

# ITALIAN MODERNITIES

Competing Narratives of Nationhood

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ROSARIO FORLENZA  
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ITALIAN AND ITALIAN AMERICAN STUDIES



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Rosario Forlenza • Bjørn Thomassen

# Italian Modernities

Competing Narratives of Nationhood

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*To Friendship*

## PREFACE

This book has been written as a dialogue that started many years ago. More precisely, it started during a morning run along the Arno River in 2009 when we both participated in a summer school on political anthropology IPASS, organized by Agnes Horvath. During the run, we realized the extent to which our ideas and interests converged. We shared the same passion for anything relating to Italian society and history, from football, to cooking, to party politics, and to religion. It even turned out that Rosario was born and bred very close to the town in the Cilento area where Bjørn had married into an Italian family. Contursi Terme and Pollica are both small hill-towns of the Salerno region less than 60 miles apart. Moreover, both of us had lived and studied for longer periods in both Rome and Central Italy (Viterbo and Florence) and in the Italian North-East (Trieste and Padova), where we also both have family.

We also quickly realized that we liked to read and think across the disciplines. In fact, this book is not easy to place in a disciplinary category. It is evidently a book on history, with hours of archival work behind it, but as the reader will hopefully appreciate, the analysis we try to provide moves between social theory, anthropology, and philosophy. In fact, one of the main aims of this book is to bring the wider field of Italian studies closer to important developments in social and anthropological theories, and vice versa, to situate Italy as a pivotal case for any meaningful attempt to theorize modernity.

A dialogue is always an open space. The dialogical landscape we have been moving within has been animated by a polyphony of voices that have stimulated our thinking and feeling in ways that are difficult to pin down

with words. We have been constantly inspired by the ideas and thoughts of our friends and colleagues: Arpad Szakolczai, Agnes Horvath, and Harald Wydra.

Special thanks also go to our colleagues with whom we have, during the writing of this book, been working intensely on a European research project related to memory and identity in contemporary Europe, a project with many links to the concerns of this book: Christian Karner, Aline Sierp, Marcin Napiórkowski, Giorgos Bithymitris, Zinovia Lialioti, and Leyla Neyzi.

While working on this book we have both worked at or been affiliated with a host of institutions, providing us with computers, libraries, coffee machines, wonderful colleagues, and a sense of home in a world of constant movement. Bjørn received generous support from the Department of Social Science and Business at Roskilde University toward the writing of the book and also benefited from a research semester spent at the Institute of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen. Rosario found support and encouragement on both sides of the ocean—at Cambridge, Padova, Princeton, NYU, and Columbia.

Because we have never worked at the same institution, much of our dialogue has been electronic, ping-ponging texts and ideas across the Atlantic. However, the substantial ideas behind this book took shape during encounters at conferences or workshops around the world during the last couple of years. In fact, since our morning run in Florence, we have been running and working together in London, Nottingham, Copenhagen, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington. There is an extent to which we should dedicate this book to our running shoes, but this is not the place for brand advertisement. We have been discussing our ideas behind the book with friends and colleagues in all these cities and express our gratitude to all of them. They are too many to be named—they know who they are. The proofs—and how could it be otherwise?—were finished in Jerusalem.

Writing a book together is sometimes hard work. However, it is also a gracious experience, as co-authorship most fundamentally grows out of unbroken cycles of gift giving. As Arnold van Gennep wrote long ago, anticipating his friend Marcel Mauss, the circulation of goods, objects, and ideas serves to create continuous social bonds. Gift giving is the confirmation of a bond, and ‘to accept a gift is to be bound to the giver’. True friendship emanates from gift giving. For the Greeks, *philia* concerned not only friendship between two human beings but also a sense of love,



vocation, and loyalty toward one's family, toward one's profession, and toward one's political community. Indeed, we stand on the shoulders of colleagues within our profession and their love of wisdom, humbly building on to generations of accumulated knowledge. We have been helped by and acted within our concrete political communities. Our families have been patient and loving all the way through. The family, as we all know, is indeed an important Italian institution. It also remains an existential anchorage point.

That is why we dedicate this book to friendship, to *philia*. Not only to our own friendship, but to that universal value, to that bond without which human existence would lose all value.

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## Into Italy, into the Modern

Any visitor to the picturesque Umbrian town of Spoleto, elegantly tossed against the Apennine foothills, will eventually find him or herself in front of the Cathedral of Saint Mary Assumption. Before entering, it is impossible not to contemplate the façade. The most striking feature of the upper façade is certainly the portrait of *Christ giving a Benediction*, signed by a certain Solsternus. But what is really striking is not only the portrait itself, but evenly so the inscription below, which is very easy to miss, but which reads as follows:

*Hæc est picture quam fecit fat placitura  
Doctor Solfernus hac fummus in arte modernus  
Annis inventis cum septem mille duecentis*

This picture which will please well  
Was made by Doctor Solfernus, the ablest of the Moderns in this Art  
In the year 1207.

In other words, in the early thirteenth century, there lived in Umbria a certain doctor Solfernus who thought of himself as a modern person. It is not easy to know what exactly he meant by this; a thorough discussion of this nontrivial question is much beyond what we can or will discuss in the present book. The point we want to make is a more general one. Discourses of modernity as applied to Italy in the ‘modern period’ have mostly missed the mark, cataloging Italy as a ‘latecomer to modernity’,

running behind the more ‘advanced’ European countries, the true homelands of political and economic revolutions. Italy was rarely a latecomer to modernity, but quite often a ‘first-comer’. This was not only the case for the Renaissance period. If modernity is not simply understood as a predefined ‘cultural program’, but approached instead as a specific kind of historical self-understanding, we need to realize that Italy represents a privileged entry point into the comparative analysis of ideas, ideologies, and experiences of modernity, *especially* as these developed from the French Revolution onwards.

This book revisits modern Italian political history from the late nineteenth century until the present. Our aim is to analyze the multitude of historical narratives that took shape during crucial junctures in the country’s political history, narratives that in different periods came to underpin cultural identity and political legitimacy. In particular, we analyze how thinkers belonging to four main ideological ‘clusters’—Catholics, liberals, communists, fascists—have formulated multiple and often antagonistic visions of modernity. In these competing narratives of the modern, epics of historical events that grounded modern nationhood were continuously shaped by changing figurations of the political present.

The more specific Italian debate will serve to cast new light on two central questions in contemporary historical and social theoretical debates: in what ways *exactly* are modernities pluralized within concrete historical and sociopolitical contexts? And what is the active role of memory politics in the formulation of alternative modernities? Let us, before we briefly outline the contents of the chapters to follow, provide a rationale and a general analytical framework for each of these questions.

## ITALY AND THE MODERN: REASSESSING ANALYTICAL PARADIGMS

As a nation, Italy has ritually been described, in popular, academic, and political discourse, as ‘backwards’, a country struggling to catch up with modernity.<sup>1</sup> The most well-known figure symbolizing this position is no doubt Pinocchio.<sup>2</sup> Pinocchio is the funny, charming but also unreliable puppet always aspiring to but never quite reaching maturity. Carlo Collodi’s Pinocchio stories were written in the post-unification period, and first appeared in an Italian children’s magazine from 1880. Collodi was a disenchanted supporter of the original Risorgimento. He had served as a volunteer with Tuscany during the wars of liberation, 1848–1860.

Before turning to children stories, Collodi mostly wrote bitinglly about politics. The story of Pinocchio captures in allegorical form the fate of backward Italy, always awaiting its true liberation and coming to maturity. The mischievous puppet aspires to true childhood, but his bad, immature behavior seems to condemn him to perpetual puppet-hood. Only after demonstrating human virtue does he become a real boy and human. His path of metamorphosis follows the track of Italian history, from a puppet forced to move at the control of others, to a donkey (a symbol for blind adherence to Church doctrine much favored by nineteenth-century Italian caricaturists), and, finally, after much struggling, fatigue, and symbolic death, to an autonomous personality, arguably a figurative emblem of a completed Risorgimento.<sup>3</sup>

The vocabulary of backwardness or lack of modernity applied to Italy is everywhere to be found—as John Agnew has correctly noted<sup>4</sup>—and it is not our aim here to provide an overview of the debates.<sup>5</sup> By way of illustration let us simply invoke discussions of Italy’s economy, so thoroughly dominated by the theme of the country’s ‘lagging behind’ and ‘catching up’ relative to the economies of northern Europe. Economic historians Nicola Rossi and Gianni Toniolo write that ‘given Italy’s relative backwardness around the turn of the century, a higher long-term growth rate might have been expected’.<sup>6</sup> The authors here refer to the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, the timeless nature of the statement is underscored when the authors in a later work discuss the immediate post–World War II period with terms that should already by now ring familiar: ‘It might be argued that, given Italy’s relative backwardness around 1950, a higher long-term growth rate could have been expected, such as to allow a full catch up with Germany.’<sup>7</sup> Need we remark that it is this very language that European economists employ in the context of today’s European economic crisis?

Given this persistent tendency to bespeak Italy as lacking in modernity in what seems like an irreducible time lag, it would obviously be wrong to entirely dismiss this discourse. The metaphor has become the preferred way of dealing with Italian differences relative to an idealized European modernity. The idea of Italy running behind modernity has evidently also become part of a self-ascribed identity, an identity that has imploded also due to continuous attempts of classification and definition reproduced by foreign scholars, often working within an Anglo-Saxon tradition. This is therefore not to say that the metaphor of backward Italy is necessarily false in all its usage. However, as analysts we need to go behind and beyond it.

As a widespread view of Italy and its history, the discourse has three inter-related shortcomings that need to be pointed out:

First, to describe and catalog societies as more or less modern remains a descriptive attempt tied to, and often dependent upon, a value judgment. This remains so even if the ‘hierarchy of values’ behind the judgment often remains implicit and unarticulated. As John Agnew has pointed out, the image and the metaphor of backward Italy has become an idealized myth where a metaphor has substituted real analysis.<sup>8</sup> The intrinsically normative character of the terms ‘backward’ and ‘modern’ is systematically obscured. Herein lies their discursive power which we should scrutinize, not adopt as our uncritical starting point of analysis. While such forms of classification of the ‘other’ as less modern (and less ‘rational’) have been rightly denuded via decades of reflexivity and disciplinary critique within anthropology<sup>9</sup> and history—especially with regard to representing and doing research in colonial and postcolonial settings<sup>10</sup>—it is remarkable just how untouched the ‘lack of modernity discourse’ has remained with respect to social and historical research on Italy. If an imaginary Edward Banfield today had republished a study of, say, South Africa, insisting to narrate a local society as backwards and amoral (as Banfield did in his original 1958 publication devoted to a small community/town in the south of Italy<sup>11</sup>), it would be—rightly so—countered by screaming hordes of critique. We really need to start asking ourselves why this is not the case for Italy.

Second, when insisting to define Italy as running behind modernity, we are, wittingly or not, matching Italy against a prototype model. Which model? Well, this of course depends on the person speaking and making the judgment. But as a general picture, the implicit models have tended to be England, France, or, sometimes (especially in the economic literature), Germany. Italy is seen as an ‘exception’ to a norm which celebrates a linear account of state and nation building, based on the experiences of single countries—and often analyzed within academic discourse that flow from those same countries. Scholars have been able to label Italy as a unique case only by ignoring the experiences of numerous southern and eastern European nations, whose paths to modernity differed considerably from the (much idealized!) histories of the Great Powers. By expanding one’s sample to include other nations—such as Turkey or Poland or other eastern European countries also combining religion and Communism into their social texture—Italy suddenly starts to look more ‘typical’ (while Whiggish England might slowly start to look peculiar indeed!). Comparison

with Balkan nations, particularly in the last turbulent decade of the twentieth century, may well help to mute statements about Italy's inherently fractured nature, while also encouraging a more careful search for the sources of nationalist violence and separatism in post-Cold War Europe. Following here the suggestion of Iain Chambers, instead of measuring Italy against unrealistic ideal-types, Italy can be meaningfully placed in a wider Mediterranean map, a region whose fundamental fluid, hybrid nature has long been obscured by the categories and structures imposed by European discourse and government.<sup>12</sup>

Third, the vocabulary of 'backwardness' leads to an imposition of conceptual uniformity and unreflexive adaptation of terms that may be alien to concrete persons and the wider communities which actively seek to shape the modern. As a discourse, it may say little or nothing about the *meaning* actors themselves search for in their present. Here the task of analysis, we argue, is *not* to arrive at some correct and exhaustive definition of what modernity really 'is' and then deductively apply the definition to a specific research area or historical period as means of 'measurement'. The result of such an operation will remain not only problematically ethnocentric, but also, and more seriously, teleological and analytically flawed. The analytical task remains to see how, in given historical periods, and in the thought and political projects of concrete persons and movements, modernity became elaborated from *within*.

In sum, the 'running behind modernity' approach to Italy is normatively problematic, analytically obfuscating, and theoretically disabling. In this sense, our larger aim is to recognize attempts to articulate an Italian political and cultural identity that do *not* simply accept the (fairy) tale of unilineal modernization, and that do not simply use English liberal democracy, French nation-state centralization, and German economic organization as mirror images to imitate. Italian thinkers have for centuries been engaged in ways to understand Italy's particular European identity, going to depths with the question of how models of modernization from elsewhere could be adopted, or not, to Italy. This has also involved attempts to formulate visions of modernity where Italy had something positive or unique to put on offer.

In fact, quests for 'modernity' have often begun and ended on the Italian peninsula. Italy badly needs to be pushed into the heartland of contemporary social theory, as the frictions of modernity have been played out more visibly and dramatically here than possible anywhere else in the world. It was here (let us not forget!) that the very concepts of the 'mod-



ern' and the 'secular' first emerged. Italy is the homeland of a series of modern 'firsts', including Fascism, Eurocommunism, and modern, institutionalized Christian Democracy. From different angles and in different periods, alternatives to the singular narrative of an Enlightenment 'French Revolution' version of modernity, based on pure reason and autonomy, were articulated; alternatives that, in Catholic versions, reincorporated transcendence as a legitimate perspective of truth and reason, and reanchored democracy, justice, and freedom in a religiously argued ethos; alternatives that in the fascist experience fatally sought to position Italy as the harbinger of a utopian state of perfection, blazing the modernist trail for the entire world *against* the French and British 'liberal' models; alternatives that in Italian Gramsci-inspired Communism sought to reground Marxist theory in the historical specificities of the nation, suggesting alternative pathways for the country's modernization process toward Socialism. These attempts did not just unfold within the realm of ideas; they were institutionalized in a series of ways that we will indicate as we go along, influencing constitutional formulations, party politics, collective identities, and memory tropes, and often in antagonistic ways, fracturing the social body as much as bringing it together.

The perspective we propose implies the recognition of historically contingent, multiple and shifting articulations of modernity, which has never been a monolithic unit and singular event in history.<sup>13</sup> At the analytical level, we suggest a diverse trajectory in which to think of Italy less as always desperately seeking to 'catch up' with its northern neighbors, and more in terms of its composite Mediterranean and European specificities. It need not be said, but the Italian case is especially worthy of attention at a time when the paradigms and historical trajectories of modernity are in question.

In short, and to be still more explicit, the substantiality of Italian contributions to the formation of modern ideas cannot be overlooked or drowned in moral and political rhetoric which systematically dumps Italy as a latecomer to modernity desperately trying to catch up. If we for very good reasons no longer accept such a deterministic, teleological terminology for people and events in Turkey, Nigeria, South Africa, Brazil, or China, we should not allow it to apply within Europe either. We need to recognize that there never was one single Western 'program of modernity', toward which everyone could simply tune in—far from it. We need to pluralize Europe's modernity from within.

## THE PRESENT IN THE PAST: ON THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF MEMORY AND RESURRECTION

The advent of the new is an old tradition for Italy. From the vantage point of a shifting present, past events were continuously reinterpreted, forgotten, remembered and sometimes ‘reinvented’. The continuous importance of reopening its historical archive and reassessing its history was always already an ongoing political and social process, toward which any historian of Italy must reflexively position him or herself, knowing that we are part of the very discursive field we try to come to terms with. Also here, we need to put Italian studies writ large ‘through the looking-glass’.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, just as Italy represents a precious laboratory for thinking through modernity, so is Italy in an unrivaled position for discussing memory politics, the past in the present and the present in the past. In fact, the Italian historical experience sits in a pivotal position for the very notion of reshaping the present in the mirror image of the past. Images and narratives of renaissance and resurgence are near-universal phenomena. In a comparative perspective, the articulation of historical memory in Italy has a privileged status for historical enquiry, as Italy was indeed the birthplace of a series of rebirths, including of course the Renaissance.

Italy’s history of rebirths certainly relates to an anthropological dimension. Rites of death and rebirth were deeply embedded in the peasant traditional and millenarian culture,<sup>15</sup> and were still common in Southern Italy as late as the 1950s, as Ernesto De Martino documented so vividly and powerfully.<sup>16</sup> The notion of a resurrection—following upon suffering and death—is the strongest moral principle of the Catholic tradition and no doubt its most central symbolic image. As a symbol, it not only means, but also *evokes* manifold sentiments and connoted images that relate to fundamental human experiences: suffering, sacrifice, loss, overcoming, defeat, victory, death. Far from belonging only to political history, therefore, the very notion of a resurrection must be placed at the heart of people’s world-making, and far back in time. Italians have for centuries become familiar with images of resurrection via paintings, frescoes, sculptures, crucifixes, and via popular narratives underpinning these symbols, biblical or not. Much more than simply an official religion, Catholicism has provided a vast archive and palimpsest of tropes, symbols, and images which express the idea of keeping the present anchored to a never fulfilled past-cum-future, most directly via the narrative of the Resurrection and the Second Coming of Christ.

At various points in history, this deeper-lying symbolic imagery became linked to the political present. This never happened in a random fashion: the invocation of a past that could resurrect the present always took force in historical transition periods, in what Reinhardt Koselleck called a *sat- telzeit*.<sup>17</sup> Using a different terminology, the need to reanchor the present in the past became an urgent need in liminal transition periods.<sup>18</sup> Translated into politics, the image of resurrection would become tied to a perceived need to free Italy (or parts thereof) from a poisoning and moral threat, whether endogenous or exogenous. In order to establish a meaningful political society, the problems of the present had to be overcome by returning to the promises lying dormant in the remote or not-so-remote past. Religious imagery has thus been transformed into political and cultural identity, crossing a boundary between ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ that in many cases was not clearly visible or perhaps meaningful at all.

The perennial affirming of a forever-resurgent Italy has emphasized a historical continuity which embodied the paradox of building anew what is supposed to exist inherently. Italy ‘pare nata per risuscitare le cose morte’ (‘seems born to bring dead things alive’), wrote Niccolò Machiavelli during a critical moment of the Renaissance.<sup>19</sup> In fact, the Renaissance was itself a double rebirth: it was, as well analyzed by Arpad Szakolczai,<sup>20</sup> an attempt to make alive, in a harmonious balance, the best of the Greek classical traditions and Christianity. But even here it should of course be remembered that while both of these traditions—what we normally see as the foundations of Western civilization—certainly saw themselves as representing something new, they also involved a self-conception tied to an idea of bringing alive something which was always already there, a recognition of foundations. They thus bear witness to a tendency to return to foundational and timeless principles during crisis periods. As Karl Jaspers wrote in his analysis of the Axial Age as a ‘pivotal’ age, ‘there are ages of change, which see upheavals that, in extreme instances, appear to go to the roots of humanity itself’.<sup>21</sup>

The Renaissance, in all its greatness, represented Italy’s last period of cultural and political rebirth before the onset of modernity. Three centuries later, the Risorgimento would establish itself as the overall term with which to understand the events that took place in the period from 1815 to 1870, the period leading up to the constitution of a unified nation-state with Rome as capital. This was not only a period involving a series of crucial events: the notion of the Risorgimento, already during the nineteenth century, became tied to a prophecy of a better future which had to rely

and feed upon the memory of a celebrated and elevated past. As we discuss throughout the book, the Risorgimento established as the underlying memory trope in which thinkers and political movements of twentieth century Italy sought the ground for their own legitimation and ideological-cum-cultural self-understanding.

The term itself, Risorgimento, denotes a double return: 'sorgere' means to 'rise', or 'elevate', 'stand up again' ('levarsi su'), and the prefix 'ri-' gives the term a double effect. The term is ambivalent (resurgence and falling, death and resurrection), as it contains within it a sense of national decline or failure, and, with its constant reference to a most glorious past, contains within it the seeds of its own disappointment. Risorgimento is a noun, and as such it denotes that larger political-cultural-social movement that would put Italy back on its feet. However, this process of unification had a religious and literary origin. Risorgimento *is* a religious concept, as in 'Resurrezione', a Second Coming. The term was first used by the Jesuit Saverio Bettarelli, and was later adopted by Vincenzo Gioberti and Vittorio Alfieri. Giacomo Leopardi invoked the term with emphasis in the long poem *Il Risorgimento* (1828), with a clearly existential and religious meaning. The political Risorgimento came later. That Risorgimento did not undo religious aspects, as is often assumed: quite the contrary, it founded a political and military narrative on the basis of that religious symbolism. Without understanding this underpinning and interweaving, we would not be able to understand the continuous resurgence of the Risorgimento in Italian history and culture.

And in fact, the Risorgimento was characterized with references to historical and moral rebirth—to an idea of national regeneration as opposed to the degeneration of Italians.<sup>22</sup> Quite often, writers and artists would understand the Risorgimento as a reference to Dante and his critique of the present. Italy, as Ugo Foscolo put it, was a 'prostitute land' (*Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis*, 1801) left with nothing 'except memory' (*Dei Sepolcri*, 1807). The political liberation of Italy from the foreign invaders inextricably linked with an internal and 'spiritual' liberation and resurrection, where even the republican ideal of 'freedom' would become tied to a religious and existential meaning. The cultural texts of the Risorgimento such as novels, poems, paintings, popular histories, music, theater, architecture, generally focused on suffering, danger, and repression: a hero betrayed, a woman dishonored, a land oppressed by foreign tyranny, the harsh experience of the exile. To counter this threat an equal emphasis on the redemptive power of courage, rebellion and martyrdom, and an exal-

tation of individual and collective struggle in the defense of the moral or physical survival of the community emerged as powerful semantic tropes.<sup>23</sup> This again, we stress, was nothing radically new, but it developed with particular force throughout the nineteenth century and within a post-1789 marked by the emancipatory appeals of the French Revolution. Through Alessandro Manzoni's influential *I promessi sposi* (*The Betrothed*, 1840–1841) generations of Italians were exposed to the making of Italy by reading the allegory of individual and communal resurgence in a symbolic universe where inner purity and tenacity struggled with external tyranny and exploitation.<sup>24</sup>

It was around such a continuously evolving memory politics that a true epic of nationhood developed, as if around a pearl of lost perfection. The present was seen as corrupt, decadent, and unfulfilled, and it had to be corrected by revoking the splendors of the past, back at least to the Roman Republic and Empire, or also the founding of a Rome-center Christian Church in the early century CE, and the other period of cultural rebirths and acknowledged greatness of Italy. The notion of an Italian resurgence thus was used to suggest the immanent and inevitable nature of the Italian nation. The ideal existence of this imagined nation had been prefigured, as the supporters of national unification affirmed, in the emergence from the thirteenth century onward of a language and a culture common to governing elites of the various political entities that dotted the Italian peninsula before 1860. Long before its formal constitution as a nation-state, Italy had a well-defined linguistic and cultural shape imposed on it by the economic, social, cultural, and political elites of the peninsula, by also by the foreigners who periodically invaded or toured it (or both). These epics of the nation as a cultural and linguistic community contrasted enormously with the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Italian states of the pre-unification period, and with the social realities of the country after its formal unification. Cultural Italianness was therefore always a form of selective consciousness and reading of history, which ennobled and retrieved some traditions and fragments of the past, while excluding others. It was on the basis of this consciousness that the patriots of the Risorgimento came to agree on the idea of consistent and continuous existence of a national cultural and a national character. And it was this consciousness that the nation-builders struggled to translate into a political fact, almost against the odds of the deep divisions and differences separating region from region, class from class, Italians from Italians.

## METHODOLOGY: LIMINALITY AND ‘PROBLEMATIZATION’

What has been said so far relates to the more specific methodological approach adopted. Far from judging or measuring historical accounts based on their veracity, we argue that historical tropes must be analyzed as relatively open-ended images of the world, representing a *weltbild*. We here follow the approach developed by Michel Foucault and Jan and Aleida Assmann. Scholars have often examined the present-oriented history-writing strategies of political elites from an instrumentalist perspective. According to such a view, elites actively manipulate historical memory in the attempt to shape the citizenship and enforce a national identity—an attempt that may often be combined with the need to establish their own or the state’s political legitimacy.<sup>25</sup> Without necessarily disregarding this manipulative dimension, the approach we here develop takes a different track.

We focus on the meaning-giving power of memories and symbols and on aspirations and expectations formulated by people and elites under conditions of political and existential *uncertainty*. Under such circumstances, ‘interests’ may far from always seem as crystal clear as they do with the benefit of historical hindsight. Adopting here the view of Harald Wydra, the Risorgimento was not only a myth continuously invented in the present but also a ‘social organism in gestation’ generating symbols and meanings that remained alive in representations, discursive patterns, political symbolism, and performative ritual actions.<sup>26</sup> In Michel Foucault’s terms, the Risorgimento—as any other significant feature of Italian historical memory—can be seen as a series of archeological strata, each of which constitutes a different discursive formation, or set of rules for thinking and speaking about the world.<sup>27</sup>

Whenever facing political and existential crisis, Italian thinkers and writers would somehow seek to identify themselves as Italians and try to rebuild a sense of community relying on the benign unifying image of the resurgence in the making. As Jan and Aleida Assmann have suggested, beyond the shaping, configuring, and engineering of an institutional bonding memory (political memory), marked by minimal content and symbolic reductionism, elites and members of a political community share a cultural memory.<sup>28</sup> ‘Cultural memory’ is the arsenal of symbolic forms, images, myths, sagas, legends that languish in a state that at the margin come close to disappearance and oblivion, yet remains accessible across millennia, as it can be reactivated in the treasure store of individuals and collectivities. Cultural memory points to the *longue durée* by which

the complex history of a community has been mediated and translated throughout regime changes via a diversity of media, making complex symbolic forms available to everybody. Media of cultural memory comprise artifacts such as texts, pictures, and sculptures as well as spatial compositions such as monuments, architecture, landscape, and temporal orders such as feasts, customs, rituals—that is, *writing*, understood in the broadest possible sense.<sup>29</sup>

Writing is not simply a means of communication but represents a storage system where the past can endure, return, and speak again, making cultural memory many-layered, complex, and full of tension. Writing becomes, in other words, ‘a place of refuge to which the repressed and the inopportune can retreat, and a background from which what is forgotten can re-emerge, a place of latency’.<sup>30</sup> Meaning and knowledge of the past are stored in libraries, museum, or archives, making it neither actively remembered nor totally forgotten, remaining accessible for future use. The concept of storage underlines the importance of cultural forms of the unconscious, which elude the structuring capacity of functional and purpose-oriented use of memory (political and institutional memory). As argued by Jan Assmann, cultural texts define the identity and cohesiveness of a society, give consciousness of unity and sense of belonging, structure the world of meaning within which communication takes place, sustaining a group’s identity through generations.<sup>31</sup>

Following the Assmanns, the remote past has more *agency* than the present. In the case we discuss here, the Risorgimento constitutes the historical mold out of which people tried to shape subsequent collective memories. The Risorgimento has laid down the tracks along which the politics of memory in Italy has run. We therefore suggest to conceptualize the Risorgimento as a complex of historical symbols that in turn constitute the semi-permanent tropes which provides a sense of historical continuity between lived memory (present) and national history (past), or, in Jan Assmann’s terms, as the codes that oversee the transformation of communicative (everyday) memory into cultural memory.<sup>32</sup>

It is also in this sense that our focus is not *simply* on intellectual and political thought. We here follow the Austrian thinker Eric Voegelin in his approach to political thought, arguing for an experientially based approach.<sup>33</sup> Voegelin essentially argued that human experiences are connected to thought. In his attempt to establish a foundation of political science, Voegelin recognized that political thought itself had to be understood as symbolizations of real human experiences. Voegelin argued that

thoughts are not simply second-order reflections of ‘reality’, but are themselves part of a historical process.<sup>34</sup> Voegelin was particularly interested in human experiences during crisis periods, where the taken-for-granted order of the world stopped to exist. He therefore focused upon the ways in which individual thinkers lived through a certain period, attempting to make sense of their experiences, and searching for ways out of the crisis.

To sum up, this book wants to show that the *problematization* of Italy’s particular road to modernity remained the underlying discursive platform from where the country developed its always open-ended cultural and political identity and contested nationhood. At the level of substance, we therefore identify a series of key thinkers where the question about Italy’s claim to its own type of modernity found an answer that would influence future generations. These ‘horizons of expectations’ were systematically articulated by revisiting the past. This always happened in specific moments that we propose to analyze with the anthropological concept of ‘liminality’,<sup>35</sup> referring to critical historical periods where the contingency of the present is countered by a search for roots in the past. Paradoxically, the most emphatically innovative episodes of political transformation likewise appear as the most revealing symptoms of dependence on traditional sources.

At the level of methodology, we thus propose a proper ‘anthropological approach’ to political transition and meaning-formation. Political regimes change as societies undergo the dissolution of established power structures, affecting not only institutional forms but also affective relations and symbolic universes of people. It is in such liminal moments that historical narratives come to the fore and become negotiated at both the official and unofficial levels of writing history. It is in liminal moments that the past gains agency; indeed, the notions of rebirth and resurrection (of the past) have played a huge role in Italy’s historical experience as a nation, epitomized in the constant appeal to an almost perennial ‘Risorgimento’.

In line with this anthropological approach, we also place special emphasis on ritual and symbolism. At various points throughout our discussion, we zoom in on specific public rituals that in a condensed manner demonstrate how a historically informed type of self-understanding had taken root and found public expression.

Without rehearsing the almost endless debates over nations and nationalism, we approach the ‘nation’ as a narrative event. Italy was never a unified whole—nor so was any other nation ever. However, in the thoughts and words of political thinkers, ‘Italy’ was indeed ‘imagined’ as a meaning-



ful if problematic ‘unit’ of sorts. This never happened peacefully: notions of nation and nationhood were always deeply contested, up until the present—and surely beyond. The Italian nation was not just ‘imagined’: via a rich array of historical ‘visions’ of the nation, Italy was narrated and given shape as a cultural-ideological conglomerate.<sup>36</sup> And it is this battle over the soul of the nation that we will discuss.

Scholars of nationalism routinely place themselves with respect to the perceived ‘modernness’ of nations: are nations an exclusively modern phenomenon, as Gellner famously argued?<sup>37</sup> Or are nations also products of pre-modern historical developments, stretching back to the Middle Ages and beyond, as Gellner’s student, Anthony Smith, has argued?<sup>38</sup>

We have no wish to take a stance in these debates, placing ourselves in whatever camp or school of thought. The ‘modernness’ that interest us is not the one that can be established by externally defined criteria of evaluation. The modernness that interests us is the one that thinkers and narrators of the Italian nation would come to articulate. We focus on the explicit ways in which the nation was given life in text and practice as a meaning-giving community that could give shape and moral direction to that very modernity. Of course, nations are modern. The question is *how*.

## OUTLINE OF THE BOOK AND CHAPTER CONTENTS

The guiding idea running through the chapters of this book is to explore the meaning and modes of modernity in twentieth century Italian history. We examine how thinkers and politicians in crucial (‘liminal’) periods have formulated visions of modernity where Italy had something positive and unique to put on offer, articulating an Italian political and cultural identity that did not simply use English liberal democracy, French nation-state centralization, or German economic organization as mirrors images to imitate.

The primary aim of the book is not to present new empirical materials but rather to reconceptualize twentieth-century Italian history and politics. In its central ideology-thematic Chaps. 2–5, the book singles out the emergence and development of four dominant narratives about Italian national identity and visions of modernity that each sought to anchor the country with respect to its own past and with respect to its wider geographic Mediterranean and European context: Liberalism, Catholicism, socialism-communism and Fascism. We explain how each of these majorisms can be viewed as different articulations of a shared attempt to outline a

particular Italian ‘road to modernity’. In so doing, these ideological-social forces laid the ground for wildly different narratives about the ‘soul’ of the nation, about the country’s virtues to safeguard and vices to overcome.

These discursive formations confronted each other in the interwar period and most dramatically during WWII, ending in the collapse of Fascism. WWII, however, was *both* a moment of collapse and ‘death’ *and* a liminal configuration in which new narratives saw the day. Political legitimacy in the postwar period became built on the moral fact of the Resistance; all major political forces in the postwar period could trace their origins and also personal stories back to the Resistance. This negotiation of truth and history will be the focus of Chap. 6. However, as will be argued in Chap. 7, Italy during the Cold War period developed into a ‘divided country’, where Communism and Catholicism kept fighting over the moral and political grounds of the nation and its anchoring in the past, and reimagined Italy and its place in a world invested by significant economic, social, and political changes. As discussed in Chap. 8, it was this foundation of political legitimacy that started to become questioned in the 1960s and 1970s by the emergence of social and political actors and by novel forms of emancipatory politics, which in various ways sought to reclaim modernity, often with appeal to utopian ideologies. Chaps. 9 and 10 will summarize and draw together the perspectives presented in the preceding chapters, contextualizing the argument within a horizon of globalization and ‘after’ modernity.

Chapter 2, ‘Liberal Modernity’, focuses on how liberal and monarchic Italy elaborated its pledge of allegiance to the memory of the Risorgimento—understood as a synthesis of freedom and nationhood which enabled the modernization of Italy after centuries of moral decadence and political subjugation. It analyzes the rites, symbols, and rhetoric of the monarchy and the state institutions in the post-unification period. A major question dominating liberal debates was always how to relate to the French Revolution and to French and British liberal ideals. In this formative period, contending narratives of the Risorgimento and Italy’s road to modernity were silenced without disappearing. The chapter further analyzes Benedetto Croce’s attempt at elaborating a liberal ideology that would serve as the theoretical-cultural underpinning of Italy as a modern nation-state.

Chapter 3, ‘Catholic Modernities: Epics of a Christian Nation’, discusses how, from within Italian political and cultural life, Catholicism related to and came to terms with modernity and national politics, tracing

continuities and changes in the tensions between religion and secularity in the country's history from unification onwards. The chapter reconstructs how Catholicism went through a process of transformation that developed from radical *rejection* of modernity to *hesitant embracement* and ending on a *critical co-articulation* of modernity. This co-articulation took a decisive turn after WWII. The chapter therefore paves the ground for understanding the more narrowly institutional and party-political context in which Catholic thought developed in the second half of the twentieth century via Christian Democracy, which became the central forum for institutionalizing Catholic modernity. This will be further discussed in Chap. 7.

Chapter 4, 'Gramsci and the Italian Road to Socialist Modernity', deals with Antonio Gramsci's theoretical attempt to apply a socialist-revolutionary strategy which would adhere to Italian cultural specificities without becoming a mere 'passive revolution' (Gramsci's reading of the Risorgimento). It focuses on Gramsci's idea that overthrowing the bourgeois State could not in any way ensure a long-term communist victory in Italy; rather than a frontal attack on the state (a war of maneuver), communists should engage in a war of position, laying a cultural and political siege of the bourgeois state, conquering 'hegemony'. This project, we argue, is another clear example of a culture-specific articulation of the modern trajectory: Italy should find its own way toward the modern revolutionary ideal, and could not simply adopt foreign (Russian) models. It was also this narrative that postwar communists interpreted (rather freely) as an ideological and strategic platform for developing a particular 'national road' to socialism (again further discussed in Chap. 7).

Chapter 5, 'Fascist Modernity', examines the relationship between past and present in the fascist self-imagery and attempt to consolidate political legitimacy. In particular, the chapter will discuss how Fascism reinterpreted the Risorgimento in order to construct a cohesive narrative grounding its own cosmogony and modernist teleology. Fascism claimed to have *overcome* the problems posited by the Risorgimento, seeing itself as the *fulfillment* of the Risorgimento, and thus as the first truly modern expression of a national epic. The crucial point for the regime was to establish continuity between the glorious tradition of the Risorgimento and the fascist present, without obscuring or undermining the complete novelty it represented. As in the interpretation by Giovanni Gentile, it was not Fascism that gained legitimacy from the affirmation of its historical continuity with the Risorgimento; rather, it was that past that gained real presence and meaning through Fascism.

Chapter 6, ‘Frictions of Modernity: World War II as a Historical Juncture’, discusses how the war provoked the disintegration of national unity, and also existential crises as acquired universes of symbolic world maintenance dissolved. With the movement against Fascism, two occupying armies, multiple Italian governments and the King’s flight from Rome, Italians lived through a liminal situation of contested sovereignties. This was the background against which new symbolic markers of certainty infused the political community with new meanings. In particular, September 8, 1943, opened up a phase in which new institutions, ideas, and forms of legitimacy appeared and transformed political imagination. The political form of society did not collapse, but instead took on an unprecedented indeterminacy of forms, an open, empty space of power,<sup>39</sup> in which a heroic epic of the nation based upon the fact and experience of the Resistance as a second Risorgimento unfolded.

Chapter 7, ‘Competing Modernities: Post-War Italy and the Struggle over a Divided Past’, discusses how the postwar period was marked by memories of war that transformed the inventory of symbols and provided the ground for political legitimacy. This ground was interpreted very differently by Catholics and by communists, leading to a notion of a divided nation, deepened by the binary nature of the Cold War. Furthermore, the postwar interpretation of the Resistance movement as the foundation of nationhood and democracy was not in congruence with WWII memories among larger segments of the Italian population. Underneath the postwar consensus, therefore, one could find antagonistic notions of the foundations of political legitimacy and national identity linked to highly contested and politicized interpretations of the past. Such debates were intimately linked to more pragmatic but also philosophical debates, concerning how to ‘modernize’ the country. The struggle over the past was therefore also a struggle between competing modernities.

Chapter 8, ‘Fragile Modernities: Critique, Crisis, and Emancipatory Politics’ discusses the various attempts to recast Italy’s road to modernity in the 1960s and 1970s. These decades were characterized by the emergence of new political and social actors which put under considerable strain the Italian ideology—as formulated up until then by the dominant Catholic and communist cultures. These decades were therefore marked by novel and somewhat creative forms of emancipatory politics, which in multiple ways sought to rediscover new trajectories of modernity based on utopian and revolutionary images.

Chapter 9 engages ideological and political developments in the post-Cold War era, coinciding with a generalized ‘crisis of modernity’. The chapter discusses how the multiple crises that affected Italian society unfolded, together with a dramatic revisiting of history. While historical revisionism shattered accepted truths and established parameters of political and cultural identity, the period likewise saw new ways of articulating links between the nation’s past and its crisis-ridden present. In this chapter we also debate whether Italy since the 1990s can be seen as a symptom of a wider process of ‘postmodernization’. We point to ways in which Italy—also in the present—can be said to be ‘paving the way’ for social, economic, and political developments of a European and global relevance.

Chapter 10 puts into perspective the conclusions reached, definitively moving beyond the view of Italy as a ‘latecomer’ to modernity. It ends by asking whether Italy—and in particular the Italian South—can be understood as a representative of an ‘alternative modernity’ to be normatively posited against globalization processes driven by the global North. In sum, it reposes the same two questions that political thinkers have been asking since the nineteenth century: What is Italy’s role in this modern world of increasing interdependency? And how can the country’s historical legacies serve as a platform for acting in the present with a view to a better future?

## NOTES

1. This discussion on backwardness and modernity is based on John A. Agnew, *Place and Politics in Modern Italy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 59–76; John A. Agnew, ‘The Myth of Backward Italy in Modern Europe’, in Beverly Allen and Mary Russo (eds.), *Revisioning Italy: National Identity and Global Culture* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 23–42.
2. What follows on Pinocchio is based on Albert Boime, ‘The Macchiaioli and the Risorgimento’, in Edith Tonelli and Kathleen Hart (eds.), *The Macchiaioli: Painters of Italian Life, 1850–1900* (Los Angeles: Wight Art Gallery, UCLA, 1986), 33–71: 67–8; Albert Boime, *The Art of the Macchia and the Risorgimento: Representing Culture and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 289–90. See again Agnew *Place and Politics*, 72.
3. Pinocchio was a puppet without strings and therefore came to serve as a symbol of post-Unification Italy whose future, according to literary critic Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, was bedevilled by the tensions between determinism and freedom; Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians (1860–1920)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

4. Agnew, *Place and Politics*.
5. For works in history, political science, and cultural anthropology in which Italy is presented as a case study in the total failure of modernity and modernization, see Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia del dopoguerra a oggi, 1943–1988* (Turin: Einaudi, 1988); Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy, 1943–1988* (London: Penguin, 1990); Domenico Settembrini, *Storia dell'ideologia anti-borghese, 1860–1989* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1991); Carlo Tullio Altan, *La nostra Italia: Arretratezza socioculturale, clientelismo, trasformismo e ribellismo dall'Unità a oggi* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1986); Luciano Gallino, *Della ingovernabilità: la società italiana tra moderno e pre-moderno* (Milan: Comunità, 1987). In particular, Italy is always treated as an anomaly to Europe's liberal democratic destiny when, as Roberto Vivarelli highlights in a stinging review, it comes to symptomatize the universal dilemmas and difficulties involved in gaining and deepening democratic practices; Roberto Vivarelli, 'L'anomalia italiana', *La Rivista dei Libri* (November 1991): 13–16. As Tim Mason pointed out in 1988, discussions of modernity and modernization have been central to much contemporary Italian history and social science, but there has been a surprising lack of conceptual precision and reflexivity concerning the notion that Italy is somehow 'behind' other countries and needs to modernize; Tim Mason 'Italy and Modernization: A Montage', *History Workshop Journal* 25, no. 1 (1988): 127–47. In more recent years, the near-perennial discourse about Italian backwardness have only been further cemented and spread to wider layers of public discourse with the endless political adventure of media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi; see Paul Ginsborg, *Silvio Berlusconi: Television, Power and Patrimony* (London and New York: Verso, 2004); Marc Lazar, *L'Italia sul filo del rasoio. La democrazia nel paese di Berlusconi* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2009), 17, 99. Others have explained Italy's unstable political present and declining economy going back to the struggle for national unification, seen as sequence of failures; see, for example, Manlio Graziano, *The Failure of Italian Nationhood: The Geopolitics of a Troubled Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
6. Nicola Rossi and Gianni Toniolo, 'Catching Up or Failing Behind? Italy's Economic Growth, 1895-1947', *Economic History Review* 45, no. 3 (1992): 537–63: 537.
7. Nicola Rossi and Gianni Toniolo, 'Italy', in Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo (eds.), *Economic Growth in Europe since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 427–54:427.
8. Agnew, *Place and Politics*, 66–7; Agnew, 'The Myth'.
9. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, 'Anthropology and the Savage Slot', in Richard Fox (ed.), *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (Santa Fe,

- NM: SAR Press, 1991), 17–44; Michael Herzfeld, *Anthropology through the Looking-glass* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
10. The work of Edward Said has been emblematic in this respect; Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979); Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1998).
  11. Banfield's book is still widely used in introductory university courses on Italian politics and society in the USA. First translated into Italian in 1961, it has been recently republished with a slightly different title. See Edward Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (New York: Free Press, 1958); Edward Banfield, *Una comunità del Mezzogiorno* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1961); Edward Banfield, *Le basi morali di una società arretrata* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010). The book served as a basic source for Robert Putnam's 1993 volume about regional differences in Italy and the lack of civic tradition which, in Putnam's view, deeply marks the south of the country, reinforcing the description of Italian history as an invidious spiral of political-cultural failure; Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, with R. Leonardi and R. Y. Nanetti (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); for a related argument see Sidney G. Tarrow, *Peasant Communism in Southern Italy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), 7, 75–77.
  12. Iain M. Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossing. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Iain M. Chambers, 'Another Map, Another History, Another Modernity', *California Italian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010): 1–14.
  13. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, 'Multiple Modernities', *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 1–29.
  14. Herzfeld, *Anthropology*.
  15. Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage: A Classical Study of Cultural Celebration*, trans. M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).
  16. Ernesto De Martino, *Sud e magia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1959).
  17. Reinhart Koselleck, *Das Zeitalter der europäischen Revolution 1780–1848* (Frankfurt a. Main: Fischer, 1969); Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. K. Tribe (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985); Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crises: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988); Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practices of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concept*, trans. T.S. Presner et al. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002).
  18. Bjørn Thomassen 'The Uses and Meanings of Liminality', *International Political Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (2009): 5–28; Bjørn Thomassen, 'Notes towards an Anthropology of Political Revolutions', *Comparative Studies in*

- Society and History* 54, no. 3 (2012): 679–706; Arpad Szakolczai, ‘Liminality and Experience: Structuring Transitory Situations and Transformative Events’, *International Political Anthropology* 2, no. 1(2009): 141–72.
19. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Dell’arte della guerra* (1521), in *Opere*, vol. I, t. 2, ed. R. Rinaldi (Turin: Einaudi, 1999), 1467.
  20. Arpad Szakolczai, *Sociology, Religion and Grace: A Quest for the Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 2007).
  21. Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, trans. M. Bollock (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 231.
  22. On this see Silvana Patriarca, ‘Indolence and Regeneration: Tropes and Tensions of Risorgimento Patriotism’, *American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (2005): 380–408.
  23. On this see Alberto Maria Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento. Parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell’Italia unita* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000). On the importance of exile as one of the foundational myths underpinning the invention of the Risorgimento, see Maurizio Isabella, ‘Exile and Nationalism: the Case of the Risorgimento’, *European History Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (2006): 493–520.
  24. Here again one sees the strong presence of a resurrection motive: the nation can sicken but not perish, because Christianity provides the moral resources needed to overcome defeat. The hero and the heroine of *I promessi sposi* are symbols of the Christian people’s capacity to survive oppression through faith in God’s providence.
  25. For this ‘invention of tradition’ approach, see the by now classic Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
  26. Harald Wydra, *Communism and the Emergence of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). See also Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Barbara Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003).
  27. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972).
  28. Jan Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Beck, 1992); Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (München: Beck, 1999).
  29. Jan Assmann uses writing as a ‘general term encompassing all the system of notation that mankind has ever used to fix the content of memory, from cave painting to computer’; Jan Assmann, ‘Remembering in Order to Belong: Writing, Memory, and Identity’, in *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, trans. R. Livingstone (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 81–100: 95. The relationship between writing, reading,



- speaking, and listening as different ‘techniques’ linked to knowledge and self-transformation became a main theme in Foucault’s last years, especially in his 1981–1982 Collège de France lectures; see in particular his crucial March 1982 lectures in Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–1982*, ed. F. Gros, trans. G. Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 331–505.
30. Assmann, ‘Remembering’, 99.
  31. Jan Assmann, ‘Cultural Texts Suspended Between Writing and Speech’, in *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 101–21: 104.
  32. We follow here Claudio Fogu and Wulf Kansteiner, ‘The Politics of Memory and the Poetics of History’, in Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu (eds), *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 284–310: 300–1.
  33. Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-between* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 6–7; see also Bjørn Thomassen, ‘Debating Modernity as Secular Religion: Hans Kelsen’s Futile Exchange with Eric Voegelin’, *History and Theory* 53, no. 3 (2014): 435–50.
  34. Eric Voegelin, *The Collected Works*, vol. 28: *What is History? And Other Unpublished Writings*, ed. T. Hollwech and P. Caringella (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1990); Eric Voegelin, *The Collected Works*, vol. 18: *Order and History, V: In Search of Order*, ed. E. Sandoz (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2000); Eric Voegelin, *The Collected Works*, vol. 6: *Anamnesis*, trans. M.J. Hanak, ed. D. Walsh (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2001).
  35. Thomassen, *Liminality*; Victor W. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1967); Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969); Van Gennep, *The Rites*.
  36. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
  37. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).
  38. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); Anthony D. Smith, *National Identities* (London: Penguin, 1991).
  39. See Claude Lefort, *Essai sur le politique* (Paris: Seuil, 1986); Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, trans. J.B. Thompson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986); Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. D. Macey (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

## Liberal Modernity

Liberalism is not an Italian invention, far from it. Such a claim to Italian primacy within political thought is possible to attribute to other ‘-isms’, as we shall indeed argue in our subsequent discussions of Catholic, fascist, and socialist modernities. Not only is modern liberal thought not Italian, in many ways, liberal ideology in twentieth-century Italy would find itself squeezed between the much more dominant collectivist models of Socialism and Christian Democracy. Modern Italy is, not without reason, often described as being defined by a notoriously weak Liberalism, and sometimes even by a distinctively Italian antiliberalism. Indeed, as well noted by Nick Carter, the post hoc dismissal of ‘liberal Italy’ as nothing but a failure, a series of unfulfilled promises, is very much due to the antiliberal currents of thought that have dominated Italian historiography from Fascism onwards.<sup>1</sup>

Still, liberal thought played a significant role in post-unification Italy. After all, it is not just as an empty signifier that we routinely talk of Italy from 1861 until World War I (WWI) as ‘liberal Italy’. ‘Liberal Italy’ must be understood in two ways. First, it refers in a concrete and technical sense to the Italian nation-state from 1861 until the rise of Fascism, a monarchical state constructed around principles of political rule that were of liberal inspiration. Second, ‘liberal Italy’ must also be understood as a particular philosophy of modernity. Without a shadow of doubt, the single most important thinker to develop such a philosophy was Benedetto Croce.

Croce's influence extends well beyond his own time period, and well beyond the confines of liberal thought. Subsequent thinkers from practically any political orientation would have to come to terms with Croce and his attempt to think Italy's road to maturity and the country's place within a modern age.

This chapter therefore has a threefold aim. First, it focuses on how liberal and monarchic Italy elaborated its pledge of allegiance to the memory of the Risorgimento—understood as a synthesis of freedom and nationhood that enabled the modernization of Italy after centuries of moral decadence and political subjugation. It analyzes the rites, symbols, and rhetoric of the monarchy and the state institutions in the post-unification period, and in particular the Jubilee of the *Patria*,<sup>2</sup> which was celebrated in 1911—an event and a moment in which the relationship with the Risorgimento was an integral part of historical debate, political struggle, and public memory. The celebration, therefore, offers a privileged perspective for exploring and analyzing national mythology and symbols, the use of history in the legitimation of the present, the conflicts over memories and narratives of the past, and strategies and languages of patriotic pedagogy in grounding a truly modern nationhood.

Second, the chapter also focuses on how the Risorgimental myths and ideals were experienced during the Great War, in Italy also known as the 'Fourth War of the Risorgimento', or the 'Fourth War of Independence'. According to the vision presented by the supporters of war at the time—and to a great extent endorsed by the subsequent liberal and fascist regimes—the war was designed to complete the unification of Italy and the making of Italians. The war was seen not as an isolated historical event, but as a process which had begun in 1848 successively pursued in the wars of 1859–1860 and 1866.

Third, the chapter analyzes the historical and philosophical writing of Croce, the great defender and ambassador of the liberal values that inspired the political struggle of the Risorgimento. Croce considered liberal Italy the genuine culmination and the true embodiment of the spirit and ethos of the Risorgimento. Furthermore, he attributed an efficient role to (his own) Idealist philosophy in the formation of the liberal elites of liberal states. Croce consciously tried to shape an Italian identity, providing a liberal narrative of Italy's transition to modernity, and the challenges such a transition implied, with reference to the historical and social particularities of Italy.

## CELEBRATING THE MODERN NATION: THE JUBILEE OF THE *PATRIA* IN 1911

In 1911, Italy celebrated fifty years of political unity and commemorated the birth of the Kingdom of Italy. The anniversary was the opportunity to assess the achievement made by Italians on the road to civilization and modernization and to show the economic, social, and cultural progress made by Italy.<sup>3</sup> But, above all else, the Jubilee of the *Patria* was meant to exalt the epic of the Risorgimento, which had given birth to the liberal and monarchic state. Liberal and monarchist Italy led by the House of Savoy confirmed its pledge of allegiance to the tradition and memory of the Risorgimento—understood as a synthesis of freedom and nation which enabled the modernization of Italy after centuries of decadence and subjection.<sup>4</sup> The myth of the nation had encountered modernity, generating a multifaceted form of political and culture modernism.<sup>5</sup>

The Jubilee of 1911 is a privileged entry to the deciphering of the kind of modernist narrative that had taken hold in liberal Italy. Political rituals are symbolic expressions of power and self-representation. There is always a performative element in the representation of power.<sup>6</sup> Under periods of relative stability, ritual forms (such as commemorations) serve to enact socially accepted myths, while myths give narrative form to rituals of participation. Thus, myths and rituals tend to consolidate and legitimize both social and political order. As we shall later see, this affirmative role of rituals and ceremonies can under certain historical conditions become under strain, as the nexus between myth, ritual, and social order is broken. As Victor Turner liked to say, ‘ritual is transformative, ceremony confirmatory’.<sup>7</sup> The 1911 celebrations were largely a ritualistic and symbolic affirmation of Italy as a modern nation. However, even in periods of relative stability—and such was still the case in 1911—meanings can and will be contested by participating subjects who seek to provide the collective body with alternative meanings. As we shall see, the pluralism of the participating bodies inherently opens up the ritual to multiple meanings.

### *Ideal Modernity*

In the official political culture of liberal Italy, the ideal of modernity rested on the triad nation-liberty-progress, framed by the institutional order. This ideal was combined with an enthusiasm for scientific discovery and a belief

in progress and ‘civilization’. All of this was seen as a direct expression of the Risorgimento. Italian intellectuals were aware of the need to form a community out of a variety of cultural, social, and geographical diversities. The modern basis for belonging, therefore, had to be found in the idea of a common past.<sup>8</sup> In Italy, this meant that it had to be found in the Risorgimento.

The aim of the 1911 celebrations was, in the intention of the ruling class, to ‘keep the population’s highly patriot ideals alive’, submerging its ‘mind and heart in a warm sea of sacred memories’, to renew the memory of the ‘sacrifices made for a united Italy’, and to ‘strengthen the faith in its great destiny’.<sup>9</sup> The 1911 celebrations glorified the country’s unification into a national state: the *Patria*, the state, and the nation were the real protagonists.<sup>10</sup> The celebrations were tied to a strongly articulated patriotic, nationalist, and monarchical rhetoric and symbolic imagery. This imagery was enhanced by the fact that Italy that year went to war with Turkey over the conquest of Libya, an event which, as it has been said, ‘was greeted with an enormous outpouring of excitement’.<sup>11</sup> In short, 1911 provided a moment for Italy to look back on its own achievements, renarrate its own coming into existence, and ritually symbolizing the essentials of its modernist nationhood.

Yet, while the success of the Libyan war improved the status of the nationalists, it was not received with general consensus, and as such, it did not help to solidify the liberal government led by Giovanni Giolitti. Giolitti hoped that success in Libya would bolster his position in the country: win over the nationalists, draw the moderate Catholics into the institutional fold, and reinforce his alliance with the reformist socialists, leaving the revolutionaries isolated. This was especially important as he was planning a major extension of suffrage. However, the influential democratic and socialist intellectual Gaetano Salvemini criticized the war and defined Libya ‘uno scatolone di sabbia’ (‘a sand box’). Quite crucially, the Libyan adventure radicalized and divided socialists between a pro-war minority (the reformists led by Leonida Bissolati) and a majority against it, which included the reformists led by Filippo Turati and the antiwar revolutionaries such as Benito Mussolini (who called for violence to bring down the government).

The patriotic celebration, in reality, had begun in 1909 with a commemoration of the Second War of Independence<sup>12</sup>; it continued in 1910 with the commemoration of Giuseppe Garibaldi and the Expedition of the Thousand (that had overthrown the Bourbon Kingdom of the Two

Sicilies and permitted the union of Southern Italy and Sicily with the north), and the plebiscite that had sanctioned the annexation of Rome to Italy (1870). It then culminated in 1911 when rites, symbols and symbolism, rhetoric, and eloquence presented the monarchy and the liberal institutions as the most authentic incarnation of the Risorgimento myth and the only means for guiding the nation toward progress, greatness, modernity, and civilization.

Giovanni Pascoli (1855–1912)—the poet laureate of the Great Italy, the intellectual who greeted the colonial endeavor in Libya claiming that ‘the great proletarian has moved’<sup>13</sup>—was the officiating minister of this consecration performed in a spirit of ‘religious worship of one’s country’, representing the civil creed of liberal Italy. Commemorating the death of Victor Emmanuel II (1878) in January 1911, Pascoli declared 1911 the country’s Holy Year: ‘Holy, I repeat. What we and the Italian people are having is not a celebration and a civil commemoration, but a religious ceremony’. He continued: ‘We are celebrating the nation with a religious rite’. This was the religion ‘that inspired the philosophy of Mazzini, that fueled the energy of Cavour, that made Carlo Alberto raise the Italian flag (the *tricolore*), that made Garibaldi launch his cry for unity, that made Victor Emmanuel unsheathe his sword’. Inspired by an ancient grandeur (dating back to the Roman Empire) in need of protection, and celebrating a renewed greatness about to be conquered, the poet glorified the great Italians of the past, the heroes, martyrs, founders, gestures and holy places of the Risorgimento’s epic deeds, placing them all in the mythological universe of the reborn country, ‘so ancient and yet so new, so different and yet the same, like the sun’.<sup>14</sup>

The myths and the tropes evoked by Pascoli were greatly magnified during the Jubilee celebrations. Rites and rhetoric emphasized a symbolic representation of the Risorgimento based on the liberal and monarchist ruling class’s assimilation of the different version of the national myth—from Giuseppe Mazzini to Victor Emmanuel II, from Garibaldi to Cavour—which had been assimilated and purified of all the elements ideologically incompatible with their own political concepts. Through such assimilation, the ruling class aimed to mend the Risorgimento’s ideological fracture, exalting the supremacy of the nation standing above the parties, building the *Patria* of all Italians. Already the year before (May 1910), celebrating the Expedition of the Thousand at the Chamber of Deputies, the Prime Minister Luigi Luzzatti praised the ‘Four Founders of the Risorgimento’, as heroes of humanity, venerated by free citizens the world over for the specific characters of the Italian ‘revolution’:

no revolution more than ours is characterized by greatness and pureness; no revolution more than ours has such a brilliant group of forerunners, philosophers, apostles, martyrs, heroes and statesmen; no revolution more than ours links together four names, each of which would be sufficient for the glory of a nation: Victor Emmanuel, Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Cavour.<sup>15</sup>

The most striking aspect of the assimilation was the cult created of the Risorgimento protagonists as architects of a single project that was accomplished by gaining independence, unity, and freedom under the protection of the House of Savoy. In this vein, Garibaldi's endeavor was celebrated as the apex of the Risorgimento, and possibly the founding event of the new state. It was considered as the moment when the aspiration to unification was accomplished thanks to the combined action of the popular initiative supporting Garibaldi's type of democracy and the Savoyard monarchy's political and diplomatic action.<sup>16</sup>

But even Mazzini and other counter-memories of the Risorgimento came back in the public representation of the Risorgimento. A scholastic edition of *I Doveri dell'Uomo* was published—cleansed from reference to Mazzini's 'republican faith' and anti-monarchic stance—and Mazzini found room among the 'fathers of the *Patria*' in museums such as the *Museo del Risorgimento* in Genova (inaugurated in 1915). By proclaiming the monarchy–democracy combination intangible in order to formulate the principles and values of a united Italy's civil ethics, the monarchic state could make use of Mazzini's unitarian mysticism, purifying it of its revolutionary–republican spirit, thus introducing a Mazzini-inspired religion of duty in its educational program: the national destiny of the monarchic state was a civilizing mission in the name of human progress.

The celebration reached a climax on June 4 with the solemn inauguration in Rome of the monument for Victor Emmanuel II (*Il Vittoriano*) dedicated to the 'freedom of the citizens' and the 'unity of the *Patria*'. With the Vittoriano—but also with the tomb of Victor Emmanuel in the Pantheon—Rome became the *lieu de memoire* in which the Piedmontese monarchy joined hands with the Italian people.<sup>17</sup> The most important message conveyed by the Vittoriano to those who witnessed its erection—which took around thirty years—was that the new liberal-monarchic regime was here to stay. Nothing else could have induced the construction, right in the heart of Rome, of a monument that rivaled in scale Saint Peter's Church and the Coliseum and that immediately became the most important hub around which state ceremonies took place.

On the day of the inauguration, prime minister Giolitti—a man and a politician reputedly allergic to any hints of myth and usually alien to rhetorical forms—spoke rhetorically, evoking Roman greatness and the epic deeds of the Risorgimento, praising the magnificence of the monumental work ‘that will remind future generations of the greatest event in the history of Italy’, celebrating the ‘long way reborn Italy has come in every field of civil progress and in the world’s esteem’, and renewing the government’s faith in the future of the country. He ended by sharing the sentiments of the Italian people who recognized ‘the symbol of the unity of the *Patria*, the guardian of its independence and freedom, and the sure guide towards its lofty destiny’, in the King and the House of Savoy.<sup>18</sup>

The inauguration of the Vittoriano symbolized the unity and the harmony of the nation and its people behind a single flag, led by the Savoy monarchy. The very architectural structure of the monument suggested an idea of unity, a path from diversity to the harmonious design of homogeneity: the bronze equestrian statue of the King stood out in the center, beneath a series of statues representing the capital cities from 1861 to 1870.

Crucially, one of the most important reasons for the celebrations of 1911 was to exalt how Italy and Italians, through the Risorgimento, had contributed to the progress of humanity: the unity and the independence of Italy had enriched and enhanced humanity and modern civilization. The Italian ‘revolution’ had a universal value, for it was, above all else, a movement proclaiming the liberation and dignity of the human being. Commenting on the celebration, the newspaper *La Stampa* wrote with extreme clarity: ‘the spirit of the Italian revolution was universal’. Italians (we) ‘were not content at changing things silently at home’; quite the opposite, ‘once again’ and despite ‘distress’ and ‘bitter obstacles’, ‘we were able to enhance the treasure of our common humanity’, with the bright examples of Mazzini, Cavour, and Garibaldi. The heroes of the Risorgimento were champions of human civilization, and ‘apostles, warriors, and ministers of the same formidable principles that the whole world fought and suffered for the last century’.<sup>19</sup>

### *Italy’s Life Is Everybody’s Life: Patriotism and Universalism*

To understand the modernist claim to universality linked with the patriotic myth, it is first necessary to understand the Italians’ inferiority complex with other European nations—France and England above all. This was a complex which sustained the forces of Risorgimento and the post-



Risorgimental aspiration to a Greater Italy. In fact, to contrast such a feeling, an opposite complex of greatness and superiority had developed—a contrasting complex based on the myth of the Italian *Primato*. After all, history confirmed that Italy had always generated sources of universal civilization—Rome, Catholicism, and the spiritual and cultural movements that opened the way to modernity: Humanism and the Renaissance. In short, Italy’s discovering of modernity through the Risorgimento was tantamount with Italy’s rediscovering of its own roots and treasures, the modern Italian genius, the very same genius that had been taken up and further developed by other European nations.

Major contributions to the myth of the Italian *Primato* had come, during the historical Risorgimento, by the Catholic Vincenzo Gioberti and by the prophet of the religion of the *Patria*, Mazzini. Writing *Del primato morale e civile degli Italiani* (‘On the moral and civil primacy of the Italians’) in 1843, Gioberti claimed that Italy, with the achievement of unity and independence, was basically carrying out the duty God had assigned to it, eventually returning to its universal mission as a teacher of nations or ‘the mother nation of humankind’.<sup>20</sup> The Italian *Primato* was proven by the geography of Italy—at the center of the sea cradle of civilization, chosen by God as the seat of universal Church—and by its history—an endless tale of resurgence and renaissance, after temporarily declines, to give the world its creativity and its liberating virtues. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, Gioberti argued, Italy has been creator and liberator of people:

The principle of liberation is innate in Italy, because of all peoples only Italy has always risen again through its own virtues after falling, and enjoys immortal life, and because other nations took the seed of their own rebirth from Italy.<sup>21</sup>

Even the darkest period of Italian history could not erase the *Primato* and its liberating and creative drive. Indeed even when ‘the Italian sun seemed close to setting, and when the setting was followed by a night that many thought would be eternal, decrepit Italy was able to bring forth some intellects that would be enough for the glory of a flourishing people’.<sup>22</sup> Like Gioberti, Mazzini had magnified the universal mission of Italy; like Gioberti, he had turned to Providence, history, and geography. Italy had achieved unity and independence not only for Italy, but also to fulfill the divine mission God had entrusted to Italy: the unification of Italy.

‘The Italian nationality’, Mazzini claimed, ‘is an indispensable part of the education plan assigned to mankind, and is a duty, a special mission to be fulfilled in the collective life of humanity’.<sup>23</sup> The fulfillment of the mission would renew, for the third time after Rome and Catholicism, the universal role of Italy: ‘Italy is the only land that has twice cast the great unifying world to separate nations. Italy’s life was everybody’s life’.<sup>24</sup>

Taken up by Mazzini and Gioberti and by the Risorgimental cosmogony, the myths of *Primato*, nation, and mission—still anchored with the myth of liberty—inspired the 1911 celebrations, but, at least since the end of the nineteenth century had started manifesting politically in a variety of stances, ranging from authoritarian to democratic. It was only the beginning of the history. The Risorgimental ideas of mission and *Primato*—combined with other ideologies and mythologies, refashioned in new versions—resurfaced in different times during the twentieth century in the symbolic universes of different and contrasting political movements which competed for the privilege of interpreting the destiny of Italy as nation in the world.

### *Contested Memory, Contested Symbolism: What Nation?*

As would happen on later occasions, the 1911 celebrations did not take place without critique and contestation. Apart from the critiques from esthetic points of view which have persisted up until today,<sup>25</sup> the Vittoriano, the larger Jubilee, and the ritual celebration of the unity of Italians and the value of Risorgimento were strongly criticized by various groups and intellectuals. Intellectuals from the Italian south such as Giustino Fortunato insisted on the existence of two Italies.<sup>26</sup> Many socialists, republicans, and Catholics did not take part in the festivities of the nation. The Jesuits of *la Civiltà Cattolica* were among the most contentious in disputing the Jubilee of the *Patria*, particularly the celebration proclaiming Rome capital. The very term ‘Jubilee’ used for a ‘pagan’ commemoration was considered ‘blasphemous’; and for ‘true’ Catholics, the fiftieth anniversary of Italian unity was ‘a year of religious mourning’.<sup>27</sup>

The socialists claimed that the proletariat had no part in the liberal bourgeoisie’s festivities. They instead celebrated the Jubilee by organizing public transport strikes, protest rallies against the high cost of living, against militarism, and also mobilized around the claim for universal suffrage. The organizers behind the demonstrations purposely exploited the events to set the proletariat against the Jubilee, organized by the bourgeoisie, in order to ‘be admired by other national bourgeoisie’, as the

socialist daily, *Avanti!*, critically remarked.<sup>28</sup> Even if by then the socialists had accepted the unitary state, they saw no reason to celebrate the anniversary of a unification which was still very far from having been achieved: ‘Independence, economic freedom and political right—the Italian, the worker, the citizens—are ideally inseparable term of the liberating trino-mial. If each one is separated from the other two, it is a falsehood’. And ‘the celebrated political unity’ of the country was a ‘falsehood’—with north and south that ‘are two countries’, cities and towns that ‘are two nations’, and with ‘much of the population excluded from political life’. In short, seen from the Left, ‘one *Patria* does not yet exist’.<sup>29</sup>

Such critiques did not only come from the Left. Mazzini was one of the first to talk about ‘the lie about Italy’. To Mazzini, the unity of the state, carried out with Machiavellian artfulness by the Savoy monarchy, lacked ‘the fecundating breath of God, the soul of the nation’.<sup>30</sup> Mazzini and his followers had never abandoned their commitment to a republican Italy. After 1860, they remained unbowed in their contempt for the conservative monarchy of Victor Emmanuel and in their conviction that Italy remained incomplete for as long as Austria continued to govern the Italian-speaking regions of Trentino and Venezia Giulia. In 1911, the republicans, Mazzini’s heirs, did not recognize Italy in the principles, values, institutions, and political lines of conduct of the monarchic state, which they argued lacked effective patriotic unity and popular consensus. Therefore, the republicans protested against the figure of Mazzini being appropriated by the Savoy mythology, with ‘posthumous honors’ that falsified ‘the clear and profound concepts of the master’. Coinciding with the inauguration of the monument to Victor Emmanuel, they consequently organized a counterdemonstration, ‘taking the oriflammes of the Republic up to the Janiculum, sacred to the Third civilization of Rome’, effectively opposing the celebration of the nation which they considered a deformation and a betrayal of Italy—‘a monarchic usurpation’ of the *Patria* longed for by the republican heroes of the Risorgimento.<sup>31</sup>

In the south of the country, many had experienced unification as invasion and occupation by a foreign power. Unification in the south after 1860 had been far removed from the harmonious union celebrated in the official iconography of the Risorgimento. The famous meeting between Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel at Teano (between Naples and Rome) in September 1860—when the Liberator of the south loyally surrendered his command to the King—was one of the most famous icons of the Risorgimento, an image that looked down from the wall of town halls and public offices throughout the new Italy.

In fact, it was a carefully choreographed lie: in the autumn of 1860, Italy was on the brink of the civil war, and two years later, Garibaldi would attempt, unsuccessfully, to relaunch the march on Rome. In the meantime, the liberal revolution had enabled local elites throughout the south to consolidate control over local government, provoking local vendettas as well as massive appropriations of the common lands on which the livelihoods of the rural poor depended. When the rural populations resisted, the government proclaimed that the south was in the hands of pro-Bourbon brigands, declared a state of emergency, and poured troops into the affected provinces. More troops were engaged in the operations against so-called brigands and terrorists in the mainland south and in Sicily between 1861 and 1864 than in all the previous wars of Independence. More lives were lost too: the majority being peasants charged by court-martial for aiding the brigands and executed by military firing squads. The canon of Risorgimento and the official history passed down to Italians during the liberal era—but also afterwards—basically denied the civil war that preceded and followed the establishment of the Kingdom, and insisted that much of the 1860s and 1870s was dedicated to the just task of combating banditry (or brigandage) in order to defend and solidify the unity of the nation.<sup>32</sup>

In short, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the Risorgimento had established as a contested terrain for meaning-making. This produced a differential memorization, which of course had roots back to the very formation of the nation-state, where very diverse forces (brigands of the south and the Church, to mention the two extremes) had opposed the unification as an act of unjust centralization.<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, for many Italians, the monarchy had indeed become a symbol of unity. Such a popular perception was first of all brought about via national education programs implemented by the army<sup>34</sup> and public schools. The national mythology of the *Patria* also spread via a variety of literary sources, including Giosuè Carducci's poetry and lay gospels such as *Cuore* (1886) by Edmondo De Amicis.<sup>35</sup> This dominant narrative of the Risorgimento also developed via civil ritual, artistic representation, public commemoration, museum exhibitions, epigraphs, and cultural institutions. From 1870 onwards, monuments had been erected throughout Italy remembering and celebrating the deeds which had brought about Italian unification. Entire cities were restructured and given new streets and itineraries that funneled people into patriotic promenades, walking along streets and squares systematically named after Risorgimento heroes

in every corner of the country. Public ceremonies continuously reminded people that they were living in a particular fortunate moment of renewal and freedom, initiated by the Risorgimento. Statues were carved, monuments erected, patriotic pilgrimages invented, speeches made, and hitherto unknown dates loaded with significance.

