks & Children’s Literature of the the University of Macerata, fond «Giovanni Lucaroni», series «Recensioni e giudizi», document n. 48.



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