

# The image of Giuseppe Mazzini in history textbooks from Italian unification to the end of World War II (1861-1945)

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## *Premise*

Reconstructing Giuseppe Mazzini's image and the Mazzinian movement as chronicled in Italian history texts used in primary and secondary schools on the peninsula during the years between Italian unification and the twenty year period of Fascism seems, in many respects, like anything but an easy undertaking. This is so not simply because of the problems connected with finding reputable sources such as the scholastic textbooks themselves (which, as we know, have not until very recently been systematically preserved nor have samples been catalogued by public libraries<sup>1</sup>), but also because, in recounting Unification and the circumstances that led to the building of a single state the person and work of Giuseppe Mazzini and the initial actions taken by the Mazzinian movement have been subject to a kind of forced removal and to general silence following a reconstruction that has assumed, little by little, features of patent partiality and significant political manipulation. The latter phenomenon has no equal in scholastic texts and is not even remotely comparable to the

<sup>1</sup> See P. Bianchini, *Una fonte per la storia dell'istruzione e dell'editoria in Italia: il libro scolastico*, «Contemporanea», III (2000), 1, pp. 175-182. For a comparison on an international level, see: A. Choppin, *L'histoire des manuels scolaires: une approche globale*, «Histoire de l'Education», 1980, 9, pp. 1-25; and A. Escolano, *El libro escolar y la memoria histórica de la educación*, in *El libro y la escuela*, Madrid, ANELE-MEC-Ministerio de Cultura, 1992, pp. 77-90.

omissions and deformations of an ideological nature usually reserved, in other epochs, for other protagonists – from Victor Emanuel II to Cavour and even Garibaldi himself – and other events of Italian Unification<sup>2</sup>.

It might be said, therefore, that the way in which the history textbooks used in the schools of a united Italy gradually traced the life and times and works of Giuseppe Mazzini may on the one hand allow us to gather the prevalent outlines from a national historiographic point of view (which reflects in the scholastic texts, however partially and at times in an extremely simplified manner, the evolution and the outcomes<sup>3</sup>), they also allow us to pinpoint several of the characteristics and basic trappings that fed the different projects designed to build national identity and shape the civil and political ethic for new generations, which were set in place by national management groups during the time period we have examined<sup>4</sup>.

It is appropriate to advise at the outset that the main focus of our research is limited to the history books used by students in public elementary schools. Unlike the textbooks prepared for the lower and superior secondary schools, which were designed for a restricted elite of students, those used by students in public elementary schools enjoyed a much wider circulation and therefore contributed far more significantly to the creation of a collective image of the life and work of Giuseppe Mazzini and to the formation of that *national pedagogy* which, in different post-Unification phases of history, inspired and nurtured teaching activity in Italian schools.

If we restrict our analysis of history textbooks used in the primary and secondary schools on the peninsula during the long time span from national unification to the Second World War, we can distinguish different phases. The first coincides, more or less, with the decade immediately following Unification; the second runs from the early 1870s to the late 1880s; the third is the last decade of the nineteenth century; finally, the fourth and fifth phases concern, respectively, the Giolitti era and the post-WWI period through the mid-1920s and the actual two decades of Fascism.

### 1. *The First Decade Post-Unification*

Regarding the first decade following Unification, it is above all necessary to underline how a large part of the production of history textbooks for elementary and secondary schools of the period reflected an essentially moderate

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. B. Tobia, *Una patria per gli italiani*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> See the important considerations by U. Levra, *Fare gli italiani. Memoria e celebrazione del Risorgimento*, Torino, Comitato di Torino dell'Istituto per la storia del Risorgimento italiano, 1992.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. G. Chiosso, *Nazionalità ed educazione degli italiani nel secondo Ottocento*, «Pedagogia e Vita», 1987, 4, pp. 421-440.

vision of recent national history that was in keeping, after all, with what was happening on the historiographic front. If it is true, in fact, as Umberto Levra states, that «la storiografia sul Risorgimento prodotta nei decenni dopo l'unificazione, quella dei vincitori, dei moderati [...], cioè di quegli storici indicati con un brutto neologismo come *sabaudisti*» was aimed at exerting a right and proper hegemonic function in the field of historical study and at legitimizing and feeding – from a cultural standpoint – the plan drawn up by the men of the historical Right to gather the populations of the “New Italy”<sup>5</sup> around the Sabaudian monarchy and liberal institutions, it is also true that the moderate interpretation of national events and, more specifically, the centrality conferred on the role of the House of Savoy in realizing the process of unification of the peninsula were reiterated in the pages of the most widely read history books used in Italian schools during the decade of the 1860s.

This is the case, for example, in textbooks like *Storia d'Italia ne' suoi patimenti e nelle sue glorie raccontata ad uso delle Scuole e del Popolo* (1861) by Ignazio Cantù<sup>6</sup>, *Storia patria fino a' nostri giorni ad uso delle scuole d'Italia* (1861) by Giuseppe Banfi<sup>7</sup>, *Compendio di storia patria ad uso delle scuole del Regno* (1861) by Matteo Gatta<sup>8</sup>, *Biografie e racconti della storia italiana per le scuole elementari* by Giuseppe Amosso (1864)<sup>9</sup>, as well as the manuals by Girolamo Boccardo, Antonio Odescalchi, and Savina Fabricius for the upper schools<sup>10</sup> and by Paolo Delfino, Luigi Schiaparelli, Gian Severino Perosino and Vincenzo Scarpa for the classical high schools, technical and normal high schools and for the technical institutes<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> «La storiografia [...] – wrote Levra – fu monopolizzata dai moderati, per molteplici ragioni: una consuetudine lontana con la storia dinastica e più in generale con la concezione della storia come “biografia” nazionale; un più agevole accesso alle fonti e alle testimonianze; una più cospicua presenza nella cultura medio-alta, frutto di una linea egemonica che datava dalla Restaurazione» (U. Levra, *Fare gli italiani. Memoria e celebrazione del Risorgimento*, cit., pp. 59-63).

<sup>6</sup> I. Cantù, *Storia d'Italia ne' suoi patimenti e nelle sue glorie, raccontata ad uso delle Scuole e del Popolo*, Milano, Tip. Scolastica Pagnoni, 1861. The volume is actually the resumption, with some formal modifications, of a series of articles entitled *Racconti di storia patria* and *La storia d'Italia*, published by Cantù in the Milanese magazine for teachers called «L'Educatore lombardo. Giornale del Pio Istituto dei Maestri di Lombardia» (1857-1860) between 1859-60, and in «L'Educatore italiano» (1861-1885) in 1861.

<sup>7</sup> G. Banfi, *La storia patria fino ai nostri giorni ad uso delle scuole d'Italia*, Milano, Tip. Agnelli, 1861 (2. ediz.: 1864).

<sup>8</sup> M. Gatta, *Compendio di storia patria ad uso delle scuole del Regno*, Milano, Tip. Muggiani e Pastore, 1861. The text was reprinted in 1863 e in 1874 by Tip. Muggiani. Two years later, Gatta published a *Storia d'Italia ad uso delle scuole elementari popolari*, Milano, Tip. Brigola, 1863 (2. ediz.: 1874).

<sup>9</sup> G. Amosso, *Biografie e racconti tratti dalla storia italiana*, Biella, Tip. Amosso, 1864.

<sup>10</sup> G. Boccardo, *Manuale di storia universale. Ad uso delle scuole liceali*, Torino, Franco, 1861.