What was celebrated above all was devotion to the constitutional monarchy and what it was supposed to stand for: freedom (individual and collective), national pride, prosperity, and a national greatness projected into the future.<sup>36</sup> In short, memories of the Risorgimental wars and their martyrs served to create a genuine ‘religion’ of the *Patria*.<sup>37</sup>

In this vein, a ‘moderate’ and monarchic narrative of the Risorgimento became dominant in the first decades of the century, without ever eliminating other interpretations. This narrative excluded and ‘forgot’ the forces that had opposed the unification, especially the southern brigands; its moderate nonrevolutionary outlook also excluded more radical interpretations of the Risorgimento as a renewed call to arms against the ‘establishment’. There was little space, however, for subversive counter-narratives that challenged the legitimacy of the new State.<sup>38</sup> In 1892, Alfredo Oriani published *La lotta politica in Italia*, a work that denounced unification as a royal conquest. What passed for a voluntary act of unification had in reality been the military conquest of the Italian states by the rulers of Piedmont, who cynically adopted the flags of Liberalism and nationalism to mask long-standing ambitions of dynastic aggrandizement. In fact, when it was published, Oriani’s book roused little public interest, but it found a very different reception when it was republished shortly after the Great War—when both socialists and nationalists once again took up the question of the relation between past and present and decried, although for different reasons, the failure of the new Italy to live up to the aspirations of the Risorgimento.<sup>39</sup> As with everything else, the war proved to be a watershed, bringing new intensity and a new dynamics of continuity/discontinuity into the relation between past and present, the Risorgimento and current political events.

### THE GREAT WAR AS THE FOURTH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

On May 24, 1915, Italy declared war on Austria. A few days later (June 2), Prime Minister Antonio Salandra urged Italians to dissolve ‘internal discords’ in ‘wonderful moral unity’ and find the strength to defeat the enemy and complete the mission of the Risorgimento.

Since the Fates have assigned to our generation the tremendous and sublime task of realizing the ideal of a great Italy that the heroes of the Risorgimento were not able to see finished, we accept this task with undaunted spirit, ready to give ourselves totally to the *Patria*, with all that we are and all that we have.<sup>40</sup>

With all the fractures—geographical, social, economic, cultural—concealed beneath an outpouring of patriotic enthusiasm, Italy set out to finish the unfinished revolution through a regenerative baptism of blood. The war would finish the job: that of making Italians.

In the effervescent and inflamed climate of the interventionist demonstrations, the Risorgimental epic—its heroes, its identity symbols, its representation, its language at the intersection of religion and politics (sacred and profane)—remained a powerful reservoir and source of memories, feelings and motivations. For example, Garibaldi was enlisted with the cause of the war, and appeals to enter the European war were made in his name. At the massive nationalist ‘festival’ held on May 5, 1915, at Quarto, Genoa (Garibaldi’s point of departure for Sicily in 1860), and in the presence of some 100 veterans from 1860, it was Gabriele D’Annunzio who dominated the occasion, and it was he who called on the Italian government to declare war on Austria and on Italians to ‘re-light the flame on the altar of Italy’. In the speech, Garibaldi was transformed into a myth in post-Risorgimento Italian memory.<sup>41</sup> He became the indisputable heroic ideal—a hero who lived apart from history, an existence beyond mankind, endowed with some sort of superterrestrial, semidivine qualities. It was in his name that D’Annunzio urged Italy and Italians to fight. Here D’Annunzio made one of his most public uses of Christological imagery by rewriting and parodying the Sermon on the Mount, eventually ending in a peculiar mixture of prose and verse, religion, and politics.

O blessed be those who have more, for more will they be able to give, more ardent shall they be.

Blessed be those who are twenty, chaste of mind, temperate of body, whose mothers are brace.

Blessed be those who, waiting and trusting, waste not their strength but preserve it with a warrior’s discipline...

Blessed be the young who hunger and thirst for glory, for they will be sated...

Blessed be the pure of heart, blessed be those victorious returning, for they will see the youthful face of Rome, the brown re-crowned by Dante, Italy’s triumphal beauty.<sup>42</sup>

As literary critic Pericles Lewis has written, ‘apart from the obvious hubris of D’Annunzio self-presentation as a new Jesus, the most remarkable element of the speech is its revision of the very terms of the Sermon on the Mount itself’; for ‘whereas Jesus promised the meek that they would receive their reward in the hereafter, D’Annunzio promised the ardent an earthly Paradise right now’.<sup>43</sup> Those who were prepared to create a new, young world—a national rejuvenation and resurgence—will prevail against those who defended the old order.

True to the spirit of the Risorgimento as a political-religious fact, D’Annunzio was consciously neglecting the boundaries between the religious and political spheres of Italian life and ascribing the deeper history of Italy to the realm of the sacred.

Croce called D’Annunzio speech and the celebration at Quarto a ‘buffoonery’.<sup>44</sup> Famous historian Michael Ledeen looked on the orations as a ‘blasphemous parody’ of the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>45</sup> This may be so. Yet, as Alfredo Bonadeo has noted and discussed, at Quarto D’Annunzio ‘was speaking with a purpose in mind’, meaning his words to be something quite different than a farce or parody. He meant both to lift the coarseness and dullness from the Italian people and to signal without ambivalence that the ‘leaven of the spirit’ stood ready to work within them and to raise them up.<sup>46</sup> Thus, ‘he equated blessing with sacrifice and sacrifice with the spiritual spark of redemption’.<sup>47</sup> The cultural effects of the ‘oration of Quarto’ and other D’Annunzio interventionist speeches were indeed significant. As Lucy Hughes-Hallett puts it so well, ‘his strategy was not to harangue but to fascinate and seduce’.<sup>48</sup>

Aiming at exciting the spirits of those who based their choices on generic and simple opinions and recovering the highly emotional charged language of sacrifice and regeneration—the opposite of moral reflection intended to help acquiring knowledge—the model of D’Annunzio’s rhetoric would deeply influence public opinion and prepare the ground for the triumph of fascist rhetoric and propaganda.<sup>49</sup>

Nationalists, futurists, militants of idealism, and ‘democratic’ interventionists—republicans, radicals, and Garibaldians representative of the tradition of the Risorgimental Action Party—all urged Italians to enter the war, making constant and consistent reference to the tradition of the Risorgimento connected to ‘irredentism’.<sup>50</sup> Left-interventionists, former socialists, and other left-wing revolutionary followed the call, converting to the myth of the nation and the universal mission of Italy, without abandoning the myth of the revolution and internationalism.

In fact, interventionists of different, if not contrasting, tendencies, political culture and ideologies shared a common belief in a fusion between the myth of revolution and the myth of the nation—a fusion that had been a quintessential trope of the Risorgimento, the (Mazzinian) ideas of revolution as a process of national resurrection. In other words, all interventionists shared the desire to act and fight to radically transform the existing situation and eventually create the condition for the resurgence of Italy and its mission in the world. Taking part in the war, interventionists believed, would consecrate the new Italy and making the new Italians—in blood.

On January 21, 1915, Mussolini's newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia* urged Italy to go to war: 'For socialism and for the war: against the fossils!'. The 'fossils' that Mussolini had in mind was the *Italiotta* of Giolitti, parliamentarism and liberal Italy, seen as utterly incapable of fulfilling the dream of the Risorgimento. Mussolini had broken with Socialism in 1914 and had converted to interventionism at the end of 1914. He now believed that the war would reveal the new Italy to the Italians and mold the new Italian:

It is Italy's first war. Of the nation of Italy, of the Italian people, united by now in a solid union from the Alps to Sicily ... it will be a great test. War is the examination of peoples ... The war most reveal Italy to the Italians. Above all, it must disprove the ignoble legend that Italians do not fight: it must cancel the shame of Lissa and Custoza<sup>51</sup>; it must show the world that Italy is capable of fighting a war, a great war ... Only this can give the Italians the idea of, and pride in, being Italians; only the war can make the 'Italians' D'Azeglio spoke of. Oh, revolution!<sup>52</sup>

In the 'interventist' narrative—which heavily borrowed from the Risorgimento and the irredentist tradition—the Great War was represented as the Fourth War of National Independence, which would eventually liberate Trieste and Trento and complete the process of national unification. Political and cultural elites worked hard to unify the memory and the historical myth of the Risorgimento in the months preceding the Italian entrance into the Great War. Furthermore, during the war, this myth was nourished by the speeches of politicians and the writing of intellectuals, and via military propaganda, as exercised first and foremost, by the famous 'servizio P', for example, the propaganda service of the army.

Every version of the Risorgimental myth—the monarchic-dynastic, the democratic, and the epic hero Garibaldi and the apostle Mazzini towering over all other inspirational figures—were integrated into the climate of patriotic mobilization and adapted to the uncertain outcomes of the Great



War. In the years immediately after the victory, the phrase ‘Fourth War of the Risorgimento’ was engraved on many local war memorials and it furthermore flourished as the ‘liberal’ perception of the conflict: Adolfo Omodeo, pupil of Croce, strongly emphasized the idea in his *Momenti della Vita di Guerra* (1934). In the official narrative, the final victory was depicted as the summation of the patriotic spirit of those many generations of men (women still did not get a mention) who had striven for the resurgence of the *Patria*.<sup>53</sup>

The Great War completed the process of the Risorgimento with the redeeming of the territories that the historical Risorgimento had not incorporated into Italy: the nation had been achieved as a united physical entity. Yet, the crucial question remains: *did* the war really make Italians? Did the war unite Italians and create a feeling of *Italianità*, pursuing thus the other dimension of the Risorgimento? Did the war nationalize the myth of the Risorgimento?

The Great War was the first mass experience as well as the first collective national experience for millions of Italians.<sup>54</sup> It was a crucial event for the formation of national identifications, as elsewhere in Europe.<sup>55</sup> Its importance appears in its social component as a form of aggregation, comradeship, trench common life, effort to survive, and close contact to life and death. These were the experiences which defined the cast of mind of the war generation. Many did not share, or did not even understand, the patriotism, policies, ideals, and propaganda of the interventionists: indeed, interventionism and irredentism flourished as important elements within relatively small intellectual and political circles. The mobilization of pro-war sentiment was a socially and culturally elite phenomenon.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, the state official nationalist and patriotic discourse was not necessarily internalized by the larger masses, though war propaganda did become intense at a certain point.

Many protested against the war. Others saw and perceived the aspirations of irredentists more as a conquest than as redemption, as acquisitions rather than a final liberation and unification. Some others returned from the trenches wanting to rebel, feeling rage and resentment against an elite that had led them into a traumatic and tragic experience.

However, the patriotic education received by Italians did not get lost and resurfaced especially at difficult times, such as the defeat of Caporetto. Although the process of top-down nationalization may have had at best partial success, the historical myth of the Risorgimento found its way into letters and diaries of officers as well as those of simple soldiers.<sup>57</sup> The ideals

of the Risorgimento's national myth, the *Patria*, the sense of *Italianità*, freedom and the greatness of the new Italy—even in a simple and emotional way—were perceived and experienced by a larger part of the population as never before.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps for the first time, Italians felt they were citizens of a single *Patria* during WWI. The Great War, in short, was the birthplace of the nationalizing myth of the Risorgimento. In a context of mass conscription and nationalist fervor, this contributed to its historicization via the double image of the Great War as a Fourth War of Independence and as a fulfillment of the Risorgimento. The former reinforced the narrativization of the Great War in an open political-military sequence; the latter refigured the Risorgimento as an advent to a new resurrection (the War).

Italy as nation and as a *Patria* and its resurgence was now inextricably linked with the efforts and the sacrifice of trench warfare. From now on, whenever an Italian would think of Italy, the thought will go toward a *Patria* made of war, trenches, humiliation, and sacrifice—a sacrifice that indeed called for another resurrection. In turn, starting with WWI, the perception of the Risorgimento would be influenced by the dimension and experience of collective death, mourning, and funereal rituals. In short, Italy developed strong ties of nationhood through the founding experiences of loss in WWI. Memorials and statues in every town and village commemorated the ultimate sacrifice for the unity of the Italian nation. The healing language of patriotism and tradition opened the way to a unifying national memory of war—which Fascism would soon take up, refashion, and develop into a full-fledged political myth.

### BENEDETTO CROCE: THE RISORGIMENTO AS A HISTORY OF LIBERTY

Liberal Italy and the liberal pledge of allegiance to the memory of traditions particular to Italy found its theoretical, philosophical, and historical foundation in the work of Benedetto Croce. The Neapolitan philosopher was one of the dominant intellectual figures of pre-fascist Italy, one of the most prestigious intellectual opponents of Fascism, and remained an important intellectual and cultural point of reference in post-fascist democratic Italy. Croce's defense of the Risorgimento—the heroic result and triumph of moderate Liberalism—carried great intellectual and cultural weight and became the official version of history in liberal Italy. Croce offered a rational bourgeois and liberal model of modernity, which he still

found completely valid, allowing Italy to face the challenges of modern life guided by parliamentary democracy. Like Gioberti before him, Croce also believed in Italy's civilizing mission. In fact, Croce assigned himself the task of forming 'a modern Italian conscience that would be European and national'.<sup>59</sup>

As Emilio Gentile has noted, from the beginning of the century, Croce was committed to fight the new 'spiritual' currents of thought made up of mysticism, activism, irrationalism, aestheticism, and imperialism, currents which he saw as a morbid and pathological manifestation of modernity and identified with decadence, and later with Fascism.<sup>60</sup> In short, Croce wanted to create an Italian awareness that would be, as he said in 1908, 'neither spiritualist, nor imperialistic, nor decadent, that would reproduce the awareness of the Italian Risorgimento in a new form'.<sup>61</sup>

### *Croce's Philosophy of Liberalism*

According to Croce, the inspiration of the modern Italian state lay in the spirit and ethos of Liberalism. Croce's idealist interpretation (condensed in the famous formulation, 'History ... is the history of liberty') asserts, as Albert Boime has rightly noted, 'the immanence of a spiritual force that manifests itself in the ideals of individuals and elites, with the Risorgimento exemplifying this vision in nineteenth-century Italian history'.<sup>62</sup> As William Salomone put it so well, both in Croce and in Gramsci, the 'dialectic of freedom' operated constantly 'through the analysis and reconstruction of events and the great conflict of men and ideas'. But whereas in the Gramscian world, 'freedom has no real identity outside the protagonists and antagonists of the historic conflict', in Croce's Risorgimento, 'liberty breathes as a transcendent spirit, a secular faith, an idea larger than the men who serve as its instrument'.<sup>63</sup> One of the heroes of his *Storia d'Europa nel secolo decimo nono*—first published in 1932 and dedicated to Thomas Mann—is Cavour, 'the man viewed in other revisionist writing as a calamity for the Italian nation'.<sup>64</sup> For Croce, 'Cavour lives and works in a Rankean sphere, as if on a providential mission beyond error and beyond judgment'.<sup>65</sup> To Croce, as Boime has insightfully written,<sup>66</sup> the Risorgimento resembled a great work of *art*:

If it were possible in political history to speak of masterpieces as we do in dealing with works of art, the process of Italy's independence, liberty, and unity, would deserve to be called the masterpiece of the liberal-national

movements of the nineteenth century: so admirably does it exhibit the combination of its various element, respect for what is old and profound innovation, the wise prudence of the statesmen and the impetus of the revolutionaries and the volunteers, ardor and moderation; so flexible and coherent is the logical thread by which it developed and reached its goal.

This ‘masterpiece’, Croce continues, ‘was called the Risorgimento’. In a similar way, ‘men had spoken of a rebirth of Greece, recalling the glorious history that the same soil had witnessed’ In fact, Croce concluded,

it was in reality a birth, a *sorgimento*, and for the first time in the age there was born an Italian State with all and with only its own people, and molded by an ideal. Emmanuel II was right when he said, in his speech from the throne on April 2, 1860, that Italy was no longer the Italy of the Romans or of the Middle Ages, but the ‘Italy of the Italians’.<sup>67</sup>

To Croce, as John Davis has highlighted, ‘Italian independence and unification had been the single most remarkable event in the nineteenth century’.<sup>68</sup> The ‘almost miraculous events’ that ended the fragmentation of Italy, opening the way for the political unification of Italy, Davis explains, were for Croce ‘the ultimate proof constructive and modernizing force of liberal values that had inspired nineteenth-century national self-awareness’.<sup>69</sup> As further discussed by Davis, one of the leading liberal historians of the prewar Europe, George Macaulay Trevelyan, endorsed Croce’s reading of Italian history in the context of nineteenth-century European politics and history. In his famous trilogy on the Italian struggle for independence and Garibaldi, published shortly before WWI,<sup>70</sup> Trevelyan portrayed Italian unification as the embodiment of liberal values precisely because Italy had triumphed over division, oppression, foreign occupation, and poverty, and eventually achieving independence and national unity. To Trevelyan, ‘Garibaldi epitomized the triumph; he was a living example of what could be achieved through selfless heroism and devotion to the cause of liberty’.<sup>71</sup>

By contrast, as Davis concluded, Croce believed that the key role in bringing about Italy’s unification had been played by the liberal elites. Garibaldi symbolized for Croce all that was noble and poetic about Italian Risorgimento. However, he ascribed the key role to the southern liberals who, in exile after the failure of the revolutions of 1848 in Naples and Sicily, elaborated the program of liberal-national revolution of which the House of Savoy and Cavour would become the executor.<sup>72</sup>

It is important to stress how Croce's attempt to fuse liberal thought with Italian historical experience was likewise a conscious attempt to offer an alternative vision of modernity as such. As also discussed by Norberto Bobbio,<sup>73</sup> Croce wanted to create a 'new world', but he did so by 'continuing to work on the old one, which is always new'.<sup>74</sup> And of course, the 'old world' which was at the same time always 'new', was the Italian Risorgimento. Croce argued that already the Risorgimento itself must be viewed 'as a reaction to the French, Jacobin, and Masonic course'.<sup>75</sup> Croce wanted Italy to be modern, but he did not want Italy to follow the path offered by French Enlightenment thinking or 'positivism'. The horrors of Jacobin violence<sup>76</sup> had given the Republican ideal a bad press throughout Europe. Italy could not afford to just imitate the French. It was via the Risorgimento that Italy could find its own path to modernity.

Croce's very explicit formulation here confirms Eisenstadt's reminder that the 'Jacobin modernity' was but one line of development, and that other versions of the modern could be established on the basis of different genealogies.<sup>77</sup> It was by thinking through the potentiality and promises lying dormant in that Risorgimento that Croce could ground the new Italy.

This differentiating attempt was likewise aimed at carving out a space between and beyond the Catholic Church and Socialism. Croce is most explicit about this positioning in the second chapter of *History of Europe* titled 'Opposing religious faiths', where he essentially argues that both Catholicism and Socialism invariably, and in contrast to Liberal faith, end on the wrong side of modernity. Croce said that 'it is well known that the Church considered the entire course of modern history as nothing but horrible perversion... In short, instead of history, she busied herself with telling fairy stories of ogres to frighten children'.<sup>78</sup> But Socialism fares not much better:

Not knowing or not understanding the lessons of history, they [the socialists] undertook to falsify it. And so they interpreted Liberalism as the mask of capitalist interests, denied to modern civilization the character of a humane civilization, considered it as classicist and bourgeois, and reduced the political struggle to a struggle of economic classes.<sup>79</sup>

To Croce, Socialism was nothing but a materialistic faith, an empty shell void of positive principles. It would invariably end in dictatorship.

Together with *History of Europe*, Croce's key work on the liberal period, *Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915* (first published in 1928), is not only a

‘relatively straightforward and overwhelmingly positive narrative account of Italian Liberalism’,<sup>80</sup> but also the ‘liberal’ response to Mussolini’s claim that Fascism was the heir of the Risorgimento (see Chap. 5). Both books were actually published when the regime was in full swing; and both books were highly criticized by fascists and by Mussolini himself. Moreover, by the end of the 1920s, after the experience of WWI and the rise of Fascism, a retrospective shadow had been cast over the Risorgimento and liberal Italy: the apparent failure of liberal Italy to live up to the aspirations and expectations of the Risorgimento started to become discussed even among liberals.

For example, as discussed by John Davis,<sup>81</sup> the young liberal democrat Pietro Gobetti, in *La Rivoluzione Liberale. Saggio sulla lotta politica in Italia*, made the case that revolutionary socialism carried the seeds of intolerance. But his principal condemnation was reserved for the political class that had inherited the Risorgimento. Their failure to pursue and develop truly liberal political values, Gobetti thought, was the reason why Italy had failed to become an effective liberal democracy and a fully modern state. Gobetti’s vision of the Risorgimento as a failed revolution contributed to shape Gramsci’s reading of recent Italian history (see Chap. 4). Liberal critics of liberal Italy did therefore exist. For example, writing in 1927 Guido De Ruggiero put the blame on the *Destra Storica*.

[The Destra] confined liberty to the narrow political caste which took actual part in public life and even...came to identify liberty with the state itself. Now it is certainly true that the state is the highest and most complete creation of human freedom; but only if the state is the term or culminating point of an ideal process connecting it with the individual, nourishing it and nourished by it in a constant interchange of influences... This was not the state brought into existence by the Right. No one who remembers how far the men of the Right and their successors were prepared to go in justifying reactionary excesses by appeals to the principle of the state can fail to recognize what degradation the original ideal had in practice undergone.<sup>82</sup>

Croce’s primary aim in writing (or rewriting) Italian history was, according to Federico Chabod, to defend the achievement of Italian Liberalism and of the ruling class of liberal Italy.<sup>83</sup> Croce’s *History of Italy* is a story of slowly but constant triumph and success, of much light and very few shadows, and ended in a verdict diametrically opposed to that of Antonio Gramsci, but also different from De Ruggiero and other liberal

critics.<sup>84</sup> To Croce, the *Destra Storica* was ‘a spiritual aristocracy of upright and loyal gentlemen’.<sup>85</sup> It successfully balanced the budget and, correctly, imposed political centralization on the country as the only guarantee of unity. The *Sinistra Storica*, which came to power in 1876, was driven by the same ideas as the *Destra*. Thus, the practice of *trasformismo* espoused by the *Sinistra*, which implied a sort of alliance and compromise with the moderate *Destra*, was a natural development for Italian politics.<sup>86</sup>

Croce approved the creation of a national army based on the Prussian model, the development of a navy of the ‘first rank’, and the construction and expansion of the railway system that contributed greatly ‘to the defense of the State, to the economic welfare of the nation, and... to internal security’.<sup>87</sup> To be sure, Croce admitted, economic development was slow—but this was the consequence of the enormous problem faced by liberal Italy and its elites. Also, the newborn State had not appropriately dealt with the ‘Southern Question’—in fact, the *Destra* had not even perceived the existence of the problem, failed to recognize its existence—but significant progress had been made nevertheless in the south in the first two decades after unification. In any event, political and economic step forward turned into the impressive social, cultural, and moral progress. Italians, Croce declared, eventually became citizens, no longer just passive subjects.<sup>88</sup>

Croce was far less positive with Francesco Crispi. Driven by the ‘desire to impress himself and others with his own energy’, Crispi, in Croce’s view, raised ‘dangerous passions’ at home and abroad, and frequently disdained and disregarded constitutional principles.<sup>89</sup> Crucially, Crispi’s inconsistent and contradictory policies encouraged lasting reactionary tendencies within Italian politics. The brutal suppression of disturbances and riots in Sicily (1893) and Lunigiana (1894), and the following general persecution of socialist organizations he ordered, engendered a spirit of reaction in government circles that survived his era. The direct result of all this were the 1898 Milan riots and Luigi Pelloux’s subsequent attempt to govern without the parliament. Yet, Croce claimed, Liberalism had won and overcome opposing, antiliberal tendencies. True liberals had opposed Crispi’s ‘war of extermination’ against Socialism, as well as the equally harsh strategy and tactics of 1898. Liberals had saved and reinforced the liberal state, demonstrating to socialists that bourgeois Liberalism was not necessarily the enemy of the workers. In this way, ‘the first far-reaching step was taken towards a reform which was in effect the fusion between Liberalism and Socialism’.<sup>90</sup>

The following period was the ‘golden age’, the era ‘in which the idea of a liberal regime was most fully realized’. Italian life after 1900 had overcome all ‘obstacles’ and ‘flowed on for the next ten years and more, rich in both achievement and in hope’. Giolitti pushed political extremists to the margins of national life and introduced ‘really remarkable’ internal reforms. Furthermore, he conducted a foreign politics that was at once cautious, ‘more enterprising’ than the politics of the *Destra*, and ‘more practical’ than the politics of Crispi. The success of the Libyan campaign only confirmed Italy’s growing strength and the substantial advancements that the country had made since the ‘national disaster’ of Adowa.<sup>91</sup>

Croce did recognize that even in these years and despite the success of the liberal elites, ‘Liberalism was not a deep and living faith’ and ‘had not struck deep roots’. The reasons for such shortcomings were the evils of positivism and irrationalism and not the failure of the liberal State—or, as Carter puts it, ‘cultural’ and not ‘political factors’<sup>92</sup>. In short, Italian Liberalism lacked the intellectual, cultural, and critical support ‘which would have enabled it to meet any crisis which might arise’. Yet, in any event, there was no crisis of the liberal state prior to WWI<sup>93</sup>; nor (so he later argued) was Liberalism in any way responsible for Fascism. Croce’s ‘splendid apology for Liberalism’,<sup>94</sup> tellingly stops on the eve of Italy’s entry into the WWI. Fascism was ‘an intellectual and moral disease’, a ‘parenthesis’, an ‘accident’, an ‘infection’, ‘a sickness that arose in the veins of all Europe as a result of the First World War’, a ‘bewilderment, a civic depression and a state of inebriation caused by the war’.<sup>95</sup> The political ideals and myth of Fascism, in particular a one-party state, were the real antithesis of Liberalism, a genuine anti-Risorgimento. There was nothing to connect Italian Liberalism to Fascism. If the history of liberal Italy was one of achievement and success—despite great obstacles and challenges, despite minor flaws and failing<sup>96</sup>—and if the supreme values of the liberty had animated the Risorgimento and had been translated from the Risorgimento to the new State, how then could it be responsible for Fascism? Catholics, socialists-communists and fascists—as we will see in the following chapters—will put the Crocean canon under serious attack.

## PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Liberalism is not an Italian invention, but nor was Liberalism simply a foreign idea imported into the Italian experience. It was very much an ideology that took shape and was given its particular interpretation from within



the Italian historical experience. It was during the liberal period that a Risorgimental idea rooted and took further shape: that Italy carried within its own historical experience the germs for future development; that the modernizing creed was innate and had to be unfolded from within, rather than imposed from the outside; that Italy had a universal mission.

Liberal ideas did develop and did give shape to the new nation-state. Italian-inspired Liberalisms took shape with references to Italy's particular past. If liberal thought did not become hegemonic in twentieth-century Italy, it was still against the backdrop of the early liberal state that later alternatives developed. Even more importantly, it was during the liberal period that a series of ideas and narratives connected to Italy's particular road to modernity developed, stressing Italy's uniqueness and its privileged position in global club of nations that rendered national developments of universal relevance.

Moreover, by at least some standards, liberal Italy was also a story of success. Pro-liberal historiography has especially identified the period from 1900 to 1915, the 'Giolittian age', as a crucial period toward the country's modernization, a productive period of nation and state formation, of democratization, urbanization, economic growth, technological, and scientific progress. Some have even interpreted liberal Italy as a precursor to the modern welfare state.<sup>97</sup> From such a viewpoint, Italy's road to modernity was indeed paved by liberal ideas—a journey interrupted 'only' by the war, and then by Fascism.

Crucially, after WWII, Croce claimed that Italian democracy should reconnect to its liberal tradition. The famous image of Fascism as a 'parenthesis' in Italian history, or an external virus that had penetrated its healthy body, sustained and legitimized both the public amnesia regarding the popular consensus to Fascism and the historicization of the Resistance as a second Risorgimento, the true face of Italian national identity. Croce's Risorgimento was a paean to the values of nineteenth-century political Liberalism. But there had been always counter-narratives, and as we will see, in the formative period of liberal Italy, contending narratives of the Risorgimento and Italy's road to modernity were silenced without disappearing. To those contenders we can now turn.

## NOTES

1. Nick Carter, 'Rethinking the Italian Liberal State', *Bulletin of Italian Politics* 3, no. 2 (2011): 225–45.

2. The Italian term *Patria* has no accurate translation. *Patria* remains the common term for ‘homeland’, ‘Fatherland’, ‘Motherland’ in many languages, based on the Greek *πατρίδα* (‘native/ancestral land’). The Italian *Patria*, however, is more similar to the Latin/Roman *Patria*, and refers to the *res publica*, the political constitution, the laws, and the resulting way of life (and thus also culture). *Patria* does not coincide with a specific territory. Romans had the term *natio* to define the place of birth and cultural/ethnic/linguistic features connoted to such a territory.
3. Turin, Florence and Rome (the three successive capital of the Kingdom between 1861 and 1871) held work of exhibitions of the arts, production, and industry; see *Guida delle Esposizioni Internazionali di Roma e Torino 1911* (Milan: Ravegnati, 1911); ‘L’Esposizione di Belle Arti inaugurata alla presenza dei sovrani’, *Corriere della Sera*, March 28, 1911.
4. Filippo Mazzonis, *Monarchia e Risorgimento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003).
5. Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century*, trans. S. Dingee and J. Pudney (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 82–9.
6. On this see Victor W. Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1988); David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988).
7. Victor W. Turner, ‘Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage’, in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Nembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 93–111: 95.
8. On this, see also Peter Wagner, *A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 48–9.
9. *Atti Parlamentari. Senato del Regno. Legislatura XXIII, 1ª Sessione 1909–1910, Documenti, Disegni di legge e relazioni*, 339-A (4 July 1910), 2.
10. Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 3–15; Catherine Brice ‘Il 1911 in Italia: Convergenza di poteri, frazionamenti di rappresentazioni’, *Memoria e Ricerca* 34 (2010): 47–62.
11. Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (London: Penguin, 2007), 381.
12. The Second War of Independence (also known as the Campaign of Italy, *Campagne d’Italie*, in France), was fought by Napoleon III of France and the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia against the Austrian Empire in 1859.
13. Pascoli considered himself a socialist, and in fact, spent some months in prison in 1879, for his revolutionary views. By the turn of the century, he was describing himself as a socialist-patriot. Several of his poems revealed a fascination with the grandeur and heroism manifest in the long and rich history of Italy stretching back to ancient Rome. The affection for Italy expressed in his poetry is reflected in the elaboration of a peculiar ideology,

which, he insisted, was socialist, but at the same time, anti-Marxist, nationalistic, and colonialist. However, his idea of Italy as a 'proletarian' nation, compared to the other European nations, was taken up and popularized by theorists of nationalism such as Enrico Corradini, and became a key concept in fascist ideology. In a January 1914 speech, Corradini said: 'Referring to the Libyan War the great poet (now dead) Giovanni Pascoli exclaimed: the great proletarian has moved. What did he mean? He wanted to show the similarity between proletarian revolt and that war waged by the humble, patient and inexhaustible *Patria* of emigrants and workers of the world. Remember what happened next: we were confronted not only by Turkey but by the rest of Europe. Why? What was taking place? What evil had we perpetrated? We had struck the great bourgeois, the Europe of the bankers, merchants and plutocrats. The great proletarian had attacked the social system of the European nations and they had reacted. The nations of Europe can be compared with the classes within a nation. European nations can be classified and distinguished in exactly the same way that social classes can be identified'; Enrico Corradini, *Discorsi politici (1902–1923)* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1925), 220–1.

14. Giovanni Pascoli, *Patria e umanità* (Bologna: Zanichelli 1914), 1–15.
15. *Atti Parlamentari. Camera dei deputati. Legislatura XXIII, 1<sup>a</sup> Sessione, Discussioni* (May 5, 1910), 6630–1.
16. According to contemporary observers, feeling the tie with Garibaldi's undertaking was 'a necessary condition to feeling Italians', because in that undertaking 'the Italian people rediscover themselves after centuries of oppression, not only in their tradition and their nationality, but also in a sense of renewed youth'; see the unassigned 'Vibrarioni patriottiche', *Corriere della Sera*, May 6, 1910; see also 'La spedizione dei Mille commemorata solennemente alla Camera', *Corriere della Sera*, May 6, 1910.
17. Bruno Tobia, *L'Altare della Patria* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998); Catherine Brice, *Il Vittoriano. Monumentalità pubblica e politica a Roma*, trans. L. Collodi (Rome: Archivio Guido Izzi, 2005).
18. Giovanni Giolitti, *Discorsi extraparlamentari*, ed. N. Valeri (Turin: Einaudi, 1952), 254–6.
19. 'Excelsior', *La Stampa*, April, 20, 1911; see also Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 40.
20. Vincenzo Gioberti, *Del Primato Morale e Civile degli Italiani*, vol. I (Brussels: Dalle Stampe di Meline, Cans e Compagnia, 1843), 19.
21. *Ibid.*, 46.
22. *Ibid.*, 44.
23. Giuseppe Mazzini, *Scritti politici*, eds. T. Grandi and A. Comba (Turin: UTET, 1972), 544.
24. *Ibid.*, 885.

25. Romans, still today, jokingly call the building for the ‘wedding cake’ or the ‘typewriter’ with reference to its arguable lack of elegance.
26. Giustino Fortunato, ‘Le due Italie’, *La Voce*, March 16, 1991, 525–7.
27. See ‘Un anno di lutto’, *La Civiltà Cattolica* 62 (1911): 78–9; ‘Le commemorazioni patriottiche del 1911’, *La Civiltà Cattolica* 62 (1911): 145–7; ‘27 marzo 1862–1827 marzo 1911’, *L’Osservatore Romano*, March 28, 1911. On the more general critical position of Catholics and the Vatican against liberal Italy, see Guido Formigoni, *L’Italia dei Cattolici. Dal Risorgimento a oggi* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), 35–81; Francesco Traniello, *Citta dell’uomo. Cattolici, partito e Stato nella Storia d’Italia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998), 51–100.
28. ‘I due cinquantenari’, *Avanti!*, March 27, 1911.
29. ‘1° maggio 1911’, *Critica Sociale*, April 16, 1911, 113.
30. Giuseppe Mazzini, *Scritti politici editi e inediti*, vol. 91 (Imola: Editrice Paolo Galeati, 1941), 162.
31. ‘Le feste giubilari’, *La Ragione*, March 19, 1911; see also ‘L’usurpazione monarchica della feste della Patria’, *La Ragione*, March 18, 1911; ‘Il Partito Mazziniano e il Cinquantennio’, *La Ragione*, June 5, 1911.
32. See Salvatore Lupo, ‘Il grande brigantaggio. Interpretazioni e memoria di una Guerra civile’, in Walter Barberis (ed.), *Storia d’Italia. Annali 18. Guerra e Pace* (Turin: Einaudi, 2002), 465–504; John Dickie, ‘A World at War: the Italian Army and the Brigandage 1860–1870,’ *History Workshop Journal* 33, no. 2 (1992): 1–24; John Davis, *Conflict and Control: Law and Order in Nineteenth Century Italy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998). See also ‘Brigandage: the Brigands of South Italy’, *New York Times*, October 16, 1868.
33. See Luigi Mascilli Migliorini, ‘Il Risorgimento dei vinti’, and John Davis, ‘L’Antirisorgimento’, both in Eva Cecchinato and Mario Isnenghi (eds.), *Fare l’Italia. Unità e disunità nel Risorgimento* (Turin: UTET, 2008), respectively, 606–16 and 752–69.
34. Military service has long been acknowledged as a critical element in the development of national consciousness. Eugene Weber, for instance, highlighted its importance in his classic work *Peasants into Frenchmen* (1976).
35. Niccolò Zapponi, *I miti e le ideologie. Storia della cultura italiana, 1870–1960* (Naples: ESI, 1981), 38–40; Laura Fournier-Finocchiaro, *Giosuè Carducci et la construction de la nation italienne* (Caen: Presses Universitaires, 2006), 115–49; Catherine Brice, *Monarchie et identité national en Italie, 1861–1900* (Paris: Éditions de l’EHESS, 2010).
36. Bruno Tobia, *Un patria per gli italiani: spazi, monumenti, itinerari dell’Italia unita, 1870–1900*. (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1991); Bruno Tobia, ‘Col marmo e col bronzo: monumenti e memoria pubblica del Risorgimento’, in Mario Isnenghi and Simon Levis Sullam (eds.), *Le “Tre Italie”: dalla*

- presa di Roma alla Settimana Rossa (1870–1914)* (Turin: UTET, 2009), 256–69; Massimo Baioni, *La religione della Patria. Musei e istituzioni del culto risorgimentale* (Treviso: Pagus, 1994); Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del littorio: La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1993), 5–38.
37. Roberto Balzani, 'Alla ricerca della morte utile', in Oliver Janz and Lutz Klinkhammer (eds.), *La morte per la patria: La celebrazione dei caduti dal Risorgimento alla Repubblica* (Rome: Donzelli, 2008), 3–21; Maurizio Ridolfi, 'Martiri per la Patria', in Cecchinato and Isnenghi, *Fare l'Italia*, 40–54; Lucy Riall, 'Martyrs Cult in Nineteenth-Century Italy', *Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 2 (2010): 255–87.
  38. On these counter-narratives see John Davis, 'Rethinking the Risorgimento?', in Norma Bouchard (ed.), *Risorgimento in Modern Italian Culture: Rethinking the Nineteenth-Century Past in History, Narrative, and Cinema* (Cranbury, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005), 27–56: 29–30.
  39. *Ibid.*, 30.
  40. *Discorsi Parlamentari di Antonio Salandra, pubblicati per deliberazione della Camera dei Deputati*, vol. 3 (Rome: Stab. Tip. Carlo Colombo, 1959), 1444–5.
  41. On this see also Mario Isnenghi, *Garibaldi fu ferito. Storia e mito di un rivoluzionario disciplinato* (Rome: Donzelli, 2007), 157–78.
  42. Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Orazione per la sagra dei Mille: pronunciata oggi cinque maggio dal sommo poeta a Quarto* (1915), 8.
  43. Pericles Lewis, *Modernism, Nationalism, and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 182.
  44. Quoted in Alfredo Bonadeo, *D'Annunzio and the Great War* (Cranbury, NY: Associated University Presses, 1995), 73.
  45. Michael Leeden, *D'Annunzio: The First Duce*, with a new introduction (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 2009), 9.
  46. Bonadeo, *D'Annunzio*, 73.
  47. *Ibid.*
  48. Lucy Hughes-Hallet, *Gabriele D'Annunzio: Poet, Seducer, and Preacher of War* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2013) 45.
  49. Commenting on the speech of Quarto and defining D'Annunzio 'literary fake made flesh', while simultaneously capturing the sense of his rhetoric, French intellectual Romain Rolland wrote: 'He dares act like Jesus! He plays Jesus and remakes the Sermon on the Mount in order to excite Italy to breach its treaties and fight against its former allies ... this infamous comedy naturally excites with enthusiasm two thirds of Europe. People do not know what the truth is. One cannot say that they betray it. They live in perpetual error. For them words take the place of true sentiments';

Romaine Rolland, *Diario degli anni di guerra. 1914–1919. Note e documenti per lo studio della storia morale dell'Europa odierna* (Milan and Florence: Parenti, 1960), 276.

50. Irredentism is the idea that urges a population to act in order to complete the process of unification of the nation, which has not yet been entirely reclaimed from the domination of foreign populations. In the context of Italy, it referred to areas with Italian-speaking communities which, after unification and the Third War of Independence (1866), had not been included in the new State, and were, at the eve of WWI, still part of other countries such as (in the most famous case: Trentino, Venezia-Giulia, Gorizia, Dalmatia) the Austrian empire.
51. Lissa and Custoza were two infamous battles of the Italian Third War of Independence. The Austrian Army seriously defeated the Royal Army and the Royal Navy, despite the Italian numerical advantage.
52. See Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol 7: *Dalla fondazione de 'Il Popolo d'Italia' all'intervento (15 nov. 1914–24 maggio 1915)*, eds. Edoardo and Duilio Susmel (Florence: La Fenice, 1952), 196–7; also quoted in Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 127. Speaking at the founding meeting of the *Fasci di Combattimento* in 1919, Mussolini saw Italy's entry to war as the beginning of a revolution: 'we are the only people in Italy to have the talk of revolution ... we have already made a revolution. In May 1915. We started off that May, which was exquisitely and divinely revolutionary, because it overturned a shameful situation at home and decided ... the outcome of the World War'. Italian intervention in war had represented, Mussolini added, the 'first phase of a revolution' that was 'not finished' (see the report from *Il Popolo d'Italia*, March 18, 1919, titled '23 March'.
53. In this vein, see, for instance, the speech given by Antonio Salandra, the man who had led Italy into the war, few days after the final victory of Vittorio Veneto: '[We are] the spokesmen amid delegates of the martyrs, the poets, the statesman, the soldiers, the princes and the common people, of the great and the humble, of all those who loved this Italy, who willed this Italy, and who celebrated this Italy; of all those who worked for her, of all those who suffered for her, and of all those who died for her. Their spirit resonates in our spirits. It is immortal Italy that has awoken, wreathed in her glories and her sorrows, wishing to re-conquer her throne... To Her, who is immanent, eternal, timeless; to Her, who has been received into the heavens of history amid the purest emanations of our blood of Her best sons, to Her we swear to consecrate all that remains to us of strength and life. Long live Italy! For ever, and above all else, long live Italy!'; *Discorsi Parlamentari di Antonio Salandra*, 1448–51.
54. The debate over the role of the Great War in promoting the nationalization of the masses is by no means limited to Italy, but of course a full com-

parison lies beyond the scope of this book. It is notable however that scholarship on war and national identity focuses on memory, commemoration and myth-creation which took place during and after the war, perhaps even more than on the experience of the war itself; see George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Jay M. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (eds.), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). The literature on Italy and WWI is extensive; see, among others, Antonio Gibelli, *L'officina della Guerra: La Grande Guerra e le trasformazioni del mondo mentale* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1991); Antonio Gibelli, *La Grande Guerra degli Italiani* (Milan: Sansoni, 1998); Giovanna Procacci, *Soldati e prigionieri nella Grande Guerra, con una raccolta di lettere inedite* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1998); Mario Isnenghi, *Il mito della Grande Guerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007), on which the following part of this section is mainly based.

55. Eugene Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1976).
56. Even in Germany and Britain, war fraternity was much less widespread than has been commonly assumed; on this see Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
57. The patriotic–Risorgimental language used in letters by simple soldiers is significant, with many references to ‘rights of our Italy’ and the need to defend, protect, and safeguard the nation. After the battle of Caporetto, this was even more the case. From the very start of the war, there are also many references in men’s letters, as in the propaganda, to the Austrians as the ‘centuries-old enemy’. The 24-year-old Amedeo Rossi, a shoe-maker from Cesena (Romagna region), wrote in July 1915: ‘Every day today we suffer for the *Patria*. And it is our duty, as our old people did in times past. And today our duty awaits us towards our beautiful Italy, and we shall not let them call us cowards but on the contrary heroes for all time of history’; *Verificato per censurato. Lettere e carolini di soldati romagnoliu nella prima guerra mondiale*, eds. G. Bellosi e M. Savini (Cesena: Società Editrice Il Ponte Vecchio), 375–7. As Vanda Wilcox has written, this reference to ‘what our old people did in times past’, suggests a clear link to the Risorgimento, as perhaps does the idea of being ‘heroes for all time of

- history'. By October 1915 Rossi was wishing for peace, but only after he and his fellows managed to 'cast out the enemy from our unredeemed lands'; Vanda Wilcox, 'Encountering Italy: Military Service and National Identity during the First World War', *Bulletin of Italian Politics* 3, no. 2 (2011): 283–302: 289–90.
58. This process is also illustrated in the letters sent by soldiers from 1918, which compared to those of 1915 show a great awareness of the nation and of Italy; on this point, see Wilcox, 'Encountering Italy', 298.
  59. As quoted and further discussed in Emilio Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism and Fascism* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003), 51.
  60. Emilio Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology, 1918–1925*, trans. R. L. Miller (New York: Enigma, 2013), 393.
  61. Croce quoted in *Ibid.*, 393; see also Benedetto Croce, *Cultura e vita morale: Intermezzi polemici* (Bari: Laterza, 1955), 36.
  62. Albert Boime, *The Art of the Macchia and the Risorgimento: Representing Culture and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 15.
  63. A. William Salomone, 'The Risorgimento between Ideology and History: The Political Myth of Rivoluzione Mancata', *American Historical Review* 68, no. 1 (1962): 38–56: 48.
  64. Boime, *The Art of the Macchia*, 15.
  65. Salomone, 'The Risorgimento', 48–9.
  66. Boime, *The Art of the Macchia*, 16.
  67. Benedetto Croce, *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. H. Furst (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933), 225; quoted also in Boime, *The Art of Macchia*, 16.
  68. Davis, 'Rethinking the Risorgimento?', 28.
  69. *Ibid.*
  70. *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic* was published in 1907, and the book marked the entry of a new foreign historian in a field, the Risorgimento, much neglected or unworthily treated outside Italy. The other books of the trilogy were *Garibaldi and The Thousand* (1909) and *Garibaldi and The Making of Italy* (1911).
  71. Davis, 'Rethinking the Risorgimento?', 29.
  72. *Ibid.*
  73. Norberto Bobbio, *Ideological Profile of Twentieth-Century Italy*, trans. L. G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 69–80.
  74. Croce as quoted in *Ibid.*, 75.
  75. Croce as quoted in *Ibid.*
  76. As Croce would state it, 'Liberalism had completed its separation from democracy, which in its extreme form of Jacobinism not only had destroyed



- by its mad and blind pursuit of its abstractions the living and physiological tissues of the social body, but also by confusing the people with one part and one aspect the least civilized of the people, with the inorganic howling and impulsive mob, and by exercising tyranny in the name of the people, had gone to the other extreme and had opened the way for an equal servitude and dictatorship instead of one for equality and liberty'; Croce, *History of Europe*, 32.
77. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution: The Jacobin Dimensions of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
  78. Croce, *History of Europe*, 23.
  79. *Ibid.*, 37.
  80. Nick Carter, *Modern Italy in Historical Perspective* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 6.
  81. Davis, 'Rethinking the Risorgimento?', 30.
  82. Guido De Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism*, trans. R. G. Collingwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), 327.
  83. Federico Chabod, 'Croce storico', *Rivista storica italiana* 6, no. 4 (1952): 473–530.
  84. The following discussion is mainly based on Carter, *Modern Italy*, 6–8.
  85. Benedetto Croce, *A History of Italy, 1871–1915*, trans. C. M. Ady (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 5.
  86. *Ibid.*, 19–20.
  87. *Ibid.*, 51.
  88. *Ibid.*, 70.
  89. *Ibid.*, 178–9.
  90. *Ibid.*, 192.
  91. *Ibid.*, 214, 225–31, 261–2.
  92. Carter, *Modern Italy*, 8.
  93. Croce, *A History of Italy*, 252–3.
  94. Denis Mack Smith, 'Benedetto Croce: History and Politics', *Journal of Contemporary History* 8, no. 1 (1973): 41–61: 56.
  95. See Croce quoted in Renzo De Felice, *Interpretations of Fascism*, trans. B. Huff (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1977), 14 and 26; Croce quoted in David Ward, *Antifascism: Cultural Politics in Italy, 1943–1946* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1996), 73; Carter, 'Rethinking', 227.
  96. Following this line of argument, in post-WWII Italy a 'liberal' school developed that, together with the opposing antiliberal Marxist school, dominated until the 1980s the historiography on the liberal period. For liberal historians, the high point of Liberalism was, in line with Croce, the 'Giolittian age'. During this period, Italy experienced 'a true national resurgence', according to a scholar who subtitled his studied on Giolittian

Italy, 'Italian democracy in the making'; A. William Salomone, *Italy in the Giolittian Era: Italian Democracy in the Making, 1900–1914* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), 97. One particularly enthusiastic Italian-American liberal historian even considered the Giolittian state 'the predecessor of the modern welfare state... Giolitti was in some ways the forerunner of Franklin Delano Roosevelt... both men were essentially democratic figures'; Frank J. Coppa, *Planning, Protectionism and Politics in Liberal Italy: Economics and Politics in the Giolittian Age* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1971), 107; see also Carter, 'Rethinking', 227.

97. See again Carter, 'Rethinking'.

## Catholic Modernities: Epics of a Christian Nation

As we have argued in the opening chapter, Italian political thought and cultural identity are best analyzed within a theoretical framework of multiple and competing modernities. Approaching modernity as a more open-ended ‘interpretative space’<sup>1</sup> also, and significantly, implies to engage the both open and hidden interconnections and tensions between religion and politics, between sacred and secular. This engagement becomes particularly dense and significant for a proper understanding of modern Italian history of politics and society. As we shall see, it was very much via a confrontation between sacred and secular that differentiating attempts of articulating alternative versions of Italian modernity developed. In this chapter, we shall reconstruct how this led to the formation of what can be termed a Catholic modernity.

Scholars often insist that political Catholicism never represented any real tradition of political thought and ideology. We have become accustomed to thinking of the history of modern Europe as a conflict among secular ideologies.<sup>2</sup> Yet in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Italy, Catholic politicians and intellectuals generated a wealth of fascinating, powerful, and controversial ideas that offered a way to articulate Catholicism and religion to the parameters of national politics and democracy. In short, a Catholic modernity developed.

While the development we wish to outline is an Italian story, it must be stressed that the institutional development of Catholic thought was always also, at the same time, a universalistic, extraterritorial project. In short,

also here Italian developments have had a significant impact on European and global history. It was, after all, a Catholic-inspired modernity that gave birth to the project of European integration after 1945.

'Sacred' and 'secular' are loaded terms, and each of them carries a long history of theoretization. In his genealogical account of the secular, Talal Asad famously argued that secularism must be viewed as something much more than a mere separation of religious from secular institutions of government, since it presupposes *new* concepts of religion, ethics, and politics, and is closely linked to the emergence of the modern nation-state. Asad argues that the 'secular' cannot be seen as the 'rational' successor to 'religion'. Rather, the secular develops from the nineteenth century as a multilayered historical category related to the foundational premises of democracy and modernity.<sup>3</sup> While we concur, we would also like to stress that exactly the same can and must of course be argued with respect to religion and the notion of the 'sacred', which, parallel with formations of the secular, dialectically transforms itself, accommodates new realities, and opens itself to alternative readings of the modern.

Italy is a crucial reference point of intrinsic importance for a larger reflection on religion, secularity and modernity, and for very evident reasons. To a large extent, those reasons pertain to history, or, more precisely, to the continued relevance of Italy's past. It is a trivial fact that Italy was the symbolic home of the Roman Empire and birth place of institutionalized Christianity developing in deadly contest with and within that empire. This happened, of course, many centuries before any notion of modern nationhood had come into existence. But it still left a legacy, also because the remnants of the administrative structures left behind after the collapse of the Roman Empire were carried over into an ecclesiastical structure that would endure up until the modern period. The ecclesiastical boundaries of today's parishes in Italy, to invoke an obvious example, can often be written back more than a thousand years. In short, the challenge of accommodating political rule and religious creed dates back 2000 years.

It is also a trivial but nonetheless pivotal fact that Italy was the birth-place, a millennium later, of the European Renaissance, that historical period of intellectual, political, and artistic achievement developing out of the search for balance between Christian traditions and Greek philosophy and science.<sup>4</sup> Since the demise of the Renaissance, the Italian peninsula hosted some of the fiercest battles between religion and secularity in Western history, from Giordano Bruno onwards. This tension was carried into the formation of the modern Italian state (1861), first during the

decades preceding Unification where condemning and celebratory attitudes toward the French Revolution and its radical secularity were pitted against each other in the Italian Risorgimento, and then, from 1870 (when the temporal power of the Pope ended and Rome became capital of Italy), as an integral part of modern, liberal, and secular Italian politics, coexisting in hyper-tension with the Vatican and institutionalized Catholicism.

Bearing in mind these complex layers of history, in this chapter we reconstruct how Catholicism gave its own imprint to interpretations of modernity from the nineteenth century onwards. We discuss how, from within Italian political and cultural life, Catholicism related to modernity, tracing continuities and changes in the tensions between religion and secularity in the country's modern political history up until WWII. We will return to the trajectory of Catholic modernity in the second half of the twentieth century in Chap. 7, where we focus on the more narrowly defined institutional and party political context in which postwar Catholic thought developed, especially via Christian Democracy (DC). In this chapter we cast the net wider, and consider developments in thought more broadly, both as they developed from within the church itself and also as they developed among lay people, historians, philosophers, and political thinkers—people who in various ways sought to bring Christian traditions into dialog with modernizing processes.

It goes without saying that the Catholic-inspired narrative of an Italian road to modernity was all along contested and rejected by other cultural and political forces, not least socialism and Communism. We will deal with those competing narratives in the chapter that follows, noting for now that the challenge posed by socialism and Communism forms part of the larger ideological and cultural battlefield in which Catholic positions took shape. And this was also a battle over contested nationhood.

Before plunging into historical detail, the general development we wish to outline can be sketched as follows. The Church and Catholic positions more broadly, went through a process of transformation which developed from radical *rejection* of modernity to *hesitant embracement* and ending on a figuration we here suggest to term as *critical co-articulation*. Employing more current terms in the wider multiple modernities literature,<sup>5</sup> the Church moved from a position of anti- and counter-modernity to one of alternative or parallel modernity. The institutionalization of Christian Democracy after WWII played a huge role in this transformation. At the same time, the larger development that turned Catholicism into a 'partner' of modernity cannot and should not be reduced to Italian or European party politics.<sup>6</sup>

The party political development after 1945, where Christian Democracy became hegemonic, could not have taken place without the cultural and political platform that had developed from the nineteenth century.

### INTERPRETING ITALY'S ROAD TO MODERNITY: RISORGIMENTO LEGACIES

In Chap. 1, we discussed the founding role of the Risorgimento for modern Italy. Let us start by stressing how within the larger Risorgimento movement a negotiation of modern Italy's relationship to Church and religion started to take place. The relationship between Church and state became an institutional conflict after unification, but the underlying questions pertaining to this relationship had in many ways taken shape prior to the unified state's existence. A discursive field of negotiation had already crystallized.

A main question for thinkers living through the Risorgimento period, and later reflecting back upon it, was this: how does the Italian Risorgimento relate to the French Revolution? Were the Italians simply following the French or the British, while also, if to a lesser extent, borrowing from the German *kulturnation* ideology? In other words, was Italy simply becoming modern by emulating models originating from elsewhere, from the 'centers' of Europe? Was there no Italian particularity, no Italian road to modernity, understood in both political and cultural terms?<sup>7</sup> While Britain and British developments (economic as well as intellectual) were constantly referred to, it was the relationship to France that remained paramount in this larger exercise of historical self-interpretation.

As we already saw in the previous chapter, most thinkers, also during the liberal period, arrived at the conclusion that Italy *was* indeed different, and that Italy did *not* and *should* not simply take the road to modernity by copying foreign models. The self-imposed task for thinkers of the period was to establish the *how* and *why* of this difference, and to work out the political implications for purposes of the present.

The role of religion was absolutely central in such 'differentiating attempts'. It is important to avoid simplification here. While many Risorgimento thinkers were indeed pitted against the Church at the direct political and military level, far from all of them simply aimed to get rid of the Papacy. It was not simply the case that at the personal level, many of the Risorgimento figures remained church members and devout Catholics;

contrary to common wisdom, many of them also refused to see a modern Italian nation and state formation in absolute contrast to the Church.

Let us invoke just one salient example here: the Catholic priest and philosopher Vincenzo Gioberti. During the 1830s and 1840s, Gioberti argued for a federal union under the Pope, concisely setting up his ideas against the French model. These ideas found their clearest expression in Gioberti's *Del primato morale e civile degli Italiani* ('On the moral and civil primacy of the Italians'), which became a fundamental text for nationalists for generations. Gioberti's message was very clear on this point: Italy should *not* simply imitate the other European powers. Italy had a moral and civil *primacy*, its own foundational values, and its own starting points (see also Chap. 2). This primacy was, for Gioberti, unavoidably linked to the Catholic religion. Gioberti summed up his entire intellectual engagement like this:

I propose to prove that Italy contains within itself above all through religion, all the conditions required for her national and political resurrection [Risorgimento], and that to bring this about she has no need of revolution within, and still less of foreign invasions or foreign examples.<sup>8</sup>

In Gioberti's reading, Italy had become *impoverished* because it had become imitative. The country had to find its own roots, and those roots belonged to its history. Gioberti praised Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803), the poet, dramatist, and fervent patriot and prophet of unity of Italy, for embodying the true fire of Italian genius, seeing the salvation of Italy 'in political and literary independence from France'.

Gioberti was adamant that the Pope should remain a unifying figure for the new Italian confederation. He therefore went up against those forces that saw the Pope as a political obstacle: 'This last is a foreign idea born in the confused brain of a French priest [Félicité de Lamennais, initiator of the French Liberal Catholic movement] whose recent condemnation [in the 1832 papal encyclical *Mirari Vos*] proved that Gallic whims do not prevail over the common sense of Rome'.<sup>9</sup>

To Gioberti, the French model for political and spiritual modernization remained a rather primitive one. Italy should set its own standards; it could do so by remaining spiritually anchored in the church, and by recognizing the authority of the Pope. Such a position was never going to become hegemonic within the Risorgimento, and at the practical-political level, the union with the Church never worked out the way Gioberti had wanted.

But Gioberti's position toward the Church as a founding value of modern nationhood would never completely disappear from the intellectual horizon. This is important to remember, for Gioberti's ideas left a legacy to refer back to, also by Catholic thinkers of the twentieth century.

### MODERNITY, A 'CRIMINAL PLAN'. THE CONQUERING OF ROME AND EARLY STATE FORMATION<sup>10</sup>

Now again, it would be tempting and not entirely incorrect to place Catholicism as an adversary to modern politics, siding with 'tradition' and outspoken critique of the modern project as a work of the Devil. Surely enough, from the French Revolution onwards the relationship between the Catholic Church and modernity had always been very troublesome, to say the least. Ever since the Enlightenment, the Church officially condemned modernity for its godlessness.

We sometimes forget how radical this struggle became. The French Revolution pitted the Church against modern politics in ways that at the period seemed irreconcilable. It was a story written in blood. Opposition to the Catholic Church was one of the animating forces of the revolutionaries. Anticlericalism was explicitly written into government policy in 1792 as the First Republic was declared. The Papacy watched with dread as the Enlightenment 'cult of reason' sought to replace Christianity. Instead of worshipping God, the revolutionaries worshipped Man. In 1793 the humiliation of the Church reached its symbolic peak, when during the so-called 'festival of Reason', the Parisian Cathedral of Notre Dame was turned into a 'temple of Reason'. The Christian altar was destroyed and replaced by an altar to the goddess of Liberty.

The Papacy, and Christians all over Europe, watched with equal dread as the wars of Vendée unfolded from 1793 to 1796. As a reaction to the centralizing policies of the Republic, which involved the persecution of disobedient local clergy and the violent suppression of religious orders, Vendéans eventually took up arms against the republicans under the banner of 'The Catholic Army'. Men, women, and children were brutally and systematically massacred over the next three years.

The Papacy saw the French Revolution and the ideas behind it as a hellish development. It would for long react very strongly against any attempt of reconciliation. In 1832, Gregory XVI's encyclical letter *Mirari vos. On Liberalism and Religious Indifferentism* condemned Lamennais' proposal to welcome the new society and its civil liberties as an opportunity



for Catholicism—to ‘baptize’, in Lammenais’ term, the Revolution, or to ‘sanctify’ democracy as the priest and journalist Davide Albertario put it. The text reads: ‘At the present moment a brutal malevolence and imprudent science, an unrestrained arbitrariness prevail’ (*‘Alacris exultat improbitas, scientia impudens, dissoluta licentia’*).<sup>11</sup> It was precisely this reading that Gioberti referred to in his own defense of the ‘Roman wisdom’, standing as a bulwark against the ‘Gallic whims’.

This position remained unaltered during most of the nineteenth century, and it was a position that quite naturally informed the church’s position toward Italian nationalism, and hence the very project of state formation. In 1864, three years after Italy’s unification, Pius IX concluded his *Syllabus Errorum*, attached to the encyclical *Quanta Cura*, by condemning the idea that ‘the Pope would have to learn to accept progress, Liberalism and modern civilization’ (*‘Romanus Pontifex potest ac debet cum progressu, cum liberalismo et cum recenti civilitate sese reconciliare et componere’*). As the Pope stated in the opening lines of the encyclical, modernity must be seen as the result of ‘criminal plans by malevolent people’ (*‘nefariis iniquorum hominum molitionibus’*). This general outlook did not change until the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), and certainly explains the Vatican’s weak position toward right-wing dictatorship emerging in the twentieth century and its general distrust of national-democratic politics.

Put as such, the opposition between sacred and secular could not have been more absolute. In some ways this radical opposition has been carried all the way into the present. However, from Unification onwards, a flip side to that coin started to be seen. Beneath official proclamations, and simultaneously with power politics and wars over territory and resources, positions started to soften, and a dialogue opened. While always serving as a critique of modernity, Catholic thought on the modern also started to undergo profound transformations, and very much in the context of Italian state formation. Italian political Catholicism was indeed called into being by the Holy See as the agency of the Papacy in the struggle against the liberal State and in the context of the process of the Risorgimento. The process of political unification and state formation—carried out and finalized by an alliance between, on one hand, the Savoy House of Piedmont and the liberal class, and, on the other, by more radical figures such as Giuseppe Garibaldi—steadily ate away at both the territorial sovereignty of the Popes in the Papal States of Central Italy, and the legal privileges, landed property, and social influence which the Church enjoyed elsewhere in the peninsula. The final destruction of the temporal power of

the Papacy came with the occupation of Rome (September 1870) and its proclamation as the capital of Italy. The ‘criminal plan’ had been fulfilled.

The response of Pius IX was to breathe anathemas and excommunications against the ‘subalpine usurpers’ (the Savoyard royal family) and all others who had assisted in the despoliation of the Church. Following the conquering of Rome, the Vatican pronounced its ‘non expedit’, with the famous formula ‘né eletti, né elettori’, ‘no representatives, nor voters’. The ‘non expedit’ was already issued in 1868, and it obliged Catholics to stay out of Italian politics, at least at the national level. This position would become the model for all other liberal countries, resulting in a continuous cold war between the Vatican and the state—with clericalism and anticlericalism splitting European countries, sometimes even turning into separate and opposed ways of life.<sup>12</sup>

But with Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) this compulsive passivity outside the sphere of religion disappeared.<sup>13</sup> Leo recognized the end of monarchy in France and directed French Catholics to vote and to participate in the political life of the Third Republic, much to the consternation of Catholic monarchists in France who opposed the Church’s *ralliement* to the Republic. Leo also dealt with Otto van Bismarck in Germany in a prudent, and perhaps even calculating, fashion. While the Iron Chancellor pursued his anti-Catholic stance to the point where it became counterproductive, Leo encouraged a softening of the culture war by dealing directly with him in matters of diplomacy and Church appointments; this policy meant recognizing Germany’s conservative monarchy, and eventually led to three visits by Kaiser Wilhelm II to the Vatican.

Such a prudent approach was bound to be much more complicated and ultimately less successful in Italy. Too much was at stake, and substantial territories under direct dispute. While recognizing that Pius IX’s demand for a return of the Papal States from the Kingdom of Italy was the only sure support for the freedom of the Church in the age of the nation-state, Leo never realistically expected to get them back. Yet, in the hope of securing a deal for a sovereign Vatican State in a territory of its own that would protect the freedom of the Church from political interference by the Italian government, Leo maintained the ban on voting and participating in politics within the Kingdom of Italy. Leo’s efforts ultimately failed, showing that political prudence is sometimes unsuccessful in balancing the demands of the spiritual and temporal realms.

Quite crucially, however, a change took place with Leo’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891). This encyclical is beyond doubt one of the most

important ones in the history of the Church. It is rightly considered the first encyclical with an explicitly ‘social’ and political agenda (the most recent one within this genealogy is Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical on the environment, *Laudato si’*). The encyclical can and should be read as a reflection on modernity and its challenges. It provided some explicit guidelines for Catholics and how they should navigate, faithfully, within this modern world. It inspired Catholics to engage, to no longer sit back passively and watch the world around them change.

Catholics, in Italy as everywhere, were now urged to actively unite in all kinds of social domains, and to actively respond to the threat of liberal and anticlerical governments, as well as to the challenge of socialism.<sup>14</sup> By then it had become clear that modern society was more than a revolutionary chaos soon to collapse. Leo’s encyclical inspired a whole range of Catholic associational initiatives across the Italian peninsula: youth organizations, literary and recreational circles, organizations of Catholic workers and Catholic unions. In this period Italy also saw the development of what in Italian is referred to as ‘mutual’ organizations, Catholic responses to the corporatist models based on socialist ideas. Significant outcomes of this wider process included the emergence of institutions like the *casse rurali*, for example, banks organized as co-operative companies which lend money to peasants. The banks were based on a Catholic philosophy of personhood and morality: they were to be centered on people and not on money. One of the Church-affiliated credit unions established in this period was the Banco Ambrosiano, founded in 1896, five years after the *Rerum Novarum*.<sup>15</sup>

A young Sicilian priest, Luigi Sturzo, founded in the same year (1896) a *cassa rurale* in his hometown Caltagirone. Important figures in the wider Catholic movement, to whom we shall return below, like Giuseppe Toniolo, were active in the sector of the so-called ‘white credit’—a term used to contrast the ‘red credit’ of socialist orientation. Another important figure in this context was the priest Luigi Cerutti, who in 1896 founded the *Società Cattolica di Assicurazione* (the Catholic Insurance Society) in Verona.<sup>16</sup>

In short, a full-fledged and well-organized Catholic subculture, a Catholic ‘pillar’ or compartment within society was established in anticipation of a Catholic modernity proper. The movement in many ways resembled what the socialist labor movement was doing around the same time in Europe and beyond.

## THE CHALLENGE OF MODERNISM

Meanwhile, the Vatican was forced to face a new movement from *within* its own ranks, going still further: this movement was incidentally called 'Modernism'. 'Modernism' was an intellectual amorphous movement which developed among Catholics in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, first in France and England, with the proclaimed aim of bringing the Church into harmony with modernity and with the post-Enlightenment world.<sup>17</sup>

The term 'modernist' was first employed condemningly by the Church authorities. The official condemnation of modernism in 1907, with Pius X's encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, signaled a victory for Catholic antimodernists, and an antimodern position that would last in most of Europe throughout the first half of the century. Antimodernists such as Joseph Lemius, the man who drafted the major part of the papal document which condemned modernist roots and branches, described themselves as 'integralists', a title which was extremely revealing of how they saw the Church and its ideology.<sup>18</sup>

In Italy, the form which modernism assumed in Pope Pius X's mind was determined most vividly by Romolo Murri (1870–1944), a neo-Thomist cleric and cofounder of the movement 'democrazia cristiana' (christian democracy), the 'party that was never born'.<sup>19</sup> Murri was like so many others inspired by *Rerum Novarum*, but evenly by the writings of jurist, sociologist, and economist Giuseppe Toniolo (1845–1918). Toniolo was one of several central figures laying the groundwork for a full-blown Catholic modern outlook. He was the founder, in 1889, of the *Unione Cattolica per gli Studi Sociali in Italia* (Catholic Union for Social Studies in Italy). He consciously worked to develop a Catholic social and economic platform that stood in contrast to socialism. He stressed the duty of work and defended the social function of property, while also inspiring the formation of Catholic unions. He was one of the persons behind the weekly, *Democrazia Cristiana*, which was first issued in Turin in 1896. His most famous and important publication was his 'Treaty of Social Economy' (*Trattato di Economia Sociale*), which sought to lay the scientific and ethical foundations of a Catholic-inspired political economy, a corporate model based on solidarity and social justice. It was Toniolo who first (1897) gave the notion of 'Christian democracy' a substantial definition, as

that civil order in which social, legal and economic forces, in the fullness of their hierarchical development, harmoniously work together towards the

common good, and in such a manner that the greatest benefit of all is reaped by the lower classes.<sup>20</sup>

A later important figure in the history of Italian political Catholicism, Alcide De Gasperi, remained immensely influenced by Toniolo's early writings. In 1949, it was De Gasperi who introduced the publication of a series of Toniolo's most important works, including his 1897 essay in which the notion of a Christian Democracy was first pinned down with precision.<sup>21</sup> In a sense, De Gasperi would come to function as the political 'patron' and realizer of his most important ideas in much the same way as Togliatti liked to see himself as an interpreter and activist codifier of Gramsci.

Directly inspired by such ideas, Romolo Murri deployed a prodigious energy in propagandating a Christian social movement in and alongside the *Opera dei Congressi*, the nonpolitical association of Italian Catholic forces. Murri elaborated a quite detailed project for economic, social, and political reforms aimed at a radical transformation of the liberal State. He wanted to bring to life the ideas of a Christian Democracy within all aspects of human affairs. On May 1899, in the *Osservatore Cattolico*, Murri wrote:

In Italy we have called our young movement of ideas and souls christian democracy. It is a complex of clear and firm principles and criteria for action that must reform our entire public life... It was not meant simply to be a critique of revolution, the reaction of religious thought: it instead was meant to be a work of reconstruction, of reconquering.<sup>22</sup>

Catholic thinkers were moving consciously away from their defensivist positions, actively seeking to reform and mold the meaningful contours, ideational as well as institutional, of modern life. In fact, Murri considered a *fait accompli* what the official Church hierarchy was yet failing to realize: that the Church would necessarily have to accept political democracy. Not only, the Church would have to *identify* itself with political democracy as understood and interpreted by Murri and his followers, that is, as a 'direct participation of the people... with special reference to the most humble and numerous classes, in economic and political institutions'.

It is important to note how Catholic thinkers of the period had become ardently aware of the issue of class. They were not going to give away the 'class struggle' to the socialists—rather, they wanted to take up the class issue, but bring it within the folds of their own playing ground. In this sense, Murri was in fact ardently 'modernist'. He pushed his point by

claiming that modern democracy, originating from the French Revolution, represented ‘the very life of christianity in human history’.<sup>23</sup>

By inserting modern democracy into the track of Christian history, Murri was urging his movement to fashion and implement a Christian society—within the limits of which such a society was thinkable and definable in the given historical context. Modern political democracy, to Murri, had no meaning and function in itself; it was imaginable only as a political modality appropriate to reach and establish a social democracy, which to him (as for Toniolo) could not be but a *christian* democracy.

To Murri, Christian Democracy was political and social to the very same effect and to the very same extent. It thus represented a genuine alternative to liberal democracy, founded on individual political representation and the individual pursuit of wealth—which would never be able to generate a ‘social’ democracy. It was equally an alternative to socialist democracy, whose collectivistic objectives, he argued, would lead to a tyranny of the state over individuals and society.

