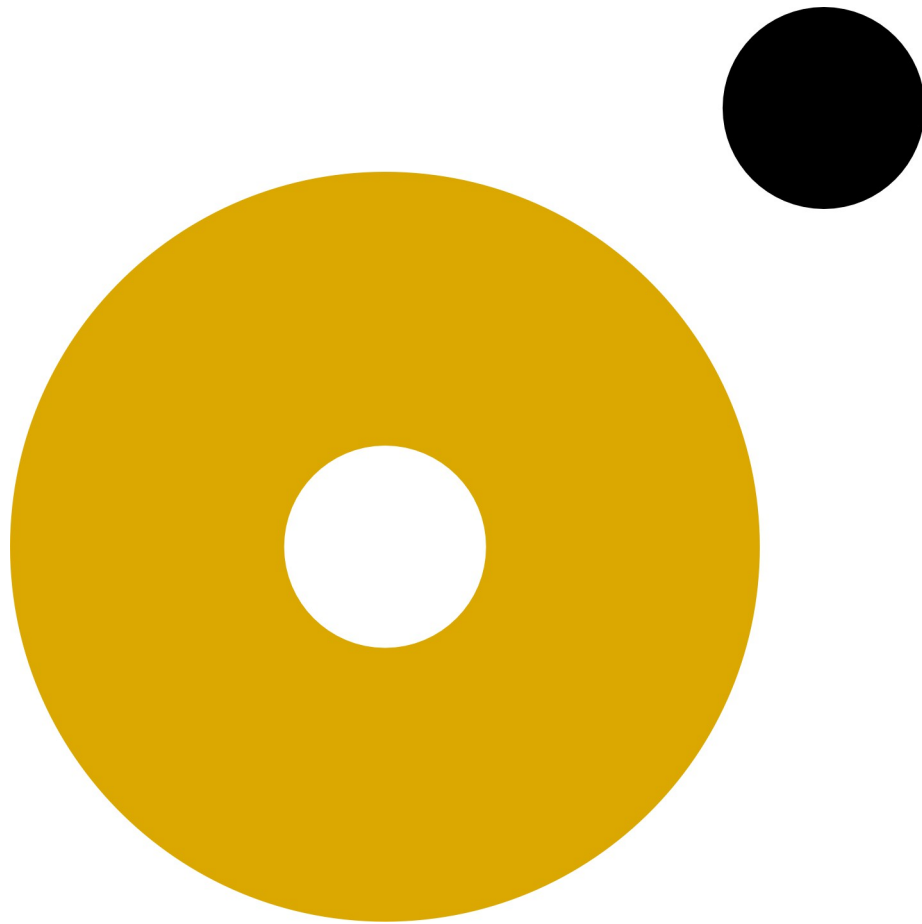


MEMORIA **SCOLASTICA**



# **The School and Its Many Pasts**

edited by Juri Meda, Lucia Paciaroni and Roberto Sani

# 0 MEMORIA SCOLASTICA

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# 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 dear 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 Sassari<sup>1</sup>. 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 Rome<sup>2</sup>. The institute has 19<sup>th</sup> century origins and since 1865 has been named after Domenico Alberto Azuni, a distinguished specialist in commercial and maritime law<sup>3</sup>. 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 Borghetto<sup>4</sup> 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, *ILgiorno def 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

<sup>1</sup> 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 pasta in Italia: francobolli, interi postali, bolli-franchi, storia, servizi bollature & relative valutazioni*, vol. 5: *La prima Repubblica in Pasta, 1949-1993*, Milano, Cif/unificato, 2018, p. 324.

<sup>2</sup> *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.

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

<sup>4</sup> Post and Telecommunications Administration, *Emissione di un francobollo ordinario appartenente alla serie tematica "Scuole d'Italia" dedicato al Ginnasio Licea 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»<sup>5</sup>. 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»<sup>6</sup>.

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 Pisa<sup>7</sup>. This was an important novelty for Italian collectors: for the first time, in fact, a thematic serial featured two different graphics<sup>8</sup>. 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

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

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

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

<sup>8</sup> 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 Cosenza<sup>9</sup>. 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 contribution<sup>10</sup>. 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

<sup>9</sup> *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.

<sup>10</sup> 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 Naples<sup>11</sup> and the State Institute of Art in Urbino<sup>12</sup> 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 tradition<sup>3</sup>. 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»<sup>14</sup>, 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»<sup>15</sup>. 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)

<sup>11</sup> Post and Telecommunications Administration, *Emissione di un Jrancobollo 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.

<sup>12</sup> Post and Telecommunications Administration, *Emissione di due Jrancobolli 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.

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

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> Post and Telecommunications Administration, *Emissione di un Jrancobollo 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 2001<sup>16</sup>, 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»<sup>17</sup>. 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 head<sup>8</sup>. 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 deeds<sup>19</sup>.

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 research<sup>20</sup>, not only in philately, but in monuments, epigraphs and commemorative speeches, all aimed at reaffirming Italian superiority in the art of pedagogy.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> *Il libro dei francobolli d'Italia. Valori postali 2001*, Roma, Posse Italiane, 2001, pp. 82-85.

<sup>18</sup> Filanci, *Il novellario*, cit., p. 219.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> 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, 35<sup>th</sup> cycle, a.y. 2022-2023, and in particular section 3.1 entitled *Vittorino da Feltre. Il monumento al Principe degli educatori* (Vittorino da Felce. 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 it<sup>21</sup>.

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*<sup>22</sup>. 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!»<sup>23</sup>. 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

<sup>21</sup> M. Halbwachs, *La memoria collettiva*, Milano, Unicopli, 2001, p. 148.

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

<sup>23</sup> 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 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death<sup>24</sup>. The Minister of Posts and Telecommunications was Giuseppe Tatarella, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and exponent of the National Alliance-MS! - 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»<sup>25</sup> were all listed, in practice listing his adhesion 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 dialectics<sup>26</sup>.

Another example of a sugar-coated interpretation of the past comes from the «Bollettino» illustrating the postage stamp<sup>27</sup> issued in August 1970 to mark the centenary of Maria Montessori's birth<sup>28</sup>. 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

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

<sup>25</sup> Post and Telecommunications Administration, *Emissione di un Jrancobollo commemorativo di Giovanni Gentile, nel 50° anniversario de/la morte*, «Bollettino illustrativo», n. 30, 21 November 1994, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> For an iconographic overview of all philatelic initiatives in the world dedicated to Maria Montessori I refer to G. Nuri, F. Bertolino, M. Filippa, *Una microstoria iconografica di Maria Montessori a 150 anni dalla nascita: figurine, rnonete, Jrancobolli...*, «MeTis. Mondi educacivi, temi, indagini, suggestioni», vol. 11, n. 1, 2021, pp. 113-140 and F. Bertolino, M. Filippa, G. Nuri, *L'irnragine di Maria Montessori nel rnondo jilatelico: sguardi pedagogici*, in P. Trabalzini (ed.), *Sensi irrnraginazione intelletto in Maria Montessori. Dirnensione estetica ed espressione di se*, 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»<sup>29</sup> 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 Italy<sup>30</sup>. 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.

<sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>30</sup> 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.

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*The Different Types of School Memory*, edited by Lucia Paciaroni

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## The School and Its Many Pasts

History is not memory; both, however, affect the way we perceive the past. In recent years, an increasing number of studies have focused on memory in order to critically analyze shared narratives of the past and their implications. Memory studies not only allow us to expand our knowledge about the past, but also help us 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 to better understand the school and its many pasts.

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