<sup>11</sup> P. Delfino, *Storia d'Italia dai primi tempi sino ai nostri giorni. Per le scuole tecniche e normali*, Torino, Paravia, 1861; L. Schiaparelli, *Storia popolare d'Italia dal 476 al 1861 per le scuole normali e magistrali*, Torino, Paravia, 1862; G.S. Perosino, *Compendio di storia popolare d'Italia per le scuole tecniche*, Torino, Paravia, 1864; V.G. Scarpa, *Biografie e racconti tratti dalla storia italiana per le scuole normali e magistrali*, Torino, Paravia, 1864.

Among the many texts that follow this interpretive line, one in particular deserves attention: the *Piccolo compendio della storia d'Italia* by Antonino Parato, published in 1865 for the Paravia printing style<sup>12</sup>. The book met with remarkable success, as witnessed by the 37 editions published in the space of thirty years<sup>13</sup>. This text, moderate and “Sabaudist” in its presentation of national history, as can readily be seen in the presentation of the origins of the Savoy dynasty and in the narration of the deeds of its most important figures (from the founder of the dynasty, Umberto, known as White Hand, to Victor Emanuel II), paid special attention to the reconstruction of more recent historical developments: from the French Revolution (to which the author pays special attention, placing in the foreground – through a murky narrative not without its own suggestive efficacy – the «torbidi ed eccessi», the plots developed «in nome della libertà» to install “a wicked Republican government”, the terrible effects of the Terror, and the no less grave consequences produced by the revolutionary events in Italy) to the Unification era and to the conclusion of national unification.

As to the latter issue, Antonino Parato offered a version that aimed, on the one hand, at highlighting the central role played by the Sabaudian monarchy and the justice and farsightedness of the political and diplomatic decisions taken by Cavour and the Piedmontese government, and, on the other hand, at acknowledging the severe limits – and at times the counterproductive results – of the Carbonari and the conspiratorial plots hatched by the Mazzinian matrix. The entire reconstruction of events on the peninsula between 1821 and 1859 is, in fact, essentially based upon the contrast between the wise and realistic politics conducted by Sabaudian Piedmont and the useless, when not downright dangerous, initiatives of the «sette». In this regard, the judgments offered by Parato on the constitutional uprisings of 1820-1821, on the actions of *Giovane Italia* during 1831, and on the 1848 insurrections leave no room for doubt:

Dopo la Restaurazione del 1815 i popoli [...] delusi nelle più care speranze, cominciarono a sospirare un governo più liberale e l'indipendenza dagli Austriaci. Ricorsero essi al mezzo deplorabile delle società segrete, tra cui la setta dei Carbonari, la più potente e diffusa in tutta la penisola. Dopo i moti del 1831 si raddoppiarono le persecuzioni ed i rigori della tirannide, e pigliarono incremento le società segrete, in ispecie quella della *giovane Italia*, fondata a Marsiglia nel 1831 da Giuseppe Mazzini genovese. Il tentativo che fece questi, nel 1834, di invadere la Savoia, ed altri simili moti andarono falliti, né fecero altro che accrescere la diffidenza dei governanti e il numero delle vittime [...]. Asceso al trono dopo l'abdicazione di Carlo Alberto, Vittorio Emanuele II fra tanti dolori e le accuse di tradimento lanciate dai settarii, non si smarriva d'animo, firmava un armistizio coi nemici

<sup>12</sup> A. Parato, *Piccolo compendio della storia d'Italia esposta per biografie contenente la storia romana, del medio evo e moderna ad uso speciale delle scuole elementari*, Torino, Paravia, 1865.

<sup>13</sup> The 37<sup>th</sup> edition (Paravia, Torino 1898) was noticeably updated with respect to the first, and carries the subtitle «for use in the upper elementary and public schools of the kingdom».

[...] e giurava che avrebbe rimarginate le piaghe del paese, mantenuto salvo l'onore e lo Statuto; e tenne la sua parola. Essendo insorta Genova per opera dei faziosi, Ei la ridusse all'obbedienza più colla benignità che col terrore.

In the same interpretive mode is the «Compendio di storia patria» (*Compendium of National History*) inserted by the Milanese priest Giulio Tarra in his well known *Lecture graduate al fanciullo italiano*<sup>14</sup>, doubtless one of the most widely read textbooks in Italian elementary schools during the 1800s. In his brief but interesting survey of the history of the peninsula from its first inhabitants to national Unification, Tarra, an important exponent of moderate Lombard<sup>15</sup> Catholicism, adds his voice to those offering a reconstruction of the events of Unification centering on the role played by Victor Emanuel II and his prime minister Camillo Benso, Count Cavour. In Tarra's account, there is no mention whatsoever of the political initiatives and insurrectional activities of Giuseppe Mazzini and his followers, and the role of Garibaldi and the activities of the Mille in southern Italy in 1860 are significantly downsized.

After reminding the reader that «l'Italia cangiando continuamente padroni, era diventata serva di tutti» and that «soltanto il Piemonte si manteneva libero sotto un Re veramente italiano», the Milanese ecclesiastic placed the accent on the many (and for the most part fruitless) “attempts to unite Italy into one strong and independent state” carried out by «alcuni cittadini unitisi col nome di *Carbonari* e di affiliati alla *Giovine Italia*», whose efforts «furono repressi e soffocati nel sangue o nelle carceri». Only the intervention of Victor Emanuel II and the Sabaudian army, as well as the «sapiente» diplomatic strategy enacted by Count Cavour, made it possible to overcome the problems and uncertainties of the «causa italiana» and create the premises for the liberation of the peninsula from foreign domination<sup>16</sup>.

Largely analogous interpretations can be found, as previously noted, in history texts meant for high school students and for other superior secondary schools. By the same token, in fact, the virtually exclusive reference to the role played by the Sabaudian monarchy and by Piedmontese diplomacy in the events that led to the formation of the Kingdom of Italy is accompanied by a sort of general denial of the figure and the works of Giuseppe Mazzini and of

<sup>14</sup> G. Tarra, *Lecture graduate al fanciullo italiano. III. Libro per le classi maggiori elementari*, Milano, G.B. Messaggi Editore, 1863, pp. 333-347 («Compendio di Storia Patria»).

<sup>15</sup> See G. Tarra, *Cenni storici e compendiosa esposizione del metodo seguito per l'istruzione dei sordomuti d'ambo i sessi nella provincia e nella diocesi di Milano*, Milano, Tip. S. Giuseppe, 1880. Nothing has been written solely on Tarra as a writer for children and editor of textbooks, but see: A. Faeti, *Letteratura per l'infanzia*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1977, pp. 42-44; P. Boero, C. De Luca, *La letteratura per l'infanzia*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1995, pp. 14-16; M. Bacigalupi, P. Foscati, *Da plebe a popolo. L'educazione popolare nei libri di scuola dall'Unità alla Repubblica*, cit., pp. 30-34 *passim*.

<sup>16</sup> G. Tarra, *Lecture graduate al fanciullo italiano. III. Libro per le classi maggiori elementari*, cit., pp. 344-346.

the anti-Austrian conspiracies and the insurrectional initiatives promoted by the Mazzinian movement on the peninsula beginning in the 1830s<sup>17</sup>.