The great novelty, and the true discovery of Murri and the wider movement around him, was that modern democracy could not be separated from the method of liberty, and that liberty was itself of Christian origin, integral to Christianity itself. Here he followed the stance more famously developed by Lord Acton in the same period, that the history of liberty is coincident with the history of Christianity (and Judaism). This interpretation was in open contrast to the Enlightenment-based version of a liberty gained by freeing states and persons from the bonds of the Church—a liberty gained *against* the Church. But it was also an interpretation that marked a clear distance from the authoritarian attitude of Christian medieval society, a conservative attitude which was still dominant within the official church hierarchy.

Not surprisingly, the Vatican remained skeptical about modern political institutions and the involvement of Catholics in national politics. In his 1901 encyclical *Graves de Communi Re*, Leo insisted that the label ‘christian democracy’ ‘must be employed without any political significance’. Leo thus consciously downplayed the political ambitions of a Christian Democracy, which should simply be understood, he said, as a ‘beneficent Christian action on behalf of the people’. The ‘democratic’ element, in this reading, had nothing to do with institutional politics; it simply meant to act and do good among the ‘people’. But this was not what Murri had in mind; his project was indeed political, openly geared toward real social reforms within the framework of state and society.

Murri cultivated contacts with modernists, aiming for a common front of scholars and social activists who were chaffing under hierarchical control. This affirmed the final suspicion among integralists that the essence of Modernism consisted in excessive claims for autonomy and an inbuilt intolerance for authority; in short, that the modernists were troublesome reformers which had to be controlled, or, if necessary, expelled. Murri was a Thomist in the classical sense, and remained skeptical about several aspects of the wider modernist movement. Yet the Church would eventually classify him with the modernists.<sup>24</sup>

The confrontation with the official Church hierarchy seemed inevitable, especially after the death of Leo XIII in 1903. His successor, Pius X, saw Modernism as nothing but an enemy to combat. In his encyclical from 1906, *Pieni l'animo*, Pius X explicitly addressed the situation among the Italian clergy. In this letter, which in many ways directly addressed Murri and his followers, the Pope put his finger on what he defined as a 'spirit of insubordination and independence displayed here and there among the clergy', and continued:

This unfortunate spirit is doing the damage especially among young priests, spreading among them new and reprehensible theories concerning the very nature of obedience. In order to recruit new members for this growing troop of rebels, what is even more serious is the fact that such maxims are being more or less secretly propagated among youths preparing for the priesthood within the enclosure of the seminaries.

In the same encyclical, seminarians were forbidden to take any part in 'external' activities, which meant any activity not under the direct control of the Church. In its final clauses, the encyclical explicitly forbade seminarians and members of the clergy to become members of the National Democratic League—the association founded by Murri and Giuseppe Fuschini in 1905 as a non-denominational party of Catholic inspiration. The conflict was by now a public affair.

Pius X summed up his position toward the modernists very explicitly in the encyclical from 1907, the famous *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, on the doctrines of modernists, which is nothing but one long attack on 'the errors of modernism'. In 1910, Pius X just as famously issued *The Oath Against Modernism* that was promulgated by the pope in the *motu proprio* ('on his own impulse', e.g. a document issued by the pope on his own initiative and personally signed by him) *Sacrorum antistitum*. The swearing

of this oath was compulsory for all Catholic bishops, priests and teachers, up until its abolition by Pope Paul VI in 1967.

In the years of Pius X, the church simply saw it as one of its most fundamental tasks to protect the world against modernism. It was a genuine culture war, fought not only against secular threats, but also within the ranks of the church. Hence also the condemnation of Antonio Fogazzaro's best-selling novel *Il Santo* (1905) which fictionally combined the social, scholarly, and Church reform movement. Murri himself was 'sospeso a divinis' in 1907 and then excommunicated in 1909.<sup>25</sup>

Murri would end up extremely disillusioned about the possibility of reforming the Church from within. While the Church thus came out victoriously against modernist tendencies, the seeds for a modern Catholic social and political movement had long since been sown. Murri lost his battle—but others were soon to pick it up.

#### ENCOUNTERING THE NATION: STURZO AND A PARTY OF CHRISTIAN INSPIRATION

In the years leading to World War I and dominated by the figure of liberal Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti, Catholics became increasingly aware of the issue of the nation. This was not an easy task, as the Church stood pitted against the state and the national identity it claimed to represent. Yet Catholics would openly try to harmonize 'solid patriotism' and 'true nationalism' with Christian and Catholic doctrine.<sup>26</sup>

The Church had by then down-toned, if not set aside, its disapproval of the myth of the nation born out of the French Revolution. This 'myth' had considered the nation as the expression of a new principle of people's sovereignty against the monarchic sovereign of Divine origin. The Church and the Jesuits of the influential journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*, and increasingly large groups of Catholics, were now committed to building a competing Catholic myth of nation that stressed the religious factor in forming the national identity. In doing this, they were seeking to reject the accusation of being unpatriotic, and were in fact accepting the existence of a unitary State.

This Catholic encounter with the idea of nation is absolutely crucial to understand. Ever since the Reformation, the Church had come to see nationalist tendencies as a threat to its integrity. With modern nationhood as conceived and enacted via the French Revolution, nationalism had come to represent a menace to Christian civilization writ large. At the



same time, by the turn of the century it was clear that the Church could not simply fight against the existence of nation-states and against national identification as such.

According to the Jesuit Agostino Gemelli (the founder of the *Università Cattolica* in 1921) nations are neither the product of an individual desire, nor a fact of nature. Nations are, he said, ‘wished by the God-Providence’; consequently ‘the source of love of *Patria* is God himself, as one country is the instrument of power, goodness and Divine providence, [and therefore] love of *Patria* is included, like the least in the most and the detail in the general, in the cult that is God’s right’.<sup>27</sup>

At the practical level, however, Catholic approaches to national politics were still prone with obstacles. As with so much else, the Great War and its aftermath proved a watershed, injecting slow but substantial changes. This was also because, although the Papacy and some sections of the Catholic movement opposed Italy’s intervention in the war, Catholics played their part loyally in the war efforts; and their patriotism removed the last major hindrance to participation in national politics.

Immediately after the war, in 1919, Pope Benedict XV lifted the ban on Catholics to participate in national political life. The Sicilian priest Luigi Sturzo, who had briefly collaborated with Murri before the war, was quick in action. Appealing to ‘all strong and free men’, he founded the Italian People’s Party (PPI), Italian Catholics’ first sustained experiment in mass politics.<sup>28</sup> The party became an immediate success, gaining 20.5 % of the national vote and hundred seats in the Chamber of Deputies in the 1919 elections. The result was largely confirmed in the 1921 elections. It was particularly strong and gained almost half the votes in a region like Veneto where Catholic associational life was extremely present and active. The party thus captured what since then has been called, and quite adequately so, Italy’s ‘Catholic vote’.

Sturzo very consciously, and here closely following Murri, posited the party in opposition to both Socialism and Liberalism. His sense that Italy had something genuine to offer modern politics, and that this ‘something’ must be grounded in its religious history, was expressed quite explicitly in the second last clause of the ‘appeal’ with which he had presented the party in early 1919:

We present ourselves to political life with our moral and social banner, inspired by the firm principles of Christianity that consecrated the grand civilizing mission of Italy.

In the words of Sturzo, this ‘civilizing mission’ had to show its real worth in the concrete historical situation that presented itself after WWI, with the collapse of empires and the simultaneous emergence of new forms of imperialism, be they socialist or ‘liberal’. In this context, Christian principles had not lost their importance, quite the contrary: they had become all the more necessary in modernity, the only reservoir of wisdom and ethical guidelines from where a true alternative to Liberalism and Socialism could be established. It was in this precise sense that Gioberti’s old notion of Italy’s ‘primacy’ and its ‘civilizing mission’ came to life again.

The model proposed by Sturzo guaranteed the overcoming of the historical fracture born in nineteenth century between the liberal ‘conciliatorism’ of the ‘transigent Catholic’ (who sought an accommodation with the less anticlerical elements in the ruling liberal establishment) and the social commitment of the intransigent Catholics (who, true to the spirit of Pius IX, abstained from any contaminating involvement with national politics)—a fracture that had come to appear insuperable in Italy and much of Europe. Sturzo’s ‘invention’ had a huge effect on the subsequent history of Catholic involvement in politics and on Italian political history as such.

Sturzo, in reality, had already prefigured and anticipated the idea of a party of Christian inspiration with a sharp democratic and reformist imprint at the famous Caltagirone speech (December 24, 1905) devoted to the ‘problems of the nation’. Here the adjectivation of the word ‘Catholic’ in the sense of ‘popular’, meant the abandoning of the traditional intransigent stance which evoked a de-historical identity, tout court simply Catholic.<sup>29</sup>

To Sturzo, the notion of ‘popolo’ was not a confused and indefinite mass of individuals, but an organic whole of social groups defined and characterized by their own position within the relations of production. Sturzo wanted to position Catholics as a *social group* and not as an ecclesial community within national political life. He wanted the party to work from the basis of a political platform that was not dependent on cultural universes opposed to Catholicism. In this way, he thought, the degree of secularization that followed with the process of political participation would not have devastating and disruptive consequences on the traditional Catholic doctrinal context.

Sturzo’s idea of a popular people’s party marked a huge and daring step forward in the process of modernization of the Catholic world. It sought to develop a Catholic platform from where to answer the challenges posed

by two crucial passages of modern democracy: the process of secularization and the process of political participation.<sup>30</sup>

As already stressed, the decisive point that qualified Sturzo's idea of democracy was that democracy must necessarily be a 'social' democracy, and not (only) a political democracy. Democracy, of course, should not be indifferent or unrelated to political forms. However, Sturzo saw that the establishment of a political system must correspond to, reflect, and represent a 'democratic' ideal social order. The crucial question here is in fact the difference between 'formal' and 'substantial' democracy. Already in 1900, Sturzo had argued that any notion of 'Christian democracy' had to work from the premise that democratic political participation could not be reduced to formal electoral rights, but had to be grounded in concrete forms of social engagements through which single persons found their worth and dignity within their encompassing political communities.<sup>31</sup> In other words, a truly Christian democracy involved an ordering of society in all its aspects, based on the 'popular will' without succumbing to the logics of majoritarian rule.

#### CATHOLIC THOUGHT AND THE FASCIST EXPERIENCE

As said, the PPI immediately became the second largest party after the Socialists.<sup>32</sup> However, very quickly its members had to position themselves toward another novel political creature, Fascism. Some of them joined the first Mussolini government alongside liberals. The Vatican itself maintained a highly ambiguous relationship with the PPI.<sup>33</sup> The Vatican secretary of State cardinal Pietro Gasparri initially called it the 'least bad' of all Italian parties.<sup>34</sup> After all, pluralism was not immediately acceptable for an institution with universalistic aspirations. The idea that a Catholic party might be just one among many parties troubled many Italian Catholics.<sup>35</sup> This attitude was also motivated by a more practical reason: the Vatican feared the loss of, at least political, control of Catholic citizens and preferred to make direct deals with the national state, rather than relying on a third pole which was potentially autonomous and independent.

Eventually the Holy See turned against Sturzo and supported factions that were unquestioningly prepared to collaborate with Mussolini. The PPI was dissolved and outlawed in 1926, and its main leaders and theoreticians were forced into exile. Alcide De Gasperi, the last party secretary and the first DC Prime Minister after WWII, found shelter in the Vatican library. Sturzo lived in London and New York for most of the *ventennio nero*.

On February 11, 1929, an historic treaty was signed between the fascist Italian government and the Vatican, re-establishing the political power and diplomatic standing of the Catholic Church, which had been lost when Italy seized Rome. The Lateran Pacts established the Vatican City as an independent State, restored the civil sovereignty of the Pope as a monarch, and regulated the position of the Church and the Catholic religion in the Italian state. Furthermore, a financial convention compensated the Holy See for the loss of the Papal States.<sup>36</sup>

This however did not mean the complete fascistization of social and political Catholicism. The *Azione Cattolica* (Catholic Action, the lay association of the Vatican), which had been important for the PPI and was to become even more important in mobilizing support and voters for post-WWII DC, continued to function as essentially the only non-fascist organization—a consequence of the 1929 treaty—despite the Duce’s efforts to restrict its activities. Equally important were other organizations of the Catholic world student from which many postwar DC leaders would be drawn. We shall have a chance to return to this argument in Chap. 5; for also fascist claims to modernity were ambivalent as concerns the possible role played by religion.

It is therefore necessary to briefly consider what happened to Catholic thought during the fascist period, especially because the fascist experience marked the intellectual and cultural journey taken by a whole generation of young Italians—those Catholics who, too young to be involved in activity of the PPI, grew up in fascist Italy and came into DC’s militancy after the war. This generation was formed in the two intellectual branches of Catholic Action: the FUCI (Federation of Catholic University Students) and the *Movimento Laureati* (Association of Catholic Laureate and Professionals).<sup>37</sup>

During the 1930s, young Catholic intellectuals, strongly influenced by fascist visions of modernity, elaborated their own project of an alternative modernity, endorsing and upholding almost all of the policies and politics enacted by the regime, from the demographic battle to the invasion of Ethiopia and the proclamation of the Italian empire (1936), which seemed to many in the association to herald a new epoch in which ‘Catholic’ Italy would play a leading role in a new world order.<sup>38</sup> The project of a new Catholic civilization, combined with sincere patriotic feeling, explained also the initial support the FUCI gave to many aspects of the fascist war efforts.<sup>39</sup> In 1941 the president of the FUCI Aldo Moro, not certainly the most radicalized patriots, wrote: ‘we can truly say that serve the *Patria* in arms is a great moment of life’.<sup>40</sup>

For young Catholic intellectuals, as for many other constituencies of Catholic Italy, Fascism was the normal and suitable regime for modern Italy, the best existing social model for the preservation of Christian values and for the anti-Bolshevik battle.<sup>41</sup> Already by 1929, over 50 % of the FUCI members were concomitantly members of the Fascist University Youth. And in the 1930s many of them participated in the Littoriali, the cultural activities sponsored by the regime.<sup>42</sup> Giuseppe Dossetti—a student at the University of Bologna and from 1934 a *perfezionando* at the Catholic University of Milan, and a crucial figure in the rebirth of Italian democracy after WWII (as we will see in Chap. 7)—participated at the activities of the National Institute of Fascist Culture, giving speeches on ‘The Originality of Fascism’ (December, 1933), ‘Bolshevik Experiment and Fascist Renewal’ (January, 1934), ‘Bolshevism and Roman Civilization’ (January 1935).<sup>43</sup> Amintore Fanfani—a member of the FUCI, a student and from 1936 a professor of economic history at the Catholic University of Milan—joined the fascist party.

Fanfani—who would collaborate with Dossetti and other Catholics in the writing of the post-WWII Constitution, and served many times as Prime Minister in republican Italy—supported the corporatist ideas of the regime (‘the third way’), that promoted the collaboration between classes, as a way to reconstruct the moral basis of the nation and oppose both laissez-faire liberal doctrines and Marxism materialism. He wrote articles for the journal *Dottrina Fascista* (‘Fascist Doctrine’) and was also one of the 330 signers of the 1938 Manifesto of race—which, inspired by the Nazi Nurnberg law of 1935, stripped all Italian Jews of Italian citizenship. He also wrote articles on the infamous *La difesa della razza* (‘The Defense of Race’), the journal directed by Telesio Interlandi which was published between 1938 and 1943.

To be sure, in 1931 Pius XI condemned, in the encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* (‘We Do Not Need’) some aspects of what he perceived to be the false religious elements in fascist ideology. The encyclical denounced the regime’s intention of monopolizing the education of the young, an effort that Pius qualified as a clear example of pagan ‘statolatry’ and a ‘new religiosity...that becomes persecution’. The denunciation was tempered by the statement that the encyclical did not want to condemn Fascism as such, but only those practices of Fascism that went against Catholic teaching. Between Fascism and Catholicism there was, for two decades, an intense flows of men, ideas, and interests—with tensions and conflicts but also with substantial exchange of vital sap. On October 28, 1935—at

the beginning of the fascist colonial adventure in Ethiopia, and the day of the anniversary of the march on Rome—the cardinal of Milan Ildefonso Schuster solemnly proclaimed that the Christian mission had found its ultimate expression in the will of the Duce and in the civilizing mission of Fascism. This very ‘mission’ was no longer perceived as national or Catholic: it had become the one and very same thing.<sup>44</sup>

In the historical context of interwar Europe, socialism and Bolshevism were seen as the major threats for Catholic faith. For example, in 1934 De Gasperi—writing on a Vatican journal—rejoiced in the defeat of the Austrian social democrats who ‘were de-Christianizing and fanaticizing the young of the country, and using political power to destroy the Family and suffocate the Faith’.<sup>45</sup> The German Church, De Gasperi wrote in 1937, was correct in preferring Nazism to Bolshevism.<sup>46</sup> After all, in March 1937, confronted with the violence and horrors of the Spanish Civil War and the persecutions against the Church in Mexico and the Soviet Union, Pius XI’s encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* branded atheistic Communism ‘the all too imminent danger’ that aimed at ‘undermining the very foundations of Christian civilization’. The encyclical was the tip of the iceberg of the anti-communist activity carried out throughout the world in this period by the Vatican. A particular role was played by the Jesuit order, whose overall ambition was to establish a Catholic international in Rome, in open competition with the communist international.<sup>47</sup>

Communism and Marxism had been condemned by the Church as early as 1864—with Pius IX’s encyclical *Quanta Cura* and its attached *Syllabus*—and the condemnation continued throughout the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Communism, Marxism, and then Bolshevism had been included in the wider concepts of secularism, socialism, and materialism. However, by the 1930s, the Vatican and the Jesuits had recognized that Bolshevist Communism—with its revolutionary appeal enhanced by the Great Depression—was a more militant version of socialism, or even a different, much more dangerous and destructive ideology. ‘Communism is by its nature anti-religious’, Pius IX wrote in the *Divini Redemptoris*. Communism, he continued, ‘strips man of his liberty, which is the principle of its life as a rational being, robs the human person of all its dignity, and removes all the moral restraints that check the eruptions of blind impulse’. By rejecting all hierarchical and divinely constituted authority in society, starting from the basic institution of the family, Communism ran counter to both reason and divine revelation. It was an onslaught against Christian civilization, concealing itself

in a ‘false messianic idea’ that entrapped the multitudes by its ‘delusive promises’. Therefore, sharpening and ordering the previous teaching of the Church on the topic, the encyclical cast the ‘satanic scourge’ of godless Communism as an antireligion, a genuine anti-civilization.

At the same time, the Church was aware of the threat posed by Nazism. Five days before the publication of *Divinis Redemptoris*, the Pope had issued another encyclical titled *Mit brennender Sorge* (*With Deep Anxiety*, or *With Burning Concerns*) written in German and not in the usual Latin, and addressed to the German bishops and the Catholic episcopate. Here, the Pope lamented that the worship of God, following natural law, was usurped by a creed of race and state. Racist ‘neo-paganism’ and the *Führerprinzip*—dominated by the pervasive and absolute ideology of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and by the State—represented a conceptual framework that was unacceptable for Catholics. It was also a political form extremely dangerous and threatening for Catholic organizations and associations which were risking to lose autonomy and freedom of action within the state—or, worse than that, violent repression.

Whereas in Italy the terms nation and *Patria* could be inflected in perfect tune with the ideological and semantic grammar of a modernized Catholicism, in Germany the same terms conjured up Nordic forests, pagan sagas, solar and Celtic cults rather than the Cross of Christ and Rome. However, the *Mit brennender Sorge* and other anti-Nazi stances lacked the radical expression that characterized the *Divinis Redemptoris* and other anti-communist policies and documents. The Catholic and Vatican attacks on Communism were more sustained and much more publicized than those on Nazism, not to say Fascism.

This is a much-discussed circumstance, which has led some historians to argue that the Vatican was in fact relatively supportive of Nazism. The most well-known argument in this direction is probably Cornwell’s controversial *Hitler’s Pope* from 1999, on Pius XII’s dealings with Nazism and anti-semitism.<sup>48</sup> However, the basic reason for what was at times a ‘hesitant’ attitude probably has to be placed elsewhere, with the ancient principle that had driven Catholic hierarchy in endless circumstances: sometimes history imposes to choose the ‘lesser evil’. And from 1917 onwards, the major Evil had become embodied by Bolshevism.

In any event, in the 1930s, the perspective for the Vatican and the Catholic Church looked grim. The threats were not only the ‘godless Red’ and the ‘neo-pagan’ tendencies of Nazism but also the weak liberal democracies such as France, not to mention the Protestant strongholds

such as Great Britain and the USA. In the 1930s, the Church seemed a besieged fortress, surrounded by enemies. The modern challenges—that had tried to corrode its ground since the French Revolution—looked as overpowering it. Never before, the identification of the Vatican with a fortress seemed so fitting. In those dramatic circumstances, Vatican officials turned even more distrustful, fearful, and inflexible. Their tasks and commitments became all the more limited and defensive. There was a narrow room for dealing with poverty, oppression, or violation of human rights—especially regarding non-Catholics, enemies by definition. Locked into their fortress, Vatican officials and cardinal focused on centralization and normalization of the Church, on control on the appointment of bishops, on education for young.

However, it is at the same time important to stress that this overall defensive attitude did not deprive Catholics, particularly the young generation, of independent mentality, ideals, and culture. And nowhere was this more visible than in Italy.

A crucial figure here was Giovanni Battista Montini, future Paul VI and the crucial figure in the Vatican's Secretary of State in dealing with the realm of party politics in the delicate period of the Italian political transition from Fascism to democracy, 1943–1946. In the period 1925–1933, he and Igino Righetti articulated the overall outlook of FUCI's cultural line. This was a view that revealed very weak ties with the tradition of liberal political and social Catholicism, but also a firm, moralistic, rejection of fascist ideology.

Fascism was seen as the result of the modern departure from God at the cultural and spiritual level. The challenge for Catholics, thus, was to reinvent and re-create a 'vital' and autonomous Catholic culture that could engage with, and eventually give direction to and lead the modern world. In his writings, Montini explicitly sought to bring into concord faith and reason, modernity and religion.<sup>49</sup> This was a significant break with the tradition of nineteenth-century political Catholicism and with Sturzo's *popolarismo*, which implied and advocated direct political action. It was also a rupture with the apologetic and defensive attitude toward Fascism common in other sectors of interwar Italian (and European) Catholicism.

In this sense, during the fascist period, a real change happened regarding the political memory of Catholicism. The result was that new generations of Catholics thirsted for a new cultural inspiration. This took place in a context in which the objective was more to correct totalitarianism than



to build democracy—which was unfamiliar to them and which seemed unattainable in the 1930s. In the search for a dialogue with the modern world, the *fucini* engaged with an eclectic and rich combination of cultural references, shaking Italian Catholicism from its provincialism. Jacques Maritain, Emmanuel Mounier, and the French neo-Thomists were the moral and intellectual compass in this search.

### TRANSALPINE INSPIRATION: JACQUES MARITAIN AND THE SEARCH FOR CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY

Jacques Maritain had been close to the quasi-fascist Action Française in the 1920s, but had abandoned the movement when it was condemned by the Vatican in 1926.<sup>50</sup> Working within a neo-Thomist philosophical framework, in the 1930s he started to embrace human rights and modern democracy. In particular, his 1936 study *Humanisme intégrale* and his 1942 pamphlet *Christianisme et démocratie*—which was dropped by Allied planes over Europe in 1943—had constituted a cautious, but nevertheless decisive endorsement of the ultimately Christian nature of democracy. As Maritain put it,

The important thing for the political life of the world and for the solution of the crisis of civilization is by no means to pretend that Christianity is linked to democracy and that Christian faith compels every believer to be a democrat; it is to affirm that democracy is linked to Christianity and that the democratic impulse has arisen in human history as the moral manifestation of the inspiration of the Gospel.<sup>51</sup>

Central to Maritain's theory and definition of democracy was the concept of the 'person' and its opposition to the 'individual'. The 'person' has a spiritual and transcendent quality, not reducible to material and biological nature; it flourishes only within a community, when open to God. It is via the transcendent principle that the good of all can be articulated in the first place.

Maritain was for a while mentor of Mounier. During the 1930s—partly inspired by Maritain—Mounier and the group around the journal *Esprit* condemned both Communism and liberal individualism as forms of materialism, and insisted that the 'person' always realized him/herself in a community, yet retaining a spiritual dimension which could never be fully absorbed into mundane politics. Liberal individualism was held respon-

sible for what Mounier disdained as ‘le désordre établi’, his designation for the corrupt parliamentary politics of the French Third Republic and for a political culture associated with the culture of the French Revolution. As he put it, ‘on the altar of this sad world, there is but one god, smiling and hideous: the Bourgeois’.<sup>52</sup> Mounier’s ‘communitarian personalism’ endorsed a society with a vigorous group life, and characterized by the decentralization of the decision-making process to communities with a human dimension.<sup>53</sup>

Maritain’s writings and those of Mounier were published by the journal of the organization and widely read by the *fucini*. Possibly, the most enthusiastic interpreter of French neo-Thomism was Guido Gonella. Gonella would later become secretary of post-WWII DC, main editor of the party’s newspaper *Il Popolo* and one of the closest collaborators of De Gasperi. In the period 1934–1935, Gonella repeatedly insisted on the concept of ‘person’ as the only way to solve the otherwise puzzling relationship citizen-State. The ‘person’, opposed to the ‘individual’, was the watershed that separated Catholicism from both collectivism (Fascism and Bolshevism) and individualism/capitalism.<sup>54</sup>

Montini translated Maritain’s *Trois réformateurs* into Italian in 1928—praising in the preface the accuracy of Maritain’s ‘diagnosis of historical and spiritual origins of modern error’<sup>55</sup>—and wrote an introduction to the Italian version of *Humanisme intégral*. Giampietro Dore translated Maritain’s *Primauté du spirituel* into Italian.<sup>56</sup> The distinction between the ‘spiritual’ and ‘temporal’,<sup>57</sup> on the eve of the Lateran Pact, ignited among the *fucini* an important reflection on laity and the relationship between religion, philosophical/cultural convictions, and politics.

Many young Catholics, not necessarily members of the *Azione Cattolica*, read Maritain in the 1930s. There is no doubt that for them, the French Thomist was a genuine ‘reading experience’ in the sense given to that term by Arpad Szakolczai: a formative and transformative ‘encounter with a certain work that struck a chord with personal experiences’,<sup>58</sup> generating an intellectual drive. For example, the Catholic philosopher Augusto Del Noce read *Humanism Intégrale* in full in French already in 1936, the year of its publication. In the post-WWII period Del Noce would elaborate and conceptualize a ‘Catholic modernity’ bridging a positive encounter between Catholicism, democracy, and freedom. The year 1936 was the year of the Italian war against Ethiopia, the event that marked the period of maximum consensus to the regime.<sup>59</sup> Del Noce, instead, felt a sense of utter disgust and moral opposition to Mussolini and Fascism, which he

regarded merely as a reign of violence, a brute force with no foundation in justice.

This opposition found in Aldo Capitini—the future organizer of the peace marches from Perugia to Assisi, whom Del Noce met in Assisi in 1935—an important political, philosophical, and existential point of reference. In this context, the influence of Maritain on Del Noce was crucial. Del Noce had never been a fascist. But quite importantly, Maritain's *magnum opus* made the conceptual incompatibility between Catholicism and totalitarianism clear to Del Noce, serving as a powerful antidote to clerico-Fascism. It in fact freed him and many other Catholics from the medievalist, antimodern utopia that drove many of them to adhere to Fascism, understood wrongly as a valuable ally in the fight against modernity and for the Catholic regeneration of Italy. In 1943, he stated very explicitly that his position was that of Maritain, 'the only possible salvation of the modern world'.<sup>60</sup> And it was on this basis that Del Noce developed in the post-WWII period his attempt at formulating a Catholic modernity.<sup>61</sup>

Another effervescent pole of Catholic culture in the 1930s was the Catholic University of Milan, engaged in harsh controversy with the Idealist conception of the 'Ethical State' developed by the fascist prime philosopher Giovanni Gentile. In such an intellectual climate, young Catholics such as Dossetti, Fanfani, Giuseppe Lazzati, and others scholars associated in some way with the *Cattolica*—such as Giorgio La Pira, an expert of Roman Law at the University of Florence—were fascinated by French legal-social currents of thinking, including authors such as Léon Duguit, Maurice Hauriou, and Georges Gurvitch, not to mention the 'institutional' ideas of the Italian constitutionalist, Santi Romano, who had always shown a special concern with social reality on which legislation should be based. As we will see in Chap. 7, Dossetti, Fanfani, Lazzati, and La Pira would become the diamond point of the group of Catholics appointed to the board that drew the Constitution of post-fascist Italy.

Some of these young Catholics were sympathetic with Fascism, yet, at the same time, they read and carefully reflected upon the work of Maritain and other European catholic thinkers who were leading the way in embracing crucial aspects of modernity and human rights as indispensable to a proper Catholic view of the world.

Maritain was able to capture the imagination of the older generation of Catholics, the *popolari* of Sturzo and De Gasperi. De Gasperi followed Sturzo and the tradition of *popolarismo*, but he also wanted to build a more comprehensive Christian Democratic political culture and identity.

In the 1930s, internally exiled inside the Vatican, he reflected on the role of Catholics in politics and on the double threat to European Christian civilization represented by Bolshevism and Nazi-Fascism. He widely read, wrote, and commented upon the most significant experiences and traditions of European Catholic political culture: nineteenth-century liberal Catholicism, the Catholic constitutionalism and the political history of the German *Zentrum*, Toniolo, and Church (and Catholic) social teachings. In many ways, Maritain's writings offered an answer to the deep-felt crisis of the 1930s. The autonomy of the state and the centrality of the person and his/her rights placed at the very top of the value hierarchy, pluralism, and anti-totalitarianism, the anti-materialism of the 'personalist' philosophy and its spiritual dimension, greatly appealed to De Gasperi.

What struck De Gasperi most were the forms of a cultured Christianity capable of speculating on a theological-philosophical renaissance and a 'modern' and nondogmatic reaction to the crisis of the times. Maritain's 'new Christendom', De Gasperi wrote in 1935, could positively become a 'myth' and provide Catholic political action with a weapon indispensable to oppose totalitarianism:

The attempt to draw the architectural lines of an ideal Christian State ... corresponds to a need of the Spirit ... The 'myth' in a Sorelian sense runs ahead of all modern political movements; and thus, why the vision of an 'ideal' Christendom, yet compatible with reality, should not run ahead of the Catholic youth, as the column of fire led Israel through the desert?<sup>62</sup>

In an even more emphatic note, De Gasperi claimed, a 'myth' or a 'mystique' is 'a necessity in our time, an epoch more inclined to accept simple formulae, sentimental and at times irrational'; it is 'a yeast needed for every popular movement and every political system'. Without a mystique, 'one does not win over the masses, and the working class is not swept along'; after, all, he concluded, 'Fascism, Socialism, and Nazism all of them have their own mystique'.<sup>63</sup> Vis-à-vis the experience of totalitarianism and modern mass politics, De Gasperi and the old generation of *popolari*—those who had entered politics before World War I, approaching politics with the modes and thoughts inherited from the nineteenth century—began to abandon the traditional Catholic hostility to mythical thought and accept its historical functionality and importance for the elaboration of a modern political language.

From his exile, first in London and then in New York, Sturzo too followed the evolution of French Catholic thought. Like Maritain, and

unlike many European Catholics, Sturzo refused to endorse Franco's struggle, or to portray the Spanish Civil War as a kind of modern crusade. Like Maritain, Sturzo considered democracy an authentic value inspired by Christianity and believed in the 'diarchy' between sacred authority and secular power. The term 'diarchy', he wrote in 1938, was the 'most apt for expressing the idea of a social duality' and the historical relationship of Church and state in the West. The two powers had always asserted themselves as 'the focal point of the two streams: the organizational and the mystical.'<sup>64</sup> The distinction between 'the organization' and 'mystical' corresponds conceptually to Maritain's distinction between the 'secular' and the 'sacral' as formulated in *Humanisme intégrale* and further elaborated by Maritain in the postwar period.<sup>65</sup> Like Maritain, Sturzo insisted that the Christian citizen (the person), whose conscience has been formed according to the teaching of the Church, must be the agent through which Christian moral values and social doctrine are transformed into political realities and applied in concrete circumstances.<sup>66</sup>

However, Sturzo's approach to democracy adopted a register different from that employed by Maritain: the first approach was historical-sociological in character and much more political and polemic; the second involved political philosophy and thought and was more irenic. The differences were the by-product of different biographies—for one, the involvement in active politics, for the other, a life of rigorous Thomist philosophical reflection. Sturzo remained convinced that Christian action required a Christian (albeit not confessional) party politics. Maritain did not see it that way.

### ON THE EDGE OF TRANSFORMATION

While the interwar years on the surface proved 'disastrous' for political Catholicism, not only in Italy but also in Germany and in other European countries,<sup>67</sup> the development of Catholic thought had not come to a standstill. Almost on the contrary, one might say: Catholic thought and Catholic positions toward modernity transformed very much as a reflection on the fatalities of the interwar period. In fact, the search for the foundations of a new social and political culture that marked the experience of the young Catholic intellectuals in the 1930s proved highly relevant and influential in postwar and post-fascist Italy. It furthered and fostered the building of a democratic political system inspired by and based on Christian principle. A very significant number of Christian Democrats had

been active participants in the life of the FUCI and *Movimento Laureati*. It was from this generation of Catholics that one would find future ministers or Prime Ministers (Aldo Moro, or much later Giulio Andreotti), MPs and member of the Constituent Assembly, political entrepreneurs, journalists and opinion-makers, university professors, pragmatic politicians willing to intervene in public life by means of cultural analysis, and ‘technocrats’ (sociologists, economists, social scientists) willing to play the democratic game, searching for a synthesis between Catholic faith and political responsibility. Many of these politicians and intellectuals flirted with Fascism, often considered to be the best social modern for the preservation of Catholic values. Yet vis-à-vis the increasing association of Fascism with Nazism and its racial policies, the experience of the war and the existential uncertainty it entailed, many of them, including Dossetti and his followers, drifted away from traditional Catholic intransigence and ‘romanità’, still advocated in 1940 by the founder of the *Cattolica* Agostino Gemelli.<sup>68</sup> They began a search for a Catholic response to the problem of modern mass politics and for the reconciliation of the Church with the modern world. In other words, the transformation was ignited not only by Maritain and his writings but rather by the fact that for the generation of the 1930s the pillar of their education and worldview collapsed, sparking a search for meaning.

In his comparative analysis of the world religions, and the rationalization processes that took place within these religions, Max Weber started out from the premise that a religious ethic ‘receives its stamp, primarily, from religious sources, and, first of all, from the content of its annunciation and its promise’.<sup>69</sup> Catholic thinkers took the wording of the Gospels seriously. While we as political analysts or historians may not share such a view, our analysis remains flawed if we do not take this essential fact into consideration. Of course, we are not suggesting that all answers are simply to be found within the kernel of texts that constitute Christianity, that everything can be reduced to a kind of ‘essential’ character of Christianity, a position that goes against the entire Weberian framework. As Weber proceeds,

Frequently the very next generation reinterprets these annunciations and promises in a fundamental fashion. Such reinterpretations adjust the revelations to the needs of the religious community. If this occurs, then it is at least usual that religious doctrines are adjusted to religious needs.<sup>70</sup>

To Weber, specific social strata may seek to seize a religious ethic, reinterpret it according to its needs and desires. But a most fundamental dynamic also lies elsewhere. As Weber goes on to say, ‘the type of a religion, once stamped, has usually exerted a far-reaching influence upon the life-conduct of very heterogeneous strata.’<sup>71</sup> The analysis therefore has to account for the way in which a religious ethic was indeed ‘seized’ by historical personalities, and with a ‘stamping effect’ on the political community that took shape after WWII.

To that discussion, we shall return in Chap. 7. The conclusion for now can be stated in brief. Despite enormous obstacles, internal and external to the church, from the late nineteenth century one can see the formation of what would later emerge even more clearly: the formation of a Catholic modernity. It was not only an Italian version of the modern but it was certainly also an Italian one.

## NOTES

1. Peter Wagner, *Modernity: Understanding the Present* (Cambridge, UK, and Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2012).
2. Typically, historical writing has been dominated by the idea that the experience of Europe’s twentieth century was defined by the conflict among ‘secular’ ideological traditions each of which had their own specific characteristics; for example, see Karl D. *The Age of Ideologies: A History of Political Thought in the Twentieth Century*, trans. E. Osers (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984); Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994); Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century*. New York: Knopf, 1994).
3. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christian, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 1–2.
4. Arpad Szakolczai, *Sociology, Religion, and Grace: A Quest for the Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 2007).
5. As summed up in Bjørn Thomassen, ‘Notes Towards an Anthropology of Political Revolutions’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 3 (2012): 679–706.
6. For a related argument on Germany see Maria Mitchell, *The Origins of Christian Democracy: Politics and Confession in Modern Germany* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2012).
7. We will in the chapter that follows show how it was in fact exactly the same underlying question animating Gramsci’s thought.

8. Vincenzo Gioberti, *Del Primato Morale e Civile degli Italiani*, vol. 2 (Losanna: S. Bonamici e Compagnia Tipografi Editori, 1846), 104.
9. *Ibid.*, 112.
10. This section draws on Staf Hellemans, 'From "Catholicism Against Modernity" to the Problematic "Modernity of Catholicism"', *Ethical Perspective* 8, no. 2 (2011): 117–27: 117–19; see also Paul Sigmund, 'Catholic Tradition and Democracy', *The Review of Politics* 49, no. 4 (1987): 530–48: 536–38.
11. The text in English of all encyclicals and papal documents are to be found at the official websites <http://papalencyclicals.net> and <http://www.vatican.va>
12. Guido Formigoni, *L'Italia dei cattolici. Dal Risorgimento ad oggi* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), 35–59; Martin Papeenheim, 'Roma o Morte: Culture Wars in Italy', in Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (eds.), *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 202–26; Stathis Kalivas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).
13. Rober Kraynak, 'Pope Leo XIII and the Catholic Response to Modernity', *Modern Age* 49, n. 4 (2007): 527–36; Michael Burleigh, *Earthly Powers: The Clash of Religion and Politics in Europe from the French Revolution to the Great War*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 334–411.
14. On *Rerum Novarum* and the birth and development of Catholic 'social thought', see Paul Furlong and David Curtis (eds.), *The Church Faces the Modern World: Rerum Novarum and Its Impact* (Scunthorpe: Earlsgate, 1994); Paul Misner, *Social Catholicism in Europe: From the Onset of the Industrialization to the First World War* (New York: Crossroad, 1991); Olivier F. Williams and John W. Houck (eds.), *Catholic Social Thought and the New World Order: Building on One Hundred Years* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).
15. Mario Taccolini and Pietro Cafaro, *Il banco Ambrosiano. Una banca cattolica negli anni dell'ascesa economica lombarda* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1996); for the Veneto region, see Giovanni Vian, 'Istituti di credito cattolici. Santa Sede e Opera dei Congressi fra fine Ottocento e inizio Novecento: il caso del Banco di San Marco di Venezia', *Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti. Classe di scienze morale, lettere, ed arti*, t. 156, f. 2 (1998): 238–411.
16. Silvio Tramontin, *La figura e l'opera sociale di Luigi Cerutti. Aspetti e momenti del movimento cattolico nel Veneto* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1968).
17. Darrell Jodock (ed.), *Catholicism Contending with Modernity: Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-Modernism in Historical Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Marvin R. O'Connell,



- Critics on Trial: An Introduction to the Catholic Modernist Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994).
18. Gabriel Daly, *Catholic Transcendence and Immanence: A Study in Catholic Modernism and Integralism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 184; Émile Poulat *Intégrisme et Catholicisme Intégral. Un réseau secret international antimoderniste: La 'Sapinière' 1909–1921* (Paris: Casterman, 1969); see also Émile Poulat, *Histoire, dogme et critique dans la crise moderniste* (1962), reprinted with a new introduction (Paris: Michel, 1996).
  19. Francesco Traniello, *Città dell'uomo. Cattolici, partito e Stato nella storia d'Italia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998), 77–100.
  20. Giuseppe Toniolo, 'Il concetto cristiano della democrazia', *Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali e Discipline Ausiliare* 14 (1897): 325–69, now in Giuseppe Toniolo, *Democrazia cristiana. Concetti e indirizzi*, with preface by Alcide De Gasperi (Città del Vaticano: Tip. Poliglotta Vaticana, 1949), 17–90: 26.
  21. *Ibid.*
  22. Quoted in Andrea Tornielli, *La fragile concordia: Stato e cattolici in centocinquant'anni di storia italiana* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2011), 70.
  23. See the 'maximum and minimum program of christian democracy' and the 'program of Christian Democracy', in *Cultura Sociale*, of August 1, September 1, and November 1 1901 quoted in Giuseppe Are, *I cattolici e la questione sociale in Italia, 1894–1904* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1963), 459–70; see also Traniello, *Città dell'uomo*, 91.
  24. Pietro Scoppola, *Crisi modernista e rinnovamento cattolico in Italia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1961), 158; Maurilio Guasco, *Modernismo: i fatti, le idee, i personaggi*. Turin: Edizioni San Paolo, 1995), 140–41.
  25. The suspension *a divinis* is not a deprivation of the clerical state, commonly known as 'defrocking', but rather a penalty barring the exercise of the power of office (such as the celebration of the Mass). The excommunication of Murri was revoked in 1943, shortly before his death. Ironically—and perhaps somewhat tragically—Murri died just months before the new DC started to take shape, initiating its way toward power that was to become more triumphant than Murri himself could not possibly have imagined.
  26. Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century Italy*, trans. S. Dingee and J. Pudney (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 115–21; Francesco Traniello, *Religione cattolica e Stato nazionale. Dal Risorgimento al secondo dopoguerra* (Bologna. Il Mulino, 2007), 7–57; Formigoni, 'L'Italia dei cattolici', 13–59.
  27. Agostino Gemelli, *Principio di nazionalità e amor di patria nella dottrina cattolica* (Turin: Libreria editrice internazionale, 1918), 52, 60–1.

28. The text is in Luigi Sturzo, *I discorsi politici* (Rome: Istituto Luigi Sturzo, 1951), 1–7. Sturzo made his appeal on January 18, 1919, the day when the Paris peace conference opened.
29. Luigi Sturzo, *I problemi della vita nazionale dei cattolici italiani* (Rome: Società nazionale di cultura, 1906).
30. On this see also Norberto Bobbio, *Ideologica Profile of Twentieth-Century Italy*, trans. L.G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 113–14.
31. See Traniello, *Città dell'uomo*, 161–2.
32. What follows on the PPI in the 1920s draws on Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth Century Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 134; Jan-Werner Müller, 'The Paradoxes of Post-War Italian Political Thought', *History of European Ideas* 39, no. 1 (2013): 79–102: 84–5.
33. On this, see John Pollard, 'Italy', in Tom Buchanan and Martin Conway (eds.), *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918–1965* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 69–96: 77–82.
34. Quoted in John N. Molony, *The Emergence of Political Catholicism in Italy: Partito Popolare, 1919–1926* (Totowa, NJ: Rowan and Littlefield, 1977), 47–8.
35. Agostino Giovagnoli, *La cultura democristiana: tra chiesa cattolica e identità italiana, 1918–1948* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1991), 23–55.
36. John Pollard, *Catholicism in Modern Italy: Religion, Society and Politics since 1861* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 85–7; Roberto Pertici, *Chiesa e Stato in Italia. Dalla Grande Guerra al nuovo Concordato, 1914–1984* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009), 99–152.
37. Jorge Dagnino, 'The Intellectuals of Italian Catholic Action and the Sacralisation of Politics in 1930s Europe', *Contemporary European History* 21, no. 2 (2012): 215–33; Richard J. Wolff, *Between Pope and Duce: Catholic Students in Fascist Italy* (New York, Frankfurt a.M., Paris: Peter Lang, 1990).
38. Jorge Dagnino, 'Catholic Modernities in Fascist Italy: the Intellectuals of Azione Cattolica', *Totalitarian Movement and Political Religion* 8, no. 2 (2007): 329–41.
39. Jorge Dagnino, 'Catholics students at war: the Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana, 1940-43', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 14, no. 3 (2009): 285–304.
40. Aldo Moro, 'Vita militare', *Azione Fucina*, July 30, 1941.
41. Emilio Gentile, 'New idols: Catholicism in the face of Fascist totalitarianism', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 11, no. 2 (2006): 143–60.
42. Renato Moro *La formazione della classe dirigente cattolica 1929–1937* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1979), 81.

43. On this see Enrico Galavotti, *Il giovane Dossetti. Gli anni della formazione, 1913–1939* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), 85–92.
44. Schuster quoted in Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il duce*, vol. 1: *Gli anni del consenso, 1929–1936* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974), 624–5.
45. Alcide De Gasperi [Spectator], ‘La quindicina internazionale’, *L’Illustrazione Vaticana* 5 (March 1, 1934): 216–17.
46. Alcide De Gasperi [Spectator], ‘La quindicina internazionale’, *L’Illustrazione Vaticana* 8 (January 16, 1937): 17–8.
47. Emma Fattorini, *Hitler, Mussolini and the Vatican: Pope Pius XI and the Speech That Was Never Made*, trans. C. Ipsen (Cambridge, UK, and Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2011), 65–6.
48. John Cornwell, *Hitler’s Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (New York: Viking, 1999).
49. Giovambattista Montini, ‘Idee-forze’, *Studium* 24 (July–August 1928): 341–6; Giovambattista Montini, ‘I cattolici e la cultura’, *Azione Fucina*, August 31, 1930.
50. What follows on Maritain and Mounier draws on Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, 134–8; see also Jan-Werner Müller, ‘Die eigentlich katholische Entschärfung? Jacques Maritain und die Fluchtwege aus dem Zeitalter der Extreme’, *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* 2, no. 3 (2008): 40–54; see also John Di Joseph, *Jacques Maritain and the Moral Foundation of Democracy* (Lanham, Md.: Rowan and Littlefield, 1996).
51. Jacques Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy*, trans. D. C. Anson (San Francisco, Calif. Ignatius Press, 1943), 37.
52. Quoted in Samuel Moyn, Moyn, ‘Personalism, Community and the Origins of Human Right’, in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman (ed.), *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 86–106: 89.
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59. De Felice, *Mussolini il duce*; Angelo Del Boca (ed.), *Le guerre coloniali del Fascismo*. (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2008).
60. Augusto Del Noce, *Scritti Politici, 1930–1950*, ed. T. Dell’Era (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino: 2001), 182.
61. On Del Noce’s intellectual and existential trajectory, see Bjørn Thomassen and Rosario Forlenza, ‘Christianity and Political Thought: Augusto Del Noce and the Ideology of Christian Democracy in Post-war Italy’ *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 21, No. 2(2016): 181–99.
62. Spectator [Alcide De Gasperi], ‘La quindicina internazionale’, *L’Illustrazione Vaticana* 6 (February 16, 1935): 179–80. De Gasperi reviewed here Maritain’s essay ‘Idéal historique d’une nouvelle chrétienté’, published in *Vie Intellectuelle* on January 25, 1935.
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68. Enrico Galavotti, *Il professorino. Giuseppe Dossetti tra la crisi del Fascismo e la costruzione della democrazia, 1940–1948* (Bologna: Il Mulino 2013), 11.
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## Gramsci and the Italian Road to Socialist Modernity

If liberals had struggled to carve out an Italian particularity on the road to political modernity, mainly with reference to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and if Catholics had started their own elaboration of an antirevolutionary modernity grounded in Christianity and Italian history, then Italian socialists from the early twentieth century faced a similar task within this larger field of ideological competition: the elaboration of a socialist path to modernity.

This challenge had to be confronted in dialogue with Marxist theory ideology (more than Enlightenment thinking writ large) and the interpretation of the Russian Revolution (more than its French predecessor).

To what extent, and how exactly, could Italy lean on to socialist ideas, principles, and guides for action developed elsewhere? Could Marxism and Leninism serve as recipes for Italy to become socialist modern? Or did Italy have to develop its own socialist modernity? The question was not only how to situate Italy with respect to the Risorgimento but also how the Italian working class and its peasantry could mobilize a political uprising with reference to the October Revolution. Posed as such, this remained Antonio Gramsci's motivating question, underlying his entire political thought and social analysis.

The answers Gramsci gave were rooted in an analysis that was fundamentally 'local' and specific to Italy; yet Gramsci's thought is by many—today perhaps more than ever before—seen as a groundbreaking development of socialist theory, of relevance far beyond the Italian experience.

And to some extent, it was via the Italian experience that a certain kind of ‘Eurocommunism’ developed, with a distinctive set of theoretical ideas combined with strategies of power that sought to rethink revolutionary practices.

Before Gramsci, the question of Italy’s road to emancipation had been posed by other socialists, including one of the founders of the Socialist Party of Italian workers (1892, Italian Socialist Party from 1895), Filippo Turati (1857–1932). For Turati, as for other socialists, the model to follow by post-WWI Italy was Germany, where the Social Democratic Party (SPD) gained 20% of the votes for the 1920 Reichstag elections, establishing itself as a well-organized mass party. Therefore, the ‘old man’ of Italian socialism rejected the violent overthrow of state and society based on the Bolshevik model, and advocated a peaceful and legal transition to socialism. This must not be overlooked: Gramsci did not develop his ideas in a vacuum.

Although Turati thought of himself as a Marxist, he paid little attention to the revolutionary side of Marxism (and the strategies related thereto, as developed by Lenin). He gravitated toward the utopian communal theories of Benoît Malon (1841–1893), who emphasized the cultural preparation necessary for the replacement of capitalism by socialism. Revolution would long remain part of his vocabulary, but the revolutionary socialists would eventually come to think of him as an adversary. Turati’s ideas were in turn much inspired by the Russian-born revolutionary ideologist Anna Kuliscioff (1855–1925), who, following a tempestuous breakup with Italian anarchist Andrea Costa (1851–1910), became lifelong partner to Turati. She was first anarchist, then socialist, arguing for a ‘democratic’ interpretation of Marx. It was Kuliscioff who urged Turati to develop a specifically Italian socialist strategy toward the peasants and the Southern Question within the framework of the PSI, engaging the particularity of Italy’s geographic and social diversities. This was also a clear recognition that while in the industrializing North the role of the party must be to support and unify the working classes such a strategy could not easily be employed in the South. In other words, there were already several ideas available concerning Italy’s culture-specific road to social(ist) and political modernity onto which Gramsci could build as his political thought started to mature.<sup>1</sup> As this chapter will show, with the fundamental notion of ‘passive revolution’, coupled with his concepts of hegemony and war of position, Gramsci definitely broke with orthodox historical materialism and also with the most deterministic elements of

Marxian theory. However, as we already indicated, the main elements of Gramsci's philosophy—the role of consciousness in determining human action and the importance of ideological hegemony in maintaining social relations, and the role of intellectuals and the party in opening the way for a revolutionary alternative—are as much developments of the Italian political and cultural tradition as of Marxism.<sup>2</sup>

In fact Gramsci employed the language of an Italian political tradition, assimilating Marxist concepts into its framework; it is the peculiar mix of Hegel/Marx and Machiavelli that so many commentators have found distinctive about Gramsci's Marxism. In so doing, he developed a new language or meta-theory of modernity and modernization, thinking from the Italian case 'upwards'. In his search for a theory of proletarian hegemony in a period of organic crisis (or 'passive revolution') of the bourgeois State—a red thread which runs through the *Quaderni del carcere* (*Prison Notebooks*)<sup>3</sup>—Gramsci attempted to reconceptualize Italian modernity. The *Notebooks* are the creative reworking of a quintessential Italian theme: how to unite theory and practices and bring together the diverse classes, cultures, geographies, and histories that made up the Italian state. Despite its fragmentary nature, the *Notebooks* provided the most comprehensive analysis and perhaps the most fascinating solution to this problem.

### PASSIVE REVOLUTION: FROM RISORGIMENTO TO FASCISM

In Europe and beyond, the very word 'revolution' had changed significance with and after the French Revolution; it had turned into a kind of mystique, and this was only reinforced with socialist interpretations. In fact, the Bolsheviks consciously emulated the French Revolution in yet another interpretation of progress and emancipation. 'Revolution' has a strong set of dense and significant semantic connotations, but it is at the same time (like modernity itself) a vague, meddling term, open to all sorts of interpretations.

Gramsci appropriated the concept of 'passive revolution' from the historian of the failed Neapolitan Revolution in 1799 Vincenzo Cuoco—combined with the coupling 'revolution-restoration' coined by French historian Edgar Quinet (1803–1875) in *Le rivoluzioni d'Italia* (1848)—as an analytical tool to interpret and understand the distinctive features of the Italian Risorgimento.<sup>4</sup> His detailed examination of the Risorgimento in the *Notebooks* served not merely to highlight the origins of the present problem but to rethink the terms in which they had been traditionally addressed.<sup>5</sup>

To Gramsci, the process of national unification lacked popular initiative and the radicalism of revolutionary, Jacobin activism. In contrast to the French Revolution—a revolutionary rupture that had brought about profound societal changes—the Risorgimento had been a ‘revolution without revolution’, or a royal conquest, which glossed over the underlying and suppressed social and political conflict.<sup>6</sup> It had ignited the development of a new political–institutional formation without any reordering of social relations. It had been a transformation of political forms undertaken by elites, garbed in the rhetoric of previous revolutionary movements, but without the extensive involvement of subaltern classes that had forced a questioning of social and economic power relations in earlier transformations. It had established bourgeois domination gradually and by means of compromise among the exploiting classes, without the radical and punctual destruction of the ancient regime as it had happened from below in France, driven by the popular masses in 1789–1794 under the leadership of the Jacobins.

Instead, the architects of Italian unification—the moderate liberals, Cavour, the followers of the monarchy, and the agrarian elites—wanted only to maintain their socioeconomic position by securing political power. They had based their domination not on intellectual and moral leadership—which following Gioberti, Gramsci regarded crucial for the establishment of a genuine political hegemony—but rather on the crudest forms of force and consent.<sup>7</sup> The moderates and Cavour had established alliances between big landowners in the Mezzogiorno and the northern bourgeoisie, while absorbing opposition in parliament through continually assimilated change within the current social formations. Gramsci therefore came to the conclusion that,

The important thing is to analyze more profoundly the significance of a ‘Piedmont’-type function in passive revolutions—i.e. the fact that a state replaces the local social groups in leading a struggle of renewal. It is one of the cases in which these groups have the function of ‘domination’ without that of ‘leadership’: dictatorship without hegemony (Q15, 59).

The possible alternative—the radical–democratise Mazzinians and the Action Party—had remained un-influential and ineffective, weakened by abstract and international viewpoints. The Action Party, Gramsci argued, must win over the allegiance of the peasantry and provide the Risorgimento with a more markedly national-popular-democratic character, launching a



project of agrarian reform. Instead, their advocacy of religious reform mirrored the quintessential feature of Italian intellectuals, namely a hopeless distance from the concerns and needs of people: ‘no only did it [a religious reform] not interest the great rural masses’, Gramsci argued, ‘but on the contrary rendered them open to incitement against the new heretics’.<sup>8</sup> In the end, the opportunity was lost because the Mazzinians were worried on the one hand that a genuine mass movement might lead to terror (as in 1790), and on the other that the Austrians might exploit the peasantry for a Vendée-type counterrevolutionary strategy. On the only occasion when they succeeded in gaining the initiative—during Garibaldi’s invasion of Sicily—the Mazzinians ended up brutally crushing the peasant uprising against the southern barons. In the end, Gramsci thought, the Action Party’s approach actually reflected a long-standing failure on the part of the urban bourgeois to engage with the rural peasantry going back to the time of medieval communes, a pattern which was repeated at a different level in the modern north–south divide: in both cases, the Italian bourgeoisie consolidate power not through an alliance with the more dynamic and vital sections of society but through a compromise with the agrarian elites. The Italian bourgeoisie was unable to impose itself on the ‘old feudal class’, or establish ‘hegemony’ and influence over the popular classes. As a result, the new Italian state lacked popular legitimacy and was neither fully bourgeois nor capitalist, with negative consequences for the liberal Italian economy. ‘The paltry political life from 1870 to 1900, the fundamental and endemic rebelliousness of the Italian popular classes, the narrow and stunted existence of a skeptical and cowardly ruling stratum’: to Gramsci, these were all the consequences of that failure.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout his account, Gramsci constantly compared the Mazzinian with the French Jacobins, who he regarded as ‘Machiavellian’ realists, rather than ‘abstract idealists’. By building a national-popular mass movement on the basis of urban–rural alliances, the Jacobins had succeeded in leading—representing not just the immediate interests of the existing bourgeoisie—not a moderate and exiguous class, but ‘the revolutionary movement in its entirety, as an integrated historical development’. He wrote:

They [the Jacobins] did not only organize a bourgeois government, that is make the bourgeoisie the dominant class, they did more, they created the bourgeois State; they made the bourgeoisie the leading national class, hegemonic, that is they gave the new State a permanent base, they created the compact modern French nation.<sup>10</sup>

The contrast with the ‘illicit’ union of moderates and Action Party could not have been greater. Rather than the legitimate modern bourgeois parliamentary state, ‘they produced a bastard’, which failed to have neither ‘a diffuse and energetic ruling class’ nor ‘to include the people’.<sup>11</sup> In short, the Mazzinians (the Italian bourgeoisie) had failed in their historical task. After 1848, the real motor of unity had not been a revolutionary class, but the Piedmontese State. The process of hegemonic expansion, which had been a distinctive feature of the bourgeoisie’s rise and transformation, could not develop. The ineffectiveness of the Mazzinian project resulted in the group’s absorption into the moderates, and its acquiescence and passive acceptance of the formal unity imposed by Piedmont and the monarchy. Crucially, a pattern for the development of liberal Italy was set, with ‘transformism’ continuing the process activated by the elites of the decapitation and the annihilation of potentially disruptive radical social forces.<sup>12</sup> As Gramsci remarked, the mixture of bribery and police repression—employed with varying degree of combination and finesse—characterized the methods and forms of political control enacted by the various liberal regimes, particularly in the south, up to and including Fascism. In fact, the latter was simply a symptom of the limits of liberal legality in the face of the mounting organized social unrest in both town and countryside following WWI. Fascism, in the end, was the revelation of recent Italian history.

Therefore, the Italian ‘passive revolution’ encompassed Caesarist actions from above, such as Mussolini’s seizure of power, and a certain ‘style’ of reformist politics: the development of a new political formation without any reordering of social relations. Adopting Francesco De Sanctis’s famous comparison, Gramsci related passive revolution to the politics of Guicciardini as opposed to that of Machiavelli: the politics of diplomacy and management rather than exercise of *virtù*.<sup>13</sup>

However, and beyond the Italian case, Gramsci would also start to employ the term ‘passive revolution’ more positively to identify a *sonderweg* of modernization.<sup>14</sup> He did so by referring to historical periods and other countries that likewise had been lacking in popular impetus toward modernity: a ‘modernity from above’, lacking the radical Jacobin moment. The evident comparison was first and foremost Germany as forged by Bismarck. In France, after the Revolution, the emergent bourgeoisie ‘was able to present itself as an integral “State”, with all the intellectual and moral forces that were necessary and adequate to the task of organizing a complete and perfect society’ (Q6, 10). In contrast to the instance of rev-

olutionary rupture in France, other European countries had gone through a passive revolution in which the old feudal classes were not destroyed but maintained a political role through state power. Hence,

[The] birth of the modern European states [proceeded] by successive waves of reform rather than by revolutionary explosions like the original French one. The ‘successive waves’ were made up of a combination of social struggles, interventions from above of the enlightened monarchy type, and national wars... restoration becomes the first policy whereby social struggles find sufficiently elastic frameworks to allow the bourgeoisie to gain power without dramatic upheavals, without the French machinery of terror... The old feudal classes are demoted from their dominant position to a ‘governing’ one, but are not eliminated, nor is there any attempt to liquidate them as an organic whole... Can this ‘model’ for the creation of the modern states be repeated in other conditions? (Q10II, 61)

The epoch of passive revolution is therefore a reflection of modern state formation set within territorial and geopolitical conditions. It is also linked to the wider deliberations on state and civil society evident in the *Prison Notebooks* and the expansion of the structures of state organization, the complexes of associations in civil society, the role of trade unions and party organizational forms, and the extension of parliamentarism that are all noted as indicative of ‘the modern world’ (Q13, 27). In other words, passive revolution is the struggle over modernity—in Italy as elsewhere. Gramsci talked about this pattern as the ‘diverse manifestations of the same phenomenon’ linked to ‘various internal as well as international relations’ (Q1, 44). Drawing inspiration from the Italian Marxist Antonio Labriola (1843–1904), it is worth citing Gramsci at some length as he reflects on the ‘difference’ between France, Germany, England, and Italy ‘in the process through which the bourgeoisie seizes power’:

In France we have the complete phenomenon, the greatest wealth of political elements. The German phenomenon resembles the Italian in certain aspects, and the English in other aspects. In Germany, 1848 fails because of the lack of bourgeois concentration... and because the question is intertwined with the national one; the wars of 1864, 1866, and 1870 resolve the national question and the class question in an intermediate way: the bourgeoisie gains industrial-economic control, but the old feudal classes remain as the governing stratum with wide caste privileges in the army, in state administration, and on the land. But in Germany, at least, if these old classes retain so much importance and maintain so many privileges, they

exercise a function, they are the ‘intellectuals’ of the bourgeoisie, with a particular temperament conferred by their class origin and tradition. In England, where the bourgeois revolution occurred earlier than in France, we have the same phenomenon as in Germany of a fusion between old and the new, notwithstanding the extreme energy of the English ‘Jacobins’, that is, Cromwell’s ‘roundheads’: the old aristocracy remains as a governing stratum, with certain privileges; it too becomes the intellectual stratum of the English bourgeoisie (Q1, 44).

Eventually, Gramsci’s ‘passive revolution’ came to describe an entire period in European history, the ‘restoration period’ that had dominated since the ebbing out of the French Revolution, marked by the particular pacifying and incorporating nature of the bourgeois hegemony. This relates to the political developments especially after 1848—the period of imperialism—where the bourgeoisie, even if no longer a revolutionary class, managed to transform society according to its own needs, maintaining the masses in a subaltern position. With the defeat of the working and popular class in 1848–1849 all over Europe, and in 1871 at the Paris Commune, a phase of passive revolution began—a period, Domenico Losurdo has argued, ‘identifiable neither with the counterrevolution nor, even less, with the political and ideological fall of the dominant class’.<sup>15</sup> The analytical category of ‘passive revolution’, therefore, pins down the persistent strength, dynamism, and inventiveness of the bourgeoisie which succeeds—even in the historical phase in which it has ceased to be a properly revolutionary class—to generate sociopolitical changes, to hold firmly on to power, and to keep the working class in a subaltern condition.<sup>16</sup>

### *Revolution or Restoration: That Is the Question*

To be sure, the bourgeois passive revolution was still able to produce limited forms of historical progress. Yet, its logic of disintegration, molecular transformation, absorption, and incorporation aimed at hampering and forestalling the ‘cathartic moment’,<sup>17</sup> the point in which the subaltern classes jump from the ‘economic-corporative’ into the ‘hegemonic’ period. To put it differently, the main aim of the ‘passive revolution’ was to stop the subaltern social layers from becoming a ‘class’, agent, and actor within history. In this vein, ‘revolution’ is not really revolution: it is the ability of the middle classes to transform society and bring about changes that are indeed progressive, but which are not driven from below,

and which do not address the most pressing questions of social and economic injustice. The notion of passive revolution captures, therefore, various concrete historical instances in which aspects of the social relations of capitalist development are either instituted and/or expanded, resulting in both a 'revolutionary' rupture and 'restoration' of social relations. 'The problem', as Gramsci states, 'is to see whether in the dialectic of revolution/restoration it is revolution or restoration which predominates' (Q13, 27). A passive revolution, therefore, represents a blocked dialectic<sup>18</sup>; or a condition of rupture in which sociopolitical processes of revolution are at once partially fulfilled and displaced.<sup>19</sup> In this extended meaning, 'passive revolution' comes to signify a certain road toward modernization. As it has been argued, 'in a certain sense, the term has become synonymous with modernity, which is now viewed as a melancholy tale in which the mass of humanity is reduced to mere spectators of a history that progresses without its involvement'.<sup>20</sup>

And it is of course this history that Gramsci sought to rewrite. How? The answer much came to rest on Gramsci's famous notion of hegemony; but the answer, and the very possibility of a new form of hegemony, was to be found in the Bolshevik Revolution.

### THE REVOLUTIONARY MOMENT: FROM RUSSIA TO ITALY

The politics and policy of permanent structural adjustment, that is the true and deep essence of 'passive revolution', was shattered and thrown into crisis by the Revolution of 1917. The young Gramsci immediately understood its significance, defining it—in a famous article published by the socialist newspaper *Avanti!* on December 24, 1917—'the Revolution against *Das Kapital*' and, much in line with Lenin, the first act of the world revolution<sup>21</sup>. Following the interpretation of French Marxist historian Albert Mathiez (1874–1932), and definitively moving from an earlier interpretation of Jacobinism as a typical bourgeois phenomenon, Gramsci considered Communism and the Russian Revolution as the true heir of the Jacobin tradition.<sup>22</sup> The 1917 Revolution, Gramsci thought, demonstrated the concrete existence of a modernity, or a road to modernity, alternative to the endless passive revolutions enacted by the degenerate bourgeoisie.<sup>23</sup> It engendered a profound crisis of trust in the existing regimes and traditional structures of power, and conversely ignited an exciting boost of confidence within the subaltern movements on an international, worldly scale.

This was particularly the case in the two Western European countries where passive revolution had been the rule and not the exception for social transformation and modernization in the second half of the nineteenth century: Italy and Germany—countries now wracked, in the immediate aftermath of WWI and Russian Revolution, by profound social and political upheavals. The rise of Fascism in Italy and the reaction against the workers' movement in the Weimar Republic—which ultimately opened the way to National Socialism—were essentially the bourgeois response to the crisis of bourgeois regimes; a response which meant the acceleration of 'revolution' from above, a much closer integration of the state and civil society, and the abolition of limited forms of political expression and autonomous organization of subaltern groups (workers' leagues, unions). The reaction of the bourgeoisie to the October Revolution was another wave of passive revolution—in which the bourgeoisies adopted some conquests of the Russian revolutionaries, such as planned economy, with the aim of neutralizing it; a reaction which manifested itself with Fascism but also Americanism—Fordism—Taylorism.

Fascism managed to halt the crisis and ward off the workers' movement and the very possibility of a revolution. Yet, it also introduced divisions and conflicts into the passive revolution movement, thwarting and undermining its indispensable premises. The 'success' of (fascist) reaction accentuated the structural crisis of bourgeois hegemony, generating a 'state of exception' (*Ausnahmezustand*),<sup>24</sup> which would be ultimately resolved only with the traumatic incivility of WWII and the following return to a stable, albeit fragile, parliamentary and institutional incorporation.

Gramsci's response to the crisis of passive revolution—from the years of *Ordine nuovo* in the Turin workers' movement in the immediate aftermath of WWI to the founding years of Communist Party of Italy (PCdI), from the quarrels with the Trotskyist cofounder of PCdI Amadeo Bordiga to the work with the International, from the early years of the fascist regime to his final pre-imprisonment text *Alcuni temi della questione meridionale* (*Some Aspects of the Southern Question*, 1926) to his death—was quite consistent. He attempted to translate one of the crucial terms of the Russian experience and Lenin's political theory and practice, *gegemoniya* (hegemony), into a theory adequate to grasp the specific conditions of Italy, and in general of Western Europe. He sought to construct the forms and modes of proletarian hegemony which could subvert the existing structure of power, domination, and exploitation.

To understand Gramsci's hegemony and the revolutionary strategy (or alternative modernity) he elaborated, it is important to understand his biography and cultural–geographic background: he was Sardinian, and his political thought was firmly rooted in his real-life experiences of his native island and the wider Italian South. Likewise, it is important to understand that he was not a 'pure' theorist; rather, he combined the role of an innovative intellectual and leader of a mass party, and a political revolutionary.<sup>25</sup> This combination warrants further discussion.

### REVOLUTIONARY THEORY AND PRACTICES

Gramsci grew up in Sardinia, a land of poverty, miners' unrest, and banditry. His father, a civil servant, had been accused and found guilty of embezzlement. His imprisonment meant the financial ruin of his family. The young Gramsci worked in the local tax office instead of attending school. However, he won a scholarship to the University of Turin where he, while also working as a journalist for socialist papers and leaflets, became particularly interested in linguistics. The first encounters with the mainland and with industrial society proved to be shocking for the young, provincial Gramsci. And in many ways, Gramsci's thought can and must be related to his real-life experiences, and his own living through a series of crises.

Gramsci's first response to the oppression and exploitation he had witnessed on Sardinia had been a form of Sardinian nationalism. As he came to understand the mainland better he embraced Marxism, without ever forgetting the national and cultural divisions with which he had grown up. In fact, throughout his life he retained an acute sense that Italy's national unification had been incomplete; a wide chasm was deepening, not just between a prosperous and industrial North and a poor agrarian South, but also between what Gramsci called the 'legal Italy' of state institutions and the 'real Italy' of social, cultural, and class fragmentation.

In this vein, Gramsci fully belonged to tradition of Italian thinkers on which the Risorgimento had bequeathed a distinctive intellectual legacy: how to find a remedy to the two difficulties posed by the process of unification of the country? First, there were the cultural and economic divisions existing between both the Italian territories, particularly the developing North and the undeveloped South, and the educated classes and the unschooled masses. Second, and largely as a direct consequence of these differences, there was the tension between 'legal Italy', the set of

liberal institutions resulting from political unification, and ‘real Italy’, the fragmented social reality of divergent regional traditions, economic attainment, and polarized classes: a tension epitomized for contemporaries (and for Gramsci too) in the Southern Question. The Southern Question and *Some Aspects of the Southern Condition* were crucial in the development of Gramsci’s thought.<sup>26</sup>

In a letter most likely written in Moscow to the Executive Committee of the PCdI, but sent from Vienna, dated September 12, 1923, Gramsci wrote that the Southern Question is one ‘in which the problem of relations between workers and peasants is posed not simply as a problem of class relations, but also and especially as a territorial problem, i.e. as one of the aspects of the national question’.<sup>27</sup> This theme was subsequently taken up in greater detail in *Some Aspects of the Southern Question* (1926). Gramsci’s essay is a major affirmation of the condition of passive revolution, despite the fact that a direct link to the term awaited its full elaboration during the period of his carceral research.<sup>28</sup>

In *Some Aspects of the Southern Question*, the territorial, class, and spatial relations of social development in Italy are elaborated in such a way as to encompass the circumstances of uneven development between North and South, state formation complex relations of class stratification, racial domination, the question of intellectuals and the social function they perform in conditions of class struggle, and how best to mobilize subaltern classes against capitalism and the bourgeois state in order to break the ruling power bloc.<sup>29</sup> To put it differently, this unfinished essay ‘focuses on the fractured entrance into modernity that shaped modern state formation in Italy’<sup>30</sup>: this is the very problem of the passive revolution.

It is well known what kind of ideology has been disseminated on a vast scale by bourgeois propagandists among the masses in the North: that the South is the ball and chain that is holding back the social development of Italy; that Southerners are biologically inferior beings, semi-barbarians or complete barbarians by natural destiny; that if the South is backward, the fault does not lie with the capitalist system or any other historical cause, but with Nature, which made Southerners lazy, inept, criminal and barbaric.<sup>31</sup>

Among such historical causes within the nexus of relations between North and South in the organization of the state and economy, Gramsci highlights the specific emergence of capitalism and the dominance of an agrarian bloc that not only binds rural producers to the bourgeois landowners



but also functions as an ‘overseer’ for northern capitalism. ‘Any accumulation of capital on the spot’, writes Gramsci with a deeply spatial and geographical awareness, ‘is made possible by the fiscal and custom system and by the fact that the capitalists... do not transform their profits into new capital locally, because they are not local people’.<sup>32</sup> Extending the class stratification of the agrarian bloc making up the state was also the intellectual social function performed by those propagandists, noted above, who supported ‘capillary processes taking place within the bourgeois class’.<sup>33</sup> Benedetto Croce and Giustino Fortunato were ‘the two major figures of Italian reaction’, which absorbed radical intellectuals into the cosmopolitanism of European and world culture to defray autonomous formations contesting state power.<sup>34</sup> The southern intellectual is therefore linked to the rural bourgeois, who views the peasant ‘as a machine that can be bled dry’, deploying knowledge alongside a new type of intellectual, ‘the technical organizer, the specialist in applied science’, the supposedly ‘objective’ nature of which is equally used ‘to crush the abject and the exploited’.<sup>35</sup> Here, we have a precursor of the organic intellectual: those who give a social class ‘homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields’ (Q12, 1). It was subsequent to his imprisonment in 1926 that Gramsci would then further advance in the *Prison Notebooks* the themes of state formation and the territorial, class, and spatial relations of uneven development shaping modernity as passive revolution.

In the second decade of the twentieth century, in the wake of the exciting, contagious revolutionary fervor raised by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, Gramsci turned into a leading socialist intellectual, inspiring and being inspired by the *biennio rosso* of 1919–1920. This was a proper civil war. Trade unions increased their membership from a quarter of a million to two million, and strikes swept over the North of Italy. The socialists (at the 1919 elections, the first election with the proportional system) became the largest party in parliament.<sup>36</sup> But most important for Gramsci was the emergence of workers’ councils in the factories of the North.<sup>37</sup> As in other European countries during and after the war, bodies had been formed within industries and factories to involve not just management but also labor in planning; in Italy, these were called Internal Commissions (*commissioni interne*). In June 1919, Gramsci wrote:

Today the Internal Commissions limit the power of the capital in the factory and settle matters pertaining to workshop arbitration and discipline.

Developed and enriched, tomorrow they must function as the organs of proletarian power capable of substituting the capitalist in his present useful functions of direction and administration.<sup>38</sup>

The political, social, and economic inequalities stemming from Italy's unification could be overcome by completely reorganizing the economy, polity, and institutional framework of the country as a federation of workers' and peasants' councils. Gramsci was instrumental in organizing factory councils in Turin, the possible Petrograd of Italian Revolution. In Gramsci's mind, the councils had to be institutions for *autogestione* (worker self-management) as well as the basic units of substantial political democracy. Power needed to be given to the producers. Democracy was not about an empty concept or an abstract ideal of citizenship and equality. Socialism was not about traditional trade unions (which inevitably divided workers following the workers' different trades and skill levels, and quickly became dominated by bureaucratic elites and privileged cast of officials). Unlike socialist parties and trade unions, the councils were to be public institutions provided with productive, legislative, and executive functions.<sup>39</sup> In a famous July 1919 article on *The Conquest of the State* published by *L'Ordine Nuovo* he claimed:

The Factory Council is the model of the proletarian State ... The Council is the most appropriate organ for mutual education of workers and the development of the new social spirit that the proletariat has succeeded in drawing from the vibrant and fertile experience of collective labor. The solidarity which in the trade union was directed against capitalism, in suffering and sacrifice, becomes something positive and permanent in the Council. This solidarity is incarnated even in the most trivial of industrial production. It is captured in the joyous realization of forming part of an organic whole, a homogeneous and compact system of productive labor which disinterestedly produces social wealth, affirms its sovereignty, and realizes its power and ability to create history.<sup>40</sup>

For the enthusiastic and optimistic Sardinian, the councils that were emerging could serve as a revolutionary crucible, the 'national territory' for the class that had no *Patria*,<sup>41</sup> and eventually the first building block of a whole new international communist economy.<sup>42</sup>

Gramsci was also enthusiastically in favor of modernization of the factories, the introduction of Taylorism, and other kinds and elements of what he defined 'Americanism and Fordism' (the title of *Notebook 22*).

In Italy, Gramsci wrote, ‘there have been the beginnings of a Fordist fanfare’. This included ‘exaltation of the big cities’, ‘overall planning for the Milan conurbation’, and the more general ‘affirmation that capitalism is only at the beginning and that is necessary to prepare for it a grandiose pattern of development’ (Q22, 2). Captured here with ‘stark clarity’<sup>43</sup> are the territorial, spatial, and geographical dimensions of uneven development, as well as the combined character of its crystallization within a social formation: the Western (capitalist) road to modernity.

The reorganization of the labor process enacted by the introduction of new methods of rationalization, regulation, and disciplining as well as their impact on familial arrangements, the gendered division of labor, cultural and ideological forms all manifested within ‘Americanism and Fordism’, led to a profound questioning of the spatial and temporal spread of capitalism. Presciently, this entailed ‘the question of whether Americanism can constitute an historical epoch, that is, whether it can determine a gradual evolution of the same type as the passive revolution ... of the last century’ (Q22, 1). As Leon Trotsky himself recognized, in a speech delivered on November 14, 1922 to the Fourth Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) (at which Gramsci was in attendance), ‘We observe more than once in history the development of economic phenomena, new in principle, within the old integuments, and more-over this occurs by means of the most diverse combinations’.<sup>44</sup> For Gramsci, ‘Americanism and Fordism’ was the latest phase of capitalist reorganization understood in classical terms as an attempt to overcome the tendency of the rate of profit to fall through the implementation of ‘Fordist’ methods of intensification and rationalization of labor (Q22, 1; Q22, 13). Yet, alongside the rise of Fascism, ‘Americanism and Fordism’ were also regarded in novel terms as the latest phase in Italy’s history of modern state formation—as a passive revolution referring to the reorganization of state power and class relations as well as the constitution of political forms to suit the expansion of capitalism as a mode of production.<sup>45</sup>

All this would be positive for Italy. All would hasten the demise of the feudal remnants in Italian politics, society, and economy. Likewise, these developments would make workers more disciplined—a precondition for the proletarian state, in which work was to be both more efficient and yet somehow more liberated. In short, ‘Lenin had wanted Russians workers to become Germans. Gramsci wanted Italians to become Americans’.<sup>46</sup> However, as Jan-Werner Müller points out, Gramsci never explained how ‘more individual autonomy through self-management and more efficiency

through national planning would go hand-in-hand'.<sup>47</sup> And this is of course no minor issue. As Müller explains further, he also was largely unconcerned that American-style rationalization and what he called the socialist 'regulated society' might permanently alienate workers from the products as well as from the processes of work.<sup>48</sup>

In 1919, he thought he was emulating Lenin. He hoped to follow the example of 1917 and to implement in Italy too a revolution against Marx's *Capital*. In the end, conditions in Russia and Italy were not that different. Russia had been backward, so was Italy; revolutionary will could succeed precisely at the periphery of the capitalist world. However, Lenin had of course turned from 'all power to the soviets' to 'all power to the party', and had insisted that the party-state was crucial for implementing his own version of 'Americanism'. As in Russia, Gramsci and the Italian revolutionaries were faced by the contrast between, on the one hand, the councils and, on the other hand, party and unions, deeply unsatisfied by the subordinate role Gramsci assigned them. Eventually, the unions were taken by the government's promise that parliament would study and solve the problems of industrial democracy; the councils, the bridge to the new socialist and internationalist *Patria*, turned into a minor instrument of industrial relations.

The *biennio rosso*, however, had made the possibility of a repeat of the Russian Revolution in Italy seem very real. Things, though, changed rapidly. Fascism fed off that perception; the fascists attacked party buildings in 1919 and Gramsci needed a bodyguard from 1921 onwards. Moreover, the power of the Church and the difficulties involved in mobilizing the peasants of the countryside demonstrated that Italy and Italians had their own characters. Gramsci later observed that 'the class struggle has always assumed in Italy a very harsh character through the human immaturity of some sections of the population. Cruelty and absence of sympathy are two characteristics peculiar to the Italian people, who pass from childish sentimentality to the most brutal and bloody ferocity, from passionate anger to the cold contemplation of the suffering of others'.<sup>49</sup>

Gramsci argued that the response to Fascism and reaction, that is the socialist revolution, and the permanent dominance of the proletariat required the conquest of hegemony, which involved the Russian revolutionary class alliance of workers and peasants.<sup>50</sup> Hegemony did not really indicate domination (as contemporary usage suggests); rather, it was revolutionary leadership successfully applied to carry several classes forward to fundamental change. It meant the existence of intellectuals linked

‘organically’ to a ‘national-popular mass’, or ‘permanent persuaders’ able to educate and lead people in a way equivalent to priesthood.<sup>51</sup> This was not indoctrination; rather it was about establishing passion and emotional bonding between intellectuals and the people—without which history and politics cannot be made—and creating a genuine culture centered in the institutions of society, the school in particular.

As said, Gramsci’s preferred example of hegemony was the French Jacobins. In Gramsci’s analysis, Mazzini and other thinkers of the period had failed to become the ‘Jacobins’ of the Risorgimento. The failure of the Italian state was a failure of its intellectuals, unable to transform dominion of force into a culture of consent. The crucial question here is: why? Why did Italy and the Italian Risorgimento not have ‘organic’ intellectuals? Why did Italy only have traditional intellectuals, organizers of the passive revolution in the superstructure, unable to make an adequate contribution to the distinctive social forms which would be necessary to forge proletarian hegemony?

#### INTELLECTUALS, HEGEMONY, AND THE MODERN PRINCE: THE RISORGIMENTO ONCE AGAIN

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to consider an alternative line of historical and theoretical research that had accompanied Gramsci’s consideration of the question of the intellectuals from the beginning of the *Prison Notebooks*. Central to this had been Gramsci’s condemnation of the enduring cosmopolitanism of the Italian intellectuals and their failure to assist in forging a national-popular unity—the absence in the Risorgimento, as we have already seen, of the ‘Jacobin moment’ that distinguished the French Revolution. Gramsci traced the Italian failure back to the particular model of intellectuals that had emerged in the Renaissance, comparing and opposing it to the more sweepingly popular experience of the Reformation.<sup>52</sup> Gramsci made explicit comparison between the double opposition Renaissance–Risorgimento *versus* Reformation–French Revolution on numerous occasions: ‘the Reformation is related to the Renaissance as the French Revolution is to the Risorgimento’ (Q3, 40). The (Italian) Renaissance had elaborated a sophisticated intellectual culture superior to the popular and spiritual/moral culture of the (Germanic) Reformation—which only much later, in German idealism and thus in its transformation in Marxism, had generated a comparable intellectual experience (Q4, 3).

Yet the Renaissance, for all of its strengths, had not been able to establish any organic relation with the masses; and the Renaissance intellectuals had not understood the Reformation. Here, Gramsci constantly referred to Erasmus's condemnation of Luther: '*ubicumque regnat lutheranismus, ibi literarum est interitus*' (Q4, 3; Q16, 3, i). Such an intellectual tradition continued, albeit in a modified form, in the nineteenth-century Risorgimento and, crucially, in early twentieth-century liberal Italy, in the philosophic system of Benedetto Croce (as Gramsci had already discussed in *Some Aspect of the Southern Question*). Croce and the intellectuals of the Risorgimento had a 'bureaucratic' and 'formal' relationship with masses, and were structurally incapable of making the transition from knowledge (*sapere*) to comprehension (*comprendere*) to feeling (*sentire*), and vice versa (Q4, 33). They were the 'specific intellectuals' of their own time, stuck on the ground of 'technique' and unable politically to understand and interpret their social and political function of leadership and organization. To put it differently—and in analogy with the formal link of intellectuals and masses established by the Catholic—Croce and the intellectuals of the passive revolution were responsible for ideas, moments of truth, and thus philosophy (theology); the masses were denied active participation in the intellectual order, and to them was left ideology and involvement in practical affairs (superstition and prejudices) (Q11; Q12, iii).<sup>53</sup> In particular, as Gramsci writes, 'set in its historical context, the context of Italian history', Croce's work appeared to be 'the most powerful mechanism for conforming the new forces to its vital interests (not simply its immediate interests, but its future ones as well) that the dominant group possesses'.<sup>54</sup> Croce was not merely a constructor of ideologies for governing others. With his dominance of the definitions of intellectual practice, he was a 'realizer' of the 'passive revolution'. He thus actively prevented others from constructing ideologies in order to govern themselves. Croce's Liberalism was antidemocratic; and such an antidemocratic Liberalism was exactly the ideology that sought to validate and justify passive revolution, the 'gastric juices' to assist 'the process of digestion'.<sup>55</sup>

Ironically, Gramsci's materialist interpretation of history and reading of Risorgimento owed much to Croce's historical observation, a debt he readily admitted—although Gramsci's conclusion about the Risorgimento's leadership arrived at an opposite end. Much of his work is devoted to a rigorous critique of Crocean philosophy in relation to Marxism and of Croce's idea of history as a history of liberty. Among other things,

Gramsci's prison reflections on Italian history were essentially a function of his long, silent 'dialogue' with Croce.<sup>56</sup>

To read Gramsci's notes on the Risorgimento and then to reread Croce's pages on the Italian national revolution in his *Storia d'Europa* is to shift between two contrasting but related historical worlds (see again Chap. 2). In both, the 'dialectic of freedom' operates constantly through the analysis and reconstruction of events and the great conflict of men and ideas. But—as we have already written in Chap. 2 following William Salomone—whereas in the Crocean world of the Risorgimento, liberty stirs and breathes almost as a transcendent spirit, a secular faith, an idea larger than the men who are its instruments, in the Gramscian world freedom has no real identity outside the concrete life-worlds of the protagonists and antagonists of historic conflict. In short, for Gramsci 'the entire Risorgimento is in the grips of an inescapable historic antinomy',<sup>57</sup> and all its heroes are rebels and prisoners at the same time, victims and victors of a giant struggle, itself a 'complex and contradictory development' of 'active and latent forces'.<sup>58</sup>

Thus—to borrow a compelling image from Salomone—in a fascist prison cell, an ideal battle over the Risorgimento was fought again. Gramsci's Marxist 'theory of praxis' grappled desperately with the Crocean philosophy of absolute historicism. The Sardinian ideologue's dialectics of power were pitted against the Neapolitan philosopher's 'religion of liberty'.<sup>59</sup> In short, this was a struggle over competing visions of modernity.

The new 'organic intellectuals' must be 'permanent persuaders' (Q4, 72; Q12, 3), 'leaders' and not specialists in a particular field (Q4, 72), 'organizers' of new culture (Q12, 1), and an amplifier for discovered 'truths' as the basis for a new society (Q11, 12). Traditional intellectuals contributed to passive revolution (the Risorgimento and then liberal Italy) by denying to the masses the intellectual resources they needed to engage in a dialectic of activity and constant consciousness. Quite the opposite, the organic intellectuals/permanent persuaders would find intellectual resources in the organic integration with the masses, working out the principles and problems which the masses had posed in their own practical activity, and eventually building a cultural-historical block (Q11, 12, iii).<sup>60</sup> Echoing Machiavelli, Gramsci defined such a cultural and historical block as a 'modern Prince' (Q8, 21; Q13, 1).<sup>61</sup> The 'modern Prince' was the fusion of a qualitatively new type of political party and oppositional culture that would gather together intellectuals and the masses in a new political and intellectual practice. The ultimate, adequate institutional form

of proletarian hegemony, it was the ‘active and effective expression’ of the process of formation of a ‘national-popular collective will’ and ‘intellectual and moral reform’ (Q8, 21).<sup>62</sup> Just as its Machiavellian predecessor, Gramsci’s ‘modern Prince’ remained no more than a proposal for the future, not a concrete reality, neither in post-WWI nor in fascist Italy. Gramsci’s concept of the ‘modern Prince’ cannot therefore be reduced to a mere metaphor for already existing political institutions or parties. Rather, like Machiavelli’s ‘concrete phantasy’ (Q8, 21), it was posited as ‘the non-existing element necessary to fill the constitutive lack of the present, in order to open that present to the future’.<sup>63</sup>

The political party, Gramsci argued, was the historically given form in which the decisive elements of organization, unification, and coordination had already begun to occur. Its re-elaboration into a non-bureaucratic instrument of proletarian hegemony, however, required an ongoing dialectical exchange with the popular initiatives from which the modern Prince emerged and into which it sought to intervene.<sup>64</sup>

In this vein, Gramsci did not stop short at identifying Italian shortcomings, he also elaborated a different kind of strategy. Hegemony, as Gramsci wrote, ‘necessarily supposes an intellectual unity’.<sup>65</sup> In practice this meant that everyone could properly conceive themselves as part of a revolutionary coalition—and everyone could do so because, as Gramsci held: ‘all men are intellectuals’ (though he added, ‘not all men in society have the function of intellectuals’). In other words, ‘party intellectuals were specialists in permanent persuasion, but all members of oppressed classes could be permanently persuaded’.<sup>66</sup> Intensifying the expansion of the social functions of intellectuals that had occurred in the modern world, it instituted a form of pedagogy-as-democratic practice, continually striving to reduce the distance between its ‘intellectuals’ and the broader popular masses. At its limit, all members of the ‘modern Prince’ were to be considered as intellectuals, not merely in the sense that ‘there are no non-intellectuals’ (Q12, 3), but in the integral sense that they would all perform the social function of organic intellectuals of their class, that is, ‘organizers’, ‘permanent persuaders’, and ‘constructors of a new and higher form of civilization’.

Clearly, this strategy was designed specifically for Italy, with its lack of national unity, with its ‘cosmopolitan’ bourgeois intellectuals who did little to further national unity, and with its large peasant masses ready to become, not German or American, but Italians. Like Bauer, Gramsci took nationalism seriously, though more as a means. Ultimately, he thought, class was the decisive factor. At the same time, he did not consider his



Leninist approach suitable for more advanced countries, where the number of peasants had diminished dramatically, and where the party, embodying the collective will of the proletariat, would have to proceed differently. In particular, the further west one looked, the stronger bourgeois civil society became—which meant that simply overthrowing the bourgeois State by itself could not in any way ensure a long-term communist victory.<sup>67</sup>

To be sure, the Russian Revolution had been the benchmark for revolutionaries all around the world; but differences in development and political culture and the persistent strength of national traditions and peculiarities had been revealed. At the end of the 1920s, this was clear to Gramsci. In turning (Leninist) theory into practice, Italian revolutionaries experienced cultural-political difficulties that their Russian comrades had no direct knowledge about and could not foresee. The Comintern was poor of analysis pertinent to the uniqueness of the west and that of Italy. The Comintern had not worked out a theory of (at least autonomous) civil societies or how they might be dealt with. Out of necessity, yet specific to a limited conception of the state, the Comintern was organized as a representative alliance of national military and political cadres. Gramsci now cautioned against the idea that the Russian Revolution could be repeated easily, and attempted to alert the Comintern to the need to update its strategy.

After years of theoretical reflections combined with struggle and political practices, Gramsci came to recognize the contingent and conjunctural features of the problem of qualitative difference among states, and thus the problem of elaboration and application of strategies.

[Lenin]... did not have the time to expand his [hegemonic] formula—though it should be borne in mind that he could only have expanded it theoretically, whereas the fundamental task was a national one; that is to say it required a reconnaissance of the terrain and identification of the elements of trench and fortress represented by the elements of civil society, etc. In the East the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks: more or less numerous from one State to the next, it goes without saying—but this precisely necessitated an accurate reconnaissance of each individual country.<sup>68</sup>

Compared with Italy—even if liberal and cultural autonomies were not fully developed here, or were being actively reversed by Fascism—the

Tsarist state that Lenin opposed was crudely instrumental and authoritarian and had no relative-autonomous superstructure. In Tsarist Russia, there existed no clearly developed civil society beyond the mechanism of the State. The totalitarian state exercised its power through force and coercion alone; there was no political space to generate consent for or against it. All that was required in Russia, as Rousseau had said of Hobbes' Leviathan state, was to counter an illegitimate and violent power with an even greater and heftier one. Where might is right, Rousseau argued, every force which overcomes another force inherits the rights which belonged to the vanquished. All that was necessary for the Russian revolutionaries to do was to seize the existing state's power and structure of authority, and turn them to the defense of the new order: to the victor, the spoil of victory. But where a frontal attack on the state could not succeed, communists should engage in a war of position, laying cultural and political siege to the bourgeois state: what Gramsci called a war of maneuver.

In this Gramsci failed. Gramsci himself died just days after being released from prison (1937). And long before that, his comrades had either gone underground or sought refuge abroad, in France or Russia. One of them was Togliatti, who would eventually return and take leadership of the communist party—more on that later. The PdCI had been banned by the fascists already in 1925, together with all other political parties. This was a real struggle over power, and a violent one at that. But it was also a struggle over and for modernity. Because Fascism just as Italian Communism can, as we shall see, be understood as an attempt to build and shape a modern trajectory tailored for Italy and its particular historical experience. To this alternative modernity we can now turn.

## NOTES

1. On Turati see Renato Monteleone *Filippo Turati* (Turin: UTET, 1987); Spencer Di Scala, *Dilemmas of Italian Socialism: The Politics of Filippo Turati* (Amherst, Mass.: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1983).
2. Richard P. Bellamy, *Modern Italian Social Theory: Ideology and Politics from Parero to the Present* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987), 115–40; Walter L. Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980); James Martin (ed.), *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Assessment of Leading Political Philosophers*, vol. 3: *Intellectuals, Culture and the Party* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

3. All quotations from the *Quaderni del carcere* have been taken from the Italian critical edition by Valentino Gerratana in 1975; Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, ed. V. Gerratana (Torino: Einaudi, 1975). Translations are our own. References are to individual notebooks and numbered notes. For example, Q1, 1 refers to *quaderno* (notebook) 1, note 1. In the early 1990s, Joseph A. Buttigieg began translating a complete and critical edition of the *Quaderni*, based upon the Gerratana edition, which was completed in 2007; Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. J. H. Buttigieg, 3 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992–2007). Prior to that, the *Notebooks* had been available primarily to the Anglo-Saxon scholarship by the selection by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith; Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971).
4. The following is mainly based on Peter Thomas, ‘Modernity as “Passive Revolution”’: Gramsci and the Fundamental Concepts of Historical Materialism’, *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 17, no. 2 (2006): 61–78; Peter Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony, and Marxism* (Brill: Leiden, 2009), 145–7; Richard P. Bellamy and Darrow Schecter, *Gramsci and the Italian State* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993); Adam D. Morton, ‘The Continuum of Passive Revolution’ *Capital & Class* 3, no. 3 (2010): 315–42.
5. Gramsci’s first reflections on Risorgimento were developed in notes 43 and 44 of *Notebook* 1 (drafted in February 1930), which then merged, with other materials, in the ‘special’ *notebook* 19 (1934–1935). Cuoco’s *Saggio storico sulla rivoluzione napoletana* was first published in 1799.
6. Gramsci originally used the term ‘revolution without revolution’, adding ‘passive revolution’ at a later date in the margins. Elsewhere in the *Prison Notebooks*, he employed the term ‘royal conquest’ and not ‘popular movement’ (Q3, 40). On Gramsci and Italy’s ‘passive revolution’ see also John Davis (ed.), *Gramsci and Italy’s Passive Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1979). According to Buci-Glucksmann, the condition of passive revolution is ‘one of the most richest and complex concepts of the *Prison Notebooks*’; Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, trans. D. Fernbach (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), 314.
7. The dichotomy of force and consent had been characteristic of Italian thinking since Machiavelli. During the Risorgimento, this theme became associated with the Italian distinction between state and civil society in the writing of a number of politicians and philosophers confronting the problems posed by the unification of the country.
8. Gramsci quoted in Bellamy and Schecter, *Gramsci*, 149.
9. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison*, 90.

10. Quoted in Richard P. Bellamy, *Croce, Gramsci, Bobbio and the Italian Political Tradition* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2103), 152.
11. Quoted in *Ibid.*
12. On transformism in liberal Italy, see Raffaele Romanelli, *Il comando impossibile. Stato e società nell'Italia liberale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1988); Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (London: Penguin, 2007), 318–19. On transformism as a ‘system’ in the history of united Italy see Giovanni Sabbatucci, *Il trasformismo come sistema. Saggio sulla storica politica dell'Italia unita* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2003).
13. On this see also Bellamy and Schechter, *Gramsci*, 150.
14. On this see again Thomas, ‘Modernity’.
15. Domenico Losurdo, *Antonio Gramsci dal liberalismo al ‘comunismo critico’* (Roma: Gamberetti, 1997), 155.
16. In a similar vein, Pasquale Voza writes: ‘The concept of passive revolution, born as a radical re-elaboration of the expression of Cuoco, is always posited, even when it refers to the Risorgimento, as a concept valid for connoting and interpreting the mode of formation of modern states in nineteenth century continental Europe’; Pasquale Voza, ‘Rivoluzione passiva’, in Fabio Frosini and Guido Liguori (eds.), *Le Parole di Gramsci* (Carocci, Roma, 2004), 189–207: 195.
17. Gramsci’s initial discussion of the concept of ‘catharsis’ took place as a critique of Benedetto Croce’s aesthetics, particularly as Croce deployed it in his reading of the tenth Canto of Dante’s *Inferno* (Q4, 78–88). However, it turned into a decisive term in Gramsci’s political vocabulary, indicating the structural conditions that determine the capacity of a class to emerge from subaltern passivity and elaborate its own concrete political initiatives. ‘The term “catharsis” can be employed to indicate the passage from the purely economic (or egoistic-impulsive) to the ethical political moment... from being an external force which crushes humans, which assimilates them and makes them passive, the structure is transformed into a tool of freedom, into an instrument for the creation of a new ethical and political form, into the origin of new initiatives. Fixing the “cathartic” moment thus becomes, in my view, the point of departure for the whole philosophy of praxis’ (Q10II, 6).
18. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, ‘State, Transition and Passive Revolution’, in Chantal Mouffe (ed.), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London: Routledge, 1979), 207–36; Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci*, 315.
19. Alex Callinicos, ‘The Limits of Passive Revolution’, *Capital & Class* 34, no. 3 (2010): 491–507.
20. Thomas, ‘Modernity’, 73; see also Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment*, 155–7.
21. Antonio Gramsci, ‘La rivoluzione contro il Capitale,’ *Avanti!*, December 24, 1917.

22. On the evolution of Gramsci's thought in the crucial years 1914–1919 see Leonardo Rapone, *Cinque anni che paiono secoli. Antonio Gramsci dal socialismo al comunismo (1914–1919)* (Carocci: Rome, 2011). Starting from March 1921 *L'Ordine Nuovo* published an Italian version of Mathiez's famous essay *Le bolchevisme et le jacobanisme*.
23. See Peter Thomas, 'Gramsci and the Intellectuals: Modern Prince Vs Passive Revolution', in David Bates (ed.), *Marxism, Intellectuals and Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 68–85.
24. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (1922), trans. G. Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. K. Attel (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
25. Lenin, in *The State and Revolution*, famously declared that the 'dialectics of living history' mean that 'it is more pleasant and useful to undertake the "experience of revolution" than to write about it'; Vladimir I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution: The Marxist Theory of the State and the Task of the Proletarian Revolution* (1917), in *The Collected Work*, vol. 25 (Moscow: Progress, 1964), 453, 492. One could not agree more! Similarly, Gramsci (Q7, 35) recognized that, 'the only "philosophy" is history in action, life itself', which means, sadly, that the more common occurrence is the less pleasurable experience of passive revolution that in turn still requires one to write about it.
26. The following is based on Morton, 'The Continuum', 326–30.
27. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings, 1921–1926*, ed. and trans. Q. Hoare (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978), 162.
28. One witnesses here 'the emergence of a strain of thought that will constitute the core of Gramsci's writings on cultural politics in prison'; Frank Rosengarten, 'The Contemporary Relevance of Gramsci's Views on Italy's "Southern Question"', in Joseph Francese (ed.), *Perspectives on Gramsci: Politics, Culture and Social Theory* (London: Routledge, 2009), 133–44: 142. This reveals the frailty behind uninformed claims that there was a 'theoretical break' in Gramsci's work between the period before he was interned and the work he produced in prison; Owen Worth, 'The Poverty and Potential of Gramscian Thought in International relations', *International Politics* 45, no. 6 (2008): 633–49: 640; see also Morton, 'The Continuum'.
29. Highly specific regional diversities in the pattern of capitalist development, the relationship between city and countryside, the forms of political representation and tensions between social classes within Italy, and the importance of Gramsci's own 'southernism' have been raised elsewhere: see Timothy Brennan, *War of Positions: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Davis, *Gramsci*; John Davis, 'Remapping Italy's Path to the Twentieth Century', *Journal of*

- Modern History* 66, no. 2 (1994): 291–320; Jonathan Morris, ‘Challenging *Meridionalismo*: Constructing a New History for Southern Italy’, in Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris (eds.), *The New History of the Italian South: The Mezzogiorno Revisited* (Devon: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 1–19; Nelson Moe, *The View from Vesuvio: Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Jane Schneider (ed.), *Italy’s ‘Southern Question’: Orientalism in One Country* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1998).
30. Morton, ‘The Continuum’, 320.
  31. Antonio Gramsci, *Pre-Prison Writings*, ed. R. P. Bellamy, trans. V. Cox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 316–17.
  32. *Ibid.*, 332.
  33. *Ibid.*, 324–5.
  34. *Ibid.*, 327, 333.
  35. *Ibid.*, 317, 329.
  36. Fabio Fabbri, *Le origini della guerra civile. L’Italia dalla Grande guerra al Fascismo, 1918–1921* (Turin: Utet, 2009).
  37. The following is based on Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 61–5.
  38. Gramsci, *Pre-Prison Writings*, 96–100.
  39. In August 1920 Gramsci wrote: ‘The Factory Council is a public institution, while the Party and the trade unions are private association. The worker takes part in the Factory Council in his capacity as a producer, that is, by virtue of the universal character of production, in the same way that the citizen takes part in the parliamentary democratic State. The worker enters the Party and trade union on a voluntary basis, by signing a contract he can cancel at any moment: the Party and the union thus cannot, as voluntary and contractual institutions, be confused with the Council’; quoted in Darrow Schecter, *Gramsci and the Theory of Industrial Democracy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1991), 93.
  40. Quoted in Darrow Schecter, *Radical Theories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 91.
  41. Charles Maier *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany and Italy in the Decade After World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 147.
  42. On council Communism see Schecter, *Radical*, 74–102. For an in-depth look at Gramsci’s factory council theory see again Schecter, *Gramsci*. For an analysis of Gramsci’s intellectual development and the relation of the factory councils writing to the *Prison Notebooks* see Bellamy and Schecter, *Gramsci*. See also Perry Anderson, ‘The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci’, *New Left Review* I, no. 100 (1976): 5–79.

43. Morton, 'The Continuum', 315.
44. Leon Trotsky, 'Report on the New Soviet economic policy and the perspectives of world revolution' (14 November 1922), speech delivered at the Fourth World Congress of the Communist International, in Leon Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, vol. 2. (New York: Pathfinder, 1972), 245.
45. On this, see again Morton, 'The Continuum', 315–16.
46. Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, 62.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Quoted in James Joll, *Gramsci* (London: Penguin 1978), 56.
50. Peter Gosh, 'Gramscian Hegemony: An Absolutely Historicist Approach', *History of European Ideas* 27, no. 1 (2001): 1–43; Peter Thomas, 'Hegemony, Passive Revolution and the Modern Prince', *Thesis Eleven* 117, no. 1 (2013): 20–39; Dylan J. Riley, 'Hegemony, Democracy, and Passive Revolution in Gramsci's Prison Notebooks', *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2011).
51. Quoted in Joll, *Gramsci*, 71, 91–3; see also Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, 63.
52. We here follow again Thomas, 'Modernity'; Thomas, *Gramsci*; Thomas, *The Gramscian*; Thomas, 'Hegemony'.
53. Gramsci went further and suggested that the limited (and limiting) unity between intellectuals and popular classes of the Catholic Church was in fact superior to the purely bureaucratic relation to popular initiatives implicit in Crocean and modern Italian idealist philosophy (in Giovanni Gentile's 'actualism', the relation was explicitly secured by the institutions of the fascist state). The Catholic Church at least attempted to integrate the lower orders into a (more or less) 'organic unity'; idealist philosophy, on the other hand, contented itself with a merely formal relation to the masses and was unable to elaborate the concrete institutional forms necessary for a genuinely comprehensive *Weltanschauung*, a limitation most noticeable in its failure to challenge the role of religious education in schools.
54. Quoted in Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci*, 21.
55. Gramsci quoted in Thomas, *The Gramscian* 419.
56. On 'Croce contra Gramsci' see also Bellamy, *Croce, Gramsci, Bobbio*, 133–281.
57. A. William Salomone, 'The Risorgimento between Ideology and History: The Political Myth of Rivoluzione Mancata', *American Historical Review* 6, no. 1 (1962): 38–56: 49.
58. Here the reference is to Gramsci's famous formulation in which he seemed to compare one idealism to another: 'The Risorgimento is a complex and contradictory historical development, which issues as a unity from all its

- antithetical elements, from its protagonists and its antagonists, from their struggles, from the reciprocal modifications which the struggles themselves impose, and also from the action of the passive and latent forces like the great agrarian masses, and further, naturally, from the pre-eminent of international relations' (Q8, 33).
59. Salomone, 'The Risorgimento', 49.
  60. Gramsci also defined the new intellectual as a 'democratic philosopher' who 'is convinced that his personality is not limited to his own physical individual, but is an active, social relation of transformation of the cultural environment' (Q10, II, 44). On the question of Gramsci, culture, and intellectuals see again Thomas, 'Gramsci'; Martin, *Antonio Gramsci*.
  61. On this, and for the following section, see again Thomas, 'Gramsci'; Thomas, *The Gramscian*; Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, 61–5.
  62. Valentino Gerratana underlines this aspect of Gramsci's conception of the distinctive nature of proletarian hegemony, noting that 'while for the hegemony of a class that tends to conceal the antagonism of interests it is sufficient to attain a passive and indirect consent, and this is the normal form of political consent in democratic-bourgeois or authoritarian regimes, in the perspective of the hegemony of the proletariat "it is a question of life and death, Gramsci writes, not passive and indirect consent, but that which is active and direct, the participation therefore of individuals, even if that provokes an appearance of disaggregation and of break-down" (Q15, 13)'; Valentino Gerratana, *Problemi di metodo* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1997), 126.
  63. Thomas, *The Gramscian*, 437.
  64. 'The modern Prince, the myth-Prince, cannot be a real person, a concrete individual. It can be only an organism, a social element in which the becoming concrete of a collective will, partially recognized and affirmed in action, has already begun. This organism is already given by historical development; it is the political party, the modern form in which gathers together the partial, collective wills that tend to become universal and total' (Q 8, 21).
  65. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison*, 333.
  66. Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, 63.
  67. See again here *ibid.*, 64.
  68. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison*, 238.



## Fascist Modernity

Fascism is an Italian invention. It is an Italian word, an Italian ideology, Italy's gift to the entire world—so Mussolini liked to see it—a unique, progressive model of modernization.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will discuss how Fascism tried to come to grips with Italy's road to modernity through the reinterpretation of the national past and the elaboration of a nexus between past and present. In particular, the chapter will discuss how Fascism reinterpreted the Risorgimento in order to construct a cohesive narrative grounding its own cosmogony and modernist teleology. Here, the question was not only how to situate Italy and Fascism with respect to the Risorgimento but also how Fascism could legitimate itself and its claim to represent Italy's version of the future modern.

Echoing here the position of Roger Griffin, at the theoretical level we position Fascism as an 'alternative modernity' rather than a rejection of modernity.<sup>2</sup> The fascist reading of history argued that Italy had become corrupt and had betrayed its true origins and deeper values. Fascism was the movement which could restore truth and hence also Italy's identity as a nation. The crucial point for the regime was to establish continuity between the glorious tradition of the Risorgimento and the fascist present, without obscuring or undermining the complete novelty it represented. As we will see in the interpretation by the prime fascist philosopher Giovanni Gentile, it was not Fascism that gained legitimacy from the affirmation of its historical continuity with the Risorgimento; rather, it was that past that gained real presence and meaning through Fascism. Through the ideal-

ism ('actualism') of Gentile and its interpretation of the Risorgimento as an unfinished revolution, Fascism reconnected to the historical process of unification. WWI and its aftermath provided the occasion for historical fulfillment. It was from the war itself, on the initiative of a handful of aristocrats of *combattentismo*, that Fascism originated.

Given the centrality of ritual, memory politics, and rewriting of history for the larger understanding of the fascist movement—and without forgetting the sometimes inconsistent readings of the past existing within the fascist ranks—it is of course not possible to discuss every detail of fascist memorization of the Risorgimento; enough will be said to indicate the most salient aspects of both continuity and change with respect to the pre-fascist era.

### MUSSOLINI AND THE RISORGIMENTO

How did Fascism interpret the Risorgimento? In a nutshell, Fascism claimed to have *overcome* the problems posited by the Risorgimento, seeing itself as the *fulfillment* of the Risorgimento, and thus as the first truly modern expression of a national epic. After the losses and human sacrifices of WWI, leading to what many patriots considered a 'mutilated victory',<sup>3</sup> Fascism wanted to establish itself as a 'new Risorgimento', a return to the *geist* of an original 'spirit' which had somehow gone lost, and which needed to be brought alive again.

To Mussolini, Fascism was the response to the complex array of hopes and anxieties that since the Risorgimento had crystallized around the idea of *Patria*, investing it with a transcendent force against which liberal Italy had proven powerless.<sup>4</sup> As dreamed by nineteenth-century writers, intellectuals, and patriots—nurtured and inspired by the glories of the ancient Rome and by the lamentation of Dante, Petrarca, and Machiavelli—Italy as a nation was to be a resurrection of past greatness, an awakening after centuries of decadence. It must be a united community, a family of brothers and sisters renouncing and refusing divisions and internecine struggles, and working for the good of the nation. Italy had been made; Italians not yet. fascist Italy had the mission to restart and finish the Risorgimento's national revolution and create a truly popular and united State. Liberal Italy, in the understanding of Mussolini, had failed to live up to these expectations: it had proven itself weak, corrupted, and backward. Freedom had not offered virtues and transformation; rather it had reproduced old vices: materialism, factiousness, and indiscipline. Fascism claimed that Liberalism and its rul-

ing class were the cause of Italy's weakness and vices. It also claimed that the unaccomplished Italian revolution was due to a failure to instill a collective faith in the religion of the *Patria*, a failure to integrate the masses into the nation, and the spreading of 'foreign' ideologies.

The scorn Fascism held and in particular its intransigent hard-liners for the liberal State and for Giolitti's *Italiotta* implied that the Risorgimento, before Fascism, was still an unaccomplished national revolution, on the wave of Mazzinian and national radicalism. Fascism proclaimed to be the heir, the continuer, and promulgator of the revolutionary ideals of the Risorgimento—interpreted in a nationalist, state-worshipping, and anti-parliamentary key. Therefore, Fascism severed the state from its liberal component, grafted it was said by foreign, individualist, and materialist ideologies that had prevented the birth of a genuine community of Italians.

In other words, Fascism offered a new *hope* and a new dawn. 'We wait nervously... straining our eyes to the horizon whence a star might arise to bearing us again the longed-for day', Giovanni Gentile wrote in 1919 in an essay entitled *The Moral Crisis*.<sup>5</sup> The star had appeared (Fascism) but resurrection required a painful struggle, since the damage inflicted on Italian psychology and culture in recent centuries and in liberal Italy had been immense—despite the countertrends ignited by the glorious Risorgimental struggles and by the great event of the war, the real beginning of Italy's rebirth out of which Fascism as a messianic movement was born.<sup>6</sup> On October 1930, Mussolini spoke to a gathering of upper-rank party leaders:

We need time, a great deal of time, to complete our work. And I am not speaking here of the material but of the moral work. We have to scrape off and crush the sediments that have been deposited in the character and mentality of Italians by those terrible centuries of political, military, and moral decadence between 1600 and the rise of Napoleon. It is a prodigious undertaking. The Risorgimento was just the beginning, as it was the enterprise of just a minority. The world war was profoundly educative. It is now a question of continuing on a daily basis this task or remaking the Italian character. For example, we owe it to the culture of those three centuries that the legend grew up that Italians cannot fight. It required the sacrifice and heroism of Italians during the Napoleonic wars to demonstrate the opposite. The Italians of the early Renaissance, of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries to be precise, had temperaments of steel, and brought all their courage, their hatred and their passion to bear in war. But the eclipse

we suffered in those centuries of decadence still weighs upon our destiny, as yesterday, as today, the prestige of nation is determined almost exclusively by their military glories, their armed might ... This enterprise is in my cross and my mission.<sup>7</sup>

A multitude of refashioned elements, myths, and ideas of the Risorgimental-nationalist tradition flowed into Fascism: supremacy and mission, regeneration of Italians, conquest of modernity, and the idea of a Greater Italy. However, the Risorgimental nation–humanity link disappeared. The supremacy of the politics of power was asserted over the humanitarian ideal of peaceful coexistence among equal and free nations. What also disappeared was the ‘liberal’ ideal of a single *Patria* common to all Italians regardless of the diversities and differences in political convictions and religious beliefs, based on the concept of national identity that rested on the liberty and freedom of citizens. What disappeared here was the fundamental link between nation and liberty, rejected contemptuously by Fascism, which explained away this substantial part of the Risorgimento tradition, while preserving the rhetorical rituals that recalled the great creators and heroic deeds in the struggle for independence and unification of Italy.<sup>8</sup>

What mattered most for Mussolini was to break the nexus between Risorgimento and Liberalism or ‘liberty’ as understood by liberal, post-unification Italy. ‘Liberty’ in effect was the continued object of attack by Fascism and by Mussolini himself. Mussolini’s insistence that freedom should not be confused with license—which also meant the right of the state (Fascism) to defend itself—struck a chord among those horrified by the violence and unrest of the *biennio rosso* and by the prospect of a socialist ‘proletarian’ revolution. As Mussolini put it in 1923 (October 28, the anniversary of the march on Rome), ‘if by liberty is meant the right to spit on the symbols of religion, the *Patria* and the state, then I head of the government and Duce of Fascism declare this liberty will never be allowed’.<sup>9</sup> Mussolini rejected the idea of freedom as a *right*, endorsing instead Mazzini’s belief that it was a *duty*, a means to an end subject to changes and modifications according the historical circumstances. On March 23, 1924, the Duce opposed those who claimed that Liberalism was at the root of united Italy and claimed that many patriots of the Risorgimento had in fact not been liberals at all:

Careful, let us not exaggerate. To begin with I dispute the claim that there was a liberal party during the Risorgimento, a party, that is, in the modern sense of the world. There were liberal currents and groups. But alongside

the liberals, splendidly represented by Camillo Cavour, there were men who were not liberals, such as Mazzini, Garibaldi, the Bandiera brothers and Carlo Pisacane, who, together with his companions, set off to be massacred for a *dream of freedom and resurrection*.<sup>10</sup>

In an important way, Fascism would come to legitimize its road to full modernity by contesting and rewriting the liberal narrative grounding modern nationhood.

### FASCISM AND ITS MULTIPLE PASTS: ROME AND THE RISORGIMENTO

To be sure, the relationship between past and present was a problematic one for Fascism's self-imagery. First, not every fascist would share the same passion and enthusiasm for the Risorgimento. In fact, some factions within Fascism wanted a more radical break with the recent past. The futurists, and radical nationalists such as Alfredo Rocco, refused the Risorgimento experience altogether. To them, Fascism was the only true expression of modernity and, as such, it must rid itself entirely of the tradition and patriotic inheritance of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Second, the historical reference to the Risorgimento coexisted and combined—sometimes conflicting, sometimes converging—with the two most important myths within the symbolic and cultural universe of Fascism: the Roman Empire and the Duce.<sup>12</sup>

After all, like Mazzini and Garibaldi before him, Mussolini, on April 21, 1924 (the 'Natale' or Birth of Rome, and the day when he was granted Rome's honorary citizenship), claimed to have been intoxicated since childhood by the mystique of Rome: 'For the love of Rome I dreamed and suffered... Rome! The world itself was like a boom of thunder in my soul'.<sup>13</sup> Fascism, with its rejection of democracy and celebration of authority, discipline, and war made it possible to embrace the history, symbols, and mythology of ancient Rome in a way that Risorgimental and liberal Italy never could. The disjuncture between past and present that had tormented so many patriots in the Risorgimento and deprived Italy after 1860 of powerful referents with which to sanction the new order appeared ended. Fascism was imperial Rome reborn. A teaching manual for members of the *Balilla* claimed:

If you listen carefully ... you may still hear the terrible tread of the Roman legions... Caesar has come to life again the Duce; he rides at the head of numberless cohorts, treading down all cowardice and all impurities to

re-establish the culture and the new might of Rome. Step into the ranks of his army.<sup>14</sup>

The regime drew extensively from the Roman myth in the elaboration of its official symbolic discourse and the building of its public image. The name *Fascismo* in itself demonstrated the fascist's linkage to Roman civilization. The term derived from the Latin *fascis*, a bundle of equal rods tied together and to an ax. In ancient Rome, fasces represented authority and were carried by minor officials, *lictors*, who preceded the high magistrates in the procession. Mussolini had not been the first one to use the Roman term. In 1919, when he founded the original nucleus of Fascism as *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento*, *fascio* constituted a common political expression meaning 'group' or 'association'. In this way, it was especially used by the Left. For example, in the early 1890s, the so-called *fasci dei lavoratori* (workers' fasces) were formed in Sicily by peasants and workers wanting to protest their miserable conditions.

The myth of Rome and the myth of Mussolini dominated the fascist regime's symbolic world. It was this double myth that guided its rituals, and shaped its cosmogony. This was nothing new. As Simonetta Falaschi-Zamponi has noted, 'since the Middle Ages, government, intellectual movements, and artists had frequently invoked the Roman past and appropriated it as a source of political and cultural legitimation'.<sup>15</sup> Emperors of the Middle Ages praised the political and cultural power of Rome, and wanted to emulate it. In the Enlightenment and Romantic periods, intellectuals and politicians, in Italy and beyond, linked the history of Rome to the ideal of a universal mission. During the Risorgimento, Mazzini elaborated the idea of a national mission, considering Rome 'as a civilization that could find new life on Italian soil'.<sup>16</sup> In this narrative, Rome was the leading force in the struggle for national unity; moreover, Rome's universal and atemporal values would become the premises on which Italy would found a united Europe. Mazzini's vision of republican Italy was defeated by the moderate option; yet, the proclivity to see Rome in Mazzinian terms as the antecedent to some sort of Italian mission in the world prevailed in post-unification Italy.

However, Mazzini's spiritual, moral, and humanistic inspiration turned, slowly but steadily, into an ideology of supremacy, superiority, and power. Indeed (as we have seen in Chap. 4) already in 1848 Gioberti claimed that the 'moral and civil supremacy' of Italians was based on Roman Christian glory. By the end of the nineteenth century,

‘the image of Rome’s political grandeur eventually triumphed over the belief in Rome’s universal cultural mission’.<sup>17</sup> This outcome was favored and enhanced by the rhetoric of power, imperialism, and colonialism that was not unique to Italy. Rome’s military greatness represented the path to be followed. Thus following again Falasca-Zamponi the evocation of a shared history conveyed a new sense of the *Patria*, reinforcing national consciousness. Consequently, when the call to make Rome capital of Italy became urgent, ‘patriots invoked the Roman tradition as the basis for national renewal’.<sup>18</sup> This affinity between the country and ancient Rome was a common belief in Italian politics and culture; and against this belief Gramsci, in his *Prison Notebooks*, lamented:

The rhetorical prejudice (of literary origin) that the Italian national has always existed, from ancient Rome to the present ... although ‘useful’ politically at the time of national struggle as a motif to raise enthusiasm and concentrate forces ... become[s] an element of weakness ... [It does not] allow one to appreciate correctly the effort of those generations who really fought to constitute modern Italy, and lead[s] to a sort of fatalism and passive expectation of a future which would be completely predetermined by the past.<sup>19</sup>

Following this trend, Fascism’s own version of the Roman myth served to define Fascism as the repository of a universal mission, the carrier of a tradition that exalted Italy’s superior values.

However, fascist Rome was still the Rome seen through the glass of recent nationalism and Risorgimental culture and sensibility. In September 1922, a few months before the march on Rome, Mussolini declared that the intention of Fascism was to bring about the spiritual regeneration of Italy in keeping with the traditions of Rome and the glorious and unfulfilled hopes of the Risorgimento. It was by underlining the Rome–Risorgimento nexus, that Mussolini urged the King not to oppose the ‘fascist revolution’:

But if Mazzini and Garibaldi tried three times to reach Rome, and if Garibaldi had presented his redshirt with the tragic and inexorable dilemma ‘Rome or death’, this signifies that for the men of the Italian Risorgimento Rome had an essential role, of paramount importance, to play in the new history of the Italian nation. Let us therefore turn our thought to Rome, which is one of the few cities of the spirit of the world, with hearts pure and free of rancor ... And it is our intention to make Rome the city of our spirit, a city that is purged and disinfected of all the elements that have corrupted

it and dragged it into the mire. We aim to make Rome the beating heart, the galvanizing spirit of the imperial Italy that we dream of.<sup>20</sup>

As Gramsci thought and feared, by claiming Roman origins and symbolically reconnecting the fascist present and the Roman past, Fascism sought to naturalize its role within Italian history. To fascists and Mussolini, the glorious tradition of Rome represented a model of action, the inspiration for renewal, the foundation for a fascist future. Rome, in fascist cosmogony, did not imply nostalgia or static contemplation of the past. As Mussolini wrote on the occasion of the 1922 Birth of Rome, in an article published by *Il Popolo d'Italia* with the title *Passato e avvenire* ('Past and future'),

The Rome that we honor ... is not nostalgic contemplation of the past, but hard preparation for the future. Rome is our departure and reference point: it is our symbol or, if you wish, our Myth. We dream of Roman Italy, i.e. wise and strong, disciplined and imperial.<sup>21</sup>

Not surprisingly, the fascist reinterpretation of Rome was highly selective. It rested above all on Rome's triumphs and supremacy, and on the great accomplishments of the Roman tradition—in a word, 'its superior power'.<sup>22</sup> With a vast array of means—speeches, writings, movies, and postage stamps—Fascism exalted the role of Rome in establishing Christianity as a universal religion and in founding the Roman Empire. It instead excluded what was considered decadent. In the name of the past, the regime commissioned archeological digs in search of the ruins of its Rome. During the excavations, buildings belonging to the Middle Ages were found and immediately destroyed in order to let, as Falasca-Zamponi has noted, 'ancient Rome predominate as the original witness of Fascism's glorious destiny'.<sup>23</sup>

As the quest for colonies moved up the political agenda in the mid-1930s, imperial Rome became the overwhelming point of symbolic and cultural reference for the regime. Not surprisingly, as Falasca-Zamponi has noted further, the regime more strongly affirmed its linkage with ancient Rome in the wake of 1936 proclamation of the Empire—when the production of historical films focusing on Rome and on Mussolini as a new Augustus boomed—and the following year, when the regime opened the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità*, as a part of the celebrations for the second millennium of Augustus's birth.<sup>24</sup> Mussolini's words ('Italians, you must ensure that the glories of the past are surpassed by the glories of the future') dominated the entrance to the exhibit, and the special section



*Fascismo e Romanità* concluded the re-visitation of Augustus's Rome. As Falasca-Zamponi has rightly pointed out, 'in this proclaimed connection between the Augustean era and Fascism, the emphasis on Caesarean leadership in turn stressed the importance of the Duce's role in fascist Italy'.<sup>25</sup>

A crucial point here to understand is the link between the Roman past and the fascist present and the role of *romanità* in fascist politics and culture. We endorse here the interpretation of Piergiorgio Zunino followed also by Claudio Fogu who sees *romanità* as 'a sea in which anyone could fish out anything for any occasion: a reminder, a justification, a title of whatsoever nobility'.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the important thing to stress here is the fact that the digging into the myth of Rome did not imply to plunge into a premodern abyss, quite the contrary: Rome was interpreted as an open-ended symbol that only served to underline Italy's privileged road to the fully modern.

#### POLITICS OF HISTORY: FASCISM AND RISORGIMENTO BETWEEN CONTINUITY AND REVOLUTION

For Mussolini and fascist intellectuals as Renzo De Felice and Claudio Fogu among others have noted a fascist vision of national history was a critical element for the 'construction of mass consensus', the strength of the regime and its political legitimacy, and for the creation of a 'new man'.<sup>27</sup> The construction of a fascist sense of history became an urgent priority for the regime. It was necessary to find and to insist on the links and continuity between fascist action and Italy's previous history, resorting to patriotic theme and nationalism to conquer the support of Italians.<sup>28</sup> The aim was to search for a historical legitimation for Fascism's rise to power in recent national past. The reappropriation of the Risorgimento was central in the entire fascist politics of history.<sup>29</sup> What was especially necessary—Mussolini wrote in 1933 to Cesare Maria De Vecchi, appointed editor of the journal *Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento* and put in charge of the *Società nazionale per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano* as a step in the fascistization of national history—was

to remove the history of the Risorgimento from a professorial and biased realm, to bring it into contact with the Italian people and consider it through the prism of Fascism.<sup>30</sup>

The construction of a (national) fascist past hinged on the crucial question of continuity/discontinuity. Was Fascism the offspring—indeed the

culmination—of a line of meaning that originated with the Risorgimento? Was not fascist disjointed from liberal Italy? How?

As we have seen in Chap. 2, Croce's classical liberal account of national history stressed the continuity of liberal ideals from the Risorgimento to WWI. Other liberals, such as Adolfo Omodeo, put the Risorgimento into a line of development from the Enlightenment through the French Revolution.<sup>31</sup> Such a line of continuity was absent in the *Enciclopedia Italiana's* article on the doctrine of Fascism, signed by Mussolini in 1932 but generally attributed to the fascist regime's prime philosopher Giovanni Gentile. Fascism was represented here as a decisive rupture with historical continuity.<sup>32</sup> The Crocean line of continuity between the Risorgimento and liberal Italy was also absent from Gioacchino Volpe's *L'Italia in cammino* ('Italy on its way', or 'Italy in movement')—originally published in 1927 as the first of a book series published by the National Institute of Fascist Culture—which in fact was a searing attack of Croce's historiography.<sup>33</sup> Volpe's book moved from 1870 and ended in 1915 conjuring up, without debating, two critical events in the history of Italy: WWI and the advent of Fascism. Through the founding experience of WWI, Fascism eventually emerged and put Italy back on track (*in cammino*), fulfilling the mission of *grandezza* bestowed upon Italy by the Risorgimento and abandoned by liberal Italy as well as making Italians as one nation. In short, by breaking the line of philosophical and political continuity established by Croce between the Risorgimento and the liberal state, Volpe could remake the line of continuity between the Risorgimento ideal of Italy and the fascist ideal.<sup>34</sup> Volpe's interpretation, however, did not meet the general acceptance. Mussolini did not like the book; other fascists such as the editor of *Il Tevere* Telesio Interlandi refused the 'miraculous' character of Fascism and its straightforward descent from Risorgimento that Volpe seemed to posit.<sup>35</sup> The official 'true' fascist interpretation of Risorgimento (and of history writ large) remained thus that of Gentile.<sup>36</sup>

### GENTILE, MAZZINI, AND MUSSOLINI: PROPHETS OF THE RISORGIMENTO

Gentile had started to undertake a systematic and complex elaboration of the nexus between Risorgimento and Fascism much earlier, even before the rise of Fascism, and in particular in two essays on Mazzini written in 1919 and published in 1923 as *I profeti del Risorgimento Italiano*

(*The Prophets of the Italian Risorgimento*). The book was dedicated to Mussolini, ‘an Italian of quality/worthy of listening to/the voices of the prophets of the new Italy’.

Crucially, in *I profeti* Gentile stated that the Risorgimento as a matter of fact *had not happened yet*—or had not been accomplished on September 20, 1870.<sup>37</sup> A Risorgimento of Italy therefore remained an unrealized augury, a project barely begun. As such, ‘the Risorgimento’ was for Gentile a series of events almost meaningless in and by themselves. These events needed to be interpreted as the omen of a future resurrection. This resurrection was Fascism.<sup>38</sup> In other words, Fascism was not simply the heir of the Risorgimento, and not only a healthy restoration of the old order, but the historical force called upon to realize it *for the first time*. Thus, it was not Fascism that gained legitimacy from the affirmation of its historical continuity with the Risorgimento; rather, it was that past that gained real presence and meaning through Fascism. In this sense, the fascists were the real prophets of the Risorgimento, as the title evoked. The realization of the prophecy implied a return to an origin. It was not a leaping point, or a negation or interruption of history aimed at establishing a new revolutionary reality. Here, Gentile explained, Fascism was very different from the Bolshevik revolution and its claim to represent an absolute break with anything that had preceded it. Fascism, argued Gentile, was a resurrection, a return to a dormant spirit, not just a historical period, but a *spirit which was already there*. In that way, the Risorgimento at a deeper level came to represent the true national ethos, a ‘Risorgimental Italianness’ (*italianità risorgimentale*). As Gentile put it:

After [the war], the torch [of Italy] was almost dead. But it did not die, because the warrior spirit was kindled and survived in Mussolini... The same spiritual conception of the world [as in the Risorgimento]; the same opposition to individualism; the same concept of state and nation... the same postulate of a totalitarian understanding of human life .... [came back with Fascism].<sup>39</sup>

Essentially, Gentile elaborated the image of Fascism as a permanent resurgence and a political–moral–religious revolution. This revolution was both the fulfillment of the historical Risorgimento and the Italian-Catholic-Latin-Mediterranean response to the Marxist concept of revolution.<sup>40</sup> Like so many Italian intellectuals from both Right and Left, Gentile held that the Risorgimento remained incomplete; that the unification, as the famous phrase goes, had made Italy, but not Italians. On this point,

Gentile together with authors and intellectuals of different political and ideological leanings such as Alfredo Oriani and Piero Gobetti was influential in shaping Gramsci's conception of the Risorgimento as a failure, a conception which (as we have seen in Chap. 4) ultimately hinged on Cuoco's analysis of the 1799 Neapolitan Revolution.

### FASCISM AND THE ORIGINS OF THE RISORGIMENTO

Gentile's work was also important because his line of interpretation was quickly and efficiently spread to the wider layers of the population via the school reform designed by Gentile himself in 1922, a reform which was central to the larger ideological and institutional setting up of the entire Italian educational system. Gentile's analysis resounded in school textbooks, school curricula, popular history books, and newspaper and journal publications supported by the regime.<sup>41</sup> The entry concerning the Risorgimento was included in the popular and authoritative *Enciclopedia Italiana* which Gentile directed since 1923 and thus became a point of reference for Italian culture at large. The entry was written by Walter Maturi and was published in 1936, the year of the Empire—at the height of fascist power and, at least at a level of public transcript, mass consensus.<sup>42</sup>

One of the main questions debated by historians was where and how far back to date the origins of the Risorgimento. Maturi's entry was on that point a partial answer to Volpe's article, 'Principi del Risorgimento nel Settecento Italiano', published in *Rivista storica italiana* the same year. In this article, Volpe traced back the Risorgimento to the early nineteenth century. A related question concerned how to locate the Risorgimento within a larger European framework: to what extent was the Risorgimento a continuation of the French Revolution and its republican and Enlightenment principles? Or to what extent was the Risorgimento a particular Italian configuration of forces and ideas? By then these questions had established as central to Italian historiography and political self-assessment. And they will probably remain so, for they touch upon the deeper question relating to Italy's type of modernity.

Maturi's last work, published posthumously in 1962, was the famous *Interpretazioni del Risorgimento*. Here Maturi would confirm what he saw as the vital and crucial connection, namely between Risorgimento and liberty: that liberty and that Liberalism which would complete, within the framework of the modern nation-state, a cultural and moral process which had already brought about the unification of Italy.

One of the thorny issues concerning the Risorgimento had always been the extent to which it could be considered a ‘people’s revolution’. Especially since the writings of Gobetti, which as we have seen appeared at the beginning of the 1920, the view that the Risorgimento was mostly a stretching of the pre-existing royal and Piedmontese administrative/bureaucratic institutions to the larger Peninsula had become more and more widespread. This analysis was sustained by the view that the unification itself had been mostly political, and only superficially touched upon and confronted the underlying social discrepancies and cleavages of the nineteenth century; in fact, as Gramsci argued (but the view was and is shared much beyond Gramscian positions), the Risorgimento never managed to mobilize the ‘masses’, in particular the peasants—and that even in the North (see again Chap. 4).

Maturi argued for a more balanced view. The essential characteristic of the Risorgimento, Maturi wrote, was ‘the harmonious co-penetration of the regular forces of the Sabaudian monarchy and the irregular forces of the national Italian revolution, thanks to the efficient and intelligent mediation of the Piedmontese political class’.

In terms of temporal location, Maturi identified the Risorgimento as having taken place from the late nineteenth century, and in particular from the French occupation onwards, until the 1860s and the conquest of Rome which fulfill the unification. Maturi argued that to anticipate the Risorgimento to the early eighteenth century or even locate it back into the seventeenth century, as other historians were then suggesting (including Croce), or even tracing back a genealogy to Dante, was meaningless; just as meaningless as it was to press the Risorgimento forwards in time toward WWI and the advent of Fascism. The international situation (and, importantly of course, the French occupation) was an important context for understanding the internal political environment that lead to the Risorgimento. However, just like Gentile, Maturi emphasized the autochthonous roots of the Risorgimento; Maturi saw a connection to the principles and facts of the French Revolution, but he also disentangled the Risorgimento from it. He argued:

That which *distinguishes* our thesis from the French... is the value we give to the epoch of illuminated despotism and to the principle of the national struggle as the indispensable generator of nations. Without the reforms of the eighteenth century, without the dissatisfaction of our most intelligent local elements against the regional state... the French revolution would

never have been able to insert itself in the political and social struggles in Italy, finding a fertile terrain. We should not forget that the great eighteenth century struggles between France and England had taught Italians the fecundity of the national struggles.<sup>43</sup>

In other words, Maturi, as so many others before him, insisted that the Italian developments simply could not be reduced to external powers and political models borrowed from abroad. Maturi here considered the Risorgimento a movement with roots in the age of reforms.<sup>44</sup> In this vein, he departed from a more radical fascist reading of the Risorgimento that tended to deny its liberal roots as well as its Enlightenment genealogy. To many fascists, the Risorgimento could not be considered in any way the offspring of the Enlightenment. To them, instead, Rome was its matrix.

Drawing on Volpe and following his nationalistic appeal, Maturi also traced back the Risorgimento not just to the Piedmontese political traditions but to a 'non-conformist' Piedmontese, Vittorio Alfieri. With Alfieri, Maturi wrote, the very will to become a nation-state expressed itself with vigor. Maturi argued that the historical process of nation-formation in the late nineteenth century becomes a fully articulated *consciousness* and political *will*. Besides Volpe, Maturi's reading was quite evidently inspired by Gentile's thought, and by the notion that the Risorgimento was jointly a myth and a prophecy.

Following Gentile, for Maturi the Risorgimento was not just a historical period, but first and foremost an 'ethical-political national myth' ('mito etico-politico nazionale').<sup>45</sup> This myth implied a patient waiting for the day in which Italy was, to stay with Alfieri, no longer *passive* ('inerme'), divided, afraid, and non-free, resurging as a virtuous, 'magnanima', free and united nation. The notion of myth, in contrast to most postwar historiography, was used here positively to refer to a moral force inherent in historical events which were indeed real enough, but at the same time 'larger than themselves'.

Once again, the figure of Cuoco, so influential in shaping Gramsci's view of the Risorgimento as a passive revolution, took on a certain importance here. Cuoco, Maturi wrote,

understood the lesson that one could detract from the revolt of the Italian lower classes and preached the moral obligation of bridging the abyss between people [*popolo*] and intellectual minority.

Cuoco came to represent the glue that ties together *popolo* and intelligentsia, the glue that enabled the Risorgimento. Cuoco, moreover, re-ignited the cult of Vico and indirectly saw a link between Vico's thought and personality and the later Risorgimento:

If Alfieri taught Italians to 'act big', Vico taught them to 'think big'; if with Alfieri Italy identified herself with the will to be a state among other European states, with Vico Italy gained the consciousness to have a proper identity within European culture. In the fusion of doctrines between these two grand thinkers the new Italy was born, a thinking and acting nation with its particular physiognomy in the heart of Europe.

Maturi here gave expression to a notion which has survived until today: that whereas the North *acted*, the South *thought*.

### MYTH AND RITUAL: 1932 AS THE HIGH POINT OF PRESENTIST MEMORY POLITICS

In order to understand the fascist projection of a revolutionary modernity projected from a rewritten national past, it is useful to look beyond textual production and consider the carefully orchestrated ritualization that served to produce and sustain the fascist narrative. The efforts of symbolic appropriation of the past inspired Mussolini's speeches, films, popular culture, political rituals, museums, libraries, and monuments throughout the entire fascist era.<sup>46</sup> The crucial year of fascist memory politics and self-glorification as linked to the Risorgimento was no doubt 1932, a year full of symbolic events that cemented Fascism's reading of past, present, and future and the high point of Fascism's ritualistic forcing of historical connections.

By the beginning of the 1930s, the fascist 'completion' of the Risorgimento and the image of the regime's historical continuity with the recent Italian past had become widely elaborated. But in 1932, Italy celebrated in grand style two key anniversaries: the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Garibaldi (June 2, 1882) and the tenth anniversary of the march on Rome (October 28, 1922).

The ground for the 1932 events had been laid in the preceding decade. The debate on the relationship between a Risorgimento past and the fascist present, Mussolini and Garibaldi, the blackshirts and the redshirts had always been intense even before the march on Rome.<sup>47</sup> Through the

1920s and the 1930s, several films were made with the Risorgimento and Garibaldi as main subjects, stressing the Risorgimento–Fascism nexus.<sup>48</sup> ‘1932’ represents a culmination of Fascism’s presentist and futuristic memory politics.<sup>49</sup>

### *Exhibiting the Fascist Revolution*

On the morning of October 28, 1932, Mussolini inaugurated the most enduring propaganda event of the fascist dictatorship. As the Duce reviewed the assembled guards of honor and passed the cheering crowds to open the doors of the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* (the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution), Fascism literally invited Italians and foreigners alike to experience and participate in the regime’s self-representation.<sup>50</sup> The *Mostra* displayed and narrated the years 1914–1922, as interpreted by Fascism after ten years in power. The exhibition’s twenty-three rooms focused on each year from the beginning of WWI until October 1922 and culminated in a *Sala del Duce* (‘Room of the Duce’) and a *Sacrario dei Martiri* (‘Chapel of the Martyrs’).<sup>51</sup> The *Mostra* was perhaps the highest expression of the ‘sacralisation of politics’.<sup>52</sup>

The year 1932 was also the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Italy’s most popular Risorgimento hero. The commemoration of the *Cinquantenario Garibaldino* similarly assumed spectacular and unprecedented proportions, both for the number of events organized throughout the year and for the involvement of the Regime.<sup>53</sup> The official program of the Cinquantenario consisted, among others, in the Garibaldinian Exhibition in the *Palazzo delle Esposizioni* the publication of the first national edition of Garibaldi’s writing; the issue of a stamp with Garibaldi’s image; a parliamentary commemoration (plenary session of the two Houses); a celebration day in schools and universities; another day for public orations by members of the fascist party in the major squares of all the cities; a pilgrimage to Garibaldi’s tomb in Caprera; and finally, a *Garibaldinian* lottery.<sup>54</sup>

Mussolini fully exploited the convergence of the two celebrations. In March 1932, Mussolini pressured the editors of the national edition of Garibaldi’s writings to have the first volume ready in time for the half-centenary, telling them that,

Garibaldi was always closer than anyone else to the people with his marvelous actions; everything that emanates from his person cannot be but profoundly felt by the people who love him and who will always be under the spell of his profound fascination.<sup>55</sup>



The core and the most important celebration of the *Cinquantesenario* was a three-day national commemoration a long spectacle executed in three public ceremonies. First: the transfer of the remains of Garibaldi's first wife Anita from Genoa (where she had been buried) to Rome on June 1. Second: the internment of Anita's remains in the base of a monument built in her memory on the Gianicolo near the equestrian statue of her husband on June 2. Third: the official inauguration of the monument by Mussolini on June 4.<sup>56</sup>

The decision to put the construction of Anita's monument at the center of the celebration was announced by Mussolini himself during his famous speech for the presentation of the Lateran Pacts to the Chamber of Deputies (May 14, 1929). The construction of the monument was to serve as an explicit deterrent for an ultra-Catholic interpretation of the Lateran Pacts as 'a license to put the Risorgimento on trial'. Mussolini added insult to injury in response to the Vatican's unofficial request that Garibaldi's monument be moved from the top of the Gianicolo. He said:

I believe that Garibaldi can keep gazing in that direction [the Vatican] because, today, his spirit is appeased! Not only will he not be moved, but the Fascist regime will also raise a monument to Anita Garibaldi in the same area.<sup>57</sup>

The announcement also became an authoritative reinforcement of what had rapidly become the most popular and widely elaborated image of the regime's historical continuity with the recent Italian past: the fascist 'completion' of the Risorgimento. The King and Queen were at the inauguration. In his speech, Mussolini made only the briefest references to Anita. He said: [Garibaldi] is 'a national hero born of the people'. Then he actually drew a clear line of descent of the fascist revolution from Garibaldi's campaign of the 1860s. The passage is worth quoting in full as it again captures the fascist interpretation of the Risorgimento in a nutshell.