## 2. *From Depretis to Crispi. The Rise of the Left to Power amid Scholastic Renewal and New Interpretations of the Unification Era*

As far as the Italian Risorgimento is concerned, history books used in the elementary and secondary schools published during the Seventies and Eighties of the 1800s reflect a gradually less moderate and dynastic view than that which distinguished the texts of the preceding phase and, by contrast, reflected the increasingly favored concept – particularly at the start of the second half of the 1870s, coinciding with the advent of Depretis's leftist government – of national Unification that was more attentive to the role played by Giuseppe Mazzini and to the democratic currents in the peninsula's unification process. During this stage, an image of Risorgimento that was «semplificata e “mitologica”, ma non priva di una sua efficacia laica e patriottica» begins to take shape, acting as a fulcrum on «un composito pantheon di padri della patria, di episodi gloriosi, di detti e gesti eroici». It is an image that would come into sharp focus only toward the end of the nineteenth century<sup>18</sup>.

Confirming the interpretive evolution described above, it is worthwhile to compare two reconstructions offered in two manuals, one dating from the beginning and one from the end of the period under examination: *La vita dell'Italia narrata agli alunni delle scuole ed alle famiglie* (1871), by Alezzo Ulisse Pioggi, a teacher at the Ginnasio-Liceo in Reggio Emilia and later Arezzo superintendent, and *Racconti e biografie di storia patria per le scuole primarie e popolari* (1889), by the Roman elementary school teachers Siro Corti and Domenico Recchi.

In Pioggi's volume, the narrative of the process of national unification, while still bearing an essentially moderate imprint, is distinguished mainly by its references to the events, initiatives and leaders of Risorgimento who were virtually ignored – or mentioned rarely and only in passing – by previous manuals.

<sup>17</sup> As an example only, we suggest: E. Ricotti, *Breve storia d'Europa e specialmente d'Italia*, Torino, Paravia, 1874; Id., *Compendio di storia patria dal 476 al 1861*, Torino, Paravia, 1871 (10. ediz.); C. Balbo, *Della storia d'Italia dalle origini fino ai nostri giorni. Sommario*, Torino, Unione Tipografica Editrice, 1865 (12. ediz.); F. De Angeli, *Compendio di storia universale*, Milano, Vallardi, 1876 (4. ediz.); C. Bianchi, *Manuale di storia moderna dal 1454 al 1866*, Firenze, Barbèra, 1869 (4. ediz.); G. Weber, *Compendio di storia universale*, Milano, Guigoni, 1874; F. Bertolini *Storia d'Italia*, Milano, Vallardi, 1872; C. Mottura-G. Parato, *Compendio della storia nazionale*, Torino, Paravia, 1873 (10. ediz.); L. Schiaparelli, *Corso generale di storia antica e moderna ad uso delle scuole secondarie*, Torino, Franco, 1865-66, 5 voll.

<sup>18</sup> S. Soldani, *Il Risorgimento a scuola*, cit., pp. 139-140.

Cases in point are the Carbonari movements of the Twenties and Thirties and, above all, the insurrectional initiatives proposed by Giuseppe Mazzini and the *Giovane Italia* movement. On the one hand, in writing of these initiatives the author emphasizes their unrealistic and almost complete impracticality. On the other, he misses no opportunity to underline the significant role these played in developing and maturing in Italians a real sensitivity for the cause of freedom and national unity:

Non sortirono [i moti e le insurrezioni degli anni Venti e Trenta] miglior successo che il solito delle congiure – Ulisse Poggi wrote –; pure mantennero vivo ed a prezzo del sangue diffusero il desiderio di libertà e il concetto di unità della patria<sup>19</sup>.

In *Racconti e biografie di storia patria per le scuole primarie e popolari* by Siro Corti and Domenico Recchi, the role played by Giuseppe Mazzini and by the democratic currents running through the events of Risorgimento found far wider and more incisive study<sup>20</sup>. This manual, like Poggi's, devoted ample and significant space to the motives of the Carbonari and the Mazzinians and aimed not only at illuminating the important role played by these movements in promoting and diffusing patriotic ideals, but also at contributing to the emergence of an interclassist character and the solid rooting within popular awareness of the insurrectional initiatives of the Twenties and Thirties, particularly those that arose spontaneously, inspired by Giuseppe Mazzini:

I patrioti riuniti in società segrete, dette dei Carbonari – the two Roman teachers wrote –, si stringevano in un sol giuro dalle Alpi alla Sicilia: *far libera la patria dallo straniero, ed ottenere l'eguaglianza dei cittadini innanzi alla legge* [...]. Vi erano rappresentate tutte le classi, dal palazzo alla capanna, e da ogni parte si preparavano all'azione, aspettando il momento opportuno per insorgere e rendere la patria indipendente dallo straniero e libera dalla tirannia interna [...]. Le società segrete continuarono a tener desti gli animi degli italiani. Al Carbonarismo successe la *Giovane Italia*, con a capo Giuseppe Mazzini, e gli affigliati, chiamati Mazziniani. Quindi puossi dire che questo fu tutto un periodo di congiure, di sommosse, di tentativi di rivoluzioni. Non vi fu angolo d'Italia in cui i patrioti non si stringessero la mano trasfondendosi la speranza di non lontano e più lieto avvenire. E la rivoluzione scoppiò tremenda nel 1848<sup>21</sup>.

In Corti and Recchi's text, the narrative of events that led to national unification are integrated with a series of portraits of the leaders of the Risorgimento era. These biographies of the «artefici dell'Unità d'Italia» seem particularly

<sup>19</sup> U. Poggi, *La vita dell'Italia narrata agli alunni delle scuole ed alle famiglie*, Milano, Agnelli, 1869. The quotation cited here from the text is from the second edition, published in 1871 by the Milan publishing house Agnelli, with a slightly modified title.

<sup>20</sup> S. Corti, D. Recchi, *Racconti e biografie di storia patria per le scuole primarie e popolari*, Roma, Tip. Elzeviriana, 1889 (1. ediz.: 1880), pp. 114-144. The most recent edition of this volume that we have been able to trace – whose preface, however, lists only Siro Corti as author – is that one published by Paravis in (10. edition.).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114-117.

meaningful, especially where they describe how the moderate Sabaudist line was surpassed and gave way to a gradual approach to a conciliatory reading in a national-popular key of the different men who animated Risorgimento.

On the one hand, this text is nuanced with the political differences, the ideological and cultural counterpositions, and the conflicts within the bourgeoisie; on the other hand, it affirms an image of a unifying process aimed at agreement and an overall harmony of intent, which finds its highest expression in the gallery of biographical profiles dedicated to the «Padri della Patria». In it we encounter, alongside the “brave and wise” Vittorio Emanuele II, «al quale doveva toccare la suprema gloria di veder riunita, libera, forte e indipendente la patria nostra sotto il suo scettro», and Camillo Benso di Cavour, «il più grande uomo di Stato che l’Italia possa vantare», Giuseppe Garibaldi and Giuseppe Mazzini as well.

Corti and Recchi’s biography of Mazzini is of great interest to our analysis. In Mazzini’s case, on the one hand, the absence of even the vaguest reference to the Republican idea that nurtured all his patriotic and insurrectional deeds seems particularly noteworthy. On the other hand, we find the almost exclusive mention of his «instancabile opera di agitatore» and conspirator («anima» of the Italian revolution), ignoring the fundamental role he played in ideology and politics, often in direct contrast to the orientations of the Sabaudian monarchy and the Cavourian moderate stance:

Fra gli uomini grandi che illustrarono la patria nostra, che sacrarono tutta la loro vita per renderla libera – as we read in *Racconti e biografie di storia patria* –, a niuno è secondo il genovese Giuseppe Mazzini. Il suo nome è indissolubilmente legato alla nostra redenzione nazionale, né per volger di secoli la gloria che lo circonda risplenderà meno fulgida [...]. Esule a ventitré anni, d’animo ardente, poeta e filosofo, fornito di forti studi, di volontà indomita, dal 1830 al 1870 non vi fu moto in Italia di cui egli non fosse l’anima [...]. Continuò la sua instancabile opera di agitatore, sino a che scoppiò la gloriosa guerra del 1859, in cui *popolo e sovrano*, dandosi la destra, incominciarono quella serie di vittorie che dovevano condurci alla *Breccia di Porta Pia*. E Mazzini, sempre grande, prestò la sua opera efficacissima<sup>22</sup>.

It hardly bears reminding that an analogous interpretation of Giuseppe Mazzini, cleansed of any reference to his Republican credo and the vigorous ideological and political polemics he encouraged regarding the choices made by the Piedmontese government would have been welcome, during those years, in a literary work destined to impact profoundly on the political imagination of new generations and lead to an appreciative reading of the events of Unification and the work of its leaders in the interests of achieving agreement and unity of intent and effort. We refer to the well known pages of De Amicis’s *Cuore*, in which the figure of the great Genoese patriot and politician is shorn

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.



of any ideological nature and assumes the features – far less awkward – of exemplary moral and civic rectitude, a necessary requisite in the cultural and political climate of the Eighties and Nineties for an «eretico» like Mazzini to take his place in the *pantheon* of the fathers of the nation:

Giuseppe Mazzini – we read in the laconic portayal which is offered by De Amicis in *Cuore* –, nato a Genova nel 1805, morto a Pisa nel 1872, grande anima di patriotta, grande ingegno di scrittore, ispiratore ed apostolo primo della rivoluzione italiana; il quale per amore della patria visse quarant'anni povero, esule, perseguitato, ramingo, eroicamente immobile nei suoi principii e nei suoi propositi<sup>23</sup>.

Taking their place in the same interpretive line, albeit placed there with greater and richer documentation and historical information, are the main and most widely circulated manuals for the upper schools, normal schools and technical institutes printed in first editions or reprinted during the Eighties. We refer, in particular, to a *Breve storia d'Europa e specialmente d'Italia* by Ercole Ricotti, to *Corso di storia civile per le classi liceali* by Piero Prada, to the *Manuale di storia moderna* by Luigi Schiaparelli, to the *Storia d'Italia* by Francesco Bertolini, to the *Compendio della storia nazionale* by Antonino Parato, to *Storia moderna* and *Nuovo compendio di storia d'Italia* by Eugenio Comba, and finally to *Manuale di storia moderna dal 1454 al 1885 ad uso dei licei* by Celestino Bianchi<sup>24</sup>. This last in particular makes fleeting reference – which deserves mention as the exception that proves the rule – to the Republican ideal pursued by the great Genoese thinker: «Giuseppe Mazzini – writes Celestino Bianchi – della forma repubblicana di governo principale ed antico fautore, predicatala [nei decenni passati] inutilmente, nel 1849 se ne andava ad instaurarla con Armellini e Saffi a Roma»<sup>25</sup>.

### 3. *The Crispin Age and the Authoritarian Reversal at the Turn of the Century*

The third phase in our journey through the history texts covers the last decade of the nineteenth century. During it, new narrative and language forms characterized textbook production and reflected – for the first time, and both

<sup>23</sup> E. De Amicis, *Cuore*, Milano, Treves, 1886, p. 222.

<sup>24</sup> Cfr. E. Ricotti, *Breve storia d'Europa, e specialmente d'Italia, dall'anno 476 al 1878*, Torino-Milano, Paravia-Maisner, 1881; P. Prada, *Corso di storia civile per le classi liceali*, Milano, Cogliati, 1885; L. Schiaparelli, *Manuale di storia moderna*, Torino, Scioldo, 1885; F. Bertolini, *Storia contemporanea d'Italia*, Torino, Paravia, 1887; A. Parato, *Compendio della storia nazionale*, Torino, Paravia, 1882; E. Comba, *Storia moderna*, Torino, Paravia, 1884; Id., *Nuovo compendio di storia d'Italia*, Torino, Paravia, 1879; C. Bianchi, *Manuale di storia moderna dal 1454 al 1885 ad uso dei licei*, Firenze, Barbèra, 1885.

<sup>25</sup> C. Bianchi, *Manuale di storia moderna dal 1454 al 1885 ad uso dei licei*, cit., p. 581.

generally and specifically – a tendency toward the consecration of the Unification era and the exaltation in religious terms of the leaders of national Unification<sup>26</sup>. In this respect, we note, on the one hand, a mythopoietic use of history, and on the other, the use of a «nuovo modello di storia sacra, su base patriottica, che sostituiva, senza distinguersene considerevolmente nello spirito e nei contenuti – compresi i miracoli e i martiri – la *storia sacra* propriamente detta»<sup>27</sup>.

On this point, it is important, to cite but one example, to note the continuous reference to concepts like *martyr/martyrdom*, *saviour/salvation*, *redeemer/redemption*, *providence/rescue*, or to expressions like “the sacred cause of Italy”, “the saving mission”, “the sacrifice to save the homeland” “the sacred duty to liberate oppressed peoples”, and so on<sup>28</sup>.

La scuola per riuscire veramente educativa – we read for example in the preface of a lucky history book for primary schools which was edited in 1896 by Siro Corti – dev’essere nazionale; deve formare il cuore del cittadino italiano [...]. I giovanetti non ricordano che quello che fa sul loro animo impressione profonda, e perciò, anziché esporre una serie di fatti, ho preso a narrare *le vite de’ nostri martiri gloriosi* intorno alle quali si raggruppano i principali avvenimenti, che ci diedero *la redenzione della patria*; e di quegli illustri che *con morte gloriosa hanno suggellato i principii santi* a cui informarono tutta la loro vita [...]. Giovani nella vita delle nazioni, noi abbiamo bisogno di conoscerci di conoscerci per apprezzarci e per amarci; e come il comune dolore aveva affratellati i nostri padri, un comune amore stringa i nostri figli, ed un comune intento guidi le opere loro: far grande questa Italia nostra carissima che *un lungo martirologio*, ed i sacrifici e le vittorie de’ nostri padri ci hanno consegnata libera ed indipendente<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> See the careful reflections of R. Moro, *Religione e politica nell’età della secolarizzazione: riflessioni su un recente volume di Emilio Gentile*, «Storia contemporanea», 1995, n. 2, pp. 255-325. For an analysis of the French situation, see J. Lestocquoy, *Histoire du patriotisme en France des origines à nos jours*, Paris, Michel, 1968.

<sup>27</sup> F. Traniello, *Nazione e storia nelle proposte educative degli ambienti laici di fine Ottocento*, in L. Pazzaglia (a cura di), *Cattolici, educazione e trasformazioni socio-culturali in Italia tra Otto e Novecento*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1999, pp. 66-67. But see also B. Tobia, *Una cultura per la nuova Italia*, in G. Sabbatucci-V. Vidotto (a cura di), *Storia d’Italia. II. Il nuovo Stato e la società civile (1861-1887)*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1995, pp. 483-486.

<sup>28</sup> An example worth remembering is: L. Bettini, *I martiri e i fattori della unità e indipendenza d’Italia*, Milano, Trevisini, 1885; P. Berra, *I redentori d’Italia, ossia la storia patria contemporanea narrata per brevi cenni ai giovanetti*, Torino, Tip. Unione dei Maestri, 1888; G. Bastone, *Racconti e biografie di storia patria*, Napoli, De Angelis, 1890; C. Corradino, *La storia d’Italia. Racconti e biografie*, Torino, Loescher, 1890; G. Vignoli, *Catechismo del Risorgimento italiano, ovvero la storia patria dalla caduta di Napoleone I alla morte di Vittorio Emanuele II*, Alba, Sansoldi, 1891; G. Merighi, *Biografie e racconti di storia patria, ossia nuovo compendio di storia italiana*, Torino, Paravia, 1893; S. Corti, *Racconti e biografie di storia patria, ad uso delle scuole primarie e popolari*, Torino, Paravia, 1893; G. Soli, *I racconti della patria. Narrazioni storiche educative sul Risorgimento italiano*, Milano, Trevisini, 1895; F. Pozzoli, *Eroi ed eroine del Risorgimento italiano*, Milano, Agnelli, 1896; C. Rinaudo, *Racconti educativi per la terza classe elementare. Il Risorgimento italiano (1848-1870)*, Torino, Paravia, 1898.

<sup>29</sup> S. Corti, *Racconti educativi di storia moderna e breve storia del Risorgimento italiano*, Torino, Paravia, 1896, pp. VII-VIII (our italics).

Along with the interpretation in a religious key of the Unification epoch, Corti revisits the steps along the road to unification on the peninsula (the *Carbonari* riots of 1820-21, the Mazzinian insurrections of Giovane Italia, the uprisings of 1848, and, lastly, the first and second independence wars) in terms that are really and truly “stations of the *Via Crucis*” for the Italian people and the «martirologio della patria», offering his young readers a true gallery of martyrs to the “holy cause” of liberty and national independence: from the «virtuosa, dotta ed eroica» Eleonora Fonseca Pimentel, whose «amore di patria» was «punito con il martirio» and whose blood contributed to «consacrare questa patria diletta»; to the «martiri» of the Five Days of Milan, «il cui sangue tutta santificò la nostra patria diletta», down to Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi, whose «gesta meravigliose» bore witness to the whole world of the meaning of «quell’amor di patria che tutto santifica» and push «tutti i cittadini italiani alle sante imprese per la patria»<sup>30</sup>.

Likewise, and in equally emphatic tones, we find the writings of Lorenzo Bettini in *I martiri e i fattori dell’unità ed indipendenza d’Italia*, one of the most widely used elementary school history books of the time, reprinted in several editions during the decade. Worthy of note as one of the most interesting aspects of this manual is the truly spiritual aura that surrounds the leaders of Unification. References to Giuseppe Mazzini systematically avoid any mention of the Sabaudian monarchy and Piedmontese moderatism; it is noted that «egli visse, sofferse, pianse e morì per la patria» and that in his words and his writings he acted «come un *profeta* al suo popolo». As to the «nuova Italia [...] fecondata dal sangue di tanti martiri, santificata dal dolore di tanti uomini Grandi», men like Giuseppe Mazzini, Bettini invoked, in conclusion, the blessing of the Lord as the «vero Artefice della sua unità e libertà»<sup>31</sup>.

If such an approach was typical of the history texts used in elementary schools, many secondary school texts, during the Nineties, favoured a far more detailed explication of the events of Unification which, however, far from promoting a more objective reconstruction of the thoughts and works of Giuseppe Mazzini, wound up offering students an inevitably partial and reductive presentation of the role played by the Genoese in the events that led to Unification.

To fully understand the reasons for such an interpretation, we must first emphasize the fact that the image of Risorgimento presented by these textbooks was a strong reflection of the political and cultural conditions that existed during the Crispino age. We refer to the highly nationalistic events that marked the country and fed the choices of the liberal governing class during the last decade of the nineteenth century. With references to the content and aims of the teaching of history, it must be remembered that the prevalent theme was

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 17-22 *passim*.

<sup>31</sup> L. Bettini, *I martiri e i fattori della unità e indipendenza d’Italia*, Torino, Trevisini, 1891, pp. 87-92.

that of substantial continuity between ancient imperial Rome and the «Terza Italia» born out of the struggle for unification, and other themes – linked to those mentioned above – that favoured a reconstruction of the past no matter how remote as “preparation” for Unification. This was intended as a reconstruction aimed not only at exalting the ideals of unification and the origins of the young Italian state, but also at furnishing a new and more solid legitimacy to the political class that would bring about Unification<sup>32</sup>, because the crisis of the institutions and liberal political forces and the growing affirmation of ideas and opposing socialist and Catholic initiatives were tending to accentuate the divide between the “legal nation” and “the real nation” and threaten the very bases of a liberal state.

The image of Unification that was to be promoted in the schools, therefore, was that of a great collective event, a real and proper «rivoluzione nazionale» at whose centre was the Sabaudian monarchy on the one hand – that is, King Victor Emanuel II and the regular Piedmontese army – and, on the other, the “people” – a term to be taken in its widest and least defined sense, an expression meant to encompass not simply the bourgeoisie, but all Italians. Not by chance does the term *monarchy-people* and the reading of Risorgimento as a great national-popular epic (within which every characterization and meaning faded and different projects and the different political ideologies that had fueled the struggle for independence were lost – above all the republican and democratic ones) represent the poles of the Crispin concept of the process of national Unification<sup>33</sup>.

Thus it is readily understood that Giuseppe Mazzini could occupy only an abstract place in this interpretive scheme, although a powerfully suggestive and above innocuous place as one of the main figures in the ethereal *pantheon* of the «padri della patria» and «artefici» and «apostoli» of Italian unity; a *pantheon* in which every ideal distinction, every ideological differentiation, every political contrast was blurred, if not completely removed.

We must also emphasize that, whether absent or present in a diluted form in textbooks of the first forty years post-Unification, Giuseppe Mazzini was, especially starting toward the end of the 1880s, the main reference point for *national pedagogy* and inspired didactic programs for elementary schools. These were formulated by a commission headed by the positivist pedagogue Aristide Gabelli and issued by the Minister for Public Education Paolo Borselli in R.D. 25 September 1888, n. 5724. The special importance of these teaching plans in national and patriotic instruction is well known. In the *Special Instructions* attached to the history syllabus, in fact, it was emphasized that «L'insegnamento della storia ha per fine principalmente di ispirare coll'ese-

<sup>32</sup> See F. Traniello, *Nazione e storia nelle proposte educative degli ambienti laici di fine Ottocento*, cit., pp. 61-91.

<sup>33</sup> U. Levra, *Fare gli italiani. Memoria e celebrazione del Risorgimento*, cit., pp. 305-306.

pio ai fanciulli il sentimento del dovere, la devozione al bene pubblico e l'amore di patria». To achieve these ethic-civil objectives, the educational prospective to be pursued had to evoke the events of national history so that students understood Italy's contribution to civilization in order to generate in these students admiration for the great past and at the same time to stimulate a strong and vigilant sense of duty toward the country and its national institutions<sup>34</sup>.

At the basis of the above considerations, there was doubtless an interpretation of the idea of nationality that was clearly derived from the Mazzinian ideal. The idea, in fact, was conceived by Gabelli and those who elaborated the 1888 syllabi as a great and imposing ethical and spiritual principle, truly a "civic religion" that could influence «l'opinione pubblica, di inculcare ideali di attività e di sacrificio, di diffondere l'idea che per essere nazione non bastava una lingua, una tradizione, un'area geografica comune, ma occorreva una volontà comune che non era la rousseauiana "convenzione iniziale" né un portato della natura, ma un'operosità continua e incessante»<sup>35</sup>.

The Mazzinian concept of nationhood, despite its indisputably romantic framework, was fated – as Federico Chabod emphasized – to meld perfectly with the new positivistic ideals of science and civil and social progress that began in our country in the 1860s<sup>36</sup>. It is readily evident, then, that this principle of nationality, calling upon the individual conscience and history – with its strong voluntaristic imprint and the importance it placed on the ethical and spiritual national community, was fated to translate into a concrete teaching plan which, by urging duty, rectitude and the spirit of sacrifice, relying on respect for authority and for the power structure of government, may be seen to have definitively sanctioned, from a moral point of view, the unity of the nation – which had already occurred on a political and institutional level – and to exert an authentic regeneration of the Italian people.

#### 4. *Democrats and Nationalists: Mazzini and the Mazzinian Movement's Arguable Heritage*

As far as Mazzini's image and the Mazzinian movement presented in history texts during the long and complicated period that runs from the start of the 20th century to the First World War – and, as far as educational policies up to Gen-

<sup>34</sup> *Istruzioni speciali*, IV, *Storia*, *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> F. Gaeta, *Dalla nazionalità al nazionalismo*, in *La cultura italiana tra '800 e '900 e le origini del nazionalismo*, Firenze, Olschki, 1981, p. 32.

<sup>36</sup> F. Chabod, *Storia della politica estera italiana dal 1870 al 1896. I. Le premesse*, Bari, Laterza, 1965, p. 282. See also, the key reflections offered by Chabod in *Id.*, *L'idea di nazione*, Bari, Laterza, 1974, pp. 68-79.

tile's reforms – are concerned, we note, on the one hand, the continuation of the motifs and interpretations present in previous times and, on the other, a clearer, more precise definition of the biography and the ideas of the Genoese. In textbooks like those of Luigi Neretti (1903), Manfredo Giannini (1903), Luigi Capuana (1904), Raffaele Altavilla (1905), written for the upper elementary school and complementary technical schools<sup>37</sup>, and in those of Giuseppe Colombo (1901), Pietro Ravasio (1901), Antonio Frontero (1904), Francesco Bertolini (1905), Giovanni Bonacci (1905), Fedele Savio (1908), Alfonso Professione (1909), for upper schools and complementary technical upper schools<sup>38</sup>, there was a return, for example, of the image previously examined, i.e. that of the *pantheon* of the «Padri della Patria», in which Giuseppe Mazzini is presented as the «Apostolo dell'Unità» and the «ardente ispiratore, con la parola e con gli scritti», of an ethic-civil ideal fated to «forgiare il cuore e l'animo dei patrioti» who «lottarono per l'indipendenza e l'unità della Nazione» and as the representative of the foundation itself of the “pact that united the Italian people in the sacred bond of one Nation indivisible”. Unlike the previous texts, *Dei doveri dell'uomo*<sup>39</sup>, more than Mazzini's insurrectional and conspiratorial activities and the ideological and political propaganda, became a reference point for subsequent school texts on the life and work of Mazzini, so much so that the «profili» or the «medaglioni» devoted to him were often constructed as a kind of essential anthological collection of excerpts taken from that work<sup>40</sup>.

Little by little during the first two decades of the 1900s, however, other and more incisive profiles of the Genoese appeared in history textbooks. A case in point are the texts used in the primary and secondary school published between 1906 and 1922 written by authors like Giuseppe Bellocco and Vincenzo Cappello, Enrico Fabiani, Pietro Costanzi, Bruno Vettori, Pasquale Fornari, Italo Raulich, Antonio Dall'Oglio, Licurgo Cappelletti, Niccolò Rodolico, Antonio

<sup>37</sup> L. Neretti, *Risorgimento nazionale. Libretto per la terza classe elementare*, Firenze, Bemporad, 1903; M. Giannini, *Storia della Patria ad uso delle scuole elementari superiori*, Palermo, Biondo, 1903; L. Capuana, *Breve storia d'Italia ad uso delle scuole tecniche e complementari*, Catania, Battiato, 1904; R. Altavilla, *Racconti di storia moderna e contemporanea d'Italia. Narrazioni educative ad uso della quinta classe elementare*, Milano, Agnelli, 1905.

<sup>38</sup> G. Colombo, *Compendio di storia contemporanea dall'anno 1815 all'anno 1900*, Piacenza, Bertola, 1901; P. Ravasio, *Nozioni di storia antica, media, moderna e contemporanea ad uso delle scuole secondarie e normali. IV: Storia contemporanea*, Torino, Paravia, 1901; A. Frontero, *Compendio della storia d'Italia a uso dei ginnasi inferiori. Parte terza (storia moderna e contemporanea)*, Albrighi-Segati e C., Milano-Roma, 1904; F. Bertolini, *Storia contemporanea politica e civile d'Italia narrata alla gioventù*, Torino, Paravia, 1905; G. Bonacci, *Nozioni di storia d'Italia ad uso delle scuole tecniche. Parte terza (storia moderna e contemporanea)*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1905; F. Savio, *Corso di storia per i Licei. Storia contemporanea dal 1748 al 1900*, Torino, Petriani, 1908; A. Professione, *Nuova storia contemporanea dal 1815 ai nostri giorni. Manuale di storia per le scuole secondarie*, Torino, Gallizio, 1909.

<sup>39</sup> G. Mazzini, *Dei doveri dell'uomo*, Genova, Dagnino, 1851.

<sup>40</sup> Similar attention to *I doveri dell'uomo* had already appeared during the 1890s. See L. Betini, *I martiri e i fattori della unità e indipendenza d'Italia*, Torino, Trevisini, 1891, pp. 89-94.

Abbruzzese, Michele Rosi and Corrado Barbagallo. These textbooks contained not only repeated mention of Giuseppe Mazzini's Republican and democratic beliefs, but also underlined the key role played by democratic thinkers and by the Mazzinian movement in the events of Unification<sup>41</sup>.

Further to this issue, we need only recall the helpful writing of Enrico Fabiani, who, in his text *Fatti principali della Storia Patria. Il Risorgimento italiano*, after explicating the influence of democratic and Republican ideals inspired Giuseppe Mazzini and his followers, goes on to explain why the leader and his fans could never remotely be included among those atheists and blood-thirsty men who had inspired the Jacobins and the most extremist elements of the French Revolution, because there was, in Mazzini, a strong spiritual and religious dimension and a lively humanitarian streak, as Fabiani said:

Giuseppe Mazzini [...] dedicò tutta la sua vita alla patria, confortato ed animato sempre dalla coscienza di compiere un gran dovere di cittadino. Egli rappresenta il pensiero della nazionalità sempre vivo [...]. Il grande agitatore (come dicemmo anche nel primo libro) esule e perseguitato dal governo sardo, raccoglieva intorno a sé i profughi italiani e preparava congiure e rivoluzioni in Italia, col generoso proposito di renderla unita e indipendente dall'Austria, aspirando poi a farne una repubblica democratica con Roma capitale<sup>42</sup>.

The same point of view was shared, but with a heightened concern to justify the scarce luck that the democratic and republican ideal met with within the framework of the events that led to the establishment of the united State, by Pietro Costanzi who, after reminding readers how «Questo grande agitatore, scrittore e filosofo» dedicated his entire life to «fare l'Italia una, libera, democratica e repubblicana», and this in spite of events, so long as the State remained «libera e unita» and hesitated at no sacrifice «insieme con Garibaldi ed altri i suoi principi di repubblicano, facendo adesione al governo costituzionale di Vittorio Emanuele II», though he never renounced his political beliefs and remained convinced that his ideals would help make the Nation even greater<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> For elementary school textbooks, see: E. Fabiani, *Fatti principali della storia patria esposti per le scuole elementari. Sesta classe. Il Risorgimento italiano*, Livorno, Giusti, 1906; P. Costanzi, *Racconti della storia d'Italia per la VI classe elementare*, Torino, Paravia, 1906; P. Fornari, *Breve storia del Risorgimento d'Italia (1815-1818)*, Torino, Paravia, 1920. Per quel che concerne i manuali per le scuole secondarie: I. Raulich, *Corso di storia moderna e contemporanea dal 1714 ai nostri giorni, ad uso degli Istituti tecnici*, Torino, Paravia, 1910; A. Dall'Oglio, *Compendio della storia contemporanea d'Italia (1815-1870)*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1915; L. Cappelletti, *Storia contemporanea d'Italia (1815-1900)*, Livorno, Giusti, 1912; N. Rodolico, *Dalla vita e dalla storia contemporanea: note*, Città di Castello, Lapi, 1913; A. Abbruzzese, *Storia moderna e contemporanea dalla scoperta dell'America ai giorni nostri (1492-1914)*, Palermo, Sandron, 1915; M. Rosi, *Storia contemporanea d'Italia dalle origini del Risorgimento alla conflagrazione europea*, Torino, UTET, 1917; C. Barbagallo, *Manuale di storia moderna e contemporanea (1492-1920) per le scuole normali*, Roma, Albrighi-Segati, 1921.

<sup>42</sup> E. Fabiani, *Fatti principali della storia patria esposti per le scuole elementari. Sesta classe. Il Risorgimento italiano*, cit., p. 21-23.

<sup>43</sup> P. Costanzi, *Racconti della storia d'Italia per la VI classe elementare*, cit., pp. 11-12.

The history textbooks published or reprinted in different editions on the eve of the I World War and during the War did not, on the one hand, vary as to the portrayal of Giuseppe Mazzini's politics but did, as noted, on the other hand, allocate far more space than previous texts to insurrectional events and to the many episodes in the war against the Austrians that had characterized the period of Unification. Their view tended to establish a tight connection, or we might say, a true and continuous link between the ongoing war and the events that had led to the liberation of the peninsula from foreign domination and the creation of the united Italian nation. Within these texts, destined to mature into a well-known and opportune thesis regarding WWI as a «secondo Risorgimento» or, perhaps better, as the «compimento del Risorgimento nazionale»<sup>44</sup>, we must mention the significant accent placed, in these textbooks, on the experience of Giovane Italia and on the insurrectional activities in which the Mazzinian movement was the leader<sup>45</sup>.

Gentile's 1923 reform and the measures taken in the scholastic textbooks that arose in the following years brought no significant changes to Giuseppe Mazzini's image or to the interpretation of his work and the activities of the Mazzinian movement as described above<sup>46</sup>. What is worthy of mention nonetheless is the reference made by the central Commission to the revision of textbooks for the elementary schools, established by Giovanni Gentile in 1923 and which was enforced until the introduction of a single State Text (1929). The revision called for not only much more space to be devoted to the figure of the Genoese, but also for rendering his biography more interesting for young and teenage boys by emphasizing those aspects and dimensions of Mazzini's thoughts and deeds to stimulate the feelings and empathy of the students:

Gli Autori – we read in a report on history textbooks written in 1923 by Giuseppe Prezolini – riportano alle volte [nei libri di testo] dei particolari assolutamente trascurabili e non riescono invece a disegnare la fisionomia di un personaggio [...], di grandi figure ricche di contenuto spirituale che costituiscono veramente le pietre miliari della storia [...]. Osservazioni in qualche modo analoghe si potrebbero fare per le figure del nostro Risorgimento. La figura di Mazzini, la quale [...] soverchia tutte le altre per la sua universalità morale, è sempre lasciata in seconda linea; né si potrebbe dire, a giustificazione di questo sistematico errore di prospettiva, che i ragazzi non siano in grado di intendere le teorie dei

<sup>44</sup> See G. Gentile, *Che cosa è il fascismo*, Firenze, Vallecchi, 1925, pp. 24-28. For more on the historiographic nature of this issue, see also P.G. Zunino, *L'ideologia del fascismo. Miti, credenze e valori nella stabilizzazione del regime*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1995.

<sup>45</sup> A case in point is P. Fornari, *La storia patria dai tempi più remoti sino ai nostri giorni*, Torino, Paravia, 1915. It is worthwhile remembering that this well-known and widely read manual was issued in a contemporary version for Italian soldiers serving at the front: Id., *La storia del Risorgimento d'Italia (1815-1915) narrata al soldato italiano*, Torino, Paravia, 1915.

<sup>46</sup> For an overview of these measures, see A. Ascenzi, R. Sani (a cura di), *Il libro per la scuola tra idealismo e fascismo. L'opera della Commissione centrale per l'esame dei libri di testo da Giuseppe Lombardo Radice ad Alessandro Melchiori (1923-1928)*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2005.



filosofi, lo spirito a cui si informano *I doveri dell'uomo* è capace di penetrare e di commuovere i cuori dei bambini più dei racconti di stragi e di violenze<sup>47</sup>.

### 5. Mazzini in «Camicia Nera». From the Myth of Fascism as «Secondo Risorgimento» to the Epilogue of the Republic of Salò

The fifth and final phase of our analysis concerns, as previously stated, the years of Fascist totalitarianism and in particular the period from 1929 (the year that the *single textbook for all State elementary schools* was introduced and a circular from Minister Belluzzo was issued regarding updating secondary school textbooks for Fascism)<sup>48</sup> to the start of WWII.

We must note at the outset that while it is true that Mussolini's regime made wide use of the figure of Giuseppe Mazzini and his work, it is also true that the heavy ideological and political use of the Genoese for the Fascism cause is only partially reflected in school textbooks which show, from the point of view of illustrating the thought and deeds of the Mazzinians, a surprising continuity with the history books that had appeared in the last forty years of the 1800s. The omissions and removals, the silences that were present in the past returned to the school narratives and interpretations of Giuseppe Mazzini. Suffice it to note the right and proper blurring of the basis of Mazzinian thought, such as the ideals of the republicans, democrats and humanitarians, the internationalism, the feeling for social justice and the brotherhood of all people.

However, if the Mazzini offered to Italian youth appeared, on the one hand, weakened as far as certain aspects of his thoughts and deeds that might have appeared eccentric or contradictory to Fascist ideology were concerned, on the other hand the picture of Mazzini and his work offered to Italian youth during Fascism was definitely constructed upon certain working earmarks of Fascism based upon Gentili's principles of Mazzini as a true and proper embodiment of Italian Unification: a Mazzini, to be sure, who was a prophet and mover of the principle of *nationality* in the lay sense of the word as the «religione della patria» and, however unlikely, who was the highest proponent of the 1800s of the «sacralizzazione della politica» that would exert considerable influence on the political theology of Fascism<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> *Relazioni sui libri di testo per le scuole elementari e popolari ed elenco dei libri approvati. I – Libri di testo per l'insegnamento della storia e della geografia*, in A. Ascenzi, R. Sani (a cura di), *Il libro per la scuola tra idealismo e fascismo*, pp. 81-82. See (among others): A. Colombo, *Il Risorgimento d'Italia (dal 1848 al 1828) per la terza classe elementare*, Milano, Signorelli, 1929; G. Paladino, *Biografie e racconti di storia moderna e contemporanea. Testo per la V classe*, Palermo, Sandron, 1929.

<sup>48</sup> Cfr. M. Galfré, *Il regime degli editori. Libri, scuola e fascismo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2005, pp. 115-119 *passim*.

<sup>49</sup> Cfr. E. Gentile, *Il culto del littorio. La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1993, pp. 8-11 *passim*.

Even the briefest glance at the *unified State elementary school textbooks* would seem to fully confirm such a reading, which on the one hand tends to project the figure of Mazzini in the new *pantheon* of the noble forefathers and precursors of Fascism, and on the other perpetuates, *de facto*, a contorted image that hardly matches the historical facts. Thus, in the history section of *Il libro della V classe elementare* (1938), the main – and virtually the only – theme in the profile of Giuseppe Mazzini concerns his extraordinary «amor di patria», his aspiration to «riunire in un fascio tutte le forze del popolo italiano, in particolar modo quelle giovanili», the burning tension for national unity, «senza la quale non [era] possibile la conquista della libertà e dell'indipendenza»<sup>50</sup>.

Largely analogous motifs are to be found in *Il libro della III classe elementare* (1935), where emphasis is placed on how Giuseppe Mazzini, unlike the members of the Carbonari, understood that «il merito di comprendere che solo l'unità avrebbe reso possibile la vittoria», and appealed to «soprattutto ai giovani ed al popolo, affinché insorgessero, concordi in ogni parte d'Italia, e concordi si riunissero sotto un solo governo nazionale».

It must be noted, as well, how in this and in similar texts the categories and the vocabulary used to describe the deeds of the Genoese were directly influenced by a religious language, following a trend that was anything but new or original, as we have seen, and, in any case, destined to be revived and reused during the two decades of Fascism: «Mazzini – according to *Il libro della III classe elementare* – aveva deciso di consacrare la vita alla redenzione della Patria [...], e non si stancò mai di propugnare con religioso fervore la causa italiana»<sup>51</sup>. And again, referring to the facial features of the Genoese thinker and activist, in this description of his «viso scarnito dalle meditazioni, dai dolori, dai disagi», «la mistica fede di Mazzini», far from disappearing or becoming lost in the prosaic events of post-Unification history, was destined to shine again, like the «stella polare», on the face of the «Duce del Fascismo», the man who, with the «Marcia su Roma» had taken up once more the mission to «portare a compimento la redenzione della patria»<sup>52</sup>.

More articulate and complex, naturally, were the reconstructions offered in the history books written for secondary school students, where – specifically in texts like those of Niccolò Rodolico, Alfonso Manaresi, Francesco Cognasso, Carlo Capasso, Francesco Calderaro e Nino Cortese<sup>53</sup> – we see the constant

<sup>50</sup> *Il libro della V classe elementare. Religione-Storia-Geografia*, Roma, La libreria dello Stato, 1936, pp. 152-153, 162-165 (see also 1936 and 1941 editions).

<sup>51</sup> *Il libro della III classe elementare. Religione-Storia-Geografia-Aritmetica*, Roma, La libreria dello Stato, 1935, pp. 62-67 (also present in the 1941 edition).

<sup>52</sup> *Amor di Patria. Il libro della V classe. Testo di lettura per le alunne*, Roma, La libreria dello Stato, 1935, pp. 26, 38 *passim*.

<sup>53</sup> C. Capasso, *Le nazioni moderne*, Milano, Vitagliano, 1930; A. Manaresi, *Storia contemporanea*, Milano, Trevisini, 1936; F. Calderaro, *Vita vissuta*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1937; N. Rodolico, *Sommario storico ad uso dei licei. Volume terzo*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1938; F. Cognasso, *Storia d'Italia, Volume terzo*, Torino, Paravia, 1938; N. Cortese, *Corso di storia. Volume*

return of not merely the Gentilian concept of substantial continuity between the French Revolution and Unification (fed by the myth of Unification as «rivoluzione nazionale incompiuta»), but also of references to Giuseppe Mazzini as the prophet of a «rivoluzione nazionale» understood as a «resurrezione spirituale e morale, realizzata per iniziativa di popolo e consacrata dal sacrificio rigeneratore dei martiri»; a revolution destined to spread a «religione della patria», by virtue of which «gl'Italiani non potranno non sentirsi sempre affiliati della Giovine Italia mazziniana e oggi si dicono fascisti»<sup>54</sup>.

An actual inversion of tendencies with respect to the texts offered widely during the Fascist decades can be seen during the brief time period of the Republic of Salò when Giuseppe Mazzini was again referred to with emphasis as above all «la carica antagonista [...] nei confronti del processo unitario così come si era concretizzato in versione monarchica»; and the Genoese would become «il vessillo della necessità di rompere con la tradizione e di dare inizio ad un vero atto palingenetico capace di portare a termine la rivoluzione incompiuta e di dare forma ad una nuova socialità in [...] un'ottica antiborghese e corporativistica»<sup>55</sup>.

In yet another of the infinite and surprising metamorphoses of this historical figure for ideological and political purposes, the democratic and humanitarian Giuseppe Mazzini became one of the noble forefathers of the Republic of Salò. Actually, this last evolution of Mazzini and the Mazzinian image was barely mentioned in the history books. It remained, for the most part, confined to official speeches and was mentioned in several academic circulars during the time of Mussolini's Republic.

To definitively overcome the distortions, silences, and censorship that for almost a century of Italian history post-Unification characterized and accompanied the school versions of the figure and works of Giuseppe Mazzini, it was necessary to await our country's return to democracy, and in particular the revisions in teaching syllabi and history textbooks that took place during the 1960s and 1970s<sup>56</sup>.

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*terzo*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1942. See S. Guarracino, *I manuali del consenso*, «I viaggi di Erodoto» 1989, 8, pp. 170-183 for secondary school history textbooks during the Fascist era.

<sup>54</sup> G. Gentile, *Che cosa è il Fascismo*, Firenze, Vallecchi, 1925, p. 27.

<sup>55</sup> P. Genovesi, *Giuseppe Mazzini in camicia nera. L'immagine del 'grande Genovese' nei libri unici di Stato*, «Ricerche pedagogiche», 2005, 156-157, p. 42.

<sup>56</sup> Cfr. A. Ascenzi, *L'educazione alla democrazia nei libri di testo: il caso dei manuali di storia*, in M. Corsi, R. Sani (a cura di), *L'educazione alla democrazia tra passato e presente*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero 2004, pp. 63-86.