The Italians of the twentieth century resumed, between 1914 and 1918, under Your Majesty's command, the march which Garibaldi broke off at Bezzeca in 1866 with his laconic and dramatic 'I obey' and they have continued it to the Brenner, Trieste, Fiume, Zara, the peak of the Nevoso, the opposite shore of the Adriatic. The Blackshirts, who knew how to fight and die during the years of humiliation, also stand politically in a line of descent from the redshirts and their leader. All his life his heart was enflamed by one passion: 'the unity and the independence of the *Patria*'. He never let himself be deflected in difficult times from this supreme aim by men, sects,

parties, ideologies, speeches in public gatherings, which he despised, ardent proponent as he was of ‘totally unlimited’ dictatorships.<sup>58</sup> The true, sovereign greatness of Garibaldi lies in this character of his as a national Hero born of the people who always remained with the people, in peace and in war.<sup>59</sup>

Mussolini exercised an unprecedented control of the organization and performance of the spectacle, down to every detail. However, the official organizer was Ezio Garibaldi, grandson of Giuseppe. Ezio had endorsed Fascism and in 1924, he had founded the ‘National Federation of Garibaldian Veterans’ (*Federazione Nazionale Volontari Garibaldini*, FNVG). While founding this organization Ezio had effectively appointed himself sole leader of *Garibaldinismo* and official heir of the ‘Garibaldian tradition’. From this institutional platform, Ezio had propagandized his conception of *Garibaldinismo* as the political vanguard of Fascism.<sup>60</sup>

Throughout the Garibaldian Exhibition in the *Palazzo delle Esposizioni* and the three-day long national commemoration, Fascism proved itself heir of the Risorgimento. The blackshirts were the direct descendants of the redshirts. In Garibaldi, Mussolini recognized the only other protagonist of Italian history whose image, just like his own, was jointly made up of order and rebellion, authority and subversion. This ambivalence and reversibility of values and character traits no doubt fed the myth that the Duce was creating around his own figure.<sup>61</sup>

However, the relations between Fascism and Risorgimento (and between the persons Mussolini and Garibaldi) had to be constructed with care, and from the perspective of the regime, had to avoid certain pitfalls of interpretation. The crucial point for the regime was to exalt the Risorgimento and to establish some sort of continuity between such a glorious tradition and the present; but this historical construction should in no way obscure or undermine the novelty represented by Fascism. The Garibaldian commemoration of June 1932, therefore, served to mark not only the continuity but also some degree of *discontinuity* between Fascism and Garibaldianism, and between Mussolini and Garibaldi. For instance, at the parade which accompanied Anita’s coffin in Genoa, the Blackshirts and the veterans of WWI were clearly separated from the glorious redshirts—yet all of them, taken together, were represented as living survivors of Garibaldi’s time.

This marked the symbolic separation between the glorious past which had to be honored but also overcome and detached from the present;

a sort of living present still in the making. The symbolism was carefully enacted in the parade's passage through the *Arco dei Caduti*, Genoa's triumphal arch recently built in memory of the city's dead in WWI. Only the historical section of the parade—the municipal ushers, the funeral carriage, the members of Garibaldi's family, and the redshirts—passed through the arch; the rest, including blackshirts and WWI veterans, were ordered to proceed to the station by another route. This as well was carefully planned by Mussolini himself.

The reality and image of Fascism as a complete *novelty* in Italian history was underlined with the *Mostra*. In the exhibition, there was no mention of Italian history preceding WWI. The chronology focused exclusively on the 1914–1922 period, leaving aside the Risorgimento and the first fifty years of unification. Fascism here claimed to be born with the *interventismo* and with the human sacrifice in the trenches of WWI. Mussolini and Fascism were depicted as the sole, legitimate heirs of the war experience: they alone had protected the nation from the political and social disorder in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. They also had protected Italy from the attack of the enemy within—the *disfattisti* who, after the war, had taken the monstrous features of Bolshevism, the 'returning beast'.<sup>62</sup>

This ambivalent approach to the Risorgimento was evidenced in some other decisions taken by Mussolini regarding the celebrations. To invoke one example, Mussolini ordered the suspension of the celebration for the Second War of Independence (1859). The battles of this war were the pillar of the moderate and monarchical memory of Risorgimento; the celebration of such an event would have brought to mind the existence of a diarchy (*diarchia*) within fascist Italy (Duce and King, Fascism and monarchy). This could have created an obstacle toward building a system of rituals and historical commemorations which must be completely and exclusively fascist; hence it was canceled.

### FASCISM AS AN ALTERNATIVE MODERNITY

As has become clear throughout the chapter, Fascism was never an anti-modern movement, quite the contrary. As Emilio Gentile has discussed so eloquently, and quoting here Howard Williams, 'all the principal features of modern political ideology are combined in Fascism.'<sup>63</sup> The question does not concern whether Fascism was modern: the question rather concerns the nature of that modernity, and how it differed from the competing modernities available at the time.

We have indicated how Fascism elaborated a national self-understanding that opposed the liberal model on a series of salient points, and this is in almost all respects a well-known fact. Fascist ideology also developed in open contrast to socialist modernity, even as it borrowed from some of socialism's idea-content; and Fascism—despite its political-institutional alliance with the Vatican from 1929—also went up against and sought to replace Catholic modernity, replacing the cult of God with a new cult of fascist man.

So how can we further characterize 'fascist modernity'? In an important article, Tim Mason argued that Fascism can be considered a 'modernization without modernity'.<sup>64</sup> This characterization in many ways rhymes with Jeffrey Herf's terminology of 'reactionary modernism'. Herf defined reactionary modernism as a curious blend of 'great enthusiasm for modern technology with a rejection of the Enlightenment and the values and institutions of liberal democracy'.<sup>65</sup> Herf introduced this term in the specific context of Germany, but the conceptualization evidently has a comparative relevance, and has since been applied in the analysis of fascist ideologies across the world.

There is something evidently true about this characterization. At the same time, also Herf's vocabulary teleologically presupposes a kind of 'norm' for what 'modernity' originally was supposed to mean: Enlightenment modernity, liberal modernity. The very notion of 'reactionary' is analytically problematic, as it operates a terminology that is intrinsic to the language of modernity: the constant distinction between the 'modern' and forward looking as opposed to the 'backward' and 'reactionary' has always functioned as a strategy of self-justification. The opposition between 'reactionary' and 'progressive' cannot serve as an analytical wedge to define a peculiar 'variant' of a norm.

It therefore seems more opportune to follow Eisenstadt when he claims that modernity was always defined by a series of open-ended tensions and antinomies, and that the Enlightenment model was always just *one* possible interpretation to follow. Fascist modernity did indeed reject core values of the French-inspired Enlightenment model, but to classify it as 'reactionary' is ultimately not terribly useful as an analytical strategy. Fascism was an alternative modernity, 'progressive' and dynamic like any other modernity.

Moreover, the concept of 'reactionary modernism' does not really engage with the anthropological foundations of the sacralization of politics.<sup>66</sup> To understand Fascism, the historical-generic conception of

theories of totalitarianism needs to be integrated with an analysis that incorporates the experiential and spiritual dimensions. Fascism emerged in an out-of-ordinary moment, where both individuals and society were pushed to the limit. This was not only due to the war and a situation of civil war that followed (in the period 1919–1921) but also linked to a re-evaluation of values in a series of limit experiences. This brokenness of political reality created visions, meanings, narratives, and rituals—some of which we have examined in this chapter—that were meant to transcend such crises. Fascism was a modern secular political authority which must maintain awe-inspiring capacity in order to bind the people to the political community as a source of identity and existential security.

In a larger vein, it is of course common to place Italian Fascism under the larger heading of ‘totalitarian regimes’. Here, however, we need to understand that fascist modernity was not simply the ‘same’ as Nazi Germany or Soviet Communism. This is so for several reasons, but the point becomes clearer if we depart from the perspective we have wished to highlight in this chapter, namely the particular kind of historicization that grounded fascist self-understanding.

In connection with fascist modernity and its temporal horizon, the discussion has often centered on the nexus between futurism and Fascism to the point of identifying the two as equal phenomenon. Literary critics and art historians have showed great interest in ‘fascist modernism’, often using Walter Benjamin’s interpretation of Fascism as the ‘aestheticization of politics’.<sup>67</sup>

While it would certainly be naïve to deny the strong link between futurism and Fascism, the nature of fascist modernity cannot be reduced to this nexus. Fascist self-understanding was deeply related to a transcending of historical time, in a way that also marks out its differences to Nazi or communist modernity; as it marks out its difference to prewar modernist nationalism. Fascism as Communism and Nazism adumbrated a new conception of historical time. Harking back to the apocalyptic impulses which had pervaded the war experience and the life of soldiers in the trenches, Fascism supported a kind of ‘end of history’ narrative. Fascism was the fulfillment of history. Or, to use an arch-Hegelian term, *Aufhebung*, it was a dissolution into itself, just as the early light of the dawn disappears in the brightness of the rising sun itself. In this sense, Fascism, as any other ‘Gnostic fallacy’ contradicted, to follow Voegelin, ‘the oldest wisdom of mankind concerning the rhythm of growth and decay which is the fate of all things under the sun’.<sup>68</sup>

In the fascist ‘end of history’ cosmology, the fulfillment would see its completion in the restoration of ancient Rome, which, as we have seen above, was a crucial element of fascist symbolic politics. Fascism thus interpreted Italy and its historical experience in a supra-temporal dimension. This represented a dynamic dimension of exalting history and concrete historical events, yet moving beyond historical time altogether. This temporal dimension would connect past and present and give meaning to the experience of Fascism. The entry of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* titled *Fascismo: Dottrina* read:

The world for Fascism is not this material world that appears at the surface, in which man is an individual separated from all others... *The man of Fascism is the individual which is nation and patria, a moral law that ties together individuals and generations in a tradition and a mission*, that suppresses the instinct of living a life closed in immediate pleasure and instead installs in duty *a superior life beyond the limits of time and space*.<sup>69</sup>

In short, Fascism implemented its totalitarian attempt in the apocalyptic perspective of the end of history, and the advent of a new civilization in which the individual would be annihilated in the name of a collective entity—the fascist Nation, the fascist *Patria*—conceived as an entity beyond and above the limits and constraints of time and space.

For Soviet Communism, the triumph of the proletariat would sanction the end of the class struggle—another version of the end of history. Following Klaus Vondung, the communist ‘time’ at the end of history was conceived not as a ‘historical time’ but as a time and space outside and after history: the third stage, the stage of perfection, the stage of Communism, would have been a stage without any further changes thus without history.<sup>70</sup>

For Nazism, the new era (the end of history) would have been characterized by the rediscovery of the law of nature (social darwinism) and blood (racial politics). The creation of the millennial Reich would have marked the end of history understood as an open and endless process. Time instead would have been marked and measured by the continuous unfolding and succession of generations of ‘good blood’ in a limitless infinite. As Himmler said (in a June 9, 1942 speech to the SS officers in Berlin), the German *Volk*, this endless chain of ancestors and descendants, from father to son, was ‘destined to have eternal life in the blood’ (*blutlich das ewige Leben haben*).<sup>71</sup>

But here we also see a difference that marks out Fascism. Unlike Nazism and Communism, Fascism's idea of new concept of history related to a historical phenomenon, a historical fact—a real historical experience, something that effectively happened in the past, in ancient Rome. 'Rome' became a 'paradigmatic archetype' in the words of Emilio Gentile, the blueprint for yet another resurrection. With Italian Fascism, the new era was to be marked by a return or rebirth of the Roman Empire and by the domination of fascist Italy over the Mediterranean in a new, timeless era.

As George Mosse wrote, history was for Fascism the only reality.<sup>72</sup> For Communism, the reference was to an alleged law of history, which was seen as the law of all social developments. For Nazism, it was the eternal law of nature. In Communism and Nazism, the rupture with historical time was much more radical than with Fascism. The apocalyptic reading of history was therefore shared by all three regime types, but it also differed. In Fascism, apocalypse meant the 'new empire' and the 'new fascist order', which, however, remained tied to a historical dimension. Apocalypse was a disclosure of something that was always already there, a revelation of a secret essence which had remained hidden since the foundation of the world. It was in this sense that Italian Fascism represented its own vision of modernity, distinct from any existing model. Certainly, it is not a 'primacy' to be proud of, but at the analytical level it has to be recognized as such.

## NOTES

1. The literature on this topic is extensive; see Emilio Gentile (ed.), *Modernità totalitaria: Il Fascismo Italiano* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2012); Emilio Gentile, 'Totalitarian Modernity', in *The Origins of Fascist Ideology, 1918–1925*, trans. R. H. Mill (New York: Enigma, 2005), 363–402; Emilio Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism and Fascism*, foreword by Stanley Paine (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003); Emilio Gentile; 'Fascism Impending Modernity: Fascism and the Ambivalent Image of the United States', *Journal of Contemporary History* 28, no. 1 (1993): 7–29; Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2001).
2. Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Pinter, 1991), 47–8; see also Gentile, *The Origins*, 385. For Griffin, the fascist attempt to institute a different civilization and a new temporality in the West alternative to decadent liberal modernity found its most comprehensive expression in the 'modernist states' of Mussolini and Hitler and their projects of national

- regeneration; Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of Beginning Under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Roger Griffin, *Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
3. After the war, Italy failed to annex Dalmatia—which had been promised by Britain and France in the Treaty of London to induce Italy to join the war—and had to fight some more years to annex the city of Fiume, which had an Italian population. This led Italian politicians, patriots, and figures such as D’Annunzio to speak of a ‘mutilated victory’. In reality, Italy had benefited from the outcome of the war. The country had been definitively freed of her century-old enemy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. With the annexation of Trento, Trieste, South Tyrol, Friuli, Istria, Zara, and some Dalmatian islands, Italy had practically completed her territorial expansion and could now rely on secure borders. The Italian politicians refused to perceive the positive elements of the peace treaties and systematically only stressed the negative ones; and so the myth of the ‘mutilated victory’ spread, eventually fueling fascist propaganda and helping Mussolini seize power; on all these aspects, see Mario Isnenghi, and Daniele Ceschin (eds.), *La Grande Guerra: dall’intervento alla vittoria mutilata* (Turin: UTET, 2008); Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1776* (London: Penguin, 2007), 407–32.
  4. This also explains, according to Christopher Duggan, the ‘relative ease’ with which Mussolini established a dictatorship; Duggan, *The Force*, 449.
  5. Quoted in Alberto Asor Rosa, ‘La cultura’, in *Storia d’Italia*, vol. 4: *Dall’Unità ad oggi*, t. 2 (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), 819–1664: 1407.
  6. At the beginning of 1923 Mussolini stated: ‘the eclipse of our race was torn open in 1915, and all the virtues that were dormant, but not dead, sprang to the forefront, giving us an immortal victory’; Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 19: *Dalla Marcia su Roma al viaggio negli Abruzzi (31 ott. 1922–22 ago. 1923)*, eds. Edoardo and Duilio Susmel (Florence: La Fenice, 1956) 9. The war, as a young disciple of Gentile wrote, was ‘a first awareness of our country’s national status’; Carmelo Licitra, ‘Proemio’, *La Nuova Politica Liberale* 1, no. 1 (January 1923): 1. See also Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century*, trans. S. Dingee and J. Pudney (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 152.
  7. Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 24: *Dagli accordi del Laterano al dodicesimo anniversario della fondazione dei fasci (12 feb. 1929–23 mar. 1931)*, eds. Edoardo and Duilio Susmel (Florence: La Fenice, 1958), 283–4; also quoted in Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini’s Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 127.
  8. On Fascism and the nation, see Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 143–7.



9. Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 24: *Dagli accordi*, 62.
10. Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 19: *Dalla Marcia*, 213, emphasis added.
11. Saverio Battente, *Alfredo Rocco. Dal Nazionalismo al Fascismo, 1907–1935* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2005). For the different reading of the myth of Risorgimento within the radical wing of Fascism, see Giuseppe Parlato, *La sinistra fascista. Storia di un progetto mancato* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000), 27–73.
12. The following section on Fascism and the myth of Rome is based on Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del littorio. La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1993), 146–54; Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997), 90–5; Romke Visser, 'Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of the Romanità' *Journal of Contemporary History* 27, no. 1 (1997): 5–22. On the myth of Rome as 'one of the major motifs of Fascism's polemics with futurism', see Gentile, *The Struggle*, 60.
13. Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 20: *Dal viaggio negli Abruzzi al delitto Matteotti (23 ago 1923–13 giu. 1924)* (Florence: La Fenice, 1956), 234.
14. Tracy H. Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight. Political Socialization in Fascist Italy 1922–1943* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 21.
15. Falaschi-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 90.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, 91; see also Isabella Clough-Marinario and Bjørn Thomassen (eds.), *Global Rome: Changing Faces of the Eternal City* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press).
19. Quoted in Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 91.
20. Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 18: *Dalla Conferenza di Cannes alla Marcia su Roma (14 gen. 1922–30 ott. 1922)*, eds. Edoardo and Duilio Susmel (Florence: La Fenice, 1995), 412.
21. Benito Mussolini, 'Passato e Avvenire' *Il Popolo d'Italia*, April 21, 1922. On this, see also Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 92; Gentile, *The Struggle*, 60.
22. Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 93.
23. *Ibid.*, 93; see also Jobst Welge, 'Fascism *Triumphans*: On the Architectural Translation of Rome', in Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum (eds.), *Donatello Among the Blackshirts. History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005) 83–94; Vittorio Vidotto, *Roma contemporanea* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2001), 172–223; Paul Baxa, *Roads and Ruins: The Symbolic Landscape of Fascist Rome* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).
24. Falasca Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 93; on films in Fascist Italy and the 'grandeur of ancient Rome', see James Hay, *Popular Film Culture in*

- Fascist Italy: The Passing of The Rex* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1985), 155–61.
25. Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 93.
  26. Pier Giorgio Zunino, *L'ideologia del Fascismo: Miti, credenze e valori nella stabilizzazione del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1985), 63; Claudio Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 23–4.
  27. Fogu, *The Historic*, 24; Renzo De Felice, 'Gli storici italiani nel periodo fascista', in *Intelletuali di fronte al Fascismo: Saggi e note documentarie* (Rome: Bonacci, 1985), 190–243: 191. On the relationship between Mussolini and the intellectuals, see James A. Gregor, *Mussolini's Intellectuals: Fascist Social and Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).
  28. Scholars have also suggested that Mussolini realized the importance on this patriotic tradition already in 1921; Fulvio D'Amoja, *La politica estera dell'impero. Storia della politica estera fascista dalla conquista dell'Etopia all'Anschluss* (Padua: Cedam, 1967), 2; Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 238(n).
  29. On which see Fogu, *The Historic*, 21–51.
  30. Mussolini's letter—dated May 12, 1933 and published by the *Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento* 20, no. 1 (1933)—is in Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 26: *Dal patto a quattro all'inaugurazione della Provincia di Littoria (8 giu. 1933–18 dic. 1934)*, eds. Edoardo and Duilio Susmel (Florence: La Fenice, 1956), 261.
  31. Adolfo Omodeo, *L'età del Risorgimento Italiano* (Messina: Principato, 1931).
  32. Benito Mussolini, 'Fascismo: Dottrina', in *Enciclopedia Italiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti*. vol. 14 (Rome: Treccani, 1932), 847–51.
  33. Gioacchino Volpe, *L'Italia in cammino: l'ultimo cinquantennio* (1927) (Milan: Treves 1931); see also Fogu, *The Historic*, 27–31.
  34. Volpe, *L'Italia*, IX–XXVII.
  35. On this, see Giovanni Belardinelli, *Introduction to Gioacchino Volpe, L'Italia in cammino* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1991), XVIII–XIX).
  36. On Gentile's thought and philosophy, see James A. Gregor, 2001; *Giovanni Gentile: Philosopher of Fascism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publisher, 2001); Myra E. Moss, *Mussolini's Fascist Philosopher: Giovanni Gentile Reconsidered* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004); Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 105–8.
  37. We follow here Roberto Dainotto, "'Tramonto" and "Risorgimento": Gentile's Dialectics and the Prophecy of Nationhood', in Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna von Henneberg (eds.), *Making and Remaking Italy:*

*the Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), 241–55; for further details, see Rosario Forlenza and Bjørn Thomassen, ‘From Myth to Reality and Back Again: the Fascist and post Fascist Reading of Garibaldi and the Risorgimento’, *Bulletin of Italian Politics* 3, no. 2 (2011): 263–81: 267–69; see also Gentile, *The Origins*, 302–3; Fogu, *The Historic*, 27. For a discussion of Gentile’s take on Risorgimento see also Augusto Del Noce, *Giovanni Gentile: Per una interpretazione filosofica della storia contemporanea* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990).

38. The ‘resurrection language’ is central to Griffin’s definition of Fascism. Fascist ideology, Griffin argues with its ‘genetic theory’, revolves around the vision of nation being capable of ‘imminent phoenix like rebirth’ from a crisis. The quest for rebirth gives rise to a revolutionary new political and cultural order that embraces ‘all of the true members’ of the national community. Fascism in short constitutes a radical form of national solentity growing out of the perception that one’s country is in imminent danger. Fascism seeks resurrection of one’s nation; Griffin, *The Nature*.
39. Giovanni Gentile, *I profeti del Risorgimento Italiano* (1923) (Florence, 1944), 151–2.
40. On this, see again Dainotto, “‘Tramonto’”; see also, Fogu, *The Historic*, 43; Claudio Fogu, ‘Actualism and the Fascist Historic Imaginary’, *History and Theory* 42, no. 2 (2003): 196–221.
41. Adolfo, Scotto di Luzio, *L’appropriazione imperfetta. Editori, biblioteche e libri per ragazzi durante il Fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996).
42. Renzo De Felice’s contention that Fascism was, by the early 1930s, very much a regime based on the mass consensus of the Italians was widely contested at its publication, but seems subsequently to have acquired a surprising degree of acceptance; Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il duce, I, Gli anni del consenso, 1929–1936* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974). Following the line interpretation proposed by James Scott, the unearthing of ‘hidden transcripts’ of dissent would mean to reconsider the question. Scott’s suggestion warns us against too ready an acceptance of the public transcript of events and attitudes as the only truth. This is of particular relevance when dealing with a regime such as Fascism, which combines the exercise of authority with the search for adulation and acceptance; James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990). See also Paul Corner, ‘Italian Fascism: What Happened to Dictatorship?’, *Journal of Modern History* 74, no. 2 (2002): 325–51; Simona Colarizi, *L’opinione degli Italiani sotto il regime, 1929–1943* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2009).
43. This and the following quotes are from Walter Maturi, ‘Risorgimento’ in *Enciclopedia Italiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti*, vol. 29 (Rome: Treccani, 1936), 434–52.

44. In a 1942 essay, Maturi will slightly change this position making no reference to the age of reforms; Walter Maturi, 'Partiti politici e correnti di pensiero nel Risorgimento', in Ettore Rota (ed.) *Problemi storici e orientamenti storiografici* (Como: Cavalleri, 1942), 837–76; see also Nicola Tranfaglia, 'Walter Maturi tra Storia del Risorgimento e storia contemporanea', *Studi Storici* 44, no. 2 (2003): 323–32; Gabriele Turi, 'Ideologia e cultura del Fascismo nello specchio dell'Enciclopedia Italiana', *Studi Storici* 20, no. 1 (1979) (1): 157–211: 193–7.
45. It is to be noted that the term 'mito' has a very different set of connotations compared to the English 'myth'.
46. Massimo Baioni, *Risorgimento in camicia nera: studi, istituzioni, musei nell'Italia fascista* (Rome: Carocci, 2006); Massimo Baioni, *Risorgimento conteso: Memoria e usi pubblici nell'Italia contemporanea*. Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 2010), 65–86.
47. For example, On February 2, 1918, a few months after the moral and military catastrophic defeat of Caporetto, Mussolini wrote on *Il Popolo d'Italia*, an article titled 'Torna, torna Garibaldi' (come back Garibaldi, come back).
48. The most famous titles were *Nostra Patria* (Emilio Ghione, 1925), *Cavalcata ardente* (Carmine Gallone, 1926), *Garibaldi e i suoi tempi* (Silvio Laurenti Rosa, 1926), *Anita* (Aldo de Benedetti, 1927)—all silent—and *Villafranca* (Giovacchino Forzano) and especially *1860* (Alessandro Blasetti, 1934), which both had a sound track.
49. The following section is based on Forlenza and Thomassen, 'From Myth', 269–73.
50. See also Marla Stone 'Staging Fascism: The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution', *Journal of Contemporary History* 28, no. 2 (1993): 215–43.
51. See *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista: Guida storica*, eds. D. Alfieri and L. Freddi (Bergamo: Officine dell'Istituto d'Arti Grafiche, 1933).
52. Gentile, *Il culto*, 212–35.
53. Claudio Fogu, 'Fascism and Historical Representation: the 1932 Garibaldian Celebrations', *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 2 (1996): 317–45.
54. All the documents regarding the government sponsorship of the Garibaldian celebrations are stored in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Roma, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 1931–33, Cinquantenario Giuseppe Garibaldi, f. 14.5.701/1–34.
55. Benito Mussolini. 'Per l'edizione nazionale degli scritti di Garibaldi', *Il Popolo d'Italia*, March 10, 1932, now in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 25: *Dal dodicesimo anniversario della fondazione dei fasci al patto a quattro (24 mar. 1931–7 giu. 1933)* eds. Edoardo and Duilio Susmel (Florence: La Fenice 1958), 81.

56. All Italian newspapers dedicated front pages to the celebrations. The LUCE institute edited 900 meters of positive film to produce one silent documentary, one sound documentary, three silent newsreels, and two with sound. The reader might want to consult the film stored by LUCE with brilliant images of the commemoration on the Gianicolo with the King and Mussolini (available at <http://www.archivioluce.com/archivio/>).
57. Benito Mussolini, 'Relazione alla Camera sugli accordi del Laterano', in *Scritti e discorsi di Benito Mussolini*, Vol. 7: *Scritti e discorsi dal 1929 al 1931* (Milan: Hoepli, 1939), 43–62: 53–4.
58. Mussolini referred, here, to the events of the Republic Roman of 1849. Asked by Mazzini what was the best way to defend the Republic, Garibaldi replied that he could serve the Republic in only two ways: as dictator with unlimited power ('dittatore illimitatissimo') or as a simple soldier. It is also worthy to note that Garibaldi proclaimed himself 'dictator' of Sicily in the name of Victor Emmanuel II in May 1860, few days after the Thousands landed at Marsala.
59. Benito Mussolini, 'Epopèa Garibaldina', *Il Popolo d'Italia*, June 5, 1932, now in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 25, 108–11: 109.
60. Since 1925, Ezio had refinanced and become editor of the official organ of Garibaldianism, *Camicia rossa*, founded in 1903 by his father Ricciotti. In 1928, he had 'systematized' his view in a very popular book, *Fascismo Garibaldino*.
61. On this see also Luisa Passerini, *Mussolini immaginario: Storia di una biografia, 1915–1939* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1991).
62. 'Contro la bestia ritornante' was the title of a famous article written by Mussolini shortly after WWI (*Il Popolo d'Italia*, February 19, 1919) where he denounced the decadent and dangerous nature of (Leninist) socialism and Communism; the very same expression was used to designate room E at the *Mostra*.
63. Gentile, *The Origins*, 385.
64. Tim Mason, 'Italy and Modernization: A Montage', *History Workshop Journal* 25, no. 1 (1988): 127–47; an overview on the relation between Fascism and socioeconomic modernization is also provided by Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5–12.
65. Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 25.
66. The following section is based on Rosario Forlenza and Harald Wydra, 'Totalitarianism: Transgression and Transcendence', working paper; for further theoretical implications see Harald Wydra, *Politics and the Sacred* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

67. On the connection between Fascism and the modernist avant-garde see Walter L. Adamson, 'Modernism and Fascism: The Politics of Culture in Italy, 1903–1922', *American Historical Review* 95, no. 2 (1990): 359–90; see also Gentile, *The Struggle*, 41–76 (chapters 2 and 3, titled 'Conflicting Modernisms: *La Voce* against Futurism' and 'The Conquest of Modernity: From Modernist Nationalism to Fascism').
68. Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 166.
69. Mussolini, 'Fascismo: Dottrina', 847–8, emphasis added.
70. Klaus Vondung, *Die Apokalypse in Deutschland* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), 101–2.
71. Heinrich Himmler, *Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945: und andere Ansprachen*, ed. A. F. Peterson (Frankfurt a.M.: Propyläen, 1974), 160.
72. George L. Mosse, *The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Century* (1961) (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988), 352.

## Frictions of Modernity: World War II as Historical Juncture

*Hell is empty  
And all the devils are here*

*Shakespeare, The Tempest, Act 1, Scene 2, 214–15*

In the first half of the twentieth century, Liberalism, Catholicism, Socialism–Communism, and Fascism had developed as different articulations of a shared attempt to outline a particular Italian road to modernity. In so doing, these majorisms and ideological–social forces had laid the ground for wildly different narratives about the ‘soul’ of the nation, about the country’s virtues to safeguard and vices to overcome. As we have outlined in the preceding chapters, these discursive formations had confronted each other in the interwar period. However, the crucial battle between them happened during WWII, which ended in the collapse of Fascism and the triumph of the anti-fascist front, which included—and this is crucial to stress—Catholics, conservatives, liberals, and communists.

In this chapter, we argue that WWII was *both* a moment of collapse and ‘death’ *and* a liminal configuration in which new narratives saw the day. Italy between 1943 and 1945 provided the setting for an Allied invasion (in the south) and a German occupation of Rome and the north. With the movement against Fascism (the Resistance), two occupying armies, the flight from Rome of the King after September 8, 1943, and

different Italian governments, there was a liminal situation of contested sovereignties. Individuals were faced with moral, political, and, above all, existential choices, on which their lives and those of their families depended. Yet, these conditions of brokenness of political reality were the background upon which new symbolic markers of certainty<sup>1</sup> infused the political community with new meanings and ideas, transformed the political imagination, and paved the way for the unfolding of a new epic of the nation and new forms of political legitimacy.

In this 'ultimate fight' over the moral and political grounds of the nation and its future, the search for a new Italy and for meaningful lives was once again anchored in a struggle over the past and its meanings. In other words, the extreme crisis of the present once again revealed dependency on the core symbols and sacred values of the nation.

### IN THE ABYSS OF WAR

On July 25, 1943, the fascist regime collapsed due to the heavy casualties, economic crisis, food-shortage, and the setbacks of the war. Forty-five days later, on September 8, Marshal Pietro Badoglio announced over the radio that an armistice with the Allies had been signed five days earlier. Accordingly, he ordered the Italian armed forces to cease fighting the Allies, leaving them, however, with no other precise instructions. The announcement was followed by the precipitous flight from Rome of King Victor Emmanuel III, his family, and the military high command. In the wake of the King's ignominious exit, there emerged a void in the leadership of the nation, as soldiers and civilians were left without any clear military and political direction: a collapse of nation.<sup>2</sup>

Within days an army of more than one million men disintegrated, and thousands of troops were rounded up by Germans and interned in concentrations camps. Soldiers listening to Badoglio's broadcast interpreted the armistice as meaning that the war was, finally, over. Badoglio told them to stop fighting the Allies. He had not told them to fight the German. 'Those who don't understand, those who half-understand. Soldiers embracing, caps flying. The soldiers are in high spirits as if the war was really over': these were the first reactions recorded, in Cuneo, by Nuto Revelli.<sup>3</sup> If they were no longer fighting the Allies, and not fighting the Germans, then the war was over and they could expect to return home. Thousands of soldiers flung away rifles and uniforms, streamed out of their barracks, and began to make for home before the Germans could stop them. All across



the country—and beyond too, in the occupied territories of Greece, the Balkans, and Southern France—chaos and confusion spread. Amid general confusion, the military leadership was uncertain what to do, issuing orders, only to cancel them later.<sup>4</sup> Other officers were as bemused as their men by the turn of the events and, effectively, decided not to face up to their responsibilities to their men, quietly disappearing without leaving them with any orders or guidance. In parts of occupied Yugoslavia, some local commanders simply hared off to the nearest airfield for a flight back to Southern Italy, leaving their men behind them.

In many respects the behavior of the Italian commands is comparable to that displayed in France in 1940, as sharply described by Marc Bloch.<sup>5</sup> A sensation of having been abandoned and let down by their officers featured prominently in soldiers' memories in the aftermath of September 8. Obviously enough, this lack of leadership was discouraging and only added to the general bewilderment. Before the Germans could intervene, some commanders allowed their men to leave and disperse to their homes as best they could in a sort of spontaneous disbandment.<sup>6</sup> This, at least, was a little bit more than simply abandoning their men without saying anything. But abandonment was what it amounted to, ultimately.

The armistice was the signal, rather than the cause, of the breakup of the Italian army. For many soldiers, as well as for the bulk of the population, the war had already ended in July, after the fall of Mussolini. Many had been stupefied by the decision to continue fighting a war which had lost its original meaning, its point of departure. The disbandment that followed September 8 could well be read as the army voting with its feet on the wars fought between 1940 and 1943. That the disintegration of the Italian army was rooted in a widespread war-weariness among the troops seems clear from what happened in Sicily in July 1943. Here the Italian military opposition to the Allied landing (July 10) was weak, brief, and confused—the first sign of a disintegration that would become uncontrollable within a few weeks.<sup>7</sup>

### *'Tutti a casa': Everybody Go Home*

After fighting a war in the worst of material and psychological circumstances, soldiers wanted above all else to go home. Home meant their towns and cities. Home meant those elements that had shaped the moral and material horizons of humble men and women for centuries: family, friends, and native villages, with its familiar peal of bells and parish priests,

its patron saint and festivals, its dialect, folklore, and ancestral memories. *Tutti a casa* (*Everybody Go Home*) is a 1960 film directed by Luigi Comencini, a tragicomedy set in the aftermath of the armistice: three men discard their uniforms for civilian clothes and head southwards for a veritable odyssey along the Italian boot. It describes the chaos and shock that pervaded Italy, with most of the soldiers eager to go back home, by every possible means, regardless of their being arrested for desertion. *Everybody Go Home* was the umpteenth re-enactment of the myth of *The Odyssey*, as Italo Calvino put it, in a short article titled ‘Homer the Antimilitarist’, published in the Turin edition of the Communist Party’s newspaper *l’Unità* on September 15, 1946:

What in fact is *The Odyssey*? It is the myth of the return home, born during the long years of military service of the soldiers who have gone off to fight in distant places, of their anxiety about they will manage to get home, when the war is over, of the fear that assails them in their dreams of never managing to make it home, of the strange obstacles that appear on their journey. The Odyssey is the story of the Eight of September, of all the Eight of Septembers in History: the need to return home by hook or by crook, through lands fraught with enemies.<sup>8</sup>

*Everybody Go Home* also meant the dissolution of military rules and chains of command: no one, be it officer or soldier, felt that by disguising himself as a civilian he was deserting. Nor did it occur to anyone that the mass flight ought to be denounced as an act of desertion. *Everybody Go Home* equally meant the evaporation of the political discipline and allegiance to the fascist regime, and in fact to any pole of authority. The squares were now empty, as in the metaphysical masterpieces drawn by Giorgio De Chirico twenty years earlier; no longer were they filled with thousands of people acclaiming empire, war, or the *mise-en-scène* of the Duce’s body.

On the evening of September 8, the words on the streets of towns and cities were that ‘the war is over’. Hope and enthusiasm, however, were mixed with incredulity, anxiety, and disorientation.<sup>9</sup> On July 25, Italians had greeted Mussolini’s ‘resignation’ with an outburst of popular enthusiasm, not necessarily because they were anti-fascist, but because they expected the end of Fascism to mean the end of the war. This was quickly followed by the dismantling of some of the public signs of the regime—the symbolic erasing which usually characterized the end of a political order.<sup>10</sup>

After September 8, however, the horizon of expectations looked very different; and the passage from incredulity to joy, from joy to worry,

and from worry to bewilderment was much faster. After all, Badoglio's announcement had been highly ambiguous; and the possible reaction of the German sowed the seed of fear among Italians. Therefore, as a sort of counterpoint to the jubilant shouting or to the ringing of the church bells announcing the armistice, many wondered what would come next.<sup>11</sup>

'Everything is so precarious,' the journalist Enrico Emanuelli wrote in his diary on September 10. He continued: 'Nothing is certain, proven, known. My heart lives an anguished night.'<sup>12</sup> The sense of disorientation was real and intense, and left countless traces in diaries, popular memories, reports, and pieces of literature and art: confusion, bewilderment, dismay, and fear gnawed individuals in those days of September 1943. Although with the inevitable divergences inspired by different political, geographical, existential background and orientation, these narratives have in common the feeling of a national and individual disaster, or a profound sense of personal loss, as a direct consequence of the armistice.

### *World War II as Liminal Juncture: Living Between Two Ages*

Worse was to follow. As the Anglo-American armies, which had landed in Sicily on July 10, advanced from Southern Italy into the German-occupied north (including Rome), civil war broke out between the forces of Resistance and the forces of Fascism. In a few weeks, Italy became the only country west of the Balkans where WWII also developed into a civil war.<sup>13</sup> From this condition emerged a situation of unprecedented uncertainty. The propagation of warfare into the heart of society, pitting neighbors against neighbors, uprooted customary life through violence, material devastation, massacres, retaliation, and bombing.<sup>14</sup> Torn by these pressures, the legal framework of the nation evaporated. The life of civilians became a generalized frontline experience, destroying patterns of trust and social consensus, and undermining beliefs in elites and political authority.<sup>15</sup>

After all, who held political authority in Italy in the wake of the civil war? With the movement against Fascism, two occupying armies, and competing Italian governments claiming legitimacy and allegiance—from the Kingdom of the South led by Victor Emmanuel to the fascist puppet republic of Salò in a few regions of the north—there was an ambiguous situation of contested sovereignties. In short, WWII events also divided Italy, geographically, politically, and socially, most dramatically from September 8, 1943, when the Italian population saw their territory turning into an open battlefield between various political forces, including not

only the Kingdom in the south (whose authority overlapped imperfectly with the Allies), the Salò republic in the north, the German Reich in the northeast (which in Istria also saw brief but significant periods of Titoist Partisans rule), but also a whole series of local political ‘experiments’ (such as the ‘red republic’ of Caulonia, a small town in Calabria). Rome was occupied by Germans, but the Vatican remained another pole of authority. In many parts of Northern Italy, political authority shifted continuously between partisans, fascists, and Nazi forces. Individuals were faced with moral, political, and, above all else, existential choices on which their lives and those of their families might well depend.

In the end, the war entailed a quintessential liminal period of confusion and disorientation. It provoked deep transformations in the political and social world, the disintegration of national unity, and also existential crises as acquired universes of symbolic world maintenance dissolved<sup>16</sup>; it pushed Italians into the abyss of the ‘anti-structure’.<sup>17</sup>

All the apparent certainties of the fascist period—the bombastic cult of the nation and its leader, the quest for autarchy and the Empire, the unceasing emphasis on the moral and physical regeneration of the Italians—were utterly shattered by the horrors of occupation and civil war. Bombardments, famine, and the clatter of tanks replaced the mass rallies, the school gymnastic displays, the dulcet tones of Beniamino Gigli—the premier tenor of his generation, who had recorded the fascist anthem *Giovinezza* (‘Youth!’) in 1937—transmitted on the state radio. The signs and markers of certainty that had given orientation to the life of Italians for decades lost meaning, value, and purpose. Luigi Meneghello and his fellow Lelio removed from the wall of a library the images of the King and Gabriele D’Annunzio—whose love of violence, cult of the Superman, and stylistic excesses had made an ideal literary figure for the regime—and trampled on them. Others had already removed the picture of Mussolini. The crucifix, however, was still there:

Lelio began to look at the crucifix, all on its own above the three white patches. At this the librarian went as white as the patches, but when after a while Lelio looked away from the crucifix, she turned red again and replaced the books. All that was left was for her to turn green, to complete the colors of the Italian flag.<sup>18</sup>

The onset of the civil war only aggravated the condition of disorientation raised by the national and individual disaster of September 8. The de-sacralization of the world combined with a terrifying and disturbing

crisis of temporal perspectives. Italians were plunged into a ‘fog bank’, or a ‘tempest’<sup>19</sup>; they were plunged into a situation where no direction and no way forward were traceable, where time was suspended, and where the future was beyond imagination; in short, they had entered a genuine liminal period. Carlo Mazzantini, one of those bourgeois children who were born out of the generation that witnessed the foundation and the making of Fascism, wrote: ‘we lived outside our time, in a parenthesis *between two ages*, of which the approaching one, deprived of any sense of reality, could be imagined like any other of our visions’.<sup>20</sup>

To Italians, time seemed entangled in a perennial and somewhat meaningless circularity—turning and turning in the widening gyre, as the falcon in William Butler Yeats’ poem *The Second Coming* (1919)<sup>21</sup>—an eternal present, a broken teleology, a climate of antithesis that defied and denied a purposeful historical linearity. The exceptional, out-of-ordinary state of things provided a very few intellectuals and writers with an opportunity for a self-analysis that, in its highest and most perceptive form, reveals a wider dynamics. In his more autobiographical novel—set in the years 1943–1945 and symbolically titled *The House on the Hill*—Cesare Pavese captured in a few dense sentences the mood of an entire community without future: ‘Nothing has happened. I’ve been at home for six months and the war still goes on’. He continued: ‘another winter will pass, we will see snow again, we’ll make a circle around the radio by the fire’.<sup>22</sup>

This situation of fractured political realities, marked by the dissolution of the pre-existing symbolic order, poles of authority, and markers of certainty, combined with a devastating crisis of time, meanings, and values. It therefore came close to the phenomenology of a Maussian ‘total social fact’, which encompassed the institutional, the political, the legal, the economic, but also the psychological aspects, as well as the esthetic, the spiritual, and the religious.<sup>23</sup> It generated a liminal situation of ‘absolute politics’ in which the political emerged as a historical concrete event that had a total, existential dimension.<sup>24</sup>

### *Existential Crisis and the Loss of History*

To understand this existential dimension, it is first necessary to understand that September 8 and the onset of the civil war signaled the psychic regression of the entire country into a state preceding its recent unification in 1861. It was as if its last sixty years of history had never happened. The loss of present reality also meant the loss of a meaningful past. Anthropologically

speaking, it was as if an entire nation were undermined by a pervasive crisis of its historical presence; and that crisis finally brought Italy and Italians to rely on the help of a foreign army, as had happened before in the nation's long history.

This was not, however, what Italians had supported in the last twenty years. It did not correspond to the slogan forged by the regime, the conquest of a 'place in the sun', the dream of being a great power with a predestined 'right' to sit at the table together with those nations that counted in the world. Suddenly Italians were relying on external help, a white knight in the form of a powerful army capable of freeing, restoring, and bringing Italy back to the previous condition, without asking (in theory) anything in exchange. It was a contradictory experience in many ways: the former enemy now welcomed as liberator. And yet, relatively few people—apart from the most fervent sustainers of the defunct regime and those young enthusiasts who volunteered to fight for it—felt the need to ask themselves what kind of creature the Allied army liberating the Italians was all about. Was it liberating them from Germans, or from fascists? But didn't Germans and fascists belong to the familiar chronicle of just yesterday? How was it possible that the acclaimed regime and its ally were not perceived like a nightmare and most of the Italians pretended that they had never existed? It was as if an entire nation were the victim of a hallucinatory state verging on public madness.

On September 8, the state collapsed, the army dissolved, the public administration disappeared, and these circumstances quickly evolved into the loss of any sense of reality. This had a profound effect on the question of the nation; and it was an effect that would have repercussions for generations to come.

### THE DEATH OF THE *PATRIA*, THE DEATH OF THE FATHER

In 1944, reflecting upon the events of September 1943, the jurist Salvatore Satta wrote: 'the death of the *Patria* is the grandest event that can occur in the life of an individual'.<sup>25</sup> It remains unclear if Satta was aware of using an expression of deep evocative appeal, as to cover the mourning mood of his bourgeois class that, together with Fascism, was on the verge of its ruin. In the end, Satta's argument seems to function as a rhetorical container meant to hide a rather narcissistic position. He generalizes his individual crisis and the crisis of his (bourgeois) class, turning them into the end of history—an inevitable destiny that denies any other political option, social innovation, or different behavior.

In fact, the military-moral disarray in the aftermath of September 8 was symptomatic of a very ambiguous mixture of desire for and fear of the death of the *Patria*, the symbol that had summoned Italians to the battlefields. The death of the *Patria* had been feared because it represented the loss of supreme value for which Italians—educated by twenty years of bombastic nationalistic rhetoric—had fought; but it had also been desired because the *Patria* had been the origin of useless and endless pain and suffering. The same interaction and combination of fear and desire had followed the military disaster of Caporetto in the Great War (between October 24 and November 12, 1917) when the Italian army had suffered its most significant blows against the Austria-Hungarian and German forces.<sup>26</sup> In 1945, when the war was over, Corrado Alvaro depicted the tragic picture of a state of mind:

Most of the Italians wished ... for their own defeat. They trusted Radio London, they fervently hoped to be defeated, they helped and preached the defeat, and yet they had their children in Africa, in the Balkans, in Russia ... Solidarity, patriotism, and sense of individual responsibility were annihilated or dispersed.<sup>27</sup>

The disaster was not only the revelatory moment of the inner weakness of the nation. It also carried with it a sense of irredeemable *shame* for having, even for only a moment, believed in the tale narrated by the regime in its vast theatrical portrait, to have really acted unanimously while overwhelmed by the vertigo of a greater Italy. June 10, 1940 (the declaration of war) was supposed to be the day of truth, the day that should have proved that the new, modern Italy idealized by Fascism had finally been created, and was ready to meet the challenge of modernity.

The scenes filmed by the Luce Institute vividly depict the religious ceremony that marked the *discesa in campo* (going to war), with the fervent masses that listened and responded to Duce's voice imparting the categorical imperative *vincere e vinceremo* ('win, and we will win'). When the test did not deliver what everybody was expecting, the grandiose vision of a 'new Italian man' suddenly seemed ridiculous, naive, and provincial.

Furthermore, the death of *Patria* had only deepened the political-existential crisis of a political community already jolted by the death of the Father—that is, by the disappearance of the body of Mussolini from the public scene after July 1943. In fascist Italy, Mussolini's body had come

to incarnate the nation. In the iconography of Fascism, carefully staged by the newsreels of the Luce Institute, Mussolini's extraordinary physique—his barrel chest and wide legs, his Rodinesque brow and jutting jaw—was ubiquitous.<sup>28</sup> He was *Übermensch*, heartthrob, and political movement rolled into one. The connection between the image of Mussolini and Italian national identity had become striking. In the understanding of Luisa Passerini, Mussolini was 'l'autoimmagine degli italiani', that is, the image through which Italians saw themselves, a kind of self-portrait.

For many Italians, Mussolini's story was their story; his successes and his failings, his humble background, his ambitions, delusions of grandeur, and ultimately his fate, in some way, reflect those of the country itself. Both the *mussolinismo*—the spontaneous myth-cult of Mussolini the man, preceding the march on Rome—and *ducismo*—the proper and carefully staged myth-cult of the Duce of Fascism, a sort of ahistorical figure—were a largely autonomous and even competitive ideological compound in relation to Fascism. And this individual and collective imaginary was perhaps the principal and most enduring factor in ensuring a measure of mass consensus, and even enthusiasm, for the regimes at all times.<sup>29</sup> In July 1943, the Italians' imaginary and visual landscape lost the most significant marker of certainty.

In fact, Mussolini and his body had disappeared from the public scene long before July 1943. The Duce's silence had in fact started during the long and increasingly difficult months of 1942. His last public speech was heard on June 10 to celebrate the anniversary of the declaration of war. More than reassuring Italians, it actually made them start to worry, as it unleashed all sort of rumors concerning his fate. Since the autumn of 1942 Italians realized that the man 'who is always right', was perhaps wrong. This sensation only increased as the war proceeded, and as effects of constant air attacks proved devastating on Italians' morale, revealing the vacuity of the Duce's promises.

The turning point was December 2, 1942, when Mussolini eventually spoke to the Italians from the Chamber of Fasces and Corporations, but only via radio.<sup>30</sup> To the people fearful and desperately looking for salvation, the Duce's only answer was that Italians should find long-sought refuge in 'our beautiful countryside'. He even had the gall to blame Italians: they had allegedly ignored his constant urgings to evacuate earlier in the war, he said, making him the leader who was more heard than followed. The response to the speech marked the most momentous shift in popular



perceptions of Mussolini. Italians started to dissociate themselves from a fascist war—*his* war, not *their* war—and from a fascist nation. The war was lost and the desire to put an end to it was great—even greater than the humiliation of losing it.<sup>31</sup> Many Italians started to lose faith in Mussolini and his subordinates. The loss was irrecoverable. The love Italians had for the Duce turned to hatred from that day on, an inversion that changed all the positive attributes from positive to negative.<sup>32</sup> Italians had turned to the Father hoping for an intervention that would save their lives. The Father, however, failed. His aura had been eventually lacerated; and the failure gradually, relentlessly rendered him disposable. It was time for him to go. Eight months later, he disappeared.

The announcement of Mussolini's arrest was welcomed as cathartic news, as the best possible bargain to exit the colossal trouble in which Fascism had thrown the country. 'Long live the King, love live Badoglio', Romans cried, clapping their hands and kissing each other with joy, hearing the radio announcing Mussolini's resignation. In the major Italian cities, the popular outburst went on for many days; the Duce's pictures were burned, and his statues and busts were thrown on the ground and smashed.<sup>33</sup>

Yet, the sense of liberation was also accompanied by a feeling of loss. Liberation, because the relations to Mussolini constrained through the exercise of authority; loss, because this relation was bound up with emotional and symbolic ties. With the abrupt fall of Fascism and the sudden disappearance of the Duce, the site of power had become an empty space, detached from Mussolini's body, thus opening uncertainty about who would occupy this empty space. The extraordinary phenomenon of disincorporation—the absence of a body that had been a physical, objective definition for two decades—introduced a radical difference with the years of regime: the site of power became an empty place.<sup>34</sup>

To Italy and Italians the forty-five days between July and September looked as if they were an unimaginable nightmare. A nation that had accepted the compromise propagandized as the few thousand dead to gain the right to be seated at the peace table re-awaked from a comfortable dream and found itself in a tragic reality. Dreams turned into nightmares. As the Father Mussolini failed and disappeared, Italians redirected their hopes, and turned to the *genitor*: the King. Again the delusion was going to be profound, for the latter would soon abandon them to their fate. But in the midst of all this emptiness, something new was also starting to grow.

## STORIES AND NARRATIVES OF REBIRTH AND RESURRECTION

The downfall of Fascism, the disintegration of national unity, and the uncertainty about the future simultaneously became the background against which new markers of certainty infused the political community with emerging meanings. The endless discussion over September 8 as ‘death’ or ‘birth’ of nation can be answered with three words: it was both.<sup>35</sup> In short, after September 8 and despite the onset of the civil war, the political form of society did not collapse. It instead took on an unprecedented indeterminacy, an open, empty space of power in which new behaviors, new relationships between the individual and new forms of allegiance became thinkable and possible. After September 8, a heroic epic of the nation based upon the fact and the experience of the anti-fascist Resistance as a second Risorgimento started to unfold.

*Making Choices*

Scholarship has tended to describe and understand the behaviors and choices of Italians after September 8 as fascist or anti-fascist, *resistenziali* or *non resistenziali*, passive or active. It has become fashionable to draw attention to the conduct of the silent majority of Italians, to demonstrate what in fact was always obvious: that those who actively resisted German occupation and those who actively collaborated with it, were small minorities. Resisting or collaborating were not how most people responded, the argument goes. Most people occupied a ‘grey zone’, to follow historian Renzo De Felice, between resistance and collaboration, fascists and partisans. Or rather, they were ‘beyond’ both resistance and collaboration. They shared neither the anti-fascist ideals of the Resistance nor the extreme fascist position of the supporters of Salò. Italians chose to make no choices at all, to do nothing and wait out the end of the war, in a passive and noncommittal way.<sup>36</sup>

After all, opportunism and *attendismo*, a kind of wait-and-see policy, are often understood as recurrent and ingrained keys and anthropological features of Italians. Yet, the division of the Italian people at war into active minorities and an inactive majority is a misrepresentation of the reality of wartime life based on a very selective and highly ideological interpretation. This was not a war people could stand aside from. The war came into people’s lives from everywhere. It was impossible to separate oneself from its effects and from the demands and the choices it imposed on a daily basis.

To survive at all, people had to act and react, make hard, unpalatable, inconsistent, contradictory choices from day to day, as circumstances demanded. How were people to feed themselves today—and tomorrow, and the day after? How were young and middle-aged men and their families to respond to military call-up, to labor service? How were people to respond to the presence of evacuees from the town, of an escaped Allied soldier wanting food and shelter, of a partisans bands, of a foreign or Italian Jew? How were people to respond to police and army round-ups and sweeps in their area? How were people to respond to the uncertainty caused by a political authority that, in many parts of Central and northern Italy, shifted continuously between partisans, fascists, and Nazi forces? How were people in the south to face the not always clear overlapping of authority between the Allies and the followers of the King? In short, Italians *must* make choices. There were no grey zones, only burning hot-spots.

The destructive reach of the war reduced life to a matter of bare survival. Yet, the almost unimaginable condition of violence, brutality, and terror, forced soldiers and civilians to find ways of surviving and to make existential choices. ‘Choice’ here does not mean to embrace a political or ideological alternative (Fascism or anti-Fascism? The King or the Duce? The Germans or the Allies?), or a fully rational judgment based on personal interest or opportunism. To apply the analytical category of ideology, rationalism, or rational choice to conditions of civil war is not only irrelevant but also positively misleading. This is so for two very simple reasons: first, because the structure on which ‘objective’ rationality and ‘rational’ choice were based had disappeared; and second, because the stressful, emotive character of a liminal crisis always prevent clear thinking within neatly defined categories.<sup>37</sup>

In the maelstrom of the emotion that followed in the wake of the armistice, some who had believed blindly in Fascism found solace in the prospect of a new redemptive faith; other soldiers who went home, threw their weapons into a rucksack, and set off to find a communist, socialist, Catholic, or monarchist partisan unit, convinced that the only *Patria* in which it was worth believing was that of the poor devils who had paid for the sins of others with their lives. Others chose to cling to the idea that the *Patria* was best represented by Fascism—particularly after the behavior of Badoglio and the King, and after the Germans had freed Mussolini from imprisonment on the Gran Sasso mountain in a commando raid on September 12, 1943—and pledged their support to the republic of Salò. For them, Fascism was not and could not be only a historical diversion or

a mistake, something to be quickly buried as a meaningless mistake. They had heartily trusted Fascism and it was extremely difficult, almost impossible to free themselves from their education. They still believed in what they had been taught. For these young men, Fascism had become a moral category worth dying for.

It is therefore also important to understand something else: that even those who made apparently ‘clear’ choices—joining Salò or the partisan bands—were not necessarily driven by clearly delineated ideological positions. To them, to these teenagers and youngsters, the *morte della patria* and other refined elaborations would have seemed only empty formulas, rhetorical exercises, or consolatory philosophies. Indeed, too many Italian intellectuals show a tendency to post hoc extend their private mood to include that of the entire nation, and have attempted to conflate the story of an individual experience with the experience of an entire political community.

Also those who did not choose Salò or partisan activism were forced into choice. A number of Italians opposed forced evacuation or attempted to impede deportation to Germany. Magistrates and public employees refused to swear allegiance to the republic of Salò. Others pledged to protect Jews. Many others safeguarded goods and properties considered to be essential for immediate survival and its aftermath: an effort without which winning or losing would have made very little difference. Acts of mutual solidarity and compassion flourished, with helpers asking for no acknowledgment, reward, or repayment. Soldiers in flight from Germans and fascists were welcomed, given civilian and unlikely clothing, and set on the road back to their home with the most disparate vehicles including hand-carts, wheel barrows, donkeys, or bicycles without chain or handlebar.<sup>38</sup> This was an impressive popular mobilization, and perhaps the greatest rescue operation in the history of Italy.<sup>39</sup> Soldiers and officers heartened and assisted the panicked Sicilian population, while all around the country the local clergy supported the communities affected by the destructive reach of the war.<sup>40</sup>

Peasants and shepherds of the highest slopes of the Apennines—people largely cut off from the causes but not the consequences of the war—helped the Allied prisoners-of-war (some 50,000) who had escaped or simply walked out of their camps after the armistice to stay free and hidden and to survive.<sup>41</sup> The state and its institutions were replaced by the communities and by ancient customs and habits of hospitality and solidarity.

Most of these behaviors lay beneath the surface of the evident, public arena, and were rather articulated through infra-politics in the hidden

sphere. As James Scott has suggested, politics is not just about openly declared dominance and revolt, but also about the ‘disguised, low profile, undeclared’<sup>42</sup> resistance of subordinate groups. Between quiescence and revolt, there is a complex reality of infra-politics, that is, negotiations and interplay between the public and ‘hidden transcripts’.<sup>43</sup> The public transcript reflects relations of power between the elites and subordinates, and aims at complying with the expectations of the powerful. The hidden transcript, by contrast, consists of speeches, gestures, behaviors, and practices that occur offstage and defy the power relations established in the public sphere thus eventually contradicting or inflecting it. The hidden transcript comprises the minute materialization of people’s modes of conduct and thought.<sup>44</sup> It also comprises the polymorphous paraphernalia of skills: irony, mockery, cunning, grimace, ridiculing, and satire, activated by weak people in order to turn the world upside down and capsize the relations of power.<sup>45</sup> The hidden transcript assumes the form of political struggle when frontal assaults are impossible or highly unlikely to succeed—as under authoritarian regimes, or in the conditions of violence, civil war, and contested sovereignty lived by Italians after September 8, 1943. From this perspective, it seems more accurate to see the realities of power not as a straightforward division between state and society, between the powerful and the subordinate, but rather to acknowledge a tension between compliance and the potential acts of resistance.

Thus, even the deference and consent to domination could be a preliminary form of subversion. Breaking the silence by the publication of a hidden transcript was not only a psychological release for the one who speaks on behalf of others; it was also a moment of political electricity: a negative attitude could become, and indeed often became, a positive force against violence and unjust authority.

In the context of the Italian civil war, acting out of solidarity or compassion—often for religious or moral and not for any specific political or ideological reasons—meant unconsciously disowning the fascist laws and German authority, and defining new forms of legitimacy, however embryonic.<sup>46</sup>

### *Gendered Modernity*

Here the spontaneous effort of so many women was of prime importance, and through them the key role of enduring family and neighborhood ties. It was, in the understanding of Anna Bravo, a kind

of ‘mass maternage’, which entailed the extension of the instinctive maternal role to the public sphere.<sup>47</sup>

With the advent of WWII, followed by the onset of civil war in 1943, the lives of women, even in the remotest areas, were inevitably affected. Women took over male jobs as men were called up to fight. In the final doomed phase of the republic of Salò, a few women even donned military uniforms and joined the armed forces in noncombatant roles.<sup>48</sup> Others contributed to the swelling anti-fascist Resistance movement. Here, leaving aside the overly heroic literature on the subject, three main points emerge.<sup>49</sup> First, recent research suggests that at least as many women as men were involved in the resistance. The chronology of this involvement mirrors the chronology of the Resistance as a whole. Second, roles in the Resistance were highly gendered. Women figured largely in what could be termed ‘support’ or administrative roles such as organizing safe houses for fugitives, ensuring communications by acting as messengers, or supplying partisan bands with food and clothing. Third, although significant numbers of Resistance activists were female, and women’s involvement—in contrast to that of most of the men—was the product of a deliberate choice, scholars search in vain for any trace of a feminist agenda connected to the activities of these militants. The Resistance, as Victoria De Grazia had suggested, ‘did not encourage critiques of male supremacy nor contemplate situations in which to confront complex issues of self-identity and gender reconstruction’.<sup>50</sup>

At the same time, the role of women in the last years of the war and in the first months after the end of the war was incomparable with previous historical experience. Upon the military collapse, Italy was left with a marked surplus of women. With a scarcity of men, women pulled their families and communities through extraordinarily lean years—the hunger years. Millions had already lost their homes to bombing raids, and the homeless population grew by millions more as refugees from the big cities and towns to the countryside poured in. The lack of food supplies was catastrophic. This starving, homeless population faced the cold winters of 1943–1944 and 1944–1945.

With few means for obtaining basic necessities, and with even those necessities in appallingly short supply, women almost literally had to make something out of nothing in order to feed themselves and their dependents.

They did so largely without men’s help. Few men were around: they were either casualties of war or still in prison camps. Those who were pres-

ent were often wounded, too weak to work, or psychologically shattered by their wartime and prison experiences. Others were fleeing the Germans or the fascists.

### *New Narratives of Meaning: Resurgence*

In the meantime, the anti-fascist forces reappeared on the scene, reformulating the narratives of a new nation. In this narrative the old symbol of the resurgence and the symbology of the Risorgimento were brought into play once again. During the years 1943–1945, there was an extremely intense negotiation of nationhood in which the search for new meanings was accompanied by a rediscovery of the past. The past, after all, had not disappeared—but it needed to be actively reappropriated.

The anti-fascist front, in reality, had tried to reappropriate the Risorgimento, and clean it from fascist pollution, much before the end of the regime. The liberal socialists of *Giustizia e Libertà* had carried forward Piero Gobetti's analysis of the Risorgimento as an incomplete or unsuccessful revolution, and in 1942 they named the political organization they formed with other anti-fascist groups *Partito d'Azione* (*Action Party*), just like Mazzini's party. The Italian communist volunteers in the Spanish Civil War had organized themselves in a 'Battaglione Garibaldi'; one of their clandestine radio broadcasts into Italy from Spain had declared in March 1937: 'Mussolini's policies are dragging Garibaldi's Italy into the mud'.<sup>51</sup> It was therefore quite natural for the anti-fascist front, which opposed the forces of Fascism after the collapse of the regime, once again the Risorgimento, clean it from fascist pollution, and denounce the regime as the anti-Risorgimento that had suppressed all liberties.<sup>52</sup> In Rome the single issue of the trade union 'Confederazione dei Lavoratori' broadsheet *Il Lavoro italiano*—whose editorial board consisted of a communist (Mario Alicata), a socialist (Olindo Vernocchi), and a Catholic (Alberto Canaletti Gaudenti)—appeared on the street on September 10, 1943, as German troops began occupying parts of the city, with the headline *Torna Garibaldi* ('Garibaldi return')<sup>53</sup> and a picture of Garibaldi by Renato Guttuso. The article reads:

Today Garibaldi returns on his horse to Italian soil. He gallops again through the streets of Rome; he is the true leader of the people, dressed in battle uniform, who at long last takes up and aims his rifle in defense of their rights. As in 1849 he calls on the people to help defend their city. This true rebirth of

Garibaldian spirit, which does not just consist of words but become concrete in actions is, we feel, the best prelude to the future because finally popular democracy is being defended now, and with determination, by the people.<sup>54</sup>

The paradox was that even the fascists of Salò claimed to be the true followers of the Risorgimento. As political conflict and struggles over legitimacy increased, the myth of the Risorgimento, instead of vanishing, became more and more solidified as the ground for articulating a vision of the present and future linked to the past. As such, the patriotism of the civil war was a mixture of historical patriotism—a legacy of the Risorgimento tradition filtered through Fascism for the young people who grew up under the regime—and a feeling of existential and non-ideological patriotism, an instinctive reaction to the shame and humiliation of the catastrophe of September 1943.

In his seminal article from 1959, Claudio Pavone skillfully pointed out how the political and ideological positions of the Resistance movement and indeed of fascists too—from the radical to the more moderate tendencies—chose their special bit of the Risorgimento to refer to.<sup>55</sup> Fascists and anti-fascists went in search of episodes that lent themselves to offering a less depressing vision of the history of the *Patria*, above and beyond the hardship, meanness, and the foolishness of the present. Commonplaces, rhetoric, recycling of memories and cultural stereotypes, autonomous reflections on one's past as a people—linked to a specific and contrasting vision of the present and future—circulated in those years in and between the two opposing camps. Everyone descended into Risorgimento grounds. The more radical expression of the Risorgimento—the (communist) Garibaldi brigade militarily, and the Action Party politically—baptized themselves with names that evoked the Risorgimento and its heroes, implicitly calling into question the post-Risorgimento order (the fascist one, but also the liberal-monarchic one), dismissing the appropriation of the Risorgimento by the boys of Salò, but evenly so of the Savoy House. To its defenders, the Kingdom of the South appeared as the re-emersion of the Italian State of the Risorgimento, while the 'ideal values' of the Risorgimento inspired the first monarchic newspaper of post-fascist Italy.<sup>56</sup>

Unity between anti-fascists 'as the epoch of the Risorgimento' was the desire expressed by the socialist leader Pietro Nenni in 1944.<sup>57</sup> Togliatti, who in the 1930s had harshly dismissed the Risorgimento, now readopted and magnified its tradition.<sup>58</sup> Imagery of the Risorgimento and reference to the 'heroes' who had 'sacrificed themselves' during the 'first



Risorgimento' filled the *Appello dei comunisti all'insurrezione* which, on March 12, 1945 called Italians to the ultimate effort against the enemy.<sup>59</sup> What Gramsci had defined, 'a passive revolution' could be turned, thanks to the communists, into a real, social revolution.

Meanwhile, Catholic partisans overcame the residues of anti-Risorgimento intolerance, and leaned to the neo-Guelphist suggestion of a new Risorgimento fought by Catholics.<sup>60</sup> One of the young closest collaborators of Alcide De Gasperi (Giulio Rodinò)—in a speech given in Naples on May 28, 1944—called to the last effort, appealing to the sacred value of the *Patria* and the martyrs of the first Risorgimento, 'those chosen souls who ... sacrificed their lives on the fields of battle, in exile, in prison, on gallows' and let the *Patria* rise again'. In this context, Catholics also appropriated the religious and spiritual (anti-Enlightenment) aspects of Mazzini's thought, while contextually expressing regret over the political use that fascists made of Mazzini.<sup>61</sup>

The young fascist Giose Rimanelli wrote in his autobiographical novel: 'this is really funny; down here, we of the Social Republic claim that we are the true sons of Italy, and the men we're fighting, up in the mountains, say that Italy is theirs'.<sup>62</sup> The boys of Salò placed Mazzini's effigy on their stamps, invoked Mameli and his anthem, pitted a truly patriotic (their own) Garibaldi against the Garibaldi besmirched by the 'bandits', and proclaimed their republic as 'the heir of the Roman Republic of 1849'.<sup>63</sup> The anti-fascists replied sarcastically to what seemed to them unwarranted appropriations: 'Why don't the Fascists quote these words of Mazzini's' asked the Action Party newspaper on March 1, 1944, after quoting some of the Genoese's thoughts inspired by the theme of liberty. To them, the fascists were profaning Mazzini, Garibaldi, and the Roman Republic.<sup>64</sup>

The crucial point here is that stories, characters, and imagery of the Risorgimento and its related meaning of suffering and sacrifice preserved a deep, powerful resonance in popular imagination. As soon as Fascism collapsed in July 1943, the Risorgimento and its symbolic patriotism provided a powerful reference for the reconstruction of individual lives and sense of community. In Rome and Milan, in Bologna and Florence, in Genoa and in Bari, in the north and in the south, Italians took to the streets—a spontaneous emotional release rather than a coordinated political response—to celebrate the exit of Mussolini while singing the national anthem and waving the national flag (two powerful national symbols crafted in the years of the historical Risorgimento) and crying out 'Viva l'Italia', or 'Viva l'Esercito

[the Army]’.<sup>65</sup> In a much more refined way the jurist Piero Calamandrei condensed the rediscovery of patriotism and Risorgimento imagery in a superb page of his diary:

We have found our *Patria* again, our *Patria*, meaning friendliness and human kindness among those living in the same country, who understand each other with a glance, a smile or an allusion. This is our *Patria*, where we feel close to, and familiar with, each other, thus enabling us sometimes to trust and be friendly with people we do not know and whose upbringing and profession are different from ours, and yet we recognize each other through something in common, something that unites us.<sup>66</sup>

In the following months, the memory of the Risorgimento sustained the spirits of the military troops interned in the German camps.<sup>67</sup> The image of sacrifice—linked to the rebuilding and the resurrection of the community, and to the sense of (individual and communal) rebirths—emerged in a vast array of grassroots memories.<sup>68</sup> It therefore crossed ideological, cultural, and geographical lines in surprising ways and intersected with the ‘official’ public memory elaborated, during and after the war, by political elites and popularized by other vectors of memory such as cinema. Based on religious images deeply ingrained in popular culture—the deposition of Christ, the *via crucis*, the martyrdom of the Saint, and the Sorrowful Mary—images of suffering, victimhood, and sacrifice helped Italians, as well as other Europeans, to symbolize the otherwise incomprehensible events of war, and to reconstruct a meaningful existence.<sup>69</sup> Both anti-fascist partisans and young fascists of Salò sentenced to death wrote letters just before the execution as a way of reaffirming a presence in the world, in which they referred to sacrifice, ritual cleansing, purification, and the desire to redeem Italy from its recent past.<sup>70</sup>

Whoever offers her/himself for sacrifice is usually an innocent victim able to understand, like Christ, what is happening to her/himself and to the entire society and willing to channel violence, anger, and emotion from society onto her/himself. The climax is not the death of the scapegoat but the experience of sacred awe when the victims—at the moment of the death—usually forgive the tormentors. According to René Girard, the sacred is inseparable from the practices of sacrifice: the word ‘sacrifice’ literally means ‘to make sacred’. The sacred manifests itself within the spilling of the reconciling blood. Similar to the scapegoat mechanism, the victim’s submission and the desire for self-sacrifice purifies society,

removes violence, overcomes the traumatic experiences of death, becomes a means of redemption, and provides the generative principle for social cohesion and for the restoration of order within society.<sup>71</sup>

### THE RESISTANCE, THE RISORGIMENTO: TOWARD THE NEW REPUBLIC

In principle, the Risorgimento was not a readymade symbol that could be exploited without risk. In fact, it was a potentially polluted and polluting symbol, whose ideological nucleus—and its boldest language and imagery of renaissance—had been used (and abused), co-opted and developed, re-elaborated and reinterpreted by the monarchy and by Fascism. However, the rearticulation-cleaning of the Risorgimento was possible because Italians had gone through a truly liminal period, a critical juncture of history. With the collapse of Fascism and onset of the civil war, Italy underwent the dissolution of established power structures.

In the liminal period 1943–1945, the normal limits to thought and self-understanding were relaxed, opening the way to novel imagination, and to the rearticulation/reconfiguration/re-elaboration of the Risorgimento and its symbolic imagery. The core symbols and sacred values of Italy—primarily the Risorgimento and the image of rebirth—were brought into play, introducing a new dynamism into the balancing of order maintaining and order transforming symbolic forces. The ‘horizons of expectations’<sup>72</sup> were articulated and reformulated by revisiting the past. In this process, historical narratives came to the fore and became negotiated at both the official and unofficial levels of writing history.

As we will see in the following chapter, in the years following WWII, the narratives of sacrifice and resurgence that had developed during the liminal period of the war—at both the popular and official level—would become the object of dispute and contestation, but also a reference point that served to overcome divisive memories of civil war or contested nation-building, and a symbolic reference for the reconstruction of the community. Likewise, these narratives helped Italians to face the double political transition (from monarchy to Republic and from Fascism to democracy) becoming the roots of republicanism, enshrined in the Italian Constitution.

And this memory-formation sustaining the transition to republican Italy would take place within two of the projections of modernity that had not only survived Fascism and the war, but also come out stronger than before: Communism and Catholicism.

## NOTES

1. Claude Lefort, 'The Question of Democracy', in *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. D. Macey (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 9–20: 19; see also Harald Wydra, 'Liminality and Democracy', in Agnes Horvath, Bjørn Thomassen, and Harald Wydra (eds.), *Breaking Boundaries: Varieties of Liminality* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 183–204.
2. Elena Aga-Rossi, *A Nation Collapses: The Italian Surrender of September 1943*, trans. H. Ferguson II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 91–124; Philipp Morgan, *The Fall of Mussolini: Italy, the Italians, and the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 93–126.
3. Nuto Revelli, *La guerra dei poveri* (Turin, Einaudi, 1962), 27.
4. For testimonies and memories see Anna Bravo and Daniele Jalla (eds.), *La vita offesa: Storia e memoria dei Lager nazisti nei racconti di duecento sopravvissuti* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1986), 80; Danilo Montaldi, *Militanti politici di base* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971), 267; Giorgio Quazza, 'Un diario partigiano', in *La Resistenza Italiana, Appunti e documenti* (Turin: Giappichelli, 1966), 127–47: 133–5. The testimonies of those days tend to support the words of a soldier in the account of the events given in an autobiographical novel by Beppe Fenoglio: 'And then they could not even give us any clear orders. There was a flood of orders, but each one was different or the opposite of the others. Resist the Germans; don't fire the Germans; don't let the Germans disarm you; kill the Germans; lay down your weapons; don't give up your weapons'; Beppe Fenoglio, *Primavera di bellezza* (1959) (Turin: Einaudi, 1991), 109–10.
5. 'Our Command...did not limit itself to undergoing the defeat:... they accepted it... Deep in their hearts [they were] inclined to despair of the very country they should have defended and of the common people from whose ranks the soldiers came'; Marc Bloch, *L'étrange défaite* (Paris: Colin, 1957), 158. The French historian then added: 'Our leaders did not only allow themselves to be beaten; they found it natural to have been beaten'; *ibid.*, 202.
6. See a testimony in Giulio Bedeschi (ed.), *Fronte italiano: c'ero anche io. La popolazione in guerra* (Milan: Mursia, 1987), 543.
7. The police chief of Catania, a major city on Sicily's eastern coast, reported on July 20, then days after the invasion started, that there were 'long files of disbanded and hungry Italian soldiers turning up in the Mount Etna area', spreading panic and terror and putting people in fear of a 'dangerous brigandage'. The officer certainly exaggerated the potential for banditry of fleeing Italian troops. However, the picture he portrayed was of an army in the process of dissolution. The report, which was passed directly to

- Mussolini, is quoted in Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini l'alleato*, I, *L'Italia in Guerra 1940–1943*, 2. *Crisi e agonia del regime* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 1310. Eyewitness accounts told the same story; see, for example, Bedeschi, *Fronte italiano*, 685–6, 689.
8. Italo Calvino, 'Omero antimilitarista', *l'Unità*, September 15, 1946.
  9. Mimmo Franzinelli, '8 Settembre', in Mario Isnenghi (ed.), *I luoghi della memoria: Personaggi e date dell'Italia unita* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1997), 241–70: 245–8.
  10. For the reports of the events in various cities and towns see 'Dimostrazione patriottiche in tutta Italia', *Il Popolo d'Italia*, July 26, 1943; 'Manifestazioni a Roma', *Corriere della Sera*, July 26, 1946. See also the police reports of July 30 and August 5, 1943 (Rome) and July 26 (Milan) in Archivio Centrale dello Stato Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Polizia Politica, 1926–1944, b. 239 (Rome), b. 238 (Milan); see also Simona Colarizi, *La seconda guerra mondiale e la Repubblica* (Turin: UTET, 1984), 191–95.
  11. See the testimonies in Bedeschi, *Fronte italiano*, 112, 137, 567, 590.
  12. Enrico Emanuelli, *Teatro personale* (Milan: Muggiani, 1945), 55–6.
  13. Claudio Pavone, *Una guerra civile: Saggio sulla moralità della Resistenza* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1991), 24.
  14. The literature on violence, German massacres, and Allied bombing—on what has been called also the 'war against civilians'—is vast; among much others see Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Our: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Paolo Pezzino, 'The German Military Occupation of Italy and the War Against Civilians', *Modern Italy* 12, no. 2 (2007): 173–88. On the barbarization of war in Eastern Europe, as war's effect and as a consequence of the Wehrmacht's policy, see Omer Bartov. 'The Conduct of War: Soldiers and the Barbarization of Warfare', *The Journal of Modern History* 64, suppl. (December 1992): 32–45.
  15. For some of the best examples of scholarly work focusing on specific areas see Giulio Guderzo, *L'altra guerra: Neofascisti, tedeschi, partigiani, popolo in una provincia padana. Pavia, 1943–1945* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002), 1–20; Victoria Belco, *War, Massacres and Recovery in Central Italy, 1943–1948* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 43–56.
  16. On this see Rosario Forlenza, 'Bewilderment and Recomposition: September 8, 1943 and the Liminal Origins of Italian Democracy', *International Political Anthropology* 4, no. 2 (2011): 133–57; Rosario Forlenza, *A Passage to Democracy: Italy 1943–1948* (manuscript).
  17. Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).
  18. Luigi Meneghelo, *I piccoli maestri* (1964) (Milan: Bur-Rizzoli, 2009), 21.

19. 'Fog bank' is the title of the autobiographical novel on those years by Riccardo Soavi, *Un banco di nebbia. I turbamenti di un "piccolo italiano"* (Turin: Einaudi, 1955); Eugenio Montale titled the collection of poems written during the war *La bufera e altro* ('The Storm and Other Things'). The word *bufera* ('storm') is sometimes used figuratively to describe the effect of passion, and carries something of the poetic connotation of 'tempest' in English; Eugenio Montale, *La bufera e altro* (Venice: Marsilio, 1956).
20. Carlo Mazzantini, *A cercare la bella morte* (Venice: Marsilio, 1986), 41 (emphasis added).
21. 'The Second Coming' was written in 1919, just one year after WWI ended. The poem reflects on how Evil has taken over the minds of people, turning the world into chaos.
22. Cesare Pavese, *La casa in collina* (Turin: Einaudi, 1948), 214.
23. On the notion of 'total social fact' see Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Society* (1923–24) (London: Routledge, 2002).
24. According to Alessandro Pizzorno 'absolute politics' is a transitory situation, where people and structures are, betwixt and between, untied from existing and acknowledge rites, norms, and boundaries; Alessandro Pizzorno, 'Politics Unbound', in Charles Maier (ed.), *Changing Boundaries of the Political* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1987), 27–62.
25. Salvatore Sarra, *De Profundis* (Milan: Adelphi), 16–7.
26. As most studies have shown, the defeat at Caporetto represented not only the central traumatic event of the Italian war experience, but also one of the fundamental factors in the formation and early mass appeal of fascist ideology. See the analysis of social psychologist Elvio Fachinelli, 'Il fenomeno fascista', in *La freccia ferma: Tre tentativi di annullare il tempo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979), 135–51; Claudio Fogu, *The Historical Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 44–5. Historical accounts have often associated September 8 with Caporetto; see for example Mario Isnenghi, *La tragedia necessaria. Da Caporetto all'Otto Settembre* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999), 7–15.
27. Now in Corrado Alvaro, *L'Italia rinunzia? 1944. Il Meridione e il paese di fronte alla grande catastrofe* (Rome: Donzelli, 2011), 28.
28. Mussolini had spent most of his adult life creating a cult of personality around his person that verged on the individual and collective worship of his very physique. In addition to the Luce newsreel one thinks of the many posters, photographs, and chiseled busts depicting the Duce with his so-called 'Roman' features and his bare chest.

29. Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, trans. R. Lumley and J. Bloomfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Luisa Passerini, *Mussolini immaginario: Storia di una biografia, 1915–1939* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1991); see also Sergio Luzzato, *Mussolini's Corpse and the Fortunes of Italy*, trans. F. Randall (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005).
30. The speech is in Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 31: *Dal discorso al Direttorio Nazionale del P.N.F. del 3 gennaio 1942 alla liberazione di Mussolini (4 gen. 1942–12 set. 1943)*, eds. Edoardo and Duilio Susmel (Florence: La Fenice, 1963–1964), 128–32.
31. The police chief of Turin summarized in December 1942 the overwhelming message reaching him and his superiors from informers' reports and censored letters. This was that 'not only do many people no longer believe in victory, they also hope for a quick end of the conflict, whatever the outcome is, and are not even concerned about the consequences': Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero dell'Interno, Dipartimento Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Segreteria del Capo di Polizia, 1940–1943, b. 9.
32. On this change of attitude between 1940 and 1943 and on the collapse of the 'fronte interno' ('home front') dating from summer–autumn 1942, see especially Pietro Cavallo, *Italiani in guerra. Sentimenti e immagini dal 1940 al 1943* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997); Simona Colarizi, *L'opinione degli italiani sotto il regime, 1929–1943* (Bari-Rome: Laterza, 1991), 383–6; Paul Corner, *The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion in Mussolini's Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 245–74; Richard Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy: Life Under the Dictatorship, 1915–1945* (London: Penguin, 2005), 463–97.
33. Angelo Maria Imbriani, *Gli italiani e il Duce. Il mito e l'immagine di Mussolini negli ultimi anni del Fascismo, 1938–1943* (Naples: Liguori, 1992), 198–9.
34. On the concept of 'empty space of power' and on the phenomenon of disincorporation from the body of the ruler see Claude Lefort, 'The Permanence of the Theological-Political?', in *Democracy and Political Theory*, 213–55; see also Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: a Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).
35. On this see again Forlenza, 'Bewilderment and Recomposition'.
36. Renzo De Felice, *Rosso e Nero*, ed. P. Chessa (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 1995); Pavone, *Una guerra civile*, 24.
37. Norbert Elias, *Involvement and Detachment*, trans. E. Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 45–6. Shakespeare had a particularly clear understanding of this phenomenon; on this see René Girard, *A Theatre of Envy: William*

- Shakespeare* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Arpad Szakolczai, 'Image-Magic in A Midsummer Night's Dream: Power and Modernity from Weber to Shakespeare' *History of the Human Sciences* 20, no. 4 (2007): 1–26: 16.
38. Franco Calamandrei, *La vita indivisibile: Diari 1941–1947* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1986), 110–11; Meneghello, *I piccoli maestri*, 24.
  39. As interpreted by Ernesto Galli della Loggia, 'Una guerra femminile? Ipotesi sul mutamento dell'ideologia e dell'immaginario occidentale tra il 1939 e il 1945', in Anna Bravo (ed.), *Donne e uomini nelle guerre mondiali* (Rome-Bari: Laterza), 3–28.
  40. Salvatore Lauritano, *La caduta della Sicilia e i siciliani* (Messina: Tip. Siciliana, 1945); Roberto P. Violi, *Religiosità e identità collettive. I Santuari del Sud tra fascismo, guerra e democrazia* (Rome: Studium 1996).
  41. Roger N. L. Absalom, *A Strange Alliance. Aspect of Escape and Survival in Italy 1943–1945* (Florence: Leo S. Olschky, 1991).
  42. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance: The Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 198–9.
  43. *Ibid.*, 2–5.
  44. Michel De Certeau, *L'invention de quotidien*, vol. I, *Arts du faire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980); Thomas C. Schelling, *Micromotives and Macrobehavior* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978).
  45. The same strategy occurs in folk tale; see Vladimir Propp, *Morfologia della fiaba* (1928) (Turin: Einaudi, 2000). Postcolonial and subaltern studies have highlighted many forms of resistance underrated by 'official' historiography and Western historical studies; see on this Dipesh Chakrabarty *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Guha Ranajit and Spivak G. Chakravorty (eds.), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).
  46. The activities of the helpers represented a form of pacific, civic disobedience, translated in Anna Bravo's discussion of the liberation process into the concept of 'civil resistance', a formula which develops some of the lines of research suggested by Jacques Sémelin on a continental scale; Anna Bravo, 'Resistenza civile', in Enzo Collotti, Renato Sandri, Frediano Sessi (eds.) *Dizionario della Resistenza*, vol. I, *Storia e geografia della liberazione* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000), 268–82; Jacques Sémelin, *Sans armes face à Hitler. La Résistance civile en Europe 1939–1945* (Paris: Editions Payot, 1989).
  47. Anna Bravo, 'Armed and unarmed: struggles without weapons in Europe and in Italy,' *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 10, no. 4 (2005): 468–84.



48. Maria Fraddosio, 'La donna e le guerra: Aspetti della militanza femminile nel fascismo dalla mobilitazione civile alle origini del Saf nella Repubblica Sociale Italiana', *Storia contemporanea* 20, no. 6 (1989): 1105–81.
49. The bibliography of women and the Resistance is too vast to list. For a research that raises important questions using oral history see Anna Bravo, 'Simboli del materno', in Bravo, *Donne e uomini*, 96–134. An excellent historiographical essay on the relation between the mythology of the Resistance and women history is Perry Wilson, 'Saints and Heroines: Re-writing the History of the Italian Women in the Resistance', in Tim Kirk and Anthony McElligott (eds.), *Opposing Fascism: Community, Authority and Resistance in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 180–98. See also Jane Slaughter, *Women and the Italian Resistance, 1943–1945* (Denver, Colo.: Arden Press, 1997).
50. Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Woman: Italy 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 285.
51. Franco Monteleone, *La radio italiana nel periodo fascista* (Venice: Marsilio, 1976), 379.
52. Luigi Salvatorelli, *Pensiero e azione nel Risorgimento* (Turin: Einaudi 1943); Ugo La Malfa, *Per la rinascita d'Italia* (Rome: Partito d'Azione, 1943), 4.
53. The article echoed, perhaps unconsciously, a Mussolini 1918 article titled 'Torna, torna Garibaldi' ('Come back Garibaldi, come back'). See Chapt. 5, 146 (no. 47).
54. Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano*, vol. V, *La Resistenza: Togliatti e il partito nuovo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), 21.
55. Claudio Pavone, "Le idee della Resistenza: antifascisti e fascisti davanti alla tradizione del Risorgimento" *Passato e presente* 7, no. 1 (1959): 850–918.
56. Rosario Forlenza and Bjørn Thomassen, 'Social Dramas and Memory Formation. Resistance and Resurgence in the Italian Politics of Memory' (forthcoming).
57. Quoted in 'Documenti inediti sulle posizioni del PCI e del PSIUP dall'ottobre 1943 all'aprile 1944' (eds. Giorgio Amendola and Filippo Frassati), *Critica marxista* 2 (1965): 131–139: 136.
58. In 1931, Togliatti (under the *nom de guerre* Ercoli) had defined the 'so called Risorgimento' as a cramped and limited movement void of the vital energy coming from the 'popular masses'; Ercoli, 'Sul movimento di Giustizia e Libertà', *Lo Stato Operaio* 5 (1931): 463–73. For the rediscovering of the Risorgimental themes during the war see his speech of September 24, 1944 (to the Rome federation of the PCI) in Palmiro Togliatti, *Opere*, vol. V, ed. L. Gruppi (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1984)

- 79–80. See also Ercoli, ‘Per un Italia libera e democratica’, *Lo Stato Operaio* 3 (1943): 102–4.
59. As in *Trent’anni di vita e di lotte del Partito comunista italiano*, Quaderno di Rinascita 2, ed. P. Togliatti (Rome: Rinascita, 1952), 202.
60. For example see ‘Saluto ai valorosi’, *Il Risveglio*, December, 26, 1943; ‘Il Risorgimento morale degli Italiani’, *Il Popolo* (Rome edition), November 28, 1943.
61. Istituto Luigi Sturzo, Archivio della Democrazia Cristiana, Fondo Rodinò, f. 52/2. At the party’s first national congress of July 1944 (Naples) Rodinò spoke of the ‘regeneration of the Italian nation’, in line with an idea of ‘religious democracy’ derived from Mazzini’s thought. In a similar vein see Giorgio Sala, ‘Mazzini vivo’, *Il Popolo*, March 10, 1945.
62. Giose Rimaneli, *Tiro al piccione* (1953) (Turin: Einaudi, 1991), 146.
63. ‘Garibaldi e le brigate Garibaldi’, *Valanga Repubblicana*, December 15, 1944; see also Mario Isnenghi, ‘Autorappresentazioni dell’ultimo fascismo nella riflessione e nella propaganda’, in Pier Paolo Poggio (ed.), *La Repubblica Sociale Italiana, 1943–1945* (Brescia: Fondazione Micheletti, 1986), 99–112; Elena Pala, *Garibaldi in camicia nera. Il mito dell’eroe dei due mondi nella Repubblica di Salò 1943–1945* (Milan: Mursia 2010).
64. ‘Saldezza del fronte antifascista’, *La Riscossa Italiana*, January–February 1944.
65. See Rosario Forlenza ‘Sacrificial Memory and Political Legitimacy in Post-war Italy: Reliving and Remembering Word War II’, *History & Memory* 24, no. 2 (2012): 73–116: 97–8.
66. Piero Calamandrei, *Diario 1939–1945*, II, ed. G. Agosti (Florence. La Nuova Italia, 1982), 284.
67. See the diaries by Giampiero Carocci, *Il campo degli ufficiali* (Turin: Einaudi, 1954), 46; Giuseppe Zaggia, *Filo spinato* (Venice: Rialto, 1945), 64.
68. For personal stories, diaries, letters, and memories of civilians and soldiers see again Bedeschi, *Fronte italiano*; see also Luigi Ganapini, *Voci della guerra civile: Italiani nel 1943–1945* (Bologna, 2012). For an exploration of the link between narrative of sacrifice/victimization and political legitimacy in post-WWII Italy see Forlenza, ‘Sacrificial Memory’.
69. Sacrifice and victimization were in fact the general response formulated by people and elites in the whole of postwar Europe, even in those countries held responsible for the onset of the war and its tragic consequences, such as Germany; see Robert G. Möeller, ‘Germans as Victims? Thoughts on a Post-Cold War History of World War II’s Legacies’, *History & Memory* 17, no. 1–2 (2005): 147–194; Alon Confino, ‘Remembering the Second World War, 1945–1965: Narratives of Victimhood and Genocide’, *Cultural Analysis* 4 (2005): 46–75. On ‘symbolization of experience’ see Eric

- Voegelin, 'Equivalence of Experience and Symbolization in History' (1970), in *The Collected Works*, vol. 12, *Published Essays, 1966–1985*, ed. E. Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 115–33.
70. *Lettere di condannati a morte della Resistenza italiana: 8 settembre 1943–25 aprile 1945*, eds. P. Malvezzi and G. Pinelli (Turin: Einaudi, 2005); *Lettere di caduti della RSI* (Rome: Ed. B. & C., 1975).
71. René Girard, *Le sacrifice* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2003).
72. Reinhardt Koselleck, "Space of Experience" and "Horizon of Expectation": Two Historical Categories', in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. K. Tribe (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), 267–88.

## Competing Modernities: Postwar Italy and the Struggle over a Divided Past

Italy emerged from WWII as it had done from the nineteenth-century unification process and the Great War: deeply split and profoundly uncertain of its identity and future. Amid the wreckage of the fascist regime and the visceral anger directed at those deemed responsible for the catastrophe—as the scene in Piazzale Loreto epitomized, with the bodies of the Duce, his mistress Claretta Petacci, and twelve fascists hanging by their feet—where could Italy find the strengths for building a new future? How could Italy become a nation in a modern political sense? How could Italians acquire the attitude and the capacity to be free, virtuous, and responsible citizens, and—on the basis of this attitude and capacity—rebuild a new, modern national awareness of democratic foundations after the disastrous experiences of totalitarianism, war, and civil war? As a liberal brochure put it in 1943, ‘Once again [we need] to make Italians... We have to turn them from subjects to citizens’.<sup>1</sup>

The need was to pull Italy out of the abyss into which it had fallen, to resume a place among modern democratic nations. Everyone agreed that the institutional reconstruction of Italy had to begin with a moral and spiritual regeneration. As De Gasperi put it in his first speech after the liberation of Rome, on July 23, 1944: ‘the problem of reconstruction is mainly a moral problem. Without a resurgence of the moral conscience of all Italian people, a material and civil reconstruction would be impossible, and, if possible, would have a short life, as the international corruption ... would... destroy the social fabric of the new state’.<sup>2</sup>

As we shall discuss in this chapter, the Risorgimento and its related images of suffering and regeneration, as resurrected through the experience of war and Resistance, provided the triumphant anti-fascist parties with the lexicon and symbology for the task at hand. As such, the memory of WWII and the *topos* of the Resistance against Fascism as a ‘second Risorgimento’ came to provide the ground for political legitimacy and the ideological foundation of post-fascist democracy.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, the immediate aftermath of war also pitted two competing versions of anti-Fascism against each other: Italian Communism and Christian Democracy (DC). The common enemy had disappeared; the struggle for power was on. It was, indeed, a struggle over hegemony in the Gramscian sense. It was a struggle over which road to modernity Italians should follow, a struggle between two competing modernities: a Catholic modernity versus a socialist–communist modernity. While DC would remain triumphant at the level of national politics throughout the entire postwar period, these competing modernities never managed to annul each other, quite the contrary: they jointly, if antagonistically, came to shape and define postwar Italy as a ‘divided nation’ in both a cultural and political sense.

### COMMUNISTS AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AFTER WORLD WAR II: DEMOCRACY, THE ITALIAN WAY

The Italian Republic was essentially split between red and white—communists and Catholics, communists and anti-communists—from the point of the view of political culture. However, what looked like a permanent *Kulturkampf* eventually settled into a stable, mutually respectful arrangement not dissimilar to the conflict between the priest don Camillo and the communist mayor Peppone (meaning roughly Big Joe), famously depicted in Giovanni Guareschi’s short stories, which also turned into five very popular movies in the postwar period.

For both communists and Christian Democrats the opponent represented the indispensable part to achieving full identity—an identity whose coalescence had been stalled when the anti-fascist alliance against the common enemy had broken apart. Each party needed the other as a straw man, as the oppositional markers of certainty around which their own identities could be constructed.<sup>4</sup>

Both parties faced the unprecedented task of postwar reconstruction: the challenge was material, but also moral and symbolic. How would it confront the challenge of modern politics and modernization?

Postwar Italy presents a 'unique political constellation in post-war Western Europe'.<sup>5</sup> Like West Germany, it was post-authoritarian, under American influence, on the front line of the Cold War and, in many respects, with a 'limited' sovereignty. Unlike the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy possessed a highly unstable form of parliamentarism with rapidly changing governments, which nonetheless combined with an extraordinary continuity: nowhere else was one party (DC) always in power. The DC was in power also to keep the communists out. Thus, the Cold War interfered with and curbed elite renewal for Schumpeter one of the essential conditions for a working democracy.

The lack of *alternanza* might well explain some of the problems or pathologies of the Italian party system. The *conventio ad excludendum* also explains a crucial element of postwar Italy: nowhere else did Communism flourish for such a long time as a party and as a political theory, gaining independence from Moscow without breaking with a Leninist and revolutionary approach to politics. As Martin Jay has highlighted, 'no national Marxist culture after World War II was as rich and vital as that which emerged from the ashes of Mussolini's Italy'.<sup>6</sup>

### CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY

The successes of DC in postwar Italy were not due only to the attractiveness of its languages and political-philosophical programs and ideas. Its strong anti-Communism during the Cold War, combined by the mobilization provided by the Church and Catholic associations, won the party many votes. DC became the quintessential anti-communist party of the era, helped by the fact that the traditional right had been so thoroughly discredited alongside Fascism.

Much of the strength of the DC lay also in the way the party acted as a belt of transmission between Rome and local elites. Grievances were passed upwards; and benefits (state infrastructure projects) were transmitted downwards.<sup>7</sup> Put critically, the DC was able to root itself in the more self-interested politics of post-1945 Italy. Voters no longer aimed at changing the nature of the political system, but wanted something tangible in return for their votes. DC's socio-economic legislation and lobbying met these requests. Finally, a postwar alliance between peasantry and the middle classes was instrumental in keeping DC in power, both in Italy and elsewhere in Europe.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, strategic dimensions aside, one of the most remarkable, if overlooked, features of the DC was the degree to which it became an intellectual project—a way of seeing, interpreting, and changing the world, a genuine political culture open to democracy and modernity. The purpose of Catholic political action changed in the transition to democracy. Christian Democrats lived and acted in postwar Italy not just to protect the Church from anticlerical assault, but first and foremost to articulate and develop political and socio-economic platforms, implementing a specific Christian Democratic and Catholic response to the challenge of modernity and democracy. This response was once again inseparable from Italy's historical, cultural, and social specificities.<sup>9</sup> As such, the political language and culture of Italian DC depended jointly on innovative thinkers and philosophers, political entrepreneurs, pragmatic politicians willing to intervene in public life by means of cultural analysis, and 'technocrats' (sociologists, economists, social scientists) willing to play the democratic game and find a synthesis between Catholic faith and political responsibility. After all, some body of *thought* that made democracy attractive for believers, while reassuring nonbelievers that those of faith have accepted pluralism, *had* to be made available.<sup>10</sup>

Catholics needed to be convinced that the DC had not surrendered to secularism, and that it would protect traditional religion, customs, and morality. Liberals, anti-communist nonbelievers, and sectors of public state-bureaucracy and economic actors needed assurance that a religiously inspired party would not abandon neutrality, the pursuit of the common good, and more secular (economic) objectives. Moreover, a body of 'democratic' thought and language had to marginalize the appeal of the extreme Right on sectors of Italian Catholic or non-Catholic voters (segments of the lower-middle class, farmers) which had supported Fascism,<sup>11</sup> turning them into a fundamental social anchor for democratic parliamentary politics.

As we have seen in Chap. 3, in the 1930s a young generation of Catholics—who had been too young to be involved in the activity of the PPI and had grown up, in fascist Italy, in the Catholic Action—had sought out a new social and political culture, as a way to reinvent and recreate a 'vital' and autonomous Catholic culture that could engage with the modern world. The search for the foundations of a new social and political culture that marked the experience of the young Catholic intellectuals in the 1930s proved highly relevant and influential in postwar Italy—in a way, it here found its fullest expression and also its insti-

tutional implementation. This was a search that furthered and fostered the building of a democratic political system inspired by and based on Christian principles.

This continuous effort to elaborate a Catholic modernity was particularly evident with the writing of the Italian Constitution—the document of modernity par excellence—where Dossetti, La Pira, Fanfani, and Lazzatti played a pivotal role.<sup>12</sup> Known as *professorini* (young, or fledgling professor), they managed to inscribe a Maritain-inspired ‘personalist’ worldview into the wording and spirit of the first section of the Constitution (Founding Principles, articles 1–12). For example, article 3 states that, ‘It is the Republic’s duty to remove obstacles of an economic and social order physically constricting the freedom and equality of citizens and thus impeding the full development of the human person.’ The term ‘human person’ implies a totally different value from that of ‘individual’ as employed in liberal thought penetrating most democratic constitutions.<sup>13</sup>

Enthusiastic admirers of Stafford Cripps’s ‘Christian socialism’ and John Maynard Keynes’ economic theories—and deeply impressed by the Labour Party’s 1945 election victory in Britain—the *professorini* were aiming at an Italian version of a labor-based ‘substantial’ democracy based on a holistic vision of the human person which could realize Christian solidarity throughout Italian society and its institutions.<sup>14</sup> The central beliefs about the economic reordering of postwar Italy could be summed up in their slogan ‘First the person, then the market’.

Other young Catholics—members of the *Movimento Laureati* (‘Association of Catholic Graduates and Professionals’) and exponents of the *Istituto Cattolico di Attività Sociali* (‘Catholic Institute of Social Activities’)—but also *dossettiani* such as Giorgio La Pira, had in 1943 drafted the so-called ‘Code of Camaldoli’, a work of social culture that wanted to update the Code of Malines, the first attempts at Catholic social doctrine produced in 1927 by the International Union of Social Studies in Malines (Belgium). Entitled ‘For the Christian Community. Principles of the Social Order Drawn Up by a Group of Friends of Camaldoli’, and inspired again by Maritain and Thomas Aquinas, the Code represented a *summa* of thought on society, on the economy, and on the State in the light of Catholic doctrine. It contained the ‘Catholic’ proposal to rebuild a new social and political order at the end of the war. As such, the model for an ideal society cherished by young Catholic intellectuals was inspired by Christianity but also rooted in the concrete analysis of class dynamics



and social conditions, and the possible institutional answers to questions of social justice and political participation. What was needed, apart from the theoretical and spiritual input, was to ascertain how persons and groups were concretely involved in existing social and political dynamics.<sup>15</sup>

The Code of Camaldoli affirmed the intervention of the state in the economy (a third way between capitalism and state socialism), and a decentralized, almost federalist organization of the state, based on strong local autonomy. An essential characteristic was the Code's identification of solidarity and social justice as primary aims of the state on a par with safeguarding freedom.<sup>16</sup>

The 'Code', Dossetti's vision, and the *Reconstructive Ideas of Christian Democracy*<sup>17</sup> influenced the constitutional, institutional, and socio-economic architecture of post-fascist Italy, giving momentum to Christian Democratic dynamic reformism. DC-led governments launched several reforms (late 1940s—early 1950s): the housing development scheme (Fanfani-law); the introduction of 'progressive' taxation by minister of Finance Ezio Vanoni (one of the Camaldoli's); the agrarian reform and the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* (the public effort to promote socio-economic growth in the south); the creation of public agencies in the economy.<sup>18</sup> The DC committed, thus, to a mixed strategy of free-markets economy and Liberalism tempered with a heavy dose of neo-keynesian state interventionism, governmental control, and industrial policies, all of it combined with the defense of Catholic morality.<sup>19</sup>

This recipe did not change with Fanfani and Aldo Moro, the successors of De Gasperi. In many ways, DC was enormously successful. At the same time, personalism and Christian morality were not easily upheld values within a wider socio-economic context of market capitalism and, with the economic miracle, a rapidly unfolding consumerism based on the American model.<sup>20</sup> On the battleground of values, Christian Democrats were losing, exactly as they were establishing their political dominion. They could try and they effectively tried to combine their belief in modernization with traditional morality. Yet, the trends of the time were summed up in 1960 by the opening scene of Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, when a gigantic Christ statue is flown across Rome followed by *paparazzi* and watched by some scantily clad women sunbathing on a rooftop below: the symbols of traditional Christianity and morality were still there, but life on the ground was changing inexorably; and the fusion of technology and tradition seemed less and less coherent, as we will see in the following chapter.

By the end of the 1950s to the early 1960s, Christian Democratic political culture and ideology began to lose distinctiveness, slipping into a conservative social democracy. The party became the most successful machine in postwar Western Europe. This was in part the consequence of the internal reform developed by Fanfani in the mid-1950s. At the Naples congress of 1954, as a the newly elected party secretary, Fanfani, argued for a strategy to make it into the director of public intervention in the economy: it must revitalize its local branches and strengthen its autonomy and power to make contracts independently of the Church and of big business, turning itself into a ruling class with its hands firmly on the reins of economic power.<sup>21</sup>

This development was certainly also a consequence of the Cold War. The DC was a state party, or at least a party colonizing areas of state, continuously in power to keep out the communists, always employing in varying positions the same personnel representing the different party factions (*correnti*), and relying on clientelism and sometimes corruption—something that Dossetti, but also Augusto Del Noce, had predicted would happen if the DC failed to offer Italy genuine ethical renewal and Christian solidarity.

Everywhere, but particularly in the poor and job-hungry region of the south, the party managed to consolidate the process of binding sections of the electorate to it by exploiting the patronage resource—jobs and contracts—of the land reform agencies, the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, and the ministry of post office. Tellingly, the party always held on to of all ministries this latter ministry, because it provided the amplest opportunities for patronage, and of course the Interior ministry, the main vehicle for social control. Power had become an end in itself and corruption and clientelism increased further.

Already in 1951, Dossetti also for his opposition to De Gasperi's pro-NATO international politics chose to dissolve his faction in the party and retired to monastic life. He returned on the public stage for a while in 1956 to run unsuccessfully for mayor in the communist stronghold Bologna.<sup>22</sup> Dossetti, in the end, believed that it was impossible to reform Italian politics. Or rather, he remained convinced that Italian politics could be reformed only on the condition that the Church be reformed and regain its leading role in history. This conviction pushed him to play an important role in the Second Council Vatican.

Quite ironically, after his retirement, state intervention and nationalization, two *dossettians* and left-wing Christian Democrats' ideas, broadened

the system of patronage further, as it created even more positions for DC politicians and clients, and resulted in an extraordinary degree of fusion between the party and the State.

Government Italian-style was not especially edifying, but it somewhat worked and in the end was stable. And Italy's postwar stability was the crucial permissive condition for the country's economic performance and subsequent social transformation, as we will see in the following chapter. And that stability rested, paradoxically as it may appear, upon the rather peculiar institutional-political arrangement just described; under the umbrella of this arrangement, state and society in Italy proved remarkably resilient in the face of inherited challenges and new ones ahead. When measured by the standards of Canada or Denmark, Italy in the 1950s might appear wanting in public probity and institutional transparency. But by the standards of Italy's strife-ridden national past, or by those prevailing in the other states of Mediterranean Europe with which the country was traditionally compared, Italy had taken a remarkable leap forward. Unlike Europe's other Mediterranean states such as Portugal, Spain, and Greece Italy became a democracy, however imperfect, and remained a democracy through the postwar decades. This was no small achievement.

### THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

After Fascism and WWII, communists kept searching for its own road to socialist modernity, now under the leadership of Togliatti. Togliatti's new Italian Communist Party (PCI) employed a strategy removed from orthodox Leninism and owed much to the designs of Gramsci. The new party emerging from the clandestine at the end of WWII conceived the revolution as a 'process': not an abrupt break, but a journey that had started with the anti-fascist Resistance and would culminate in a new type of republic and in a progressive democracy guided by the working class.

The PCI was the largest communist party West of the Balkans, and, perhaps with the exception of France, came closer to national power than Communism anywhere else in Western Europe. The PCI entered the governments of national unity in the period 1944–1947, and sustained DC-led governments in the mid-to-late 1970s—the years of national solidarity against the threat of red and black terrorism. Moreover, the party constantly engaged in *consociativismo*—a practice of pacts and mediation with the opponents. Constrained by the Cold War to four decades of national opposition, the party entrenched itself in the parliamentary commission

through which Italian legislation must pass, and becoming entwined with the ruling order at local (municipal, provincial, and later regional) level.

The PCI tried hard to become part of the national political establishment, and neither made good on its revolutionary promises or exploited the atmosphere of the last period of the war or of immediate postwar period—an atmosphere that had seemed no less revolutionary than the years 1918–1919. Togliatti had been a Stalinist before and during the war. In 1944, deeming revolution not possible in a country occupied by the Allies, he imposed to his comrades a legalistic strategy. Thus, he recognized the Badoglio government and made the PCI participate in the first postwar governments of national unity. He did not advance radical socio-economic measures or the abolition of monarchy—postponing the institutional question at the end of the ‘national’ war of liberation from Fascism and Nazism. Togliatti made this explicit in the instructions he wrote for the party in June 1944:

Remember always that the insurrections that we want has not got the aim of imposing social and political transformations in a socialist or communist sense. Its aim is rather national liberation and the destruction of Fascism. All other problems will be resolved by the people tomorrow, once Italy is liberated by means of a free popular vote and the election of a Constituent Assembly.<sup>23</sup>

Consistently referring to the lexicon—more perhaps than the substance—of Gramscian political theory, Togliatti wanted to turn the PCI into a ‘new’ party committed to the building of a ‘progressive democracy’, a democracy not understood as a simple return to the pre-fascist liberal system. As Eric Hobsbawm famously remarked, the meaning of the expression ‘progressive democracy’ remained inscrutable as the face of the Sphinx.<sup>24</sup> In general terms, the expression conjured up a form of state involvement combined with direct popular participation, wider than a parliamentary system. The working class would become the leading political force, implementing radical reforms such as the destruction of all residues of Fascism, the agrarian reform, and measures against monopolistic capitalism.<sup>25</sup> To achieve ‘progressive democracy’, Togliatti argued, a coalition of mass popular parties, including of course DC, was indispensable.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the unity of the war years must continue into the period of reconstruction. On the top of this, Togliatti launched a *via nazionale* or *via Italiana* (national road, or Italian road) to socialism, or even a third

way between the superpowers—a position that would eventually lead to his advocacy of ‘polycentrism’ in international Communism.

The Italian road to Socialism would not follow the example of the October Revolution but a less threatening, specifically national Italian route.<sup>27</sup> Thus the PCI co-operated with the other political forces in the anti-fascist struggle, in the organization and the referendum and in the establishment of the Republic, in the organization of local and general elections, and in the writing of the new Constitution. Togliatti collaborated with Dossetti and the *professorini* favoring—against the socialists, other leftist forces and many of his comrades—the inclusion in the charter of the Lateran Pacts. He also served as Justice Minister under De Gasperi (1945–1946) issuing, as we will see, an amnesty for the fascist crimes. In short, the communists—after two decades of clandestinity and exile, accused by Fascism to be anti-national agents—became legitimate components of the new republican and democratic experience, a constituent part of Italy’s body politic.

The core of the ‘Italian road’ to Socialism was a strategy of alliances—social, ideological, political, geographical—to be steered in an anti-monopolistic direction by structural reforms, directed not against capitalism but against the form assumed by capitalism in Italy, with its industrial–agricultural bloc. This generated tension within the party. The alliance strategy was not accepted by all Italian communists; rather the revolutionary and class-based aspiration of the Resistance—symbolized by the party’s second-in-command Piero Secchia—fueled the desire for a united vanguard, Leninist, and class-based, focused on organizing cadres, and *rivoluzionari di professione* rather than on masses.

It is important to note, however, that under Togliatti the party did not abandon Leninist language and, at least in principle, the tradition of insurrectionism. In fact, it engaged in what would often be referred to as a policy of *doppiezza* (duplicity): talking like a revolutionary, but in practice playing by the rules of parliamentarism, capitalism, and bourgeois democracy.<sup>28</sup> It also cultivated the myth of Soviet Union and Stalin as the heralds of the revolution—which, in addition to the party’s outstanding record of resistance to Fascism before and during the war, were crucial reasons for communist hegemony on the Left and for the party’s deep popular roots. Formulas such as ‘a party of government’ and ‘a party of struggle’ tried to conceptualize this ambiguity between being simultaneously anti-system and ‘loyal’ opposition.<sup>29</sup> After Secchia, an internal left-wing group led by Pietro Ingrao kept criticizing the abandonment of anti-capitalism from the

early 1960s. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, *doppiezza* turned into an acute problem when the PCI was eventually confronted with mass worker militancy in the late 1960s.

Togliatti's postwar strategy was only very partially successful. He made the communists into the largest party of the Left. Yet, his ideas of incorporating the PCI into national politics and cultural life as a privileged partner for the DC failed.<sup>30</sup> The PCI was expelled from the DC-led government in 1947, and for good. Subsequently Togliatti and the PCI essentially concentrated on local and, above all, on cultural politics, creating a 'red counterculture' in opposition to the 'white' culture of the DC. And at this level they were in many ways successful.

Once the control of national government was out of discussion, the PCI used local politics, developing its strategy of alliance at this level in order to show how communists could have ruled the country if they had been given the opportunities. After 1947 and the split of the anti-fascist coalition, the communists did regularly govern in many town and cities of the central regions of Italy (Tuscany, Umbria, and Emilia-Romagna) known as the 'red Italy', but also (in the 1970s) in the cities of Rome and Naples—again, a phenomenon without parallel anywhere else in Western Europe. Crucially, in many councils of red Italy, communists were able to implement the strategy of alliance, to promote working-class interest, to pursue reformist (social-democratic) policies, keeping a 'revolutionary' rhetoric and propaganda, against the wishes of less sympathetic national governments—again another example of *doppiezza*.<sup>31</sup>

In Bologna—the paradigmatic example of Italian Communism in power—the PCI offered alternative models of economic development, political strategy, and administrative management, as if the government of town councils could undermine national political structures. Even if the city federation regarded the conquest of power not as an end but as a necessary step in the transition to socialism,<sup>32</sup> Bolognese Communism pointed not toward the summit of dictatorship of the proletariat but toward an efficient and humane application to the Western model. It built new alliances, which in theory could be implemented at national level, but still operating within the capitalist system.<sup>33</sup>

The Bolognese communists had accepted capitalist development as a social fact, but had tried to modify its worst imbalances and distortions. The language used was that of 'corrective' rather than 'structural' reforms. This distinction was subject to endless debates. In rhetoric, language and symbolism, communists were for 'structural' reform, that is, for the

transition to Socialism; when they were in government, as in Bologna, they turned to ‘corrective’ reform. Indeed, they could have done nothing else, because the power and the resources of Italian local governments were far too limited to permit a truly alternative model to develop on a merely local level. The Bolognese communists also made much of their attempts to encourage ‘moment of self-governments’ as they called them, both in the neighborhood council and within the social services. In reality, these were no more than moments, carefully controlled by a party federation noted for the complete lack of internal democracy. The experience of communist-controlled municipal government remained very far removed from Ingrao’s (and others within the party) vision of it as the initiator of direct democracy.

### *Intellectual Hegemony and the Progressive Left*

In addition to local politics, the party’s domination in the intellectual and cultural sphere was the crucially distinctive asset of Italian Communism. The PCI’s ability to polarize Italian intellectual life around itself, not only in a broad arc of scholars, writers, thinkers, and artists, but a general climate of progressive opinion, was without parallel elsewhere in Europe. After all, the entire communist strategy, in the footsteps of Gramsci as we have seen in Chap. 4 gave a paramount role to the figure of the ‘intellectual’.<sup>34</sup>

The majority of young Italian intellectuals, including those tempted by Fascism, had been formed in the shadow of Benedetto Croce. Yet, in the situation of postwar Italy, Liberalism and idealism appeared incapable of facing up to the challenges of the times. The real, stark alternative was between clericalism—the conservative or even reactionary alliance between the Vatican, the USA, and the DC—and political Marxism. Disregarding all the complexities of political life, most Italians would come to understand their choice as one of two: are you communist or Catholic? Nowhere else in Europe was the cultural–political life of a nation so thoroughly bifurcated.

From the perspective of Left positions, the hopes and aspirations of the Resistance and Liberation were strongly felt, and even as the perspective of political and social revolution started to demise, they remained active at the cultural level. The prospect of a complete regeneration in national life was highly attractive for intellectuals and writers. The reconstruction was seen as a global project investing the whole organization of social life,

a qualitative shift with respect to the past, a new beginning. These hopes fueled the passions of a large sector of intellectuals who took the leap from Croce's Liberalism to political Marxism, becoming the PCI's most talented young leaders—Giorgio Amendola, Lucio Lombardo Radice, Emilio Sereni, to cite just a few. The PCI was also joined by men and women disillusioned by the Action Party's failure to put into practice the aspirations of the Resistance, signaling the end of hopes for a leftist non-Marxist alternative in Italian politics and culture. 'Shamefaced Crocians', one writer called them at the time.<sup>35</sup>

Presented as the voice of modernity in a land of conservatism and backwardness—the only hope for social, economic and political reform—the PCI was enlivened by a wide circle of intellectuals, scholars, writers, and artists. The driving principles of the PCI's cultural politics were the re-discovery and rescue of indigenous roots and tradition, as well as the creation of a progressive national culture. Yet, many of these intellectuals looked elsewhere for inspiration. Thus, although the PCI struggled to put itself in national life and in continuity with the progressive traditions of Italian culture, a great number of the neo-communist intellectuals wanted to reshape culture by breaking with the narrow-minded provincialism and nationalism they had experimented in the years of Fascism.

Before the war, Cesare Pavese, Elio Vittorini, and many others had discovered new horizons of freedom in American literature, from Steinbeck to Faulkner. Others were fascinated by French or American cinema and by new forms of music such as jazz. After the war the journal *Il Politecnico*, directed by Vittorini, tried to link the PCI to the avant-garde and open Italian culture to new experiences and influences.<sup>36</sup> As Stephen Gundle put it, *Il Politecnico* was 'one of the most lively and original reference points in the immediate postwar years', opening its page to psychoanalysis and existentialism—which had not been allowed to circulate under Fascism—and surveys of working class and peasant life in Europe, Soviet Union, and Japan.<sup>37</sup>

With the division of Europe and the Cold War, all this came to an end. The criticism addressed by the Soviets to the PCI at the first Cominform meeting in September 1947 revealed Stalin's determination to bring Italian (and French) communists under tighter control. Togliatti had no option but to exercise Stalinist norms. This provoked public dissent among some of the party's intellectuals. Vittorini reminded Togliatti in an open letter of January 1947 that 'culture' cannot be subordinated to politics, if not at the price of truth.<sup>38</sup> Under the control of Moscow every instruction came



from above, everything was subordinate to politics (or, following Gramsci, to the ‘Prince’ the party). ‘Culture’ was not a protected zone in which party rule dissolved. Vittorini and his friends would have to accept the party line, or leave. In short, there was only limited room for intellectual activity within the ‘red counterculture’.

Over time, the PCI came even closer to Soviet absolute authority and strict control. Vittorini and others took the consequence and left the party. *Il Politecnico* was closed down after a few issues; relations with the neorealist filmmakers soured; and the late 1940s saw the imposition of Stalinist dogmas in culture. And yet, as Tony Judt has underlined, ‘despite Togliatti’s unswerving loyalty to Moscow’ the PCI kept ‘a certain undogmatic aura, as the only major Communist Party that tolerated and even embraced intelligent dissent and autonomy of thought’, a ‘reputation would serve it well in later decades’.<sup>39</sup>

The PCI’s adherence to conventional and established model of culture served certain well-defined ends, but coupled with an approach to politics that placed all the emphasis on civil society to the neglect of the state and even economic action, it revealed a general perspective that was at odds with the emergent framework of Italian politics and society in the mid-twentieth century. In later years, as economic development provoked changes at all levels of Italian society, the party would find itself increasingly the prisoner of its own conservatism.

Two important points can be made about postwar Italian Communism and its road to modernity. First: the ‘originality’ of the Italian road to socialism as developed through Togliatti’s program should not be exaggerated. The politics of national unity and collaboration while linked to Italian realities—re-enacted the popular fronts policy introduced by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (Moscow, 1935). Togliatti’s strategy was not in contradiction with Stalin’s will. In fact, secretly agreed upon by Togliatti and Stalin on the night of March 3–4, 1944—on the very eve of Togliatti’s departure from Moscow to Italy—it now matched too well the Soviet struggle against Nazi-Fascism and the plan to increase communist influence in those countries that appeared destined to fall after WWII within the Western sphere.<sup>40</sup> The same ‘national’ turn again mostly decided by Stalin was taken in November 1944 by the French Communist Party led by Maurice Thorez.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, as a result of the 1948 elections, as well as the attitude of the Church, Soviet criticisms of compromise politics and the larger Cold War scenario restricted the PCI’s independence from the directives of international Communism. This effectively put the

'Italian way' on ice, at least until 1956, when the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union acknowledged the possibility of national versions of socialism.

Second: Togliatti and most other leading communists read Gramsci quite selectively.<sup>42</sup> Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* began to be published in 1947, selectively in a way to leave out Gramsci's criticism of Stalin and his own party. The discovery of Gramsci as a major Marxist gave momentum to Italian Communism in general—and the PCI's search for a new approach to the history of Risorgimento.<sup>43</sup> In communist mythology, the Sardinian was, in Togliatti's words, 'our great one', or, as the literary critic Carlo Salinari said, 'the most genial and prepared Marxist that Italy has ever had'.<sup>44</sup> However, Gramsci's thought was distorted to fit the PCI's political strategy. He became the thinker of hegemony through persuasion, a theorist of gradualism rather than revolution as an abrupt rupture.<sup>45</sup> The notion of 'war of position' was stressed almost exclusively at the expense of 'war of maneuver', and the focus remained on transforming civil society, rather than conquering the Winter Palace. Thus, as Jan-Werner Müller has remarked, 'politics became culturalized', just as 'culture became politicized'.<sup>46</sup> As Norberto Bobbio put it in retrospect: 'the maxim that Croce took as his inspiration in the early years of the century—that the only way for an intellectual to be involved in politics was to become involved in culture—was turned around to state that the only way to contribute to culture was to be active in politics and do one's bit toward the transformation of society'.<sup>47</sup>

### RESHAPING THE PAST: WAR, MEMORY AND POLITICAL LEGITIMACY

Nowhere was the ideological battle between DC and Communism more clearly fought out than in the arena of memory politics.<sup>48</sup> In the anti-fascist narrative that took shape between 1943 and 1948, the Resistance was interpreted as the new national and patriotic war of liberation supported by the entire populace rallying around partisans and soldiers; 'un popolo alla macchia' ('a nation underground') was the eloquent expression coined by the communist leader Luigi Longo in 1947. A mythical image was created of the Italians as recalcitrant victims of the fascist dictatorship who had finally risen against the tyrant, demolishing the regime with all their strength, fighting and beating the German invader, rising again to freedom, morally regenerated and united, ready to take up their place in the world again.

On April 25, 1945, a combined Allied offensive and Resistance-led armed insurrection drove the Germans out of Italy, brought the fascist collaborationist government to an end, and executed Mussolini, exposing his body to a ritual desecration in Milan. The war ended and the political forces that had led the struggle against Fascism could eventually engage with the task of giving Italy and Italians a novel political-cultural myth. Naturally, they turned first to the common experience of the war of liberation.

In fact, the public memorialization of the war events began before 1945. Between 1943 and 1947, anti-fascist forces elaborated and imposed a narrative of the war, which was to become the all-dominant public and social memory of the Republic. That narrative was based on the image of the Resistance as a second *Risorgimento*—a patriotic war of national liberation from Fascism and from the Germans, and a spontaneous popular revolt for national redemption. The Resistance was identified as an expression of the anti-Fascism of all Italians and was enshrined as the sign of a harmonious national identity. One of its most durable symbols was Robert Capa's famous picture of a Neapolitan *scugnizzo* (street urchin), with an anti-fascist and anti-German wall inscription figuring in the background, wearing a military style helmet and a chain of ammunition around his neck, fighting against the invaders.<sup>49</sup>

Other 'vectors of memory' such as neorealist cinema—most notably Roberto Rossellini's masterpiece *Rome Open City* (1945)—painted and transmitted the Resistance as a unified national movement, and as the redemption of Italian people thanks to a historic compromise between communists and Catholics.<sup>50</sup> Cinema had a crucial role in this representation. Having first experienced the inebriation of power, Italians had paid for their crimes, made amends for their guilt, redeemed themselves with pain and sacrifice, and finally gained freedom. The new Italian nation, powerful and symbolically epitomized by the successful self-image of the neorealist cinema, showed its sores, its miseries, its population in rags, astonished among ruins, but already hard at work to reconstruct; in short, a great example of a population regenerated from pain and shame.

The anti-fascist front aimed at displaying a regenerated sense of beginning rooted in a bright past: the narrative reconstruction they proposed was the basis for the self-understanding of the Italian nation, at the same time legitimizing the political role of anti-Fascism and providing the Republic with a founding myth. The key features of this narrative were a portrayal of the Italians as victims of Fascism and of a war desired exclu-

sively by Mussolini; a re-dimensioning of Italian responsibility in the Axis war, the blame for which was laid entirely upon the Duce and the former German ally; and finally, a glorification of the role played by the Italian people in the struggle against Nazi Germany and its fascist allies after the armistice.<sup>51</sup> Italians, according to this narrative, had been always *good people* ('brava gente'): they had protected Jews from the racial laws and form persecutions; they had fought alongside the Wehrmacht in Africa and Russia, yet avoiding brutality and violence against the local population, and actually protecting individuals from the abuse of the Germans, the wicked or the evil.<sup>52</sup>

Above all, this narrative highlighted the events of what became termed the 'second war', the war fought by Italians between 1943 and 1945, the 'real war', in which the Italians had revealed their 'true feelings'. The war of the co-belligerent Italy and the Resistance was celebrated by a political and intellectual class which had taken a leading part in it, and which drew from it the source of its legitimacy as the country's ruling class. With the monumentalization of the years 1943–1945, not only the 'first war', 1940–1943, but also the entire fascist period was obliterated from public memory. As a result, the first postwar generations of Italians never ever acquired an official image of Fascism. Fascism had been as Croce claimed in 1944 a 'parenthesis' in Italian history, an external virus that had penetrated its healthy body.<sup>53</sup> This image sustained and legitimized both the public amnesia regarding the popular consensus to Fascism and the historicization of the Resistance-second Risorgimento as the true face of Italian national identity.

The process of oblivion was also fostered by the desire for reconciliation, by the need to reintegrate society, by the need to turn over a new leaf and live a new life.<sup>54</sup> For example, the invitation to forget the past as an amnesiac came from Fernando Palazzi, one of the nation's best-known philologists and linguists, in a widely read newspaper article of June 1946.<sup>55</sup> Other Europeans shared the same thought: after all, a crucial condition for starting anew in Western Europe after the war was a 'blessed act of oblivion', as advocated by Winston Churchill in his famous Zurich speech of September 19, 1946.<sup>56</sup>

As we have seen above, in June 1946 Togliatti, as a minister of justice, issued a general amnesty for the fascist crimes, in the name of national concord and with the intention of integrating the fascist rank-and-file into the nascent democracy.<sup>57</sup> Although amnesia and amnesty have the same etymological root, Togliatti's decision was not simply an act of forgetting but

rather one of forgiving—an attempt to put aside the well-remembered and haunting violence of unity-threatening events in order to ensure national cohesion and reinforce group solidarity.<sup>58</sup>

In the years immediately following the war, Christian Democrats repeatedly posed the analogy between the first and the second Risorgimento—not only the Resistance but its completion and continuation with the postwar reconstruction led by DC—insisting on the theme of moral, spiritual, and religious regeneration of Italy. In 1948—shortly after the first parliamentary elections in which Christian Democrats triumphed over socialists and communists—De Gasperi told the Chamber of Deputies that there had been a rebirth in the Italian people via those very ‘spiritual energies of faith, liberty and civilization that made the nation great in its first Risorgimento’.<sup>59</sup> Communists supported and further motivated the interpretation of the Resistance as a second Risorgimento—an interpretation that quickly came to constitute a key discursive strategy adopted by the PCI to establish its national-democratic credentials. Far from being an international movement inspired by foreign ideologies, this narrative enabled communists to portray themselves as an authentic indigenous force, deeply rooted in national history and values, fighting for human dignity.<sup>60</sup> This is why Togliatti changed the name of the party—no longer *Partito Comunista d’Italia* (‘Communist Party of Italy, e.g. a branch of an international movement) but *Partito Comunista Italiano* (‘Italian Communist Party’, e.g.) an Italian party); this is also why the new symbol of the party was the red flag with the *tricolore* appearing behind it. The PCI made massive use of nationalist symbolism in their rhetoric, strategy, and electoral campaigns (local and national), and this often included direct references to themes and heroes of the Risorgimento, and above all to Garibaldi. By placing themselves in a line of continuity from the Risorgimento to the present through the Resistance Communists gave an implicit, although obvious message: Communism was the offspring, nay the culmination, of Italian sensibilities, Italian culture, Italian ingenuity, and Italian history.<sup>61</sup>

It was therefore quite natural for the left-wing coalition (communists, socialists, and other minor leftist forces) running for the first parliamentary elections in 1948 to choose ‘Garibaldi’ as symbol of their electoral list. In fact, the left-wing political bloc had already run jointly in local elections with the symbol of Garibaldi since 1946. On November 12, 1946, for instance, the *Blocco Popolare* which had run in the local elections of Rome two days earlier, arranged a torch-bearing walk through the Capital to celebrate Garibaldi in front of the Campidoglio.

This evoking of Garibaldi and the larger left-wing appropriation of his figure did not go unchallenged. The struggle for controlling Garibaldi's memory was vigorous and involved all the political forces, from Left to Right, as well as Garibaldi's family members, called upon by various political parties. This was especially the case again for the elections of 1948, where the DC stamped its own election posters with references to Garibaldi, who was seen to triumph and drive away the fake hero proposed by communists. Christian Democrats also stamped a counter-propaganda poster which took up the Left Bloc's image of Garibaldi, and turned it upside down, transforming Garibaldi's face into that of Stalin: the 'left' Garibaldi, the Christian Democrats wanted to signal, was a cover for the real purposes of the PCI, whose deeper loyalty lay with the 'alien'. At the dawn of the new postwar Italy, Garibaldi remained the iconic image of democracy, just as he, for the fascists, had been hailed as the precursor to Mussolini. Garibaldi's Risorgimento remained the mirror into which the new democratic forces wanted to see themselves and establish their hegemony.<sup>62</sup>

The Christian Democratic reference to the ideals, images, and traditions of the Risorgimento corresponded to a specific political goal similar to the communist strategy: to establish the DC as the 'party of the nation', or a 'national party', becoming an embodiment not only of religious values, but a political force with deep roots in national history.<sup>63</sup> In this vein, the Christian Democratic leadership moved toward a reinterpretation of national history which emphasized the role played by Catholic culture but also assimilated or reinterpreted elements of national-liberal political forces into a coherent narrative.<sup>64</sup> Thus, somewhat paradoxically, the role played by Catholics—especially Antonio Rosmini, Vincenzo Gioberti, and Alessandro Manzoni—and by the papacy was interpreted central to the history of Risorgimento. Even Giuseppe Mazzini, due to his national popular pedagogic approach and the clearly anti-Marxist and anti-Enlightenment aspects of his thought, insisting on the primacy of moral values, could be reinterpreted in a Catholic key and considered patrimony of the Christian Democrats.<sup>65</sup>

Different interpretations of the very same recent past thus coexisted, and were only deepened by the Cold War and the breakdown of the anti-fascist alliance which had first fought against Mussolini and the Germans and then, as we have seen above, collaborated in the political transformation of Italy and in writing of the Constitution. These differences were particularly evident on the celebration of April 25

(Liberation day), since 1946 the day of ‘our second Risorgimento’.<sup>66</sup> Communists considered Liberation day as a celebration to match the *epos* of a fighting people guided by a partisan vanguard who wanted to free their own country. This celebratory structure favored a militant memory that considered the Resistance as an ethical choice to be made over and over again because the mission was still to be accomplished. By contrast, for Christian Democrats, the Resistance had an essential ‘ideal’ value; it reached its aims and concluded its course by freeing the country from the Nazis, thus opening the way for democracy. To Catholics, the Resistance as a second Risorgimento was a fundamental step in the process of national reconstruction, but also a phase of history limited in a specific temporal boundary ultimately to be archived. Consequently, they commemorated rather than celebrated the Resistance, retaining the utmost composure and trying to reconcile the nation by honoring the common sacrifice made by all servicemen.<sup>67</sup> On April 25, 1951, in his hometown Trento, De Gasperi commemorated the Resistance insisting again on the Resistance as a second Risorgimento, but not a socialist one—highlighting its spiritual and quasi-religious values as a period of redemption and rebirth.<sup>68</sup> These conflicting interpretations, far from breaking up the collective imaginary, were ways to bring it to constant life, making April 25a shared, albeit contrasted, symbolic space.<sup>69</sup>

Indeed, the ritual of the Feast of Liberation commemorated the Resistance as ‘chaos’ and a ‘golden age’ simultaneously. It might sound paradoxical to see a civil war as the source of republicanism. Nevertheless, the reconciliation of the deep contradictions between supporters of Fascism and partisans required some, albeit precarious, consensus about the unity of conflicting memories and identities. The Italian national holidays represent a double funeral of sorts. It related to physical burials, reburials of partisans, and arrangements of cemeteries but also to symbolic burials, commemorating, tautologically, that the dead have died. The survivors—the individuals and the community (the *Patria*)—should liberate themselves from the dead, from death. Partisans should be commemorated dead, not alive, as martyrs, not as victors.<sup>70</sup> Accordingly, as Gury Schwarz has also pointed out, in state-ceremonies and official celebrations, this commemoration assumed a much lower profile than November 4—the day of commemoration for the victory in WWI—that became the day for remembering all those who died during wartime.<sup>71</sup>

## HEGEMONIC NARRATIVE AND FORGOTTEN MEMORIES

There is no doubt that the memory of the Resistance as a second *Risorgimento*, although it grew from legitimate political needs, produced a distorted version of history.<sup>72</sup> It denied public expression to those stories, experiences, and memories that did not fit with the Resistance as a popular epic and founding moment for the new national identity. For instance, more radical and revolutionary appeals of the Resistance—to many Italians the beginning of a social ‘revolution’—were put aside. The identification of the war experience with the partisan Resistance was primarily a northern phenomenon, and therefore marginalized the southern memories, where German occupation had been violent, but extremely brief. The Resistance-memory also had little room for the counter-memories of many communities that had suffered the atrocities perpetrated by Germans and fascists as retaliation or pre-emptive strikes against partisan operations.<sup>73</sup> Quite a few Italians had come to see members of the Resistance as ‘troublemakers’ that put civilians at risk, with little prospect of real military gain. Likewise, the dominant official narrative excluded from legitimate history the fate of the defeated (the fascists) and the civil war character of the Resistance.<sup>74</sup> It likewise excluded the violence perpetrated by Italians, soldiers, and civilians, at home or abroad, against enemies and Jews; the divisions between the forces of the Resistance, and the violence of communist partisans against other partisans and, after the end of the war, against fascists and other public figures such as Catholic priests; the question of the *foibe*—the killings of Italians in the Istria region (north-east of the country, at the border with Yugoslavia) by Croat and Slovenian communist partisans closely co-operating with Italian communists.<sup>75</sup>

The Italian experience of the war years could not but yield a divided memory along geographical, political, ideological, and existential lines.<sup>76</sup> The war had been experienced in very different ways by the various sectors of the population: soldiers, anti-fascist partisans, apolitical citizens, members of the Fascist Party, supporters of the Nazi collaborationist government, self-identified Italians fleeing from Istria, to name just a few. The role of Italy in the war was unclear, as the country was simultaneously loser, occupied, resister, victor. As a consequence, memories of war were not only fragmented and conflicting but also anomic, juxtaposed, un-related, and referred to different and noncommunicating universes. As in the Athens studied by Nicole Loraux, multiple and noncommunicating memories were made to merge by the dominant political authorities



into a public memory (the memory of the winners) so as to lay foundation of a new collective identity. In this process, oblivion or the manipulation of events in order to construct an image that caters to necessity became essential.<sup>77</sup>

With the selective historical image of a second Risorgimento, the anomic crisis could be overcome. Interpreted as a re-enactment of the Risorgimento, the Resistance became the origin of a new Italy and the confirmation of an unalterable and unaltered national essence. With the symbolic/cultural image of the Risorgimento-resurgence—freed from fascist meaning and variously blended with Catholic and/or communist references—the birth of the new democratic and republican Italy after the civil war could be experienced as an epochal break with the past and as the realization of a submerged national continuity (Risorgimento-Republic). The affirming of a forever resurgent Italy served to underpin a legitimate political order of the present with historical and quasi-religious foundations.

#### THE RESISTANCE, THE RISORGIMENTO AND ITALIAN CULTURAL MEMORY

Yet, the Resistance as a second Risorgimento cannot simply be done away with as a myth constructed in order to legitimize democracy and the new ruling political class, a myth invented to uphold the political, social, and moral renewal of Italy.<sup>78</sup> The Risorgimento was not only a postwar invention, but also a trope deeply embedded in what Aleida and Jan Assmann would call ‘Italian cultural memory’, or Foucault a set of rules for thinking and speaking about the world. As we have seen in previous chapters, the semantic matrix involved in the appeal to the Risorgimento, understood as a ‘return to the present via the past’, goes far back in time in Italian history and arguably has to do with an inherent feature of modernity which the Italian case only brings to light in its own particular way. This symbolic imagery at various points in history, this deeper-lying symbolic imagery became linked to the political present. This never happened in a random fashion: the invocation of a past that could resurrect the present always took force in historical transition periods. Using the terminology proposed here, the need to re-anchor the present in the past became an urgent need in liminal periods. Translated into politics, the image of resurrection would become tied to a perceived need to free Italy (or parts thereof) from a poisoning and moral threat, whether endogenous or exogenous. It is as such a ‘mythscape’<sup>79</sup> that the Risorgimento had become the object of dispute

and contestation, but also a reference point that could serve to overcome divisive memories of civil war or contested nation-building. And in fact, the trope of the Risorgimento had often helped to remove such divisive memories. In other words, whenever facing crisis or even a dissolution of the political community, Italians from all corners of the political spectrum would identify themselves *as* Italians and rebuild a sense of community relying on the image of a resurgence in the making.

After WWII, once again, in order to establish a meaningful political society and rebuild a political community torn apart by a war—which had also developed into a civil war—Italians resorted to the image of the resurgence in the making. In post-WWII Italy, as time and again in the past, the Risorgimento represented an arsenal of symbols that helped Italians to face crisis and transition; to face the dissolution of the symbolic markers of authority and power provoked by the collapse of Fascism, the end of monarchy, the violence of the civil war. It served once again as a symbolic reference for the reconstruction of the community. It made the present meaningful, firmly rooting it into the past: the old contained the new and the new was built on the old. It silenced and repressed divergent memories, yet it integrated and incorporated the civil war into a fragile, but substantial democratic national identity. Following a prolonged period of liminality and uncertainty, the memory formation that took place between 1943 and 1948 posited the Risorgimento as the contested yet effective roots of Italian democracy and its republican Constitution—the closing of the liminal period.

## NOTES

1. Quoted in Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century*, trans. S. Dingee and J. Purdey (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 292.
2. Alcide De Gasperi, *La Democrazia Cristiana e il momento politico* (Rome: SELI, 1944), 33.
3. Rosario Forlenza, 'Sacrificial Memory and Political Legitimacy in Post-war Italy: Reliving and Remembering World War II' *History & Memory* 24, no. 2 (2012): 73–116; Massimo Baioni, 'Miti di fondazione. Il Risorgimento democratico e la Repubblica', in Maurizio Ridolfi (ed.), *Almanacco della Repubblica. Storia d'Italia attraverso le tradizioni, le istituzioni e le simbologie repubblicane* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2003), 185–96.
4. On this see Rosario Forlenza, 'In Search of Order: Portraying the Communist in Cold War Italy', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, no. 4

- (2016); see also Giovanni De Luna, 'Partiti e società negli anni della ricostruzione', in *Storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, I, *La costruzione della democrazia: Dalla caduta del fascismo agli anni Cinquanta* (Turin: Einaudi, 1994), 721–76.
5. On this see Jan-Werner Müller, 'The Paradoxes of Post-War Italian Political Thought', *History of European Ideas* 39, no. 1 (2013): 79–102: 80–1; for an insightful reflection on the 'republic of the parties' see Pietro Scoppola, *La Repubblica dei partiti: Evoluzione e crisi di un sistema politico (1945–1996)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997); see also Salvatore Lupo, *Partito e anti-partito. Una storia politica della prima Repubblica (1946–78)* (Rome: Donzelli, 2004).
  6. Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1984), 423.
  7. On this see Rosario Forlenza, 'A Party for the Mezzogiorno: The Christian Democratic Party, the Agrarian Reform and the Government of Italy', *Contemporary European History* 19, no. 4 (2010): 331–49.
  8. Martin Conway, 'The Age of Christian Democracy: The Frontiers of Success and Failure', in Thomas Kselman and Joseph A. Buttigieg (eds.), *European Christian Democracy: Historical Legacies and Comparative Perspectives* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 43–67.
  9. On this see Rosario Forlenza and Bjørn Thomassen, 'Modernity, Religion and Secular Politics: Italian Catholic Thought and the Alternatively Modern', forthcoming.
  10. Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth Century Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2011), 140.
  11. Gregory M. Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism or Social Democracy: Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Inter-War Europe* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
  12. See Rosario Forlenza and Bjørn Thomassen, 'Catholic Modernity and the Italian Constitution', *History Workshop Journal* 81 (2016): 231–51.
  13. See here Paolo Pombeni, 'The Ideology of Christian Democracy', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 5, no. 3 (2000): 289–300.
  14. Paolo Pombeni, *Il gruppo dossettiano e la fondazione della democrazia in Italia, 1938–1948* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1979); Enrico Galavotti, *Il professorino. Giuseppe Dossetti tra crisi del fascismo e costruzione della democrazia, 1940–1948* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013).
  15. The main writer of the 'Code' Sergio Paronetto wanted attention focused on concrete historical contingencies, and withdrawn from the temptation of simplistic recipes. He displayed a great independence from the Church's

- social teaching, opting instead for measuring socio-economic issues on their own terms, albeit firmly rooted in a Christian conscience, and in a personal spirituality that has come to be known as the 'ascetic of the man of action' (the title of a posthumous collection of his writing). Paronetto died prematurely at the age of thirty-four, in 1945.
16. *Per la comunità cristiana: Principi dell'ordinamento sociale, a cura di un gruppo di studiosi amici di Camaldoli* (Rome: Studium, 1945). After an introduction on 'premise on the spiritual foundation of the social life', the Code focuses on *State, Family, Education, Work, Production and Exchange, Economic Activity, and International Life*.
  17. Elaborated by De Gasperi and others Catholic politicians, the *Ideas* circulated secretly since the Spring of 1943, and publicly after the fall of Mussolini in July 1943. The *Ideas* echoed a constellation of political, ideological, and cultural references—from Catholic social teaching to *popolarismo*, from Toniolo to central aspect of Maritain's thought (the dignity of the 'person', the principle of 'political liberty', the appeal to 'fraternity', and Christian values which alone could reconcile conflicts among people and nations). Signed *Demofilo*, the *Ideas* are in *Atti e Documenti della Democrazia Cristiana 1943–1967*, I, ed. Andrea Damilano (Rome, 1968), 1–8. *Demofilo* derives from the Greek *demos* (people) and *filos* (friend or also lover).
  18. See again Forlenza, 'A Party'.
  19. Like the German CDU, the DC was quite conservative in questions of morality. In 1946, Guido Gonella declared that 'an invisible and silent atomic bomb has destroyed the family unit. The family, if it is not already dispersed, is more likely to unite around the radio, which is a deafening and dulling window on the world, than around the domestic hearth ... The family is a fortress which cannot be defended from inside the fortress. Certainly we must build up its internal defences, but we must also issue forth and fight the enemy in open battles'; Guido Gonella, 'La Dc per la nuova Costituzione', in *I Congressi Nazionali della DC* (Rome: Cinque Lune), 29–64: 53. On 'gender and family order' in the early German Christian Democracy see Maria Mitchell, *The Origins of Christian Democracy: Politics and Confession in Modern Germany* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 107–10.
  20. Guido Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano. Culture, identità, trasformazioni fra anni Cinquanta e Sessanta* (Rome: Donzelli, 2005); Silvio Lanaro, *Storia dell'Italia repubblicana. Dalla fine della Guerra agli anni novanta* (Venice: Marsilio, 1992), 223–306.
  21. See again Forlenza, 'A Party'.
  22. Having retired from public life nearly 40 years earlier, Dossetti shortly reappeared in public in 1994, when he expressed publicly his worries for the proposed modifications of the Constitution under way with the new Berlusconi government. Dossetti died in 1996.

23. Palmiro Togliatti, 'Le istruzioni alle organizzazioni di partito nelle regioni occupate', in *Opere Scelte*, ed. G. Santomassimo (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1974), 331–2; see also Palmiro Togliatti, *Opere*, ed. L. Gruppi, vol. V, 1944–1955 (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1984), 87.
24. Eric J. Hobsbawm, 'Gli intellettuali e l'antifascismo' in *Storia del Marxismo*, vol. II, t. 2 (Turin: Einaudi, 1981), 443–90: 487; see also Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943–1988* (London: Penguin, 1990), 43.
25. According to the *Quaderno dell'Attivista*, the journal for communist cadres and *agit-prop*, 'progressive democracy is a new road to Socialism. It is a road that unites all the healthy elements of the population behind an advanced democratic regime which is open to every possible progressive development. Precisely for this reason, it is a strategy for socialism which is less painful, less costly and less bloody than which in Russia, because of the historical circumstances, had to be the way of the dictatorship of the proletariat'; quoted in *Il Quaderno dell'Attivista*, ed. M. Flores (Milan: Mazzotta, 1976), 5.
26. Christian Democracy, as Togliatti said in a July 1944, had in its ranks 'a mass of workers, peasants, intellectuals and young people who basically share our aspirations because like us they want a progressive and democratic Italy'; Togliatti, *Opere*, 73.
27. The following is based on Rosario Forlenza, 'The Italian Communist Party, local government and the Cold War', *Modern Italy* 15, vol. 2 (2010): 177–96; see also Donald Sassoon, *Togliatti e la via italiana al socialismo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1981); Richard Bellamy, *Modern Italian Social Theory: Ideology and Politics from Pareto to the Present* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987), 141–56.
28. On this see Pietro Di Loreto, *Togliatti e la doppipezza. Il PCI tra democrazia e insurrezione, 1944–1949* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1991). There was, however, also extensive planning for the case that the party was to be outlawed. Moreover the PCI received significant secret subsidies from the Soviet Union annually; see Robert Service, *Comrades! A History of World Communism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 265–6; Elena Aga Rossi and Victor Zaslavsky, *Togliatti and Stalin: Italy and The Origins of the Cold War* (Stanford Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011).
29. Donald Sassoon, *One Hundreds Years of Socialism* (New York: Tauris Publisher, 1996), 301–2.
30. Alexander De Grand, *The Italian Left in the Twentieth Century: A History of the Socialist and Communist Parties* (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1989), 100–16.
31. On this see again Forlenza, 'The Communist'. In the anti-communist propaganda, towns and cities led by communists were depicted as a world

- upside-down*; see, for example, the propaganda docu-film *Accadde a Sopradisotto*, production: Christian Democracy, duration: 12 minutes, 1951; Archivio Audiovisivo del Movimento Operaio (Rome).
32. See a 1950 document in Istituto Gramsci Archivio del Partito Comunista Italiano [hereinafter IG, APC], mf. 325, ff. 1299–1348. The town council, as stated by the communist regional committee of Emilia on April 19, 1950, was a ‘tool of the class struggle’, not a mere administrative organ (IG, APC, mf. 325, ff. 655–94).
  33. Luca Baldissara, *Per una città ‘più bella e più’ grande. Il governo municipale di Bologna negli anni della ricostruzione (1945–1956)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994); Simon Parker, ‘Ricostruire la città’ socialista: amministrazione locale, organizzazione politica e mobilitazione della classe lavoratrice a Londra e Bologna 1945–1951’, *Ricerche di storia politica* 9 (1994): 59–87.
  34. This section on the relationship between the PCI and intellectuals follows closely the insightful points and arguments by Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Heinemann, 2005), 207–8; see also Nello Ajello, *Intellettuali e PCI, 1944–1958* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1979); Albertina Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali: Storia dell’Istituto Gramsci negli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1992).
  35. Quoted in Judt, *Postwar*, 207.
  36. See Elio Vittorini, ‘Una nuova cultura’, *Il Politecnico* 1, no. 1 (1945): 1.
  37. Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943–1991* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2000), 25.
  38. See Elio Vittorini, ‘Politica e cultura: lettera a Togliatti’, *Il Politecnico* 3 (25): 2–5; here Vittorini responded to Palmiro Togliatti, ‘Politica e cultura: Una lettera di Palmiro Togliatti’, *Il Politecnico* 2, no. 33–34 (1946): 3–4. The debate on ‘politics and culture’ had been initiated in May–June 1946 by Mario Alicata, with an article highly critical of *Il Politecnico* and Vittorini’s attempt at a new culture; Mario Alicata, ‘La corrente Politecnico’, *Rinascita* 3, no. 5–6 (1946): 116; to Alicata, Vittorini had responded with the article ‘Politica e cultura’, *Il Politecnico* 2, no. 32–33 (1946): 2–6.
  39. Judt, *Postwar*, 208.
  40. Silvio Pons, ‘Stalin, Togliatti, and the Origins of the Cold War in Europe’, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 3, no. 2 (2001): 3–27.
  41. Historians have observed that Stalin’s postwar policy never seemed consistently directed at installing communist regimes in Western Europe through revolutionary conquest, for he preferred a ‘divided and docile Europe, rather than a Communist one’; Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 2. On the ‘national front’ policy see Eduard Mark, *Revolution by Degrees*:

- Stalin's National-Front Strategy for Europe, 1941–1947*, Cold War International History Project, Working Paper no. 31 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholar).
42. This section draws on Müller, 'The Paradoxes', 90–1.
  43. In the 1950s, a generation of historians influenced by the revisionist Marxism of Gramsci applied sophisticated class-analysis to the Risorgimento.
  44. Quoted in Richard Drake, *Apostles and Agitators: Italy's Marxist Revolutionary Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003), 206–7.
  45. Carl Boggs, *The Socialist Tradition: From Crisis to Decline* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 119.
  46. Müller, 'The Paradoxes', 90.
  47. Norberto Bobbio, *Ideological Profile of Twentieth Century Italy*, trans. L. G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 166; Müller, 'The Paradoxes', 90.
  48. This section is based on Forlenza, 'Sacrificial'; Rosario Forlenza and Bjørn Thomassen, 'Social Dramas and Memory Formation: Resistance and Resurgence in the Italian Politics of Memory, 1943–1948', forthcoming.
  49. The image was published by *Life* magazine in November 1943 and very effectively established the stereotype of *scugnizzo* upon which neorealist cinema elaborated further, with movies such as Roberto Rossellini's *Paisà* (1946). It was a posed picture, staged after Naples had been liberated by Germans and conquered by the Allies.
  50. On the various 'vectors' that transmitted the memory of Resistance see Philip Cooke, *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
  51. Filippo Focardi, 'Reshaping the Past: Collective Memory and the Second World War in Italy, 1945–1955', in Dominik Geppert (ed.), *The Postwar Challenge: Cultural, Social, and Political Change in Western Europe, 1945–1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 42–63.
  52. For further discussions, see Bjørn Thomassen and Rosario Forlenza, 'The Pasts of the Present: World War II Memories and the Construction of Political Legitimacy in Post-Cold War Italy,' in Christian Karner and Bram Mertens (eds.), *The Use and Abuse of Memory: Interpreting World War II in Contemporary European Politics* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2013), 137–54; for the double image 'good Italian/wicked German' see Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano. La rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale* (Laterza: Rome-Bari, 2014).
  53. Benedetto Croce, 'Chi è fascista?', *Il Giornale di Napoli*, October 29, 1943.
  54. For an analysis of how amnesia enables (contemporary) nationalist discourse to respond to external political pressure see Rodhanti Tzanelli,

- 'Solitary Amnesia as National Memory: From Habermas to Luhmann', *International Journal of the Humanities* 5, no. 4 (2007): 253–60. On forgetting see Paul Connerton, 'Seven Types of Forgetting', *Memory Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 59–71.
55. Fernando Palazzi, 'Amnesia e amnesia', *Nuovo Corriere della Sera*, June 21, 1946; Antonio Baldini, 'Beata dimenticanza', *Il Tempo*, April 5, 1946.
  56. Quoted in Walter W. Rostow, *The Division of Europe After World War II: 1946* (Aldershot: Gover, 1982), 152.
  57. Barbara Misztal, 'Memory and Democracy', *American Behavioral Scientist* 48, no. 10 (2005): 1320–38; 1324–6.
  58. This cannot be reduced, as suggested by Ilaria Poggiolini, to a bifurcated political system dominated by DC and by the amnesia it stood for, and countered by a civil society penetrated by communists, which operated the countercultural form of remembrance of the Resistance. Remembrance, Poggiolini argues, inspired the Constitution whereas amnesia made prosperity and military security in NATO possible at the cost of fifty years of Christian Democracy's hegemony; Ilaria Poggiolini, 'Translating Memories of War and Co-belligerency into Politics: the Italian Post-war Experiences', in Jan-Werner Müller (ed.), *Memory and Power in Postwar Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 223–43. In fact, things were far more complex and much less symmetrical. As everywhere in Europe, amnesia and remembrance were tightly intertwined within parties, institutions, and within society as such and often even within single individuals.
  59. Alcide De Gasperi, *Discorsi Parlamentari*, vol. I (Rome: Camera dei Deputati, 1985), 371–91: 373.
  60. Andrea Cossu, 'Commemoration and Process of Appropriation: The Italian Communist Party and the Italian Resistance (1943–1948)', *Memory Studies* 4, no. 4 (2011): 386–400; Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 310–17.
  61. On this see Forlenza, 'In Search of Order'.
  62. For further details here see Bjørn Thomassen and Rosario Forlenza, 'From Myth to Reality and Back Again: The Fascist and Post-Fascist Reading of Garibaldi and the Risorgimento,' *Bulletin of Italian Politics* 3, no. 2 (2011): 263–81.
  63. Alcide De Gasperi, *Non diserteremo il nostro posto!* (Rome: SPES, 1947), 33.
  64. Guido Formigoni, *L'Italia dei Cattolici: Dal Risorgimento ad oggi* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), 145–70.
  65. Paolo Acanfora, 'Myths and the political use of religion in Christian Democratic culture', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 12, no. 3 (2007): 307–38: 315–16.
  66. On this see again, Forlenza, 'Sacrificial'; Forlenza and Thomassen, 'Social Dramas'.



67. Yuri Guaiana, 'The formation of a civil religion in republican Italy (1943–49)', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 14, no. 3 (2009): 329–45; Stephen Gundle, 'The "Civic Religion" of the Resistance in Post-War Italy', *Modern Italy* 5, no. 2 (2000): 113–32.
68. 'Per il secondo Risorgimento d'Italia. Discorso di Alcide De Gasperi a Trento il 25 Aprile', *Il Popolo*, April 26, 1951.
69. Cristina Cenci, 'Rituale e memoria: Le celebrazioni del 25 aprile', in Leonardi Paggi (ed.), *Le memorie della Repubblica* (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1999), 325–78: 330–1.
70. Forlenza, 'Sacrificial', 82.
71. Guri Schwarz, *Tu mi devi seppellir: Riti funebri e culto nazionale alle origini della Repubblica* (Turin: Utet, 2010).
72. See again Thomassen and Forlenza, 'The Pasts of the Present'; Paolo Pezzino, 'The Italian resistance between history and memory', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 10, no. 4 (2005): 396–412.
73. Paolo Pezzino, *Anatomia di un massacro. Controversia sopra una strage tedesca* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007).
74. Claudio Pavone, *Una guerra civile. Saggio storico sulla moralità della Resistenza* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1991).
75. On these topics see Mirco Dondi, 'Division and Conflict in the Partisan Resistance', *Modern Italy* 12, no. 2 (2007): 225–36; Gaia Baracetti, 'Foibe: Nationalism, Revenge and Ideology in Venezia Giulia and Istria', *Journal of Contemporary History* 44, no. 4 (2009): 657–74; Filippo Focardi and Lutz Klinkhammer, 'The question of Fascist Italy's war crimes: the construction of a self-acquitting myth (1943–1948)', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 9, no. 3 (2004): 330–48; David Bidussa, *Il mito del bravo italiano* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1994); Lidia Santarelli, 'Muted violence: Italian war crimes in occupied Greece', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 9, no. 3 (2004): 280–99; Massimo Storchi, 'Post-war Violence in Italy: A Struggle for Memory', *Modern Italy* 12, no. 2 (2007): 237–50.
76. John Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 147–82.
77. Nicole Loraux, *The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens* (New York: Zone Book, 2002).
78. As, for example, in Philip Cooke, 'La resistenza come secondo risorgimento—un topos retorico senza fine?', *Passato e Presente* 30, no. 86 (2012): 62–81.
79. Duncan Bell, 'Mythscapes: Memory, Mythology and National Identity' *British Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 1 (2003): 63–81.

## Fragile Modernities: Critique, Crisis, and Emancipatory Politics

The twenty-year period from 1948 to 1968 was one of relative stability for Italy. The competing modernities of Communism and Christian Democracy described in the previous chapter developed in some sort of antagonistic harmony, and within an institutional (and constitutional) framework that was recognized by everyone. Governments kept changing, but the Christian Democrats remained in power. Italy normalized, democracy normalized, and from the 1950s the economy started to grow, slowly but surely—and from 1957 onward not so slowly at all.

For the centennial celebrations of the Risorgimento in 1961, one could witness, once again, ceremonies, speeches, public events, conferences, television shows, and the inauguration of monuments.<sup>1</sup> Booklets extolling men, ideals, and events of the Risorgimento were distributed in schools, while a film about Garibaldi's Expedition titled *Viva l'Italia* (directed by Roberto Rossellini) was shown throughout the country. Turin—Italy's first capital and now center and symbol of the economic miracle—hosted the centennial exhibition. And the purpose of the exhibition was indeed to highlight the economic and social progress made by the Republican Italy.

However, on the whole the celebration of the national state's second Jubilee, officially called 'Italy'61', was less sumptuous, less pervaded by patriotic enthusiasm and national pride, and far less clamorous than earlier celebrations, such as the one in 1911. The trope of the Risorgimento certainly did not disappear from the surface of Italian

political and public life; reference to the Risorgimento however, in a very general sense, lost much of its significance from 1961 and possibly already from the mid-1950s onward.

The reasons for this fading out of the Risorgimento are not difficult to discern. There is no doubt that the lack of emotional arousal had much to do with the fact that nationalism had been so thoroughly discredited by the fascist rhetoric and dreams of imperial greatness, and emptied by the humiliating consequences of the regime's failed policies. Moreover, with the onset of the Cold War, Catholics and communists, the main forces of republican Italy, found sources of identity, allegiance, and legitimacy within an extra-national horizon: the universal mission of the Church, the struggle for freedom led by Washington, the process of European integration, the proletarian internationalism of the USSR, the myth of revolution, and (until 1956 at least) the myth of Stalin. The celebratory language of nationalism in postwar Italy had become the discursive monopoly of the extreme Right. Scholarship ignored the issue, and popular culture had become remarkably non-national. In popular songs of the 1950s, the theme of *Patria* all but disappeared, replaced by the praise of *mamma*. Italian cinema, of course, did produce a number of representations of Italianness (ranging from the self-flattering image of the *bravo italiano* to the cynical and opportunist individual of the *commedia all'italiana*), but such representation was not in any general way linked to a self-conscious work on national identity and historical reflexivity.<sup>2</sup>

By the early 1960s, the political system had found a certain degree of stability, which also related to an often tacit compromise over historical events and values. In line with our theoretical framework, foundational moments and the events tied to such moments return to the surface of political life and public discourse during crisis periods, where the flux of the moment needs a new anchoring in the re-interpreted past. From the 1950s, the national imaginary needed other heroes or reference points which could speak more directly to the ongoing modernization process. To refer to warriors and military feats had come to appear anachronistic in a moment in which Italy was undergoing social and economic transformations, tied to the economic miracle, and where Italians were experiencing new degrees of mass consumption and subsequent changes in values and worldviews. The postwar figuration, in short, was tied to a forward-looking and 'pragmatic' view of life. By the late 1960s, this had all changed.

## THE SPECTER OF REVOLUTION

By the late 1960s, the specter of revolution was haunting Italy. The same was certainly the case elsewhere in Europe and beyond. However, Italy provides a special case. 1968 was here a ‘long’ phenomenon that began in the early 1960s and lasted until 1977—with the movement of the ‘Year 9’, as Umberto Eco famously called it. Furthermore, Italy was a special case for at least two other reasons: Catholicism or the various developments within Catholicism, and the existence of a combative working class re-invigorated by the southerners who had emigrated north to sustain the industrialization of the country.

Like elsewhere, Italy from the late 1960s was marked by a radical critique of existing norms and institutions. The term often used, and consciously so, by activists of the period was that of *contestazione*. The Italy that had developed since 1945 was essentially contested, and new ideals were searched for. The *contestazione* generated an enormous and confusing deluge of organizations and groups, forms of protest and utopian expectations, revolutionary thoughts, and radical languages.<sup>3</sup> The old vocabulary of Marxism intertwined, not without contradictions, with the semantics of anti-authoritarianism. The culture of strikes and permanent conflict against authorities became ‘the rule and was no longer the exception’.<sup>4</sup> Social insurgency and the ideology and practice of permanent *conflittualità* percolated from school and university into factories, and then into every levels of the social fabric—challenging the ‘Italian’ ideology as it had unfolded since the end of WWII.

Ample sectors of Italian society fought for the advent of an alternative society—built on different forms of interpersonal and intergenerational communication, novel institutions (or rather counter-institutions), new mechanisms of power, and decision-making. Certainly in Italy as anywhere else there were no ‘economic’ and ‘political’ revolution, no ‘advent of the proletariat to power’, no ‘classless society’, no ‘destruction of mainstream culture’, and no ‘obliteration of language’<sup>5</sup>; yet, ‘another kind of revolution did happen’, a revolution in lifestyles, family relationships, personal freedoms, and worldviews, ‘a cultural revolution’.<sup>6</sup>

Once again, people living through the 1960s and 1970s saw their struggles as an attempt to make Italy ‘fully’ modern, to move beyond ‘tradition’. Social scientist Sidney Tarrow has argued that the cycle of mobilization and disorder of the 1960s and 1970s was eventually positive for

Italian democracy and for the modernization of the country. It expanded the boundaries of politics to new social and political actors; it enhanced the autonomy of the individual from the control of parties, mass organization, and institutions; it stimulated crucial socioeconomic and political reforms such as the improvement of workers' condition, the law on divorce and abortion, the lowering of the voting age to 18, the law on mental health, and the institution of the national health system. Social rights were extended to a great number of citizens. New and wider forms of participation entered school, factories, hospitals, and town councils. This process of democratization and modernization could have been deep and more effective, if the party-political system had governed the dynamism and energy of social conflict, translating its often unrealistic and maximalist character into a renewed political-institutional framework. However, what did not come from above came from below.<sup>7</sup>

This somewhat reassuring interpretation risks undermining the profusions of ideas and practices that emerged in the period and which were radically *alternative* to the model of modernity and democracy that had emerged and consolidated in Italy after WWII. We therefore need to discuss further how the political cultures of the long 1968 elaborated a 'critique of the *esistente (status quo)*' simultaneously foreshadowing a nebulous new order—a new society and culture, a new way of life, and new forms of relationship between individuals and between the individual and the political power—that challenged the various roads to modernity as proposed until then by the traditional political cultures.

### THE 1968 FIGURATION

The baby boom of the immediate postwar years, the sociocultural changes triggered by the 'economic miracle' unfolding since the mid-1950s, and the expansion of higher education all contributed to the emergence of a strong student movement from mid-to-late 1960s. Students came from both secondary schools and universities. The immediate bases for the explosion of the protest were the dissatisfaction with poor students' facilities, the authoritarian teaching methods, the biased and arbitrary nature of oral examination, outdated course organization and content, and rising fees<sup>8</sup>; in short, as Tarrow pointed out, concrete problems and not anti-capitalist values or utopian dreams.<sup>9</sup> Students also opposed a series of bills proposed by the Minister of Education Luigi Gui to align academic curricula with the demands of the market.<sup>10</sup>

The cycle of protests effectively began in 1966 at the University of Trento—founded in 1962 by Catholic intellectuals with the aim of training a modern Catholic élite capable of analyzing and directing the processes of socioeconomic transformations investing Italy—followed by the Catholic University of Milan, Pisa, and Turin (1967), and other universities in the country.<sup>11</sup> Well before the French May, Italian students became involved in mass protest activities marches, sit-ins, and strikes that reached enormous proportions.<sup>12</sup>

The events of Rome in February–March 1968 triggered by a protest against the Gui bill were certainly not a beginning, but rather a turning point or perhaps more accurately, a threshold event. At Valle Giulia, near the Faculty of Architecture, students fought with the police for the first time using as weapons cobblestones, bottles, and books.<sup>13</sup> Paolo Pietrangeli's song *Valle Giulia* announced that 'un fatto nuovo' ('a new event') had happened: 'non siam scappati più, non siam scappati più' ('we no longer ran away, we no longer ran away'). For the first time students realized that violence was a rewarding 'game', offering them an unprecedented political visibility.

One of the most acute observers of the event, Pier Paolo Pasolini, immediately captured the irony of the situation and the reversal of class roles that had taken place at Valle Giulia—with the sons and daughters of the bourgeoisie on the revolutionary side, and the sons of southern peasants or *sotto-proletari* (*lumpenproletariat*) defending the existing civic and political order.<sup>14</sup>

In only a brief span of time from 1966 to 1968 the student movement had transformed from 'a reform-minded constituency clamoring from improvements in the course content and delivery into a frontal challenge to all form of hierarchies and the power of state'.<sup>15</sup> The refusal of the academic authoritarianism turned into the refusal of the authoritarianism that, according to the students, pervaded the entire society. A document written in 1968 by the students of Trento outlined this process of discovery. Questions such as 'why do I study, for whom? How come that I can study and the majority of men cannot?' had found the opposition of the 'social mechanism of repression', the institutions, 'police and Law...press, family, Church'. Thus, 'the student', as a 'collective fighting for a just cause' had eventually discovered 'the injustice tightly linked to the entire system'.<sup>16</sup>

Every authority in Italy was made an object of critique: first professors and the academic system, then the police, and finally institutions such as the political parties, the Church, and the family. At the end of the 1960s, the family was attacked as a source of oppression and evil, and as discussed

by Luisa Passerini, ‘orphan-hood will become a slogan, derisory and profane’. A participant later recalled: ‘the best poster on the walls of my faculty.... [was] “I want to be an orphan”. I shared that feeling. I took a picture of it, I brought the poster home, it was the one I liked best of all: I want to be an orphan.’<sup>17</sup>

A common thread running through the mobilizations and occupations across the country became the willingness to break the monopoly of politics and representation held by all the representative institutions, guardians of those social injustices denounced by the students. The crucial creed and philosophy of the students were *autonomia*—the autonomy of students and social actors from the family and from representative institutions—the rejection of intermediaries, democratic self-management practices, and the ‘capture of the speech’ (i.e. the right to talk and let hear one’s own voice).<sup>18</sup> As the movement spread, *autonomia* invaded the cultural sphere and students came to criticize the conformist atmosphere of Italian society writ large,<sup>19</sup> challenging the hierarchical cultures that dominated Italian society: Communism and Catholicism.

In short, the transformation of the academic system was no longer enough to quench the students’ thirst for change. Universities and schools were only one single manifestation of the unjust, classist, and repressive society. For the students of the well-known *Liceo* Berchet in Milan, ‘to change the school, society must be changed’.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, the ‘Manifesto for a Negative University’ (published in different versions from 1967 onward by the students of Trento and considered the first programmatic document of the movement) advocated the impellent need not only to reshape university seen as an instrument of class domination but also to radically transform the society that had generated that kind of university.<sup>21</sup> ‘It is not really worth to find a place in this society’, a wall-inscription at the University of Trento said, ‘but to create a new society in which it is worth to find a place’.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, wide themes such as women and sexual liberation (or ‘sexual modernization’<sup>23</sup>) began to emerge within the movement—but also *against* the movement itself and the gendered dimension that it had taken—as early as 1969.<sup>24</sup>

### *Emancipatory Violence*

One of the most popular slogans of the movement declared, ‘Smash the state, don’t change it’.<sup>25</sup> Hence, the ideology and practice if not the celebration of (just) violence against the violence of the institutions

appeared in the movements' songs and slogans: 'Revolution, yes—revision, no', 'Workers' power—arms to the workers', 'Power comes out of the barrel of the gun', 'The Vietcong win because they shoot', 'Violence in return of violence', 'Two, three, lots of Vietnam—two, three, lots of Valle Giulia', 'War, no—guerrilla action, yes'. On June 1968, in Turin, students chanted: 'No to social peace in the factories', and 'only violence helps where violence reigns'. The most popular song of the student movement was appropriately titled *La Violenza (la caccia alle streghe)* [Violence (witch-hunting)], by Alfredo Bandelli (1968); Paolo Pietrangeli's anthem *Contessa* (1966) claimed: 'compagni dai campi e dalle officine/prendete la falce portate il martello/scendete giù in piazza picchiate con quello/scendete giù in piazza, affossate il sistema' (Comrades from the fields and workshops/catch the sickle and bring the hammer/go down to the streets and beat with that/go down to the streets and scuttle the system'). Following Alessandro Pizzorno, violence and the conflicts with authority tended to be ends in themselves: as such, they did not rely on processes of negotiation as the true and ultimate objective was the constitution of a new identity.<sup>26</sup>

In the comprehensive refusal of the entire system and search for an alternative, Italian students found inspirations in the experience of Berkeley—as Renato Curcio, one of the writer of the 'Manifesto of the Negative University', and later founder of the Red Brigade put it—in Herbert Marcuse's analysis of modern civilization as a power able to integrate oppositions into the structures of liberal yet authoritarian state, and in C. Wright Mills critical sociology aimed at unveiling the pathologies of society.<sup>27</sup>

The sense of rejection of authoritarianism was also supported by autochthonous sources, internal to Catholicism. Before and even more after the pontificate of John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council new ferments, the imperative of social justice and palingenetic visions of social renewal had percolated within increasingly ample sectors of Catholicism—particularly in the new generations dissatisfied with the involution of Christian Democracy into a mere party of power.

One of the most read books by the student movement was *Lettera a una professoressa (Letter to a Teacher)* published in 1967 by the dissident priest Lorenzo Milani who had founded a school in a little village north of Florence. The poor students of don Milani's school effectively and unsparingly exposed the classism, injustice, and individualism supporting the Italian education system and Italian society writ large:



Woe betide him who touches the Individual. The Free Development of the Personality is your supreme conviction. You care nothing for society or its need... You also know less than us about your fellow men. The elevator is a machine for avoiding your neighbors, the car for ignoring people who go by tram, the telephone for not talking face to face and for not going to the people's home.<sup>28</sup>

In the heated atmosphere of the end of the 1960s, the revolt within universities could appear to students as the beginning and the epitome of any possible revolt: against authority, against capitalism, against imperialism, and the war in Vietnam. The point was to transform society through a never-ending utopian revolution and to live the 'authentic' life. As Oreste Scalzone—one of the protagonists of the 1968 in Rome, who would be active in other radical groups until the end of the 1970s—put it, the period of mobilization and occupation was like a mysterious 'ants nest' where a multitude of small actions somehow fused together into one big 'laboratory'.<sup>29</sup>

At the heart of the spirit of 1968, there was the feeling of individual and collective liberation triggered by the 'possibility of a different world',<sup>30</sup> by the (re)discovery of what men and women of the eighteenth century had defined 'public happiness'.<sup>31</sup> Nobody wanted to wait for the 'sun of the future'. *Vogliamo tutto!* (We want everything!) was one of the central slogans of the movement. As Jim Morrison sang in 1967 (in *When the music is over*): 'We want the world, we want it, now. We want the world and we want it now. Now, now'. The rallying cry 'Vogliamo tutto' would become famous few years later with Nanni Balestrini's novel *Vogliamo tutto* (1971), which tells the crucial 'encounter' between a young southern proletarian man and the industrial and metropolitan dimension of the northern city (Turin).

### *A World of Dreams: Utopian Modernity*

The crucial question here is, why the student movement abandoned problems related to the academic system and embraced utopian and existential demands? The repression of the state and the inability of the system to meet the demand of creating an inclusive politics—the answers suggested by the existing literature, and also by the protagonists of those years—remain on the veneer; there was something deeper at stake.

Much more convincing is the analysis by psychoanalyst Elvio Fachinelli in a widely read article (written in 1968) that focused on the utopian

dimension of the students' movement. Students were faced with an image or a 'ghost' of society that, while promising a complete liberation from needs, at the same time threatened the loss of personal identity. In other words, existing society combined the offer of immediate certainty with an unacceptable perspective: the *perdita di sé* (loss of the self) as a project and as a desire. Fachinelli writes: 'liberation from need appears instead to have as its condition the renounce to desire' ('la liberazione dal bisogno sembra anzi avere come sua condizione la rinuncia al desiderio'). What drove the movement was utopian dreaming, a shaking of what Koselleck termed the 'horizons of expectations'.

As in the past, the movement and the creation of a new community was the spontaneous offspring of a shared condition of private anguish and social atomization. However, the movement broke with past experiences as its participants understood that 'what counts is not the object of the desire but the state of desire, and that the fulfilling of the desire is the death of the group'. This was probably the kernel of the 1968 radicalism: against a society based on the satisfaction of needs, students opposed a perennial 'it is not enough'. This generated a utopian tension: an obtained or satisfied request would soon be left behind, opening the way to a new request that would keep alive the state of desire. This was also a dramatic rupture with the revolutionary communist tradition of the Third International based on the rallying cry of the satisfaction of material needs.<sup>32</sup>

### THE RETURN OF CLASS: STUDENTS GO TO FACTORIES

In contrast with Britain—where, as David Cannadine (1998) has showed, the language, rhetoric, and symbolism of class and classism have often dominated the representation of society<sup>33</sup>—the dominant Italian political cultures had always privileged a representation of Italian society as a *nation*. True, a vision of the society as an organism structured in term of classes had emerged in few periods of Italian. This happened, for example, at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the working class, through the Socialist party, acquired self-consciousness and developed its own political and unionist organization and when the bureaucratic sectors of the young Italian states claimed a proper role as new middle class (*ceti medi*). This also happened during the *biennio rosso* 1919–1921, which was marked by a deep and radical social clash. However, Fascism destroyed on purpose any kind of partial and sectarian vision of classes. After WWII, both Catholics and communists consciously avoided a language based exclusively on class.

Both parties wanted to be, as we have discussed in Chap. 6, *parties of the nation*. The interclassist positioning of all Italian parties—except to some extent the small PLI (liberal party)—did not leave room for a classist representation of the society.<sup>34</sup> While ‘1968’ did not arise out of class struggle, it would soon signal the return of class, at the level of ideology and also at the level of social mobilization and political action.

Students consciously made the first step. In order to achieve deep social change and the radical transformation of power relations, students must go to the people, outside the walls of universities. As Horn writes, students ‘wanted to find new agents’ which could carry their comprehensive and radical project, and started to ‘search the forces necessary to exert influence’ beyond campus life. This extension of the range of actions was rendered indispensable ‘by the centrality of the question of power relations and the confrontation with the state’. Thus, ‘they engaged with various artistic and cultural movements of revolt, with their neighborhood, or campaigned for the rights of the mentally ill’; and ‘they eventually settled for an encounter with the blue and white collar working class’.<sup>35</sup>

The labor disputes that began in the Pirelli company’s Milan factories in September 1968 and lasted until the end of 1969—when the government pressured Pirelli into conceding the strikers’ main demand—furnished an industrial counterpoint and encouragement to the student protesters. In 1969, as labor contract came up for renewal for other big industrial firms, particularly in the north of the country, a series of major strikes began. Workers demonstrated against the terms of employment, while the government in Rome appeared virtually helpless in responding to these developments.<sup>36</sup>

Between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the spirit of 1968 remained alive in multiple forms and modes of militancy: from the struggle over housing to the feminist movement. And yet, it was in the factories that the decisive battles were to be fought. The strike of 1969—famously renamed by the conservative journalist Indro Montanelli the *autunno caldo* (Hot Autumn)—was the largest in Italian history, and, as Tony Judt has rightly noted, ‘had a mobilizing and politicizing impact upon young Italian radicals out of all proportion to France’s brief, month-long protest of 1968’.<sup>37</sup> With the Hot Autumn students ‘encountered’ and discovered the working class—the revolutionary class par excellence, once again the reference point for the beginning of a revolutionary process.

Crucially, as Judt has further noted, the Hot Autumn, with its wildcat strikes and spontaneous occupations by small groups of workers demanding power in running and controlling factories, ‘led a generation of Italian student theorists and their followers to conclude that the rejection of the bourgeois state was the right tactic’. In short, workers’ autonomy a tactic as well as an objective was ‘the path of the future’.<sup>38</sup> Unlike in France, the youth and student movement was able to form a strong and relatively lasting bond with the workers’ movement. Unlike the German student movement, which dismissed the working class as irredeemably integrated into the system, and unlike Marcuse and Frantz Fanon and their emphasis on the marginal groups as the new revolutionary subjects,<sup>39</sup> the Italian students thought that the working class was still a potentially revolutionary class, and that the center of the revolutionary scene was still to be found in the big industrial cities of Western societies. The task was to convince workers of the necessity and viability of the just cause, and to provide them with a guide and a comprehensive strategy.<sup>40</sup>

As the events unfolded, the student movement dissolved in a great numbers of groups and political organizations, all committed to accelerate the start of the revolution. Yet, their identification with the workers’ movement remained strong, as their names—*Avanguardia Operaia* or *Potere Operaio*, to name but a few examples—suggest.<sup>41</sup>

In fact, a wave of radicalism and tension had marked the northern factories since the beginning of the 1960s. The conditions behind this phase (in the analysis of Paul Ginsborg, ‘the rigidity of the northern labor market, the alienation of the unskilled and semi-skilled workers, the anger of the southern immigrants’)<sup>42</sup> had not disappeared in the following years. Quite crucially, material developments had been interpreted and analyzed by a number of Marxist intellectuals, whose influence on students and the radical groups were to be massive in the late 1960s and in the 1970s. These intellectuals—Renato Panzieri, Mario Tronti, Alberto Asor Rosa, Massimo Cacciari, and Antonio Negri, to name just a few—had broken with the PCI and with Togliatti’s approach to political struggle. Dismissing the reformist concept of progressive democracy and Gramsci’s political-cultural approach based on the alliance between the working class with enlightened members of the middle class—Gramsci as ‘officially’ interpreted by Togliatti—they claimed that the Italian Left must return to the ideology of the factory council. In doing this, they developed yet another Italian-ism: *operaismo*, or, *workerism*.

## *WORKERISM: PUTTING SOCIALIST MODERNITY BACK ON TRACK*

Already in the late 1950s after Khrushchev's secret speech and the crushing of the Hungarian uprising space had opened up left of the PCI. As discussed in Chap. 7, under the leadership of Togliatti, communists had basically supported bourgeois democracy and slowly built a political and cultural hegemony in its regional and urban strongholds of the so-called red Italy. Many radical left-wing thinkers regarded the PCI's strategy as a capitulation to bourgeois democracy. Instead, they sought to forge an antagonistic strategy designed to destroy neo-capitalism. The socialist thinker Renato Panzieri had written during the 1950s against the ambiguities and duplicity of *togliattismo*, denouncing the concept of 'progressive democracy', which seemed designed to oscillate between reform within the system and revolution. Panzieri affirmed the need to revive the class struggle within the factories, rather than wait and hope for change through the alliance of the working class with members of the middle class; and he also claimed that the Italian Left should rally around the old ideas and ideology of the factory council.<sup>43</sup>

When socialists joined Christian Democrats in government at the beginning of the 1960s (the 'opening to the Left'), Panzieri left the party and founded the journal *Quaderni Rossi*. The journal was based in Turin and began its publication in 1961.<sup>44</sup> Turin was the heart of the new industrial Italy, and therefore the most appropriate ideological and cultural hotbed for a new thought soon to be called 'operaismo' (*workerism*).

The concept of *workerism* was of course an idea that related to the wider left-wing movements in the Western world. But the concept was at the same time distinctively Italian, delineating an ideological strategy that would pave the way toward revolutionary emancipation suited to the Italian socio-economic and cultural settings. It was a conscious attempt by a new, young generation to link theory to empirical enquiry.

*Workerism* became quite a crucial reference point for the movements and groups of the late 1960s and 1970s. The idea was to bring 'Lenin to England' following the title of a famous 1964 essay by Tronti.<sup>45</sup> Tronti's essay analyzes the condition of possibility of revolution in the most advanced bastions of capitalism. As Lenin had brought Marx to Russia discovering the strength of the working class there now Lenin, the major theorist and guide of the proletarian political organization, must be brought to England. In short, Lenin's words and tactics must be brought

into the most advanced countries, in the attempt to identify and elaborate with the same revolutionary courage and boldness a new Marxist practice for the working class. As Asor Rosa wrote, the central thesis by Tronti was that ‘the revolutionary process is likely to begin not where capitalism is weaker, but where the working class is stronger’. This was a crucial thesis indeed, as it re-launched the revolutionary discourse at every possible level, revealing that Italy and Western societies as a whole incubated within themselves and against themselves the chance to become the center of a new revolutionary wave.<sup>46</sup>

Inhabited by what Tronti memorably termed the ‘rude razza pagana’ (the ‘rough pagan race’), that is, the new mass of young workers, and mostly southern migrant workers—who flooded the huge FIAT plants in Turin, and the emerging chemical industrial complex of Porto Marghera (Venice), for example—the working class was, in the eyes of the *workerists*, eventually opening up modernity in Italy.<sup>47</sup> *Workerism* was marked by a particular focus on actual class struggles in factories, as opposed to maneuvering at the top between parties within the legal and established institutions of the Republic and in the context of the corporatist politics of productivity.

The *workerists* were deeply convinced that Italy was becoming an advanced revolutionary laboratory. Standing thus at the forefront and the threshold of epochal changes, this meant that there was a need for a philosophy a genuine social science and a practice able to interpret and lead the struggle. It could not be a provincial philosophy.<sup>48</sup> Even Gramsci’s philosophy was by then considered, particularly in Togliatti’s version, part of Italian provincialism.<sup>49</sup> The philosophy had to be grounded in the empirical realities of the Italian situation, and the stuff out of which its working classes were made; and yet the Italian theory that had to guide revolutionary practice had to pave the way to modern emancipation for the entire ‘advanced’ world.

One could say, following Paolo Capuzzo and Sandro Mezzadra, that the ‘basic aim’ of Tronti and of most *workerists* (including Negri) in the following decade was ‘to disentangle Marx from idealism and historicism and this meant to also disentangle him from Gramsci’.<sup>50</sup> ‘Back to Marx’ became the slogan of *workerism*, which led to a tight engagement first with *Capital*, volume I (especially with the chapters ‘The Working Day’ and ‘Machinery and Large Scale Industry’), and soon afterward with the *Grundrisse*.<sup>51</sup> While Gramsci was a point of entry to understand the past, Marx was to be read in the present: he must be confronted ‘not with *his*

age, but with *ours*. Capital has to be evaluated on the basis of *contemporary capitalism*'.<sup>52</sup>

### WHAT REVOLUTION? NEO-MARXISM AND MAOISM

The influence of *workerism* was strong on the entire cycle of protests and social movements.<sup>53</sup> However, *workerism* was but one although salient example of more general trends. At the end of the 1960s, the groups of the New Left had their own revolutionary agent: the working class. They also had a revolutionary language: Marxism. They had a dream and a project: revolution. Yet the question still remained: exactly what kind of revolution could serve as a model for Italy?

To most Italian revolutionaries, a 'pure', uncontaminated Marxism, a Marxism before its Stalinist degeneration was somehow the answer, combined therefore with Lenin and voluntarism, and inspired by ideas drawn from *State and Revolution*, the October Revolution, the seizure of power by Bolsheviks, and the myth of the proletarian dictatorship.

#### *Exotic Marxism and the Search for a Revolutionary Model*

Yet for an increasing number of groups, inspiration for revolutionary practice and ideology was the appeal to 'exotic' Marxism: Cuba and Fidel of course, but above all else China and the Chinese cultural revolution.

For an increasing number of groups, China became the place where the revolution had taken place and was still taken seriously, and where the interruption of the world revolutionary process caused by Stalinism had been overcome and put back on the right track. This was the model of Socialism to be implemented in Europe via the Italian context.

To the groups of the New Left, the Cultural Revolution was a spontaneous and anti-authoritarian mass protest movement. Mao had invited the Chinese youth to 'open the fire on headquarters'; in Italy, too the time seemed ripe to begin a 'cultural revolution' from below, against established hierarchies, values, and center of powers. 'Maoism', as opposed to the despised Soviet Communism but also to the Communism of the PCI, flourished in Italy as nowhere else. The groups of the New Left criticized the hierarchal-centralized version of revolution as unfolded in the Soviet Union with its Stalinist degeneration. Instead, the revolution in China,

but also in Cuba, was deemed to have all the qualities and characteristics lacking in Italy and elsewhere in Europe.

To Maria Antonietta Macciocchi 'in China there are no signs of alienation, nervous disorder or the fragmentation within the individual that you find in a consumer society. The world of the Chinese is compact, integrated and absolutely whole'.<sup>54</sup> Parties, journals, and groups of Maoist inspiration recognizable by the adjective 'Marxist-Leninist' propagated quickly. The members of *Unione dei Marxist-Leninisti*, a group known also as *Servire il Popolo* ('Serve the People'), usually shook the Red Book over their heads, when taking to the streets for demonstrations.<sup>55</sup> Young people fascinated by the Chinese example even sought to learn themselves Chinese, enabling them to follow news events directly, read Chinese newspapers and political pamphlets, and consult Mao's teachings in the original language.

*Workerism* and Maoism were not two opposed phenomena. Indeed, the combination of Maoism and *workerism* was embodied in the movement (and journal) *Lotta Continua* (*Continuous Struggle*, from the French *La lutte continue*), whose name encapsulated its project.<sup>56</sup> *Lotta Continua* was permeated by the idea that the 'democratic' centralism and bureaucracy of the traditional leftist parties were to be rejected in favor of a more open style, and by a dissatisfaction with reformist parliamentary route followed in Italy by the PCI.<sup>57</sup> In fact within the PCI, there was an entire 'Chinese' faction that was expelled in 1969, and then created the group and the journal *Il Manifesto*, which still exists today.

The accommodating strategy of the PCI and its national road to socialism based on alliance and compromise were charged as being 'reformist', that is, reactionary. With its national-patriotic language, the PCI had betrayed the Resistance, inhibiting a social revolution and the transformation of class relationships exactly when the chance had presented itself. Since the end of the 1950s, such a leftist branch had emerged within the PCI, questioning the party's moderation and Togliatti's strategy of alliance. This branch, unofficially led by Pietro Ingrao, claimed that the party, abandoning completely the Leninist model and sidelining anti-capitalism as a consequence of the search for (bourgeois) allies, had lost sight of its ultimate goal: revolution against capitalism and bourgeois power. What was needed, thus, was decentralization to empower grassroots activism. Therefore, this faction was not as hostile to the student and social movements as other party members were. However, to the PCI what emerged to its left was considered infantilism and dangerous extremism.<sup>58</sup>



*Pluralism, Liberation, and the Search for Autonomy*

China was not the only reference point for Italian revolutionaries. Revolutionary experiences in Cuba, Africa, and in Latin America provided Italian revolutionaries with other model of actions, which were combined of course with the emancipatory language of post-colonialism that was circulating globally. Vietnam and the struggle against American imperialism or imperialism *tout court* was another crucial myth for the New Left.

The death of Che Guevara provided the Italian but also the French and German students with their single greatest hero, while the teachings of radical South American priests who sought to reconcile Catholicism and Marxism found a very particular resonance within Italy. This indeed was the period of ‘liberation theology’. In a sense, even the ‘radicals’ forged new connections between revolutionary practices and Christianity, but outside the official hierarchies of both party and church. A memorable slogan of the period was ‘Yes to Jesus, No to the Church’. The idea that Jesus was really a pacifist-revolutionary hippie whose ideals had been betrayed by the institutional Church was not unlike the betrayal of Marx that revolutionaries saw in the PCI.

Thus, one might say, at the beginning was tradition: the internationalist solidarity which was nourished also by the contribution of young Catholics educated in the Church of John XXIII. At the beginning were the demonstrations for Vietnam, but also for the dispossessed and poor African or south American people, or the heroic martyrdoms of Camillo Torres and Che Guevara. It was the awakening of the China giant, the new peasant epic which unfolded not against but in the name of the proletariat. It was the re-discovery of the *popolo*. The motivational source for action was a blend of rage and enthusiasm, the willingness of a generation to be protagonist, and the constructor of a new political and existential identity.

The young revolutionaries took to the streets against the parents who had betrayed the dream of a new Italy after the failure of Fascism and the tragedy of war. They took to the streets against those who had betrayed the Resistance and its promises for a social revolution—not only the DC but first of all the PCI and its insistence of the national-patriotic ideology of the ‘Resistenza tricolore’ (see the previous chapter). The real Resistance, they affirmed, had been a ‘red’ resistance. As such the Resistance and those of the ‘older generation’ who still believed in the Resistance could be mobilized as a source of inspiration for the ‘final’ revolution.<sup>59</sup> This was thus a rupture with tradition, but not a complete rupture.

### *Ulster as Paradigm for Urban Revolution*

At the same time, Vietnam, China, Cuba, and South America as well as older examples to be found in the history of Italy were not enough. There was a need to update the internationalist appeal, centering it in the context of the urban dimension, where revolutions had to be made. There was, in other words, an urgent need to find a new Vietnam in the heart of the developed and capitalistic world. In short, what was needed was a Vietnam populated by the *operaio-massa* (mass worker) and an urban *lumpenproletariat*, which would unveil the inadequacy of neo-capitalism and the limit of the European welfare state.

To *Potere Operaio* and *Lotta Continua*, such an example of armed struggle was found at the periphery of the British metropolis: Ulster and the struggle of the Irish Republican Army. Here Catholics had developed urban guerrilla warfare methods to be taken as an example. Ulster, as *Potere Operaio* wrote in 1971, was the first and ‘until now, the only thoroughly urban battlefield in the democratic, Western Europe, the first and until now the only citizen battle that does not manifest itself as an insurrection, but as a war fought over time’.<sup>60</sup>

After all, a proper Maoist war—that is, a war of people starting from the countryside—was an unlikely solution in Italy; and a ‘classical’ proletarian insurrection had not yet managed to put the system in crisis. To be sure, the *centralità operaia* (the centrality of the working class and the factories) remained crucial for the identity and the strategy of leftist groups. However as also Tronti and Negri suggested the potential revolutionary subject had to be enlarged, shifting the focus from factories to the ‘social factory’, that is, the process of domination in society as a whole. The idea was that proletarians were exploited not only in the factories but everywhere; within their own houses, because they were forced to live in unhealthy houses or very expensive compare to salaries; for the high cost of life, for commuting and transport (which for the groups of the New Left must be considered working time and, consequently, paid by the owner!).

Crucially therefore, ‘proletarians’ was interpreted to mean not only the working class traditionally defined but also a range of groups outside of it: ‘precarious workers’, students, women, indeed *anyone* suffering from being victims of capitalism or traditional forms of domination (religion, family). These groups, as Tronti and Negri wrote paralleling Marcuse’s ideas about the marginalized elements of one-dimensional society and distancing themselves by the position of Panzieri, were the ones who would be able to assert their autonomy.

*Workerism* thus needed to be replaced by a more broadly defined struggle for *autonomia*—again an absolutely crucial term for the movement of 1977. Tronti and Negri advocated for local committees and networks, and for direct action by anyone willing to go on strike in the ‘social factory’: rejection of work as well as what came to be known as *autoriduzione*, the refusal to pay transport fares or rent or tickets for cinema, concert, and theater.<sup>61</sup> In a sense, ‘autonomy’ combined revolutionary insurrection with what James Scott later would term ‘everyday forms of resistance’, the weapons of the weak.<sup>62</sup>

### *‘Let us Take the City’*

In the early 1970s, *Lotta Continua* came to the conclusion that a third way between revolution made by workers and a revolution made by peasants had to be found. The Italian experience, once again, had to pave the way. To *Lotta Continua*, for example, the aim was to re-conquer those urban spaces in which the capital leaving the factories sought to expand its dominion; re-conquer those spaces in order to re-build them on a human scale, freed from the demand of profit. The aim was to ‘take the city’ (*prendiamoci la città*), which became the rallying cry of the second national congress of *Lotta Continua* on July 1971, 24–25.

Within such a new effort, the most important references had to be experiences of the more developed countries. Italy simply could not copy social and political developments in China or Vietnam, where the revolution was well under way or already established. ‘The historical and social conditions under which the revolution develops in Europe are different’.<sup>63</sup> *Lotta Continua* was impatient: instead of waiting for the right moment for revolution, the aim must be to *create* such a moment through action.

In short, the aim was to create a situation in which society was ‘broken in two: on one side the proletarians, on the other side the bourgeois’.<sup>64</sup> The model to follow were the Black Panthers, the IRA, but also the experience created by the *provos*, a Dutch underground movement, known as ‘Temporary Autonomous Zones’. As a former member of *Lotta Continua* would remember later, the imagination of the New Left was also nurtured by extra-political experiences. The celebration of the *scudetto* by the supporters of Cagliari in 1970 offered *Lotta Continua* with the image of a different, alternative urban space: ‘In Turin there were 40.000 Sardinians... they took to the streets and for a day they became rulers of the city, controlling the traffic, ordering drinks in the bars without paying, keeping the

police at a distance. So I said to myself: this is the proletarian power...the masses that govern the city from below'.<sup>65</sup> Cagliari was the first team from the *mezzogiorno* to win the *scudetto*, and its players became instant heroes of the Left, samples of a 'rough' and strong peasant population coming down from the mountains to conquer Milan and Turin, beating the powers of the 'system' through sheer force and technique.

*Lotta Continua* adopted *prendiamoci la città* as one of their central slogans from 1970. The 'city' actually meant everything that existed: the school, the university, the transport system, the asylum. The *popolo* had to re-appropriate what the *padroni* had unrightfully stolen.<sup>66</sup>

In 1972, *Lotta Continua* published a book that proposed a juxtaposition of the partisan heroes of Vietnam with the Irish experience. The book presented a description of the politics of control of the territory that seemed to be a perfect *trait-d'union* between the Maoist concept of 'red basis' and the Italian doctrine epitomized by the slogan *prendiamoci la città*.<sup>67</sup>

*Autoriduzione* (and the consequent unilateral reduction of rent by the tenant, a kind of partial rent strike), *assemblearismo* (the assembly as the only decisional power, direct democracy), proletarian justice, and 'dif-fused' armed struggle rigorously anchored in mass action: the battle in the Irish Catholic ghetto appeared as the earthly manifestation of the program of the extra-parliamentary Left, a revolution fulfilled.

## THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE AND THE RED BRIGADES

Whereas French students had played with the idea that public authority might prove vulnerable to disruption from below, Italy's radicals had good reasons to believe that they might actually succeed in subverting the fabric of the post-fascist Republic—and they were keen to try. When did this turn to violence begin? 1969 and the event of Piazza Fontana is considered a watershed.

On December 12, 1969, after the Pirelli conflicts had been settled and the strike movements ended, the Agricultural Bank on the Piazza Fontana in Milan was blown up.<sup>68</sup> Sixteen people died, eighty-eight were wounded. The police version of anarchist responsibility for the bombing soon began to fade, and a more alarming explanation emerged: neo fascists groups and not anarchists were responsible for the bombings. Even more alarming was the picture that began to emerge of contacts between members of the secret service and extreme right-wing groups. Italian public opinion, after

the work of obstinate investigative journalists, became ever more convinced of the existence of a plot: a series of bomb explosions and other obscure events would sow the seeds of fear and uncertainty, favoring the conditions for an authoritarian turn. In short, it now looked as if neo-fascists and sections of the secret service were trying to repeat in Italy the strategy that the colonels had employed successfully in Greece. The ‘strategy of tension’ that underlay much of the seventies had begun.<sup>69</sup>

As the leader of *Lotta Continua* Adriano Sofri would admit in a famous 2004 interview, the radical Left did not elevate violence to political virtue after December 12, but much before that. Violence was seen as necessary, as a ‘decisive passage’, and as constitutive of the ‘new man’. The idea of ‘emancipatory violence’ had roots far back in time.<sup>70</sup>

Violence was a central problem for the movement of the 1968 and for the groups of the New Left. In fact, different sectors of the 1968 movement and various members of the groups of the New Left opposed violence and militarism. Some of them were frankly pacifists. Yet, for a generation that wanted to make the revolution and was inspired by the Marxist tradition the problem of violence was ineludible. Historian Michel Vovelle, in his study on French Revolution, identifies violence—in addition to egalitarianism and unanimity—as a component of the tradition of ancient millenarianisms.<sup>71</sup> If Marxism is a millenarian-utopian attitude—a ‘gnostic derailment’, as Eric Voegelin would say,<sup>72</sup> or a mystic-utopian attitude, as Marxist philosopher Lucio Colletti famously said—its relation with violence is constitutive: violence is history’s midwife.

As we have seen above, the rhetoric, ideology and practice of violence had already appeared in 1968 within the student’s movements. For the groups of the New Left, the passage of violence was a necessary step toward revolution. The 1971 program of *Lotta Continua* highlighted that to ‘take the power means to use force’ and that it was only possible to make the revolution by ‘arming masses’—even though the same program clarified that this would happen only in a future and somewhat nebulous ‘third phase’. However, the expression *per la presa del potere* (‘toward the taking of power’), suggested that the ‘armed struggle’ was not limited to the final assault, but could be conceived also for other contained reasons. Hence the need to deal with the problem of the ‘organization of violence’ and the relationship between ‘violence’ and ‘political program’.<sup>73</sup> Between 1970 and 1971, in *Lotta Continua* and in other groups such as *Potere Operaio*, the word ‘revolution’ was more and more replaced by the word ‘armed struggle’. Revolution meant tomorrow; armed struggle

meant today. The substitution implied the actualization of the revolutionary myth. Armed struggle meant revolution of a here and now, a revolutionary conquest of position strategically adequate before the clock of insurrection—before the revolution itself would finish its work of destroying the *ancien régime*.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the Red Brigades (but also the GAP *Gruppi di Azione Partigiana*, ‘Partisan Action Group’) started their ‘demonstrative’, not yet clandestine, actions (threatening letters, punitive actions), which were to be followed by more professional and military actions (kidnapping, assassinations). This was an *iniziativa armata* (‘armed initiative’) carried in the name of the masses and openly theorized since the beginning.<sup>74</sup>

Facing this situation, different positions emerged between the two most important groups of the New Left, *Potere Operaio* and *Lotta Continua*. *Potere Operaio* favored a political project toward the military control of urban spaces, against the police and the institutions, through the practices of *appropriazione* and *autoriduzione*. It was favorable to the armed initiatives of the Red Brigade and GAP. After all, the journal of the organization titled an article, following Mao but also Lenin, *La rivoluzione non è un pranzo di gala: organizzazione e violenza* (‘Revolution is not a dinner party: organization and violence’) and it openly urged for armed insurrection.<sup>75</sup>

*Lotta Continua* was instead rather skeptical: ‘The conquest of power will be the fruit of a war fought over time... It is not via an insurrection that the proletariat will gain power, or that the bourgeois state will be defeated’.<sup>76</sup> The crucial point here—central to every revolutionary experience in history—was the debate on *voluntarism* and *vanguardism*, which *Lotta Continua* condemned. The real problem with the *azioni esemplari* (‘exemplary actions’) was the political project in which such initiatives were inscribed. The risk was that the ‘initiatives of the masses’ would be replaced by the *azioni esemplari*. *Lotta Continua* did not renounce violence, but it insisted that the political struggle had to remain first and foremost political.<sup>77</sup>

The turn to violence could end only badly. And in fact it did. It is not correct to assimilate the Red Brigade and terrorism with the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s and reduce the latter to the dimension of political violence. To the social movements and to the groups of the New Left, violence was only one of the various tools of protest, and violence was given meaning by the context in which it took place: the greater the support for a strike, occupation or demonstration, the less the need to use coercion.

The Red Brigades alone based their notion of leadership and revolutionary action on the systemic use of violence making violence and the *discorso delle armi* (literally: ‘the discourse of weapons’, i.e. the use of weapons) the only form of struggle, its program and strategy, and the verification of class consciousness.<sup>78</sup> Yet, the Red Brigades were but a variant of the Marxist revival of the 1960s and 1970s. In short, as the Marxist intellectual Rossana Rossanda famously said, they belonged to the ‘family album’ of the Marxist intellectual tradition.<sup>79</sup>

### 1977: THE REVOLUTION COMES

From February 1977, university students mobilized against the Malfatti law. This was only the starting point for a new round of mass protests, occupations, street battles with the police, and demonstrations that spread in the major Italian cities including Rome, Bologna, Turin, Naples, Milan, Padua.

It is not easy to synthesize the characteristics of a movement so diverse and jagged, ideologically and geographically, such as the movement of 1977.<sup>80</sup> However, there were two main wings: the ‘creative’ pacific wing (the *indiani metropolitani*), inspired by artistic avant-gardes and by the feminists and devoted to an ironic and transgressive forms of communication<sup>81</sup>; and the ‘military’ wing of the armed *autonomi* (*Autonomia Operaia*), which expressed a political project which was openly antagonistic and subversive.<sup>82</sup> The *autonomi* advocated and implemented political violence, and were sympathetic to the practices and ideas of the Red Brigades. Eventually, the *autonomi* prevailed and were able to impose their control on mobilization.

Perhaps the common thread among the various groups was the politics of *autonomia* which, as we saw above, in its earlier formulation date back to the 1960s and the analysis of Mario Tronti, and had been re-launched by *Lotta Continua* since the early 1970s. The central idea was an almost Foucauldian understanding of power as multicentric and diffused throughout society as a whole; thus, it had to be fought and attacked on the same grounds, at every level, in its multiple ramifications, even its most peripheral manifestations. In short, even if the working class was happy with the civilization of frigidaire, to quote Louis Aragon, there were other groups willing to assert their ‘autonomy’, build local committees and networks, and direct action without intermediation, going on strike in the social factory. Hence the practices of ‘proletarian’ *espropri* (dispossession), *autoriduzione*

for rent, transport fares, concerts or cinema or travel tickets, sabotage of productions, (self)-reduction of working time, the struggle against or the refusal to work—probably the center theme of the *autonomia*—occupation of houses (squatting), and multiple form of mass illegality.<sup>83</sup>

Here again the Italian developments were closely followed from left-wing activists elsewhere in Europe, who not without reason continued to see Italy as a laboratory for social renewal and emancipation. The squatter movements in particular became examples to follow, and within Italy they turned into dynamic centers for alternative life styles and political action, a kind of grassroots alternative to the ‘people’s houses’ of the PCI, where old men (established workers) would sit and play cards or read *l’Unità*. Many of them still exist today as *centri sociali*.<sup>84</sup>

The real ‘novelty’ of the movement, as Lumley writes, was its assertion of the autonomy of ‘youth identity’ taken as ‘emblematic of a situation typical of the modern metropolis. Youth was made to signify exclusion, marginality, and deviance’.<sup>85</sup> But the youth of the 1977 did not want to be integrated, nor did they want their deviance and marginality to be cured, nor did they ask for a job. Dismissing the values of society, they wanted to be happy, enjoy existence, and develop their creativity and life in community. For youth circles and for the *indiani metropolitani*, revolution was to be a revolution against solitude.<sup>86</sup> They claimed a radical diversity not only from the politics of the Left, but also from the politics of their older siblings, the *sessantottini*, the activists of the New Left which had translated their radicalism into careers or institutionalizations that mimicked the major (bourgeois) parties.

To the young activists of the 1977, the revolution meant not to take the Winter Palace but as the creative wing of Bologna proposed to exit from the usual path, to wander from the subject, to, literally, rave about (*delirare*).<sup>87</sup>

The refusal of work was a central theme of the culture of 1977. As a well-known song titled *Lavorare con lentezza* (‘Work slowly’) claimed: ‘Work slowly... who works fast will get injured, and end in hospital, and in hospital there is no place, and you can die... slow down’.<sup>88</sup> Others had transformed the unionist rallying cry ‘*é ora é ora/potere a chi lavora* (‘it is time, it is time/power to those who work’) into the wall inscription ‘*é ora é ora/lavora solo un’ora*’ (‘it is time, it is time/work only one hour’). In many ways, the movement was able to express itself in a different register.

The reaction of the PCI against the *autonomi* was strong. For example, in Rome, the local leftist administration guided by the well-known art



historian Giulio Carlo Argan asked, after another violent demonstration, that the government shot down the ‘covo dei provocatori’ [holdout for instigators] (a ‘base’ of the *autonomi* in the Roman San Lorenzo neighborhood). The *autonomi* replied with artful irony that what ought to be shut down was not their base, but the ‘covo’ on *via delle Botteghe Oscure* (i.e. the headquarters of PCI), where the PCI’s leaders were selling out on every single principle that could lead to emancipation.<sup>89</sup>

By the end of 1977—after the armed wing had taken full control of the mobilization, and the rise of terrorism had left on the ground only violence—the movement started to recede. Some militants entered into the rank of the terrorist clandestine groups; for others, it was time to return to their private life and try to find meaning in a world where the horizons of revolution had disappeared.<sup>90</sup> *Autonomism* persisted in the countercultural environments of Italian cities from the late 1970s onward (especially in Rome and Bologna) in quite marginal forms, to emerge again and with a global outreach at the turn of the century with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire*. Meanwhile, contending political forces were not simply allowing the Left to capture the entire political space.

### THE HOBBIT CAMP AND THE YOUTH CULTURE OF THE ITALIAN SOCIAL MOVEMENT

It is important to stress that the 1970s also signaled new developments on the Right, and the mobilization of a new generation of young people who equally dreamed of a ‘new society’, but who did not see themselves as anti-fascist, quite the contrary: central tenets of fascist ideology were, from their perspective, as relevant as ever. Italy had to be re-generated with reference to fascist values if not Fascism *tout court*.

The *Campi Hobbit* were summer festivals organized by a group of young members of the neo-fascists Italian Social Movement (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*, MSI) between 1977 and 1981.<sup>91</sup> The aim was to re-imagine the obsolete legacy of Fascism creating alternative cosmologies and symbolism for a new culture of the Right that wanted to oppose liberal democracy and Marxism without falling into the nostalgic doctrinarism of the neo-fascists. The camps were held in an open and casual atmosphere, amidst self-ironic discussions and debates, that had nothing in common with the gloomy and militaristic atmosphere of previous similar initiatives held by neo-fascist youth groups. The idea was to construct a common space for reflections for those ‘alien’ to the system. The desire was to put

an end to the bloody confrontation with the ‘reds’, get out of the neo-fascist ghetto, and take part of Italian society.

Tolkien’s *Hobbit* appealed to these young people for its thirst for adventure, the existential quest (by Bilbo and the dwarves) against the great odds, the just battle against the deadly Five Armies, and the joy of comradeship and communitarian life. They, ostracized by the mainstream political class for decades, identified themselves with the innocent *Hobbit*, perceived just like them as those who would save the world from ‘evil forces’ such as materialism, consumerism, and standardization. Likewise, they criticized capitalism, Liberalism, and Marxism—all those ideologies unable to respond to the ‘spiritual need’ of young people and less privileged sectors of the society.

The real inventor of the *Campi Hobbit* was Pino Rauti who, very young, had joined the republic of Salò and then become member of the MSI. Against a ‘law and order’ line as defended and conducted by the MSI’s leader Giorgio Almirante, Rauti advocated for the need to combine traditional values with the ‘Social question’—a ‘Destra Sociale’ (Social Right), one might say, close to George Sorel and Julius Evola. Rauti insisted on themes such as anti-capitalism, localism (social activities in neighborhoods), third-worldism, youth unemployment, youth communitarian life, solidarism, women conditions, and environmentalism. The struggle against the Left had to depart from the traditional ‘nationalist’ themes and move on the ground of social matters, competing with the Left on its own terrain—moving in other words from ‘the nation’ to ‘il popolo’. These reflections provided the MSI and in particular its young members with an arsenal of ‘new ideas’ to fight, as it was said at the time, ‘the good battle’. Many of these ideas outlived the MSI and became the main sources of inspiration for the constellations of new radical right’s movements (such as CasaPound) that have emerged since.<sup>92</sup>

Ideologically, the main source of inspiration for Rauti and the young activists of the *Hobbit* Camps was the effort to construct a New Right (*Nouvelle Droite*) as attempted by *Groupe de Recherche et Etudes Pour la Civilisation Européenne* (GRECE), led by French philosopher Alain de Benoist.<sup>93</sup> As Fernan Gallego has pointed out, the central points in the ‘modernization’ of the Right’s traditional political culture included ‘the criticism of state nationalism, the defense of inequality in the scientific terms of “biodiversity”, the recuperation of a European pagan tradition plundered by Judeo-Christian rituals, the defense of the Third World and an attack on the Americanization of Europe’.<sup>94</sup> In a sense, this ‘new Right’

represented an up-to-date version of what Jeffrey Herf designated as 'reactionary modernism' (see Chap. 5).

While the radical Right and the New Left would often confront each other, and sometimes violently so, they also shared quite a lot in terms of worldview. Both were convinced that they were living through an irreversible crisis of the political, economic, and social system; both shared the search for a radical solution to put an end to the crisis. Neo-fascist groups and the extra-parliamentary Left shared an 'extremist' approach to politics, conceiving their political strategy as a radical alternative to parliamentary democracy and its unbearable gradualism, moderation, negotiation, and endless compromise, always leaving the power skeletons intact.

Furthermore, denouncing the multiple aspects of the Italian crisis, both the neo-fascists and the leftist revolutionary groups tried to address something deeper, ascribable to an essential, fundamental character of contemporary society. At the center of their reflections, there were the consequences and the problems brought by consumerist society. Such a society was being accused of generating a reified society, in which human will was replaced by technological planning, in which human happiness was reduced to the mere satisfaction of socially induced (or artificially created) needs (as in Marcuse). Human life diluted and dispersed in a timeless horizon of meaningless activity. A new kind of Moloch to which the human being was offering itself as the ultimate sacrifice of humanness had to be confronted: a new 'tyranny'—a 'culture industry' as denounced by the Frankfurt School—equipped with unprecedented tools. In this vein, the extreme Right and Left shared a diagnosis of modernity as alienation, decadence, and disintegration as a dispersion of the Self. Thus, both forces advocated a leap into authentic Being, the expansion of the Self beyond the sphere of emancipation from primary needs and against the economic dimension and materialism which silenced the spiritual dimensions of the human condition.

From this point of view, both neo-fascists and leftist groups considered the Soviet Union and the USA to be on the same plan. The two systems shared the same prevailing aspects: the search for material richness, the celebration of material triumph and technological advance, ditching everything that would make humans really free. Behind the various movements, therefore, one can recognize a new diagnosis of the consequences of modernity that went much beyond existing paradigms in political thought, penetrating the existential dimension of post-industrial 'late' modernity.

## AUGUSTO DEL NOCE AND THE CATHOLIC CRITIQUE OF MODERNITY

A similar diagnosis of the situation was perhaps most famously launched by the Catholic philosopher already mentioned in previous chapters, namely Augusto Del Noce. Del Noce was firmly anti-fascist, but he was just as firmly anti-communist, and his fiercest critiques were often launched against the Left and its political culture. This is worth mentioning, because Del Noce was one of those thinkers who kept alive the idea that an alternative modernity in Italy could be formulated *through* Christianity.<sup>95</sup>

To Del Noce, modernity contained indeed something positive: the idea of liberty. At the political level, Catholicism must meet this ideal. This was pivotal in the case of Italy where many Catholics had ended up supporting Fascism, and with the dominance of Christian Democracy in a post-totalitarian state. It was a necessary move, moreover, in a country where large segments of the population, Catholics included, had come to embrace Communism, and therefore were still under the spell of totalitarian thought.

Facing this historical-political situation, Del Noce argued that the correct way to answer the challenge posed by secularization is not by rejecting modernity altogether but by correcting it in light of the classical metaphysical tradition, a tradition which must be rediscovered and renewed. Del Noce's entire thought was aimed not only at an understanding of the current crisis, but also at an attempt to re-conceptualize modernity. Modernity needed to be brought back on a different track, and this could best be done from a philosophical platform that recognized the irreducible nature of transcendental experiences; in other words, for Del Noce, it could best be done by turning to Christianity and the teachings of the Gospel, but always from the reflexive stand point of the here and now.

During the political turmoil and growing left-wing influence of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Del Noce's continued his analysis of atheism by taking up the wider theme of secularization and contemporary history. Some of his essays from this period were published in the 1970 volume *L'età della secolarizzazione* (*The Age of Secularization*), a work that in many ways anticipated arguments about the secular age later made by Anglo-Saxon scholars such as Charles Taylor.<sup>96</sup> Del Noce also returned to the question of the relationship between Catholics and Marxists, as in his

book from 1981 *Il cattolico comunista* (*The Catholic-Communist*).<sup>97</sup> *Il suicidio della rivoluzione* (*The Suicide of the Revolution*) from 1978 remains one of his most famous and controversial works, in which he accurately predicted the implosion of Communism, provocatively arguing that the process of dissolution of Marxism into neo-bourgeois nihilism was already at work in the thought of Gramsci.<sup>98</sup>

By the late 1960s, Del Noce realized that a new society was gaining momentum—a society that no longer needed religious forces to oppose Communism, a ‘post-Marxist’ era, a time when the relativizing of every ideal would blend with a technocratic vision of the world. Inspired by Eric Voegelin’s analysis of the ‘gnostic origins’ of modernity, Del Noce argued that the twentieth century had entered a new ‘profane’ period of secularization, marked by ‘irreligiosità naturale’ (natural irreligiosity), a new form of totalitarianism: the ‘società opulenta’ (opulent society),<sup>99</sup> technocratic, nihilist, scientist, relativist, individualist, marked by the primacy of instrumental reason, *more irreligious* than communist atheism, victorious on the very battleground of Communism itself, that of materialism. The ‘opulent society’ is the triumph of Western irreligion,

a society that accepts every Marxist ‘negation’ regarding the denial of religion, metaphysics, and contemplative thought; that therefore accepts the Marxist reduction of ideas to an instrument of production; but that on the other hand refuses Marxism in its messianic revolutionary aspects, i.e. the only religious remain of the revolutionary idea ... [the opulent society] represents the Bourgeois spirit in its pure state, the Bourgeois spirit that has triumphed over its traditional opponents, transcendent religion and revolutionary thought.<sup>100</sup>

In the end, Marxism had served nihilism and the bourgeois spirit. Marxism broke any link with tradition, but had no elements with which to affirm a new dimension of reality, to replace tradition; the ultimate effect of Marxism is the bourgeois society, opulent, rich, fat, and void of values. Within an ‘opulent’ society, democracy becomes another form of relativism; being a democrat means not to believe in the existence of truth. Democracy in this sense counters Marxist Gnosticism with its own agnosticism; it still equals a frightening loss of standards and an existential loss of meaning, a negation not only of the human person in his integrity but also of the very Socratic-Platonic idea of *politics* as that glue which ties together human beings in a meaningful order. Del Noce’s analysis

of the Italian situation was at one and the same time a diagnosis of the crisis faced by Western civilization more broadly—in a sense, the Italian setting merely epitomized what was turning into a global condition of value-relative technocracy.

### THE END OF REVOLUTION

Things would cool down in the 1980s. The radical Left became less radical, and many sought refuge in the private sphere (the so-called ‘riflusso’). The PCI kept its strongholds in many regions of Italy. But especially after the death of Enrico Berlinguer, it was becoming less of a reference point for an alternative modernity. Christian Democracy would maintain its political hegemony, but according to thinkers like Del Noce, it would do so at the expense of giving up on its aspiration to give Christian shape to modernity. MSI would languish in the ashes, waiting for the right moment. The 1980s instead was the virtual triumph of ‘craxismo’ (from the name of the socialist leader and prime minister Bettino Craxi), another Italian ‘solution’ to the politics of the period, as it was based on ‘revised socialism’, pragmatism, image-based politics, and institutional ‘accomodamento’.<sup>101</sup> Everything would change at the end of the Cold War.

### NOTES

1. This section is based on Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in Twentieth Century Italy*, trans. S. Dingee and J. Purdue (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 337–55. See also Norma Bouchard, ‘Italia’61: the Commemoration for the Centenary of Unification in the First Capital of the Italian State’, *Romance Studies* 23, no. 2 (2005): 117–29; Samantha Owen (Quinn), ‘Continuing National History: the 1961 Italian Centennial of Unification Commemoration’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 56, no. 3 (2010): 393–409; Massimo Baioni ‘Anniversaries and the Public Uses of the Risorgimento in Twentieth-Century Italy’, *Journal of Modern European History* 9, no. 3 (2011): 397–415: 406–11.
2. On the discrediting of nationalism in post-WWII Italy see Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (London: Penguin, 2007), 529–47.
3. For a useful comparative analysis, see Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

4. Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and Northern America, 1956–1976* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 118.
5. Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958–c.1974* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 805.
6. *Ibid.*, 14–5.
7. Sidney G. Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder: Protest and Politics in Italy, 1965–1975* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); see also Alberto De Bernardi, 'Il movimento giovanile negli anni Sessanta e il sistema politico', in *L'Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni Settanta*, II, *Culture, nuovi soggetti, identità*, eds. F. Lussana and G. Marramao (Rubbettino: Soveria Mannelli, 2003), 175–86.
8. Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency: Culture of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978* (London: Verso, 1990), 49–61; Marwick, *The Sixties*, 587.
9. Tarrow, *Democracy*, 88.
10. Marwick, *The Sixties*, 554–55.
11. Horn, *The Spirit*, 74–85.
12. For an 'atmospheric' accounts see Rossana Rossanda, *L'anno degli studenti* (Bari: De Donato, 1968); see also Aldo Agosti, Luisa Passerini, and Nicola Tranfaglia (eds.), *La cultura e i luoghi del 68* (Milan: Franco Angeli 1991); Pier Paolo Poggio (ed.), *Il Sessantotto, l'evento, la storia* (Brescia: Fondazione Micheletti, 1989). On the French May and the way it has been overtaken by its subsequent representations see Kristin Ross, *May'68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
13. On this see Guido Crainz, *Il paese mancato. Dal miracolo economico agli anni Ottanta* (Rome: Donzelli, 2003), 260–3; Vittorio Vidotto, *Roma contemporanea* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2001), 307–8; Horn, *The Spirit*, 84.
14. Pasolini's famous anti-student poem *Vi odio, cari studenti* (*I hate you, dear students*) was published by *L'Espresso* on June 16, 1968: 'Now the journalists of all the world (including/those of the television)/are licking your arses (as one still says in student/slang). Not me, my dears./You have the faces of spoilt rich brats.../You are cowardly, uncertain, desperate/... When the other day, at Villa Giulia you fought/the police,/I can tell you I was on their side./Because the police are the sons of the poor./ They come from subtopias, in the cities and countryside'.
15. Horn, *The Spirit*, 112.
16. Quoted in Crainz, *Il paese*, 237–8.
17. Luisa Passerini, *Authobiography of a Generation. Italy, 1968*, trans. L. Erberg, foreword J. W. Scott (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 29.

18. Tarrow, *Democracy*, 131. The crucial process of the ‘capture of the speech’, where previously shy or indifferent people began to talk, has been reconstructed more powerfully, in the case of France, by Michel de Certeau. ‘Last May, speech was taken the way, in 1789, the Bastille was taken’, De Certeau goes on explaining the atmosphere of individual and collective liberation as experienced in Paris; Michel De Certeau, ‘The Capture of the Speech (May 1968)’, in *The Capture of the Speech and Other Political Writing* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 11–2. Similarly in Italy, ‘What occurred ... during the academic year 1967–1968 was an extraordinary experience of thousand of young people, most of whom were just discovering politics, ideal commitment, collective excitement; in a tumultuous environment, everybody could and even was obliged to take the floor to say whatever he had in mind, the audience being composed of comrades who made up “general assemblies”, fluid bodies which operated in the name of direct democracy without any delegation of power. These assemblies were designed to be occasion for debate and free individual expression, providing students with the opportunity to “find themselves”, to change their minds, to exert their own repressed drives by the mean of verbal violence Gianni Statera, *Death of a Utopia: the Development and Decline of Student Movements in Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 174.
19. Tarrow, *Democracy*, 149.
20. Quoted in Lumley, *States*, 96.
21. See the document collections *Documenti della rivolta universitaria*, ed. Movimento Studentesco (Bari: Laterza, 1968); *Università, l’ipotesi rivoluzionaria: documenti delle lotte studentesche: Trento, Torino, Napoli, Pisa, Milano, Roma* (Padua: Marsilio, 1968).
22. Quoted in Crainz, *Il paese*, 238.
23. Bryan Turner and Rosario Forlenza, ‘The Last Frontier: The Struggle over Sex and Orthodoxy in the Catholic Church’, (forthcoming).
24. On this see Angelo Ventrone, “*Vogliamo Tutto*”. *Perchè due generazioni hanno creduto nella rivoluzione* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2012), 144–6.
25. Quoted in Lumley, *States*, 68.
26. ‘When a mass of individuals, who belong to an occupational group, or class fraction, or who have common objective interests, are excluded from the system of representation but find themselves in favourable circumstances for mobilization...the conflict which ensues in their struggle for recognition tends to be more intense than over normal demands... For example, conflicts are often ends in themselves (and sometimes no specific demands are made)... because the real objective is the constitution of a new identity?; Alessandro Pizzorno, ‘Le due logiche dell’azione di classe’, in Alessandro Pizzorno, Emilio Reyneri, Marino Regini, and Ida



- Regalia (eds.), *Lotte operaie e sindacato: il ciclo 1968–1972 in Italia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1978), 7–45: 13; see also Lumley, *States*, 69.
27. Renato Curcio, *A visto aperto: Intervista di Mario Scajola* (Milan: Mondadori, 1993), 35; see also Horn, *The Spirit*, 80–1; Nanni Balestrini and Piero Moroni, *L'orda d'oro, 1968–1977. La grande ondata rivoluzionaria e creativa, politica ed esistenziale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2003), 212–13.
  28. *Lettera a una professoressa*, Scuola di Barbiana (Florence, 1967), 112, 116.
  29. Quoted in Balestrini and Moroni, *L'orda*, 237–8.
  30. Horn, *The Spirit*, 216.
  31. In 1972, Hannah Arendt wrote that the generations of radical students in the 1960s discovered what the eighteenth century had defined 'public happiness': 'when a man takes part in public life he opens up for himself a dimension of human experience that otherwise remains closed to him and that in some way constitutes a part of complete happiness'; Hannah Arendt, 'Thoughts on Politics and Revolution', in *Crises of the Republic: Lying in Politics, Civil Disobedience, On Violence, Thought on Politics and Revolution* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), 201–33: 203.
  32. Elvio Fachinelli, 'Il desiderio dissidente'. *Quaderni Piacentini* 33 (1968): 74–9; see also Luisa Passerini, 'Utopia and Desire', *Thesis Eleven* 68, no. 1 (2002): 11–30: 14–5.
  33. David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998).
  34. In the 1970s, notwithstanding the social conflicts of that period, the PCI did not have a rigorous classist language and a vision of society in terms of class; see, for example, Enrico Berlinguer, *La proposta comunista* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975).
  35. Horn, *The Spirit*, 85.
  36. On this see Lumley, *States*, 167–269; Marwick, *The Sixties*, 618–32; Horn, *The Spirit*, 111–15.
  37. Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Heinemann, 2005), 415.
  38. *Ibid.*
  39. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon, 1964); Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la Terre* (Paris: François Maspero, 1961). Marcuse will correct his pessimism on the working class and Western society with his *An Essays on Liberation*, published after the eruption of movement in 1969.
  40. Marco Revelli. 'Movimenti sociali e spazio politico', in *Storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, vol. II, *La trasformazione dell'Italia: sviluppo e squilibri*, t. 2, *Istituzioni, movimenti, culture* (Einaudi, Torino, 1995), 385–476: 440–4; Ventrone, "Vogliamo Tutto", 142–4.

41. *Potere Operaio* was probably the group that in the Italian context represents and epitomizes better than any other group, the ‘last generation’ that had believed in the path opened by the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution; Benjamin Stora, *La dernière génération d’Octobre* (Paris: Attock, 2003); Ventrone, “*Vogliamo Tutto*”, 150–2; Aldo Grandi, *La generazione degli anni perduti. Storie di Potere Operaio* (Turino: Einaudi, 2003).
42. Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943–1988* (London: Penguin, 1990), 309.
43. On this see Jan-Werner Müller, ‘The Paradoxes of Post-war Italian Political Thought’, *History of European Ideas* 39, no. 1 (2013): 79–102: 91–2; see also Richard Drake, *The Revolutionary Misticque and Terrorism in Contemporary Italy* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1989), 40.
44. On *Quaderni Rossi* see Ventrone, “*Vogliamo Tutto*”, 20–35.
45. Mario Tronti, ‘Lenin in Inghilterra’, *Classe operaia* 1, no. 1 (1964), reprinted in *Operai e capitale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966), 89–95.
46. Alberto Asor Rosa, ‘Su Operai e Capitale di Mario Tronti’, *Giovane Critica* 15–16 (1967): 34; see also Müller, ‘The Paradoxes’, 92–3.
47. On this see Paolo Capuzzo and Sandro Mezzadra, ‘Provincializing the Italian Reading of Gramsci’, in Neelan Srivastava and Baidik Bhattacharya (eds.), *The Postcolonial Gramsci* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 34–54: 44.
48. *Ibid.*
49. Already in 1959 Tronti argued that Gramsci ‘is a typically, I would even say fundamentally on Italian thinker’, and that would be a mistake to give him a ‘European range’; Mario Tronti, ‘Tra materialismo dialettico e filosofia della storia: Gramsci e Labriola’, in Alberto Caracciolo and Gianni Scalia (eds.), *La città futura: Saggi sulla figura e il pensiero di Antonio Gramsci* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1959), 139–62: 156; see also Capuzzo and Mezzadra, ‘Provincializing’, 44.
50. Capuzzo and Mezzadra, ‘Provincializing’, 44.
51. See Negri’s commentary on Marx’s Grundrisse titled *Marx oltre Marx* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979).
52. Mario Tronti, ‘Marx ieri e oggi’, *Mondo Nuovo* (1962), reprinted in *Operai e capitale*, 31–8: 31; also quoted in Capuzzo and Mezzadra, ‘Provincializing’, 44.
53. Tarrow, *Democracy*, 128–31.
54. Quoted in Judt, *Postwar*, 406.
55. On the most extreme Maoist groups see Ventrone, “*Vogliamo Tutto*”, 245–61.
56. Judt, *Postwar*, 415.

57. On the trajectory of the group see Giovanni De Luna, *Le ragioni di un decennio, 1969–1979. Militanza, violenza, sconfitta, memoria* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2011); Luigi Bobbio, *Storia di Lotta Continua* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1988).
58. On this see also Horn, *The Spirit*, 142–4.
59. Emblematically, two famous *brigantisti*, Alberto Franceschini and Prospero Gallinari, were sons of partisans. Franceschini once famously remarked that at the end of the 1960s he decided to become a revolutionary because an old partisan gave him the weapons that the partisans had hidden at the end of WWII waiting for the ‘ora X’, the beginning of the revolution, that ‘beginning’ which had been betrayed by the PCI.
60. ‘Anche in Europa è possibile lottare come in Vietnam’, *Potere Operaio* 3, no. 43 (October 25, 1971): 29; see also ‘Irlanda tra religione e barricate’ *Potere Operaio* 1, no. 1 (September 8–25, 1969): 2.
61. Mario Tronti, *Sull'autonomia del politico* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1977); Antonio Negri, *Dall'operaio massa all'operaio sociale. Intervista sull'operaismo*, eds. P. Pozzi and R. Tommasini (Milan: Multhipla, 1979). In 2009, Tronti published his own memoir of *operaismo*, drawing a sharp distinction between classical *operaismo* and its distant echo, autonomism; Mario Tronti, *Noi operaisti* (Rome: DeriveApprodi, 2009).
62. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
63. ‘Prendiamoci la città’, *Lotta Continua*, no. 10 (June 11, 1971): 19.
64. ‘Prendiamoci la città’, *Lotta Continua*, no. 20 (November 12, 1970): 34.
65. Quoted in Aldo Cazzullo, *I ragazzi che volevano fare la rivoluzione, 1968–1978: Storia di lotta continua* (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), 115–16.
66. ‘Prendiamoci la città’, *Lotta Continua*, no. 22 (December 11, 1970): 19.
67. *Irlanda, un Vietnam in Europa. Materiale di informazione, documenti, interviste con dirigenti e militanti della lotta armata* (Turin: Edizioni di Lotta continua, 1972), 52.
68. This section on Piazza Fontana is based on Ginsborg, *A History*, 333–4.
69. On this see Anna Cento Bull, *Italian Neofascism and the Strategy of and the Politics of Nonreconciliation* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007).
70. “‘Tutto parti da Piazza Fontana. Poi lanciammo la prima pietra’” (interview of Roberto Delera with Adriano Sofri), *Corriere della Sera*, April 2, 2004; see also Ventrone, “*Vogliamo Tutto*”, VII.
71. Michel Vovelle, *La mentalité révolutionnaire: Société et mentalités sous la Révolution française* (Paris: Editions sociales, 1985).
72. Bjørn Thomassen, ‘Reason and Religion in Rawls: Voegelin’s Challenge’, *Philosophia* 40, no. 2 (2012): 237–52.
73. See ‘Il nostro programma’, *Lotta Continua*, no. 3 (January 29, 1971): 7.

74. On the Red Brigades see Lumley, *States*, 279–93; Ventrone, “*Vogliamo Tutto*”, 275–341; Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The Religious Mind-set of Modern Terrorists*, trans. S. J. Nodes (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).
75. ‘La Rivoluzione non è un pranzo di gala: organizzazione e violenza’, *Potere Operaio* 3, no. 38–39 (April 17–May 1, 1971): 3–4.
76. See ‘Potere Operaio. Teoria della “ricchezza” e miseria della “teoria”’, *Lotta Continua*, no. 13 (July 25, 1971): 16–7.
77. ‘Violenza Borghese e violenza rivoluzionaria’, *Lotta Continua*, no. 6 (April 2, 1971): 2–3.
78. Lumley, *States*, 283–4; Vittorio Dini and Luigi Manconi, *Il discorso delle armi. L’ideologia terroristica nel linguaggio delle Brigate Rosse e di Prima Linea* (Rome: Savelli, 1981), 37.
79. Rossana Rossanda, ‘Il discorso sulla DC’, *Il Manifesto*, March 28, 1978; Rossana Rossanda, ‘L’Album di famiglia’, *Il Manifesto*, April 2, 1978.
80. For a ‘sympathetic’ analysis see Marco Grisignini, *Il Settantasette* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1997).
81. On the feminists see Lumley, *States*, 313–36; Ventrone, “*Vogliamo Tutto*”, 351–3.
82. On *Autonomia Operaia* see Ventrone, “*Vogliamo Tutto*”, 341–8. See also the testimony of Daniele Pifano, one of the leader of Rome’s *Autonomia Operaia*, in *Settantasette. La rivoluzione che viene* (Rome: Derive Approdi, 1991), 361–9.
83. Balestrini and Moroni, *L’orda*, 459–60; Lumley, *States*, 295–312.
84. Pierpaolo Mudo, “‘Ogni Sfratto Sarà una Barricata’: Squatting for Housing and Social Conflict in Rome’, in Claudio Cattaneo and Miguel Martínez (eds.), *The Squatters’ Movement in Europe: Commons and Autonomy as Alternative to Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2014), 136–63.
85. Lumley, *States*, 296. On generation and gender as the two major motifs running through the entire 1970s and spanning to the social, cultural, and political spheres, see the various essays in Anna Cento Bull and Adalgisa Giorgio (eds.), *Speaking, Out and Silencing: Culture, Society and Politics in Italy in the 1970s* (London: Maney Publishing, 2005).
86. On this, see also Ventrone, “*Vogliamo Tutto*”, 348–51.
87. ‘Tutta la pratica di liberazione della classe si presenta come de/lirio. De/lirio: uscire dall’ordine della leggibilità, dalla previsione [...] dall’ordine del contratto Nel contratto dell’operaio (il prestatore d’opera), viene chiesto di prestare il tempo. Rifiutarsi di prestare tutta la vita alla fabbrica è uscire dall’ordine ... è delirare’; quoted in Franco Ottaviano, *La rivoluzione nel labirinto. Sinistra e sinistrismo dal 1956 alla fine degli anni Ottanta*, II, *I partiti del sinistrismo* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino, 1993), 755.

88. This song, by Enzo Del Re, opened the broadcasting of Radio Alice, one of the first free radios in Italy, and the voice of the movement in Bologna. The song was also included in the 2004 movie *Radio Alice*, directed by Guido Chiesa.
89. Document of February 3, 1977 at [www.nelvento.net/archivio/68/settesette/volantini1-10.htm](http://www.nelvento.net/archivio/68/settesette/volantini1-10.htm) (last accessed: September 25, 2015).
90. On the process of disengagement from terrorism and the connected issues of reconciliation, truth and justice, see Anna Cento Bull and Philip Cooke, *Ending Terrorism in Italy* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2013).
91. This section is based on Piero Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 41. See also Marco Tarchi (ed.), *La rivoluzione impossibile: Dai Campi Hobbit alla nuova destra* (Florence: Vallecchi, 2010) (the author of this book was one of the organizer of the camps).
92. For the history of the MSI see Piero Ignazi, *Il polo escluso. Profilo del Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998); for a wider take on the history of the Right in Italy since 1946 see Adalberto Baldoni, *Storia della destra. Dal postfascismo al Popolo della libertà* (Florence: Vallecchi, 2009); Giovanni Orsina (ed.), *Storia delle destre nell'Italia repubblicana* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino, 2014).
93. Francesco Germinario, *La destra degli dei. Alain de Benoist e la cultura politica della Nouvelle Droite* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2002); Ignazi, *Extreme*, 22–4.
94. Ferran Gallego, 'The Extreme Right in Italy from the Italian Social Movement to Post-Fascism', Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials, working paper no. 169 (Barcelona, 1999), 9; [http://www.icps.cat/archivos/WorkingPapers/WP\\_I\\_169.pdf?noga=1](http://www.icps.cat/archivos/WorkingPapers/WP_I_169.pdf?noga=1) (last accessed: September 11, 2015).
95. For further details see Bjørn Thomassen and Rosario Forlenza, 'Christianity and Political Thought: Augusto Del Noce and the Ideology of Christian Democracy in Postwar Italy', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 21, no. 2(2016): 181–99.
96. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007); Augusto Del Noce, *L'epoca della secolarizzazione* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1970).
97. Augusto Del Noce, *Il cattolico comunista* (Milan: Rusconi, 1981).
98. Augusto Del Noce, *Il suicidio della rivoluzione* (Milan: Rusconi, 1978).
99. The term 'società opulenta' appeared first in Del Noce's 1963 essay 'Appunti sull'irreligione occidentale' later collected in *Il problema dell'ateismo* (*The Problem of Atheism*, 1964). On Del Noce's reading of Voegelin, see Bjørn Thomassen and Rosario Forlenza 'Voegelin's Impact on the Italian Response to Modernity: The Parallel Life-Works of Augusto Del Noce and Eric

Voegelin,' *VoegelinView*, November 2014, <http://voegelinview.com/voegelins-impact-italian-response-modernity-parallel-life-works-augusto-del-noce-eric-voegelin/> (last accessed: September 20, 2015).

100. Del Noce, *L'epoca*, 14.

101. On Craxi and 'craxismo' see Simona Colarizi and Marco Gervasoni, *La cruna dell'ago. Craxi, il partito socialista e la crisi della Repubblica* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2005).

## After Modernity? Nationhood in the Post-Cold War Era

France had its political revolution. England had its industrial revolution. Italy had neither. But Italy had history. And from that history repeated attempts were made to articulate a culture-specific pathway to the modern. This happened as a constant negotiation over nationhood, attempting to define the ‘soul’ of the country. But it also happened as a mission with a wider purpose, identifying an Italian platform for a project of modernity resonating beyond its borders. Italian thinkers of political modernity were trying to blaze the trail for others to come, and often they succeeded in formulating ideas of lasting consequence and importance for modern European history.

Because of Italy’s dependence upon history, trajectories toward the modern were never articulated as a complete and radical rupture with the past as happened in France with the *ancien régime* rupture. The pathway to the modern was instead articulated as an attempt to revive something lying dormant in the past. Any call to ‘revolution’ was always balanced against the idea of reform; and the ground for such reforms remained tied to a historical legacy and its interpretation.

This continuous dialogue and interpretation of the nexus between past, present, and future has since the nineteenth century shaped Italian roads to modernity, in ways that cannot be defined by pre-existing or external models. As we have argued throughout this book, it was on many occasions that Italian developments inspired ways of conceptualizing the modern outside the Italian peninsula, rather than the other way round.

Let us in this chapter first sketch Italy's more recent coming to terms with its past, as related to the political crisis provoked by the end of the Cold War. In continuation, we will indicate how Italian political and social developments, even in the midst of chaos and turmoil, somehow indicate more general patterns connected to a more broadly defined 'crisis of modernity', or what some authors have called 'post-modernization'.

### ITALY IN THE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD: MULTIPLE CRISES AND CONTESTED NATIONHOOD

Next to Germany, the most direct impact of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Communism was no doubt recorded in the structural crisis of the Italian political system. The end of the Cold War signaled the dissolution of the political arrangements Italians had known since 1945, and the beginning of a new era—an endless transition, or a transition that never really happened, as scholars and commentators have said time and again.<sup>1</sup>

However, by the late 1980s Italy was already floundering in a morass of corruption, as the Italian political system had degenerated over the decades, losing legitimacy within civil society. While single political parties (Christian Democracy and the Italian Socialist Party, PSI) as well as single persons (Bettino Craxi comes to mind) certainly can and should be identified as culprits, the structural elements involved in this development should not be overlooked: the staying in power of a single political party for half a century was almost bound to produce clientelist technologies of power. While governments kept shifting at a European record pace, real government alternation did not take place, as the question was always narrowed down to a matter of whom the Christian Democrats should ally with—and from the 1960s, the support of the PSI had become quasi-structural. The two aspects the international and the national were in fact related. With the sudden disappearance of the Cold War setting which to a great extent had structured Italian politics, degeneration could no longer be ignored.

The fall of the Berlin Wall produced a paradoxical outcome: in the abstract, the collapse of the Soviet Union should have marked the triumph of the parties (DC and, to a certain extent, the PSI) that had been historically opposed to the PCI, pushing the latter to a dramatic and complete reassessment of its history, if not total disappearance (as happened with communist parties elsewhere in Europe); in real terms, however, almost the opposite happened.



The founding elements of the Italian political system evaporated quickly: Christian Democracy, the fundamental axis of national government from 1944 to 1994 and the quintessential anti-communist force, quite simply disappeared. The PSI collapsed, seeing its leader, Craxi, escaping into exile in Tunisia to avoid prison. The Communist party changed its name, and then divided into several left-wing parties. The party system collapsed, parliament was defunct, and in 1992 a technocrat government took over. Virtually every day saw the public announcement of another corruption scandal. Operation Clean Hands sought to tackle the systemic economic and political corruption and the trials that followed turned into public spectacles. The period from 1992 to 1994 is rightly referred to as the 'earthquake years'.

In 1994, however, a new electoral law was passed, and the 1994 elections gave life to the new political parties that would come to dominate what was then seen as the 'Second' Republic. The anti-Mafia movement lost much of its fervor, and Operation Clean Hands faded out. Regionalism in the north was given new political expression with the formation of the Northern League, which posed a radically new threat to the idea of national unity. The former neo-fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Italian Social Movement) transformed itself into the *Alleanza Nazionale* (National Alliance), which in 1994 entered a coalition government led by media tycoon and political newcomer Silvio Berlusconi, leader of *Forza Italia*.

The neo-fascist presence in Berlusconi's government was a watershed in postwar politics, marking the first neo- or post-fascist movement to participate in Italy's government since the war. In the mid-1990, the *Alleanza Nazionale* moved to distance itself from its fascist past; hence the change of the party's name. This official negation of the party's fascist heritage, once a source of pride for party leaders and grassroots members, was seen as the precondition for the drafting of former neo-fascists into a center-right coalition capable of occupying the mainstream of Italian political life. However, the fact remains that Italy was now governed by parties without roots in anti-fascism (on which Italy's constitutional legitimacy was based)—and the importance of this fact can hardly be overestimated. This new political situation did not alone cause historical revisionism and the heated debates over national identity that came to characterize public debates throughout the 1990s, but it certainly had much to do with it.

### *Historical Revisionism and World War II*

The crisis that hit Italy in the early 1990s was not only political–institutional and structural. It involved the symbolic underpinning of Italy as a national, democratic community; it also involved how Italy could re-establish a modern political culture equipped to face and deal with the challenges of the post-Cold War era. Thus—as we have explained elsewhere—from the early 1990s Italy plunged into a period of political and historical self-assessment.<sup>2</sup>

The time had come to reassess and to question the foundation of political legitimacy that had sustained the Italian Republic and its competing political cultures.<sup>3</sup> Political and public debates from the early 1990s focused intensively on the country's identity, the notion of nation and how to interpret it, on the country's historical past and how to link it meaningfully to the present.

Discussion over nationhood and the reassessment of the past and particularly of WWII was a European phenomenon in this historical juncture.<sup>4</sup> But the Italian setting was at the same time unique and in some ways closer to the experience of former Eastern European countries, where the debate on the past took place within the dramatic context of regime changes. And also in Italy, the return to the past became tied to foundational debates over the democratic roots of Italy as a modern nation, and the cultural–ethical roots from which democracy could be reconstructed.

Historical revisionism of WWII and Fascism was not a sudden event. The famous Italian historian, Renzo De Felice had embarked upon his revisionist task from the 1970s. During the 1980s the moral and historical fixtures of Fascism/anti-Fascism had started to lose its solidity. In his analysis of an exhibition of fascist economy and industrial expansion held at the Coliseum in September–November 1984: *The Italian Economy Between the Wars 1919–1939*, Mason concluded that the event signaled

the general and vital fact that the political struggle over the interpretation of national history in Italy seems to have entered a new and confused stage, a stage in which old fixed point of reference (progressive/reaction; authority/democracy; nationalism/internationalism) are being eroded.<sup>5</sup>

It was this opening of the nation's historical archives that would take new and dramatic developments as the Cold War came to an end. The debates were particularly dramatic during 1995. It was the fiftieth anniversary of the collapse of Salò, the death of the Duce and the end

of WWII. De Felice added to the already febrile atmosphere by launching a brief but devastating critique of the ‘myth’ of the Resistance in a book entitled *Rosso e Nero* (‘Red and Black’). The book was written for a mass audience and became a best seller within days of its publication. De Felice attacked the *vulgata resistenziale* (the ‘resistential vulgate’), which represented the core element of anti-Fascism and the legitimization of the First Republic.<sup>6</sup> De Felice argued that since the end of the war, Italy’s political and intellectual class had perpetuated the false myth of Italy as the anti-fascist nation par excellence. It had done so through a particular construction of the memory of the war and the fight against Fascism, propagating the idea of anti-Fascism as a political and moral virtue shared by the whole of the Italian people. This anti-fascist orthodoxy, he claimed, had dominated both Italian historiography and the cultural life of the nation since the end of WWII. In De Felice’s view, the net effect of this myth had been both to obscure the actual history of Fascism and the war, but also to allow many decidedly undemocratic elements (fascists and communists) to hide behind the mask of Italy’s so-called anti-fascist republic.

Historical revisionists now started to emphasize Mussolini’s role in Italy’s modernization, Fascism’s advanced package of social policies; its ‘good and benevolent colonialism’ and the Duce’s hesitancy and reluctance to introduce the racial laws. Historians started to document how Mussolini had actually relied on a wide-ranging consensus throughout his regime. The Resistance came under scrutiny. It became more and more common to speak of a civil war referring to 1943–1945, a claim which until then had been argued solely by the neo-fascist Right. However controversial some of these revisionist theses were, they had the positive effect of producing a more balanced and less hagiographic view of the Resistance among historians. The 1991 book by Claudio Pavone, a historian with strong leftist and anti-fascist credentials, was a turning point in this respect.<sup>7</sup> It made the idea of the Resistance as a civil war legitimate for the Left. It is now widely accepted that Italy was a divided country during the regime years, as it was divided when faced with its fall and collapse.

Alternative and repressed stories of WWII came to the surface, contradicting the images and narratives that for half a century had been the official memory of the Italian Republic. Historical experiences emerged from individual and marginalized memories and slowly made their way into mainstream historiography and national collective memory. Such repressed stories included the fate of ‘the boys of Salò’, the young Italians who had fought alongside the Nazi and against the forces of the Resistance

in the Salò republic from September 1943. Lay people and historians alike began to ask to the motives, ideals, politics, and reasons that had animated the fascist fighters. They were human beings after all. And in their own memories, *they* had fought for Italy. New stories about the violence within and among partisans of different colors and ideology came to the fore. This involved particular focus on the red violence of communists against other partisans. The whole role played by the Communist party and communist partisans in the Resistance came up for debate. The journalist Giampaolo Pansa published researches on the violence committed by communist partisans against fascists in the so-called triangle of death in the Emilia region.<sup>8</sup>

Historical research also started to engage with the behavior of Italian soldiers on the battlefield, not only during the war (on the Eastern Front or in Greece), but also during the colonial period. In Abyssinia, Italians had deployed gas against local populations. The mythology of Italians as *brava gente* was fundamentally shattered.<sup>9</sup> The question of the *foibe*, which up until the 1990s had only been debated among exile Istrians now became a national issue.<sup>10</sup>

These narratives flew in the face of traditional Leftist-national discourses concerning the Resistance. From 1994, WWII commemorations became contested, and a new geography of divided memory emerged, from the local level, within single towns, all the way to the national level. From the mid-1990s, WWII had once again become a war, now fought by every segment of public opinion, in public gatherings, in coffee bar discussions, and increasingly within the organs of mass media.

These revisionist theses had the crucial effect of writing into history subjects and segments of the population that had felt outside legitimate history. There is little doubt that this confrontation over WWII memories was a necessary one. The prolonged effects of WWII divisions had lain dormant. The very fact that they could not be discussed openly during the Cold War period effectively meant that Italians had lived in what was in fact a repressed yet omnipresent prolonged civil war, breathing under the thin surface of official history. To be able to treat these unhealed wounds in open confrontation, however painful, was a necessary first step. But to go forward, something was also needed to heal the cracks that had burst into the open. Once again, and not surprisingly, this involved a leap into history.

### *Regained Nationhood and the Return of the Risorgimento*

In preceding chapters, we have analyzed how the Risorgimento established as a reservoir of symbols and ‘strata’ of archeological layers that were continuously employed toward an understanding of the present and how to move Italy forwards. We also argued that from the late 1950s the Risorgimento lost much of its popular and political appeal, and not surprisingly: Italy entered a period of relative stability, and to invoke heroic deeds of revolutionary figures suddenly seemed less appealing and natural than in previous periods of deep crisis and dramatic upheavals.

In fact, when the Risorgimento *was* taken up in subsequent discourse from the late 1960s onwards, it was often tied to new forms of social critique. For the first regional elections in 1970, the Italian Communist Party launched a new kind of debate about the regional nature of the country; in a documentary used as an element in the electoral campaign, *Why the Region?*, the viewer is taken to a voyage through Italy, a voyage that starts from the *scoglio di Quarto*, the place nearby Genoa where the Expedition of the Thousand took off. The documentary, however, has lost any trait of heroic or mythical gestures: the Risorgimento simply denotes the beginning of a new historical period, with all the social consequences this has involved for each of Italy’s regions. In this sense, Garibaldi’s troops are turned into a narrative about the ordinary Italian and his life struggles.<sup>11</sup> This general de-mythologization could also involve a questioning of the very idea of continuity between the new Italy and the Risorgimento. One emblematic example can be invoked here: the movie, *Bronte, cronaca di un massacro*, directed in 1972 by Florestano Vancini. The film is an extremely critical representation of Garibaldi’s Thousand and their military acts. The film narrates what is here seen as the Garibaldian *repression* of the poor peasants of the South. Garibaldi and his generals are practically turned into war criminals against the ‘people’.

This fading out of the Risorgimento would take a completely new turn from the 1990s, and the shift of perspective—while articulated in different ways by different segments of the political parties and civil society—was best epitomized with the memory politics that developed during the presidency of Carlo Azeglio Ciampi.<sup>12</sup> From the beginning of his presidency (1999–2006), Ciampi self-consciously adopted a cultural and political strategy that sought to strengthen Italian national identity and a popular feeling of national unity. He tried to represent and re-articulate an overarching imagery of the nation, tied to the challenges of the ongoing

political transition and to the challenges of the new historical era. He did so through the careful elaboration of a more inclusive narrative that would serve to overcome Italy's 'divided memory'.<sup>13</sup> It was in this larger context that he returned to the Risorgimento as a founding moment of the nation.

*National Memory and the Politics of Reconciliation  
During the Ciampi Presidency*

Ciampi's presidency was important in more than one way. Ciampi was seen as someone who could reignite the reform process of the political system and bring the construction of a majority-based and bipolar democracy to a conclusion.<sup>14</sup> Ciampi thus incarnated that transition process that had started by the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the party political system that ensued. In fact, Ciampi had entered Italian politics *exactly* as the party political system collapsed. He became prime minister of Italy from April 1993 to May 1994, during the most intense period of the transition from the First to the Second Republic. He led a so-called 'technocrat government'. The priorities of that government were extremely pragmatic and mostly non-ideological: economic recovery, reduction of the public debt and public deficit, keeping inflation under control, and initiatives toward privatization. The aim was simply to bring Italy forwards, also by creating a new electoral law, and thus paving the way for a new round of general elections, in order to turn to a 'new normality' in 1994. Ciampi was generally perceived to comply with this task, and was thus in an ideal position to establish himself as a guarantor. From 1996 to May 1999 Ciampi served as minister of the Treasury, in the governments of Romano Prodi and Massimo D'Alema, and was influential in Italy's adoption of the euro.

Ciampi's interpretation of his presidential period focused on symbolic unification—on what time and again he defined *il lavoro della memoria* (e.g. the 'work on memory'). He had been a crucial figure in the institutional reform process; he now would focus on the healing of memory that could sustain patriotic nationalism and civic society, the cultural mold of institutional democracy.

The larger narrative offered by Ciampi in his speeches, symbolic acts, and in the ritual and commemoration he invented or reactivated needed to emphasize, jointly, the Risorgimento, the Resistance, the end of WWII, the writing of the Italian Constitution, all tightly connected to the ideal of national unity. He would often use identical expressions and words to

emphasize the continuity between the Risorgimento and the Resistance, leading into the republican period and, crucially, the Constitution—whose spirit was inscribed backwards in history. The Constitution had been sustained by the very same commitment, hopes, ideals, and moral values as the Risorgimento. These foundational principles had in turn been revitalized by the experience of WWII and by the Resistance, understood again as second Risorgimento: the moral and symbolic heir of the Risorgimento, and the breeding ground for the new Italy. In September 2003, celebrating in Rome the anniversary of the beginning of the Resistance, Ciampi said:

The Constitution of 1948 is a valid document, alive and vital, not only because being written with intelligence by eminent politicians and jurists, but because it has a spirit: this is the spirit of the Risorgimento which has lived through the drama of the dictatorship and the catharsis of 1943–1945. It has the civil passion which only the profound and lived sharing of values matured by Italians over centuries of history can generate.<sup>15</sup>

Ciampi's memory narrative also accomplished something that should not be underestimated: the attempt to reconcile the ideological divides that sustained the reproduction of Italy as a divided nation. This attempt at national reconciliation was summed up in one of Ciampi's slogans: 'what unites us is more than what divides us', first pronounced during his highly symbolic 2000 New Year's speech. Ciampi and his advisors consciously turned local diversity into a national resource.<sup>16</sup> During the Ciampi years, the notion of *Patria* was metaphorically constructed as a vital plant with countless roots. Ciampi believed in variable geometry of national identity: a unique identity enriched and enhanced by the participation in the European project and by the manifold articulations of *Italia delle cento città* ('Italy of the hundred cities'). Ciampi also proposed a carefully balanced elaboration of a more inclusive narrative of WWII—an inclusive narrative that would allow every single Italian to come to terms with his or her WWII experience and legacy with an intact love of nation. Ciampi's strategy on this decisive point was clear: he confronted all historical moments, including Fascism, by bringing them under a larger 'protective umbrella' of historical continuity and an overarching set of values. Such a 'deep' narrative saw the historical experience of Italian civilization as part of an unbroken path, leading all the way from the Roman Empire up to the modern Republic of Italy. On July 25, 2000 during an official

meeting with the Italian ambassadors abroad he stated that ‘Italianness is the consciousness to belong to an unbroken line of history and civilization, marked by the legacy of ancient Rome, of Christianity and of Humanism’.<sup>17</sup>

This systematic rediscovery of the Risorgimento continued with Ciampi’s successor Giorgio Napolitano (2006–2015). The year 2011 was the 150th anniversary of the formation of the modern Italian state, and not unlike the 1911 celebrations, Italy of the present was still imagined as a Risorgimento, a renewal and redemption of the past. The old litanies of disappointments, regenerations and re-creations, and failures after great expectations resurfaced. In the year in which its triumphs were celebrated, its shortcomings remarked, its final outcome (the Unification) blamed for the country’s woes—and its significance for the future once again debated—the Risorgimento resurged once again as a point of departure and a persistent, if also contested, point of reference. The anniversary encouraged politicians, historians and opinion makers to wonder which of the Risorgimento’s symbolic, cultural, and ideological legacies is living or dead; and their discussions about the nature of Risorgimento nationalism connected with debates about the values and principles that should define Italy as a community today and tomorrow.

The work of memory that took place from the 1990s was in many ways effective. The seven years of Ciampi’s presidency certainly did become part of a change in attitude toward the popular usage of national symbolism. Italians have started to use their flags again, and the national anthem is now taught in schools all over the country.

### POSTMODERN ITALY?

Throughout this book we have positioned the Italian historical experience toward the larger modernity debates. We have argued this as an analytical strategy that evidently does not imply to be ‘for’ or ‘against’ modernity, or to praise or criticize Italian developments. In the words of Emilio Gentile, what is needed is an ‘awareness of the tragically contradictory presence of modernity in contemporary history, viewed with critical rationality and not the illusory pretense of identifying modernity and the meaning of contemporary history to fit one’s personal ideological preferences’.<sup>18</sup>

In the last two decades, scholars, and intellectuals—in their attempt to capture and explain Italy’s historical–political trajectory—have often resorted to the rather imprecise concept of ‘post-democracy’ or



‘post-modernity’. Mark Doidge has recently talked about ‘postmodern populism’, a sort of postmodern approach to politics embodied and epitomized by the figure of Silvio Berlusconi. In a similar vein, John Foot has highlighted the ‘post-modern elements’ of Berlusconi’s Forza Italia coming to power in 1994. Also the experience of the Northern League or the more recent success of the Five Star movement led by the former actor Beppe Grillo have led scholars such as Marc Lazar, Paul Ginsborg and others to define Italy as a kind of ‘post-democracy’.<sup>19</sup> In the words of political theorist Jan-Werner Müller ‘nowhere else has a current of thought that one might broadly call “postmodern political disenchantment” been as consistently articulated as in Italy’.<sup>20</sup> Even Antonio Negri to provide just one last salient example has insisted on the ‘post-modern’ character of Italian politics.<sup>21</sup>

One must notice a deep irony here: the very same authors who have tended to see Italy as running behind modernity now picture Italy as running ahead of it. The Italy ‘which was never fully modern’ suddenly becomes positioned as the very same country that has moved most visibly beyond the modern. The problem with this extremely popular diagnosis is of course that it once again posits Italy within a teleological understanding of a generalized modernization process, which Italy is supposed to exemplify in its own awkward and funny way. The temporalizing strategy is still at work.

Also with respect to an understanding of the present, it seems that Italian developments can best be understood with the analytical framework of multiple modernities that we have proposed throughout this book. Italian developments cannot be explained away by referring to the country’s lack of ‘mature’ modernity, but must be understood through the prism of the tensions and ambivalences of modernity—tensions that will always be confronted and ‘answered’ in culture-specific ways, in Italy as elsewhere.

In *this* sense, Italian developments may indeed point to some more widespread patterns. As Marc Lazar has rightly argued, ‘instead of considering Italy as an anomaly the idea is to think at the political mutation of this country as a laboratory of a general change of European democracies’.<sup>22</sup> Italy can be approached as a laboratory in which new forms of politics have been tested and distilled. Some of these Italian political experiments in the last two decades have had a significance and relevance well beyond Italy’s borders, foreshadowing democratic developments and challenges of democracy in Europe and beyond.

Let us in the remainder of this chapter provide some examples of where and how Italian developments may be said, for better or worse, to be ‘paving the way’.

## WHEN ITALY PAVES THE WAY

### *Politics and Technocracy*

One crucial aspect of political change across modern democracies is what has been widely recognized as a technocratic turn in policy making, which implies the strengthening of ‘governments’ against parliament.

In this respect as well, Italy has not caught up with other parliamentary democracies, but has in fact forefronted a trend, arguably even anticipating new forms of democracy.<sup>23</sup> As early as in 1992, at the onset of the ‘earthquake years’, the government of Italy was put into the hands of the socialist Giuliano Amato, whose cabinet included non-political technocrats. In the following years, Italy has experienced a number of technocrat-led governments, from the cabinet led by Ciampi, 1993–1994 (the first nonpolitician and non-MPs to occupy the role of prime minister), to those led by Lamberto Dini (1995–1996) and by Mario Monti (2011–2013).

In recent years, facing the recurrent crisis of the EU and its member states, the ‘technocratic’ solution has been invoked many times. It has also been effectively pursued in the Czech Republic (2009–2010), Hungary (2009), and Greece (2011–2012). Observers and experts have also argued that technocratic solutions could become more common, perhaps even desirable under certain circumstances. Sure, critics insist that technocrat rule is essentially undemocratic and can serve only as a short-term fix. Yet, technocratic governments can arguably deliver what elected governments sometimes fail to deliver: transcend political divisions, calm the financial markets, and implement unpopular policies that may result painful in the short term, but perhaps necessary in the long term. However one may wish to judge technocratic solutions, the fact remains that Italy is the country in the most developed part of the world which has most systematically experimented with such a solution.

### *Personal Politics: Berlusconi and Beyond*

Other party-political experiments in the immediate years of post-Cold War Italy that have foreshadowed democratic developments include the

transformation of the neo-fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* into *Alleanza Nazionale*, the emergence of the Northern League, and above all else Silvio Berlusconi's 'personal party' *Forza Italia*.<sup>24</sup>

Recent studies, mixing qualitative and quantitative methods, have demonstrated that the process of presidentialization and personalization of democratic government has generated a shift of power and responsibility from the collective to the monocratic. The mediatization of political life has played a crucial role in this transformation in which parliamentary democracy is perhaps departing from its traditional forms. And when it comes to the rise of the 'individual party', starting from Berlusconi to the current prime minister Matteo Renzi, Italy seems a bit more advanced than most Western democracies, blazing the trail in three fundamental aspects: leader selection, party organization, and governmental activities.<sup>25</sup>

More specifically, the *berlusconismo* is a fusion of populism, leader-ism, familism, 'affarismo', immorality, and anti politic-ism. It is in fact a process of deformation or transformation of democracy that has supranational implications. It is a political phenomenon that sees financial-economic lobbies exercising political pressure and trying (or managing in the case of Berlusconi) to conquer directly the political power. In this way, such lobbies empty in both practice and substance the democratic system—or the democratic system as known until then—that remains intact in its veneer, in its exterior shape. It is in the end a sort of 'parasitism of democracy'.

Now, it is awfully tempting to think about a figure like Berlusconi as a kind of feudal lord and yet another proof of Italy's backwardness: a relapse into an old-style, premodern *gemeinschaft* where everything can be solved by magic of personal charm, a not-so-divine comedy. Yet the figure of Berlusconi is rather made possible by a more general hybridization of the modern, that is, the coexistence of forms and cultures of modernity, and a highly 'progressive' use of forms of 'archaism'.<sup>26</sup> In this way, *berlusconismo* has become paradigmatic at the European level—perhaps providing Italy with a primacy at the world scene (to the embarrassment of a good deal of Italians, it goes without saying).

As Paolo Mancini has noted, the end of the twentieth century has been characterized by a 'new style of politics' that has transformed the assumptions and practices of politics as hitherto known. In this momentous shift and under the weight of structural constraints, politics has been deeply marked by the politicians' need to master the media and public relations techniques; and Berlusconi represents, following Mancini, 'the most extreme version of this mastery of the media as a political tool'.

The crucial point here, as Mancini also recognizes, is that this outstanding case of skillful politician-media manipulator is not an exception. Quite the opposite, Berlusconi has had his imitators, including Tony Blair, Bill Clinton and, chief among them, the former French president Nicolas Sarkozy.<sup>27</sup> French sociologist Pierre Musso has talked of ‘Sarkoberlusconisme’ to pin down similarities existing between Sarkozy and Berlusconi. This includes the way they took political decisions, the development of their policies and the relationship with the citizens.

Sarkoberlusconisme is a political phenomenon, even if it assembles, or distorts, methods drawn from marketing, business management and television... it mixes together the culture of business and the culture of the Church within a very strange combination of glorification of competitiveness and moralization of capitalism.<sup>28</sup>

In short, Berlusconi and his political style can be seen—and should be seen by scholars of media studies and political science—not as an ‘exception’ but rather as a ‘prototype’, a new possible model of politics that has emerged in Italy and that may become more important in the future, in Italy again or in other countries.<sup>29</sup> As the deputy editor of *El País*, Luis Bassets has noted, highlighting the exemplary and trailblazing experience of *berlusconismo*,

The malign figure of Berlusconi has been for the Italian and European politics what Attila has been with his Huns: he has modified the landscape of politics and mass media. As the Catalan writer and journalist Antoni Puigverd has written, ‘The imago mundi of popular classes is now that of *Telecinco*’.<sup>30</sup>

But Italy is already beyond Berlusconi. Recently, a new political animal has stormed the Italian (and European) political scene: the Five Star Movement.<sup>31</sup> Criticizing representative democracy and endorsing direct and/or deliberative and web-based democracy, the movement rapidly gained the front stage with the support of citizens—in particular young people—disaffected, disillusioned and frustrated with traditional parties and politicians. Traditional politicians have tried to dismiss the movement as an expression of ‘anti-politics’ or populism—and scholars have sometimes used the same ‘hazy’ and somewhat imprecise concept of populism.<sup>32</sup> Observers, commentators, and scholars maintain that the movement shares the main feature of the personal party model—as Berlusconi’s *Forza Italia*.

To be sure, the Five Star Movement would not exist without Beppe Grillo. Yet, rather than a force embodying a political or antipolitical model along the line of past experiences—the Five Star Movement seems rather a mirror but also a consequence of the crisis of representative democracy, a crisis of both mass parties and ‘audience’ democracy (the Berlusconi model).<sup>33</sup> It is rather a laboratory, an attempt to re-articulate the relationship among citizens and between citizens and political elites—which is in fact the most serious challenge faced in most European societies, not to mention the EU itself. In this vein, as Ilvo Diamanti has rightly noted, the Five Star Movement

seem ... to be an effective summing-up of all the tendencies and political tensions of the last 20 years. Grillo’s movement is a ‘laboratory’ that can help us to identify and understand the challenges that await the representative democracies of Europe. ... it is a catalogue of the changes taking place in the party-based systems and in the relationship between citizens and institutions. Such a catalogue should be useful both to those who study, and to those who practice, politics.<sup>34</sup>

Also here Italy is paving the way. ‘Non-party’ movements existed elsewhere, but Italy was the first country in the world where such a movement became the largest political force (as indeed happened with the 2013 elections). This watershed result immediately inspired similar movements across Europe such as *Podemos* in Spain and *Syriza* in Greece.

### *Political Thought and the ‘New Left’*

The last two decades have witnessed the rising hegemony of radical Italian political and social theory, renamed ‘Italian theory’ *tout court* within Anglo-American academia. The very expression, *Italian theory*, is in fact an invention of Anglo-American scholars, exactly as was the case for a previous definition of *French theory* (which very broadly referred to the work of Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari, and Baudrillard). From London to California, the names of Antonio Negri and Paolo Virno, Christian Marazzi and Sandro Mezzadra, Maurizio Lazzarato, Franco Berardi, and not least Giorgio Agamben have become primary references in academic publications.

The first official breach of *Italian theory* across the North American intellectual and academic *milieu* was *Radical Thought in Italy*, edited

by Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno, which collected the essays of a group of Italian Marxist and post-workerist intellectuals. The idea of the book was to provide platforms for thinking about radical democratic politics in the post-Cold War era, which could speak not only to the Italian situation but also to a broadly international context, making Italy the model and the trailblazer for revolutionary politics and practices of the time. In the opening essay of the volume, significantly titled *Introduction: Laboratory Italy*, Hardt the coauthor with Antonio Negri of *Empire*,<sup>35</sup> wrote:

In Marx's time revolutionary thought seemed to rely on three axes: German philosophy, English economics, and French politics. In our time the axes have shifted so that, if we remain within the same Euro-American framework, revolutionary thinking might be said to draw on French philosophy, U.S. economics, and Italian politics. This is not to say that Italian revolutionary movements have met only with great successes in recent decades; in fact, their defeats have been almost as spectacular as those suffered by the French proletariat in the nineteenth century. I take Italian revolutionary politics as model, rather, because it has constituted a kind of laboratory for experimentation in new forms of political thinking that help us conceive a revolutionary practice in our times.<sup>36</sup>

The ideas of the *Italian theory*—which were inspired by the radical thinking of the 1960s and 1970s (as we discussed in Chap. 8)—but also the some of the insights of Gramsci have been at the forefront on the debate on globalization and empire, as indeed in the work of Antonio Negri.

But also other Italian radical thinkers have paved the way for further international works and discussions such as the new potential of cyberspace and cyber-time (Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, one of the protagonists of the 1977 movement in Bologna), the autonomous forms of labor that are organized and reproduced outside of directly capitalist control (Sergio Bologna), the relationship between social movements and the economic strategies of flexible production.

In short, in a time of great crisis for Left politics all over Europe, Italy continues to offer to movements, parties, and forces of that side of the political spectrum, inspiration, insights, and avenues to explore.

*Political Thought as 'Weak Thought'*

In addition to the 'Italian theory', Italian developments have paved the way for the articulation of so-called 'weak thought'. This is a sort of 'political disenchantment' formulated and codified in Italy, through the work of Sergio Vattimo, in great detail and before the term was elaborated anywhere else in the world.<sup>37</sup> The 'weak thought' condensed and expressed the political disenchantment—a deeply cynical attitude toward the political system and political actors—that has become widespread in the representative democracies across the globe. It might be seen as a reaction to the ineptitude of post-Cold War democracies to instill hopes and passions in citizens, and as a reaction, despair, and disillusionment after the expectations and hopes raised by mass political action and radical politics in the 1960s and 1970s had failed. Yet, as Jan-Werner Müller has written:

Vattimo's thought clearly transcends its local Italian or even European context: the attempt at turning Heidegger into a 'philosopher of democracy' and at a reconciliation of secularised religion and democracy in particular are not simply ingenuous ways of compensating for political defeats. They are efforts at downplaying political-philosophical conflicts about 'truth' while holding practical political aspirations of a broadly social democratic kind constant.<sup>38</sup>

*Immigrant Literature, Culture, and Post-colonialism*

Another field in which Italy might be seen as a prototype and trailblazer of a more general phenomena—linked to the deep and complex socio-demographic transformations which are investing Italy and Europe—is what is now defined the *Italophone migrant literature*.

Categorizing *Italophone* migrant writers is a very difficult task because they are heterogeneous when compared to migrant writers in France or England, whose place of origin is mostly defined by these countries' former colonies. But exactly for this reason, the notion of 'Italophone' writing has the potential to move beyond the postcolonial genre and toward a genuine 'world-travelling' literature, capturing experiences of globalization better than elsewhere. In Italy, migrant writers are Romanians, Somali, Tunisians, Moroccans, Albanians, Iranians, Russians, Brazilians, Togolians, and so on. As Julio Monteiro Martins, a Brazilian writer, explains:

Italy didn't have a post-colonial literature as rich as the one in France or in England. Maybe it missed an important literary flux but maybe this has left an open door and has made Italy the center of migration literature in Europe. From what I have read, the number of writers is similar but nowhere else they come from all over the world. Maybe the fact that Italy didn't possess a post-colonial literature created this world traveling literature?<sup>39</sup>

### *Economy and Family Business*

The economic sphere is no doubt the field in which the 'backwardness' of Italy has been most consistently highlighted. More specifically, the family business aspect of Italian economy has been for decades been seen as another example of Italian backwardness.<sup>40</sup> The concept of family capitalism or family business has been used, particularly in the USA, to explain a deviation from some notion of an ideal-typical American path to capitalism of the kind best described by Alfred Chandler and David Landes, and therefore also invoked to explain economic failures everywhere in the world.<sup>41</sup> Italian capitalism, in particular, has been often described in terms of 'amoral familism', borrowing the term from Edward Banfield.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, it is all too tempting to ascribe every fault and failure of Italy (economic, political, social, cultural) to 'amoral familism'.

Yet, family companies have not just survived the ups and downs of global capitalism, but have in fact flourished, particularly in the years of the economic downturn after 2008. They thus have shown a remarkable robustness in responding to the challenges of twenty-first-century global capitalism, arguably better than large corporations and the management fads of the day. This had lead scholars to consider that many assumptions about the nature and characteristic of economic modernization. As noted recently by *The Economist*, 'classical sociologists and classical economists both predicted that family business would retreat as societies became more rational and bureaucratic... But that orthodoxy is crumbling in the face of growing evidence that family dynasties can do well in even the most sophisticated modern societies'.<sup>43</sup>

After the 2008 crisis, the success of big, medium, and small Italian companies in the USA—marked by the family business aspect and form of organization—has provided examples of economic development and performances alternative to the strategies that most American business books and schools describe, recommend, and teach. Only the future will of course reveal whether different (Italian) patterns to globalization



exist, and where these patterns may represent deep and enduring forms of social and economic organization. As for now, there seems to be an Italian route to global capitalism.

## NOTES

1. Gianfranco Pasquino, 'Teorie della transizione e analisi del sistema politico: il caso italiano', *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, 31, no. 2 (2001): 313–27: 317; Leonardo Morlino, 'The Impossible Transition and the New Unstable Mix: Italy, 1992–2012', *Comparative European Politics* 11, no. 3 (2013): 337–59; Umberto Gentiloni Silveri, 'Italy 1990–2014: the transition that never happened', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 20, no. 2 (2015): 171–5.
2. Bjørn Thomassen and Rosario Forlenza, 'The Pasts of the Present: World War II Memories and the Construction of Political Legitimacy in Post-Cold War Italy,' in Christian Karner and Bram Mertens (eds.), *The Use and Abuse of Memory: Interpreting World War II in Contemporary European Politics* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2013), 137–54.
3. We can here only refer to some of the more important works of the 1990s which dealt with the questions of the nation, *Patria*, national identity, and *italianità*; Gian Enrico Rusconi, *Se cessiamo di essere una nazione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993); Ruggiero Romano, *Paese Italia: Venti secoli d'identità* (Rome: Donzelli, 1994); Saverio Vertone (ed.), *La cultura degli italiani* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994); Silvio Lanaro, *Patria. Circumnavigazione di un'idea controversa* (Venice: Marsilio, 1996); Mario Isnenghi (ed.), *I luoghi della memoria*, 3 vols. (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1996–1997); Remo Bodei, *Il noi diviso. Ethos e idee dell'Italia repubblicana* (Turin: Einaudi, 1998); Ernesto Galli della Loggia, *L'identità italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998); Aldo Schiavone, *Italiani senza Italia. Storia e identità* (Turin: Einaudi, 1998); for a useful discussion see also Silvana Patriarca, 'Italian neo-patriotism: Debating national identity in the 1990s', *Modern Italy* 6, no. 1 (2001): 21–34. One of the most debated argument was the 'death' of the *Patria*; Ernesto Galli della Loggia, *La morte della patria. La crisi dell'idea di nazione tra Resistenza, antifascismo e Repubblica* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1996). Certainly, Galli della Loggia's argument of the 'death' of the *Patria* is not to be dismissed completely. Yet, his attack on the resistance-dominated historiography must certainly be put into the context of the crisis of the early 1990s: the evidence for the death of the nation had been there all along, but in the early 1990s time were evidently more mature for the development of such an argument. More importantly, Galli della Loggia's intervention—with its insistence on the imagined ideal of what 'the nation' could or should have been, had this or that happened—

- suffers from the same teleological tendency that affects the work denouncing Italy's backwardness; for further details, see Rosario Forlenza, 'Bewilderment and Recomposition: September 8, 1943 and the Liminal Origins of Italian Democracy,' *International Political Anthropology* 4, no. 2 (2011): 133–57.
4. The literature is extensive; for an insightful take see Tony Judt 'The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe', in István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt (eds.), *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) 293–323; see also the various essays in Jan-Werner Müller (ed.) *Memory and Power in Postwar Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
  5. Tim Mason, 'The Great Economic History Show', *History Workshop Journal* 21 (1986): 3–36: 20.
  6. Renzo De Felice, *Rosso e nero*, ed. P. Chessa (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 1995).
  7. Claudio Pavone, *Una guerra civile. Saggio storico sulla moralità della Resistenza* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1991); Pavone's book has been recently translated into English as *A Civil War: A History of Italian Resistance*, trans. P. Levy, preface S. Pugliese (New York and London: Verso, 2014).
  8. Giampaolo Pansa, *Il sangue dei vinti* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 2003).
  9. Rosario Forlenza, 'Sacrificial Memory and Political Legitimacy: Reliving and Remembering World War II', *History & Memory* 24, no. 2 (2012): 73–116: 83–5; Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani, brava gente?* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2005); David Bidussa, *Il mito del bravo italiano* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1994); Claudio Fogu, 'Italiani brava gente: the Legacy of Fascist Historical Culture on Italian Politics of Memory', in Richard Lebov, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu (eds.), *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 147–76.
  10. The *foibe* are deep cracks scattered all around the *karst* land of the Istria region where—according to some rough calculations—500–700 Italians (all numbers argued by historians have been contested, especially by Istrian Italians who see the *foibe* as core symbol of their escape from Yugoslavia) were killed by Tito's partisans closely cooperating with the Italian communists; on this see Bjørn Thomassen, 'Italy from below and from the outside-in: an Istrian life story across the Italo-Yugoslav border', *Acta Histriae* 14, no. 1 (2006): 155–78. See also Giampaolo Valdevit (ed.), *Foibe. Il peso del passato. Venezia Giulia 1943–1945* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1997); Raoul Pupo and Roberto Spazzali, *Foibe* (Milan: Mondadori, 2003); Guido Crainz, *Il dolore e l'esilio* (Rome: Donzelli, 2005); Guido Franzinetti, 'The rediscovery of the Istrian Foibe', *JGKS, History and*

- Culture of South Eastern Europe* 8 (2006): 85–98; Gaia Baracetti, ‘Foibe, Nationalism, Revenge and Ideology in Venezia Giulia and Istria, 1943–5’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 44, no. 4 (2009): 657–74.
11. *Perché la regione. Viaggio nell’Italia da regionalizzare*, duration: 34 minutes; Archivio audiovisivo del movimento operaio e democratico.
  12. For further details, see Bjørn Thomassen and Rosario Forlenza ‘Re-narrating Italy, reinventing the nation: assessing the presidency of Ciampi,’ *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 16, no. 5 (2011): 705–25; Rosario Forlenza, *La Repubblica del Presidente: Gli anni di Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, 1999–2006* (Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 2011).
  13. Giovanni Contini, *La memoria divisa* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1997); John Foot, *Italy’s Divided Memory* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
  14. Gianfranco Pasquino, ‘The election of the tenth President of the Italian Republic’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 3, no 4 (1999): 405–15.
  15. <http://www.quirinale.it/qrnw/statico/expresidenti/Ciampi/dinamico/discorso.asp?id=22929> (last accessed: November 14, 2015).
  16. This attempt did of course bring Ciampi some criticism from the Northern League; but even that critique was less pronounced than one could have expected.
  17. <http://www.quirinale.it/qrnw/statico/expresidenti/Ciampi/dinamico/discorso.asp?id=12740> (last accessed: November 20, 2015).
  18. Emilio Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology, 1918–1925*, trans. R. L. Miller (New York: Enigma, 2013) 385.
  19. Mark Doidge, *Football Italia: Italian Football in an Age of Globalization* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 38–44; John Foot, *Modern Italy* (New York, 2014), 217; Paul Ginsborg, *Silvio Berlusconi: Television, Power and Patrimony* (London and New York: Verso, 2004); Marc Lazar, *Democrazia alla prova: L’Italia dopo Berlusconi* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2007). But see also Sergio Fabbrini and Marc Lazar, ‘Still a difficult democracy? Italy between populist challenges and institutional weakness’, *Contemporary Italian Politics* 5, no. 2 (2013): 106–12.
  20. Jan-Werner Müller, ‘The Paradoxes of Postwar Italian Political Thought’, *History of European Ideas* 39, no. 1 (2013): 79–102: 82.
  21. Antonio Negri, ‘Italy’s post-modern politics’, *Le Monde Diplomatique* (English edition), August 5, 2002.
  22. Marc Lazar, ‘Texting Italian Democracy’, *Comparative European Politics* 11, no. 3 (2013): 317–36: 317 (abstract).
  23. Scholars have suggested that this previously unthinkable possibility must be indeed thought about; Russel J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg, ‘Unthinkable democracy: political change in advanced industrial democracies’, in Russel J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg (eds.), *Parties without Partisans. Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (Oxford:

- Oxford University Press, 2000), 3–16; Gilberto Capano and Marco Giuliani, ‘Governing without surviving? An Italian paradox: law-making in Italy, 1987–2001’, *Journal of Legislative Studies* 7, no. 4 (2001): 12–36.
24. Mauro Calise, *Il partito personale. I due corpi del leader* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2010).
  25. See *Italian Political Science Review*, 2015, 2, special issue on ‘The Personal Leader in Contemporary Party Politics’, eds. Fortunato Musella and Paul Webb; see also Fabio Bordignon, *Il partito del capo. Da Berlusconi a Renzi* (Milan/Sant’Arcangelo di Romagna: Apogeo/Maggioli, 2013).
  26. On ‘parasitism of democracy’ and ‘hybridization of the modern’ see Angelo D’Orsi, ‘E se fossimo tutti berluschini?’, *MicroMega*, January 30, 2012; <http://blog-micromega.blogautore.espresso.repubblica.it/2012/01/30/angelo-dorsi-e-se-fossimo-tutti-berluschini/> (last accessed: November 20, 2015).
  27. Paolo Mancini, *Between Commodification and Lifestyle Politics: Does Silvio Berlusconi provide a New Model of Politics for the Twenty-First Century?* (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford, 2011) <http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/publication/between-commodification-and-lifestyle-politics> (last accessed: November 8, 2011), 1–2; see also Donatella Campus, ‘Mediatization and Personalization of Politics in Italy and France: The Cases of Berlusconi and Sarkozy’, *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 15, no. 2 (2010): 219–35.
  28. Pierre Musso, *Le Sarkoberlusionisme* (Paris: Editions de l’Aube, 2008), 30. A crucial factor in Berlusconi’s relationship with citizens neglected by Musso and many other scholars is the ‘body’ and its language; see Marco Belpoliti, *Il corpo del capo* (Milan: Guanda, 2009).
  29. Mancini, *Between*, 9–10; see also Ginsborg, *Silvio Berlusconi*, 10.
  30. Luis Bassets, ‘Il berlusconismo ha già vinto’, *Internazionale* 901 (June 10–16, 2011). Telecinco is the Spanish TV channel owned by Berlusconi’s corporation Mediaset; see also Mancini, *Between*, 10.
  31. Fabio Bordignon and Luigi Ceccarini, ‘Five Stars and a Cricket: Beppe Grillo Shakes Italian Politics’, *South European Society and Politics* 18, no. 4 (2013): 427–49.
  32. Piergiorgio Corbetta, and Elisabetta Gualmini (eds.), *Il partito di Grillo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013); Roberto Biorcio and Paola Natale, *Politica a 5 stelle. Idee, storia e strategie del Movimento di Grillo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2013).
  33. With the expression ‘audience democracy’, scholars define the form of politics that has replaced the parties with ‘persons’, the organization with television, and ideology with marketing; on this see Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

34. Ilvo Diamanti, 'The 5 Star Movement: a political laboratory', *Contemporary Italian Politics* 6, no. 1 (2014): 4–15: 14.
35. *Empire* was in fact thought and written in the mid-1990 and then published only in 2000 by Harvard University Press. The volume was the first of a trilogy continued in 2004 with *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), and completed in 2009 with *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).
36. Michael Hardt, 'Introduction: Laboratory Italy', in Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno (eds.), *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (Minneapolis, Minn.; University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 1–10: 1.
37. Aldo Rovatti and Sergio Vattimo (eds.), *Il pensiero debole* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1982).
38. Müller, 'The Paradoxes' 96.
39. 'Quinto Seminario degli Scrittori Migranti', *Sagarana*, available at [http://www.sagarana.net/scuola/seminario4/seminario4\\_3.htm](http://www.sagarana.net/scuola/seminario4/seminario4_3.htm) (last accessed: September 9, 2015); see also Graziella Parati, *Migration Italy: The Art of Talking Back in A Destination Culture*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Graziella Parati, *Mediterranean Crossroads: Migration Literature in Italy*, (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999).
40. This section is based on Rosario Forlenza, 'The next wave of Italians has come to America: Italian investments and business in the United States 1980–2013', *Journal Modern Italian Studies* 20, no. 5 (2015): 708–31.
41. Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977); David S. Landes, 'French Entrepreneurship and Industrial Growth in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Economic History* 9 no. 1 (1947): 45–61.
42. Andrea Colli, *Il quarto capitalismo. Un profilo italiano* (Venice: Marsilio, 2003), 43.
43. Adrian Wooldridge, 'To Have and to Hold', special report on family companies, *The Economist*, April 18, 2015, 3; [http://www.economist.com/sites/default/files/20150418\\_family.pdf](http://www.economist.com/sites/default/files/20150418_family.pdf) (last accessed: November 23, 2015).

## What If We Were Never Modern?

The study of Italian political history is a privileged prism for the unfolding of alternative and sometimes competing modernities. The figurations of political thought and culture that emerged in twentieth-century Italy can be seen as a microcosm of Europe's twentieth-century age of ideologies.<sup>1</sup> To think about Italy less as a latecomer to modernity and more in terms of its composite Mediterranean and European specificities means to reopen its historical archive and reassess its history.

But Italy's multiple modernities are not just of historical interest—they are not just a remnant of the past. They instead concern an understanding of the transformation of the present. They also shed light on the theoretical question dominating contemporary historical and social science debates in an age of globalization: in what ways *exactly* are modernities plural?

Italy's relevance as a historical-cultural case lies, we argue, precisely in these continuous clashes between competing modernities which have happened within a series of open and unfolding tensions that throw light on wider European developments. There never was one Western modernity in the first place, no single cultural program of progress and development, no unified creed based on a series of categorical principles and divisions between reason and faith, science and nature, nature and society. In this sense, Bruno Latour was certainly right to claim that 'we have never been modern'.<sup>2</sup>

The study of modernity is not the study of an assumed norm against which countries and societies can be cataloged as 'more' or 'less', or 'fully

arrived' or 'on their way'; it is the study of contested ideas and practices, of interpretative schemes of what the modern may be taken to mean, of cultural borrowing and culture-specific historical trajectories.

While the notion of multiple modernities was certainly not available to political thinkers until recently, in substance this was exactly what characterized twentieth-century political discourse. Italian politicians, intellectuals, and philosophers made a series of contributions to alternative articulations of the modern that preceded by decades our current efforts to conceptualize the multiple forms of the modern. This helps us to rediscover the ideas of modernity pluralistically reconceived as an analytical and interpretative tool suitable for an age of cultural differences.

This journey across Italy's competing modernities also invites us to rethink modernity in an age in which the global is now understood as the condition of the modern world, rather than a mere consequence. While the notion of 'global modernity'<sup>3</sup> resonates widely, it is ultimately a rather deceptive term. Whatever we may mean by the concept of globalization, it should be clear to everyone that it certainly cannot be taken to mean the simple spread of a 'Western model'. In fact, globalization is best seen as the intensified struggle over competing modernities, and the global articulations of the frictions and tensions of modernity.

### ITALY, LAND OF MISSED OPPORTUNITIES?

It is often said that Italy is a land of unfulfilled promise, of missed opportunities: a country that constantly managed to disappoint expectations. This may be true. But what if those missed opportunities do not reside with the country and its multitude of inhabitants, but with those people—like the ones who write—who try to analyze the complex realities of Italy's historical experience? What if the unfulfilled promise is to be found in the eyes of those who observe?

This is not meant to say that Italy of 2016 does not face—once again—a series of extremely harsh challenges. The Italian economy does expose structural deficits as well as accelerating debt levels; youth unemployment (especially in the south) is a real problem. Politics is characterized by high disaffection, distrust, and decreasing social participation. Civil society can seem rather dormant or even numb, and corruption scandals seem endless. The threat of organized crime seems endemic. Rapid immigration, the refugee crisis, and a changing demography with

a growing elderly population create further tensions and frictions within the Italian social fabric.

The argument we have been trying to put forward in this book is certainly not meant as any kind of feeble attempt to ‘defend’ the country and its virtues and honors. The agenda we are trying to push relates to the analytical point. Yet the notion that Italy is a land of missed opportunities should not be dismissed, and for two essential reasons. First, from the perspective of the political thinkers and activists we have discussed throughout, this was exactly their point, and repeatedly so, from their various entry points to the debate: Italy had missed out on ‘something’. But this ‘something’ was rarely an externally imposed variable of growth or happiness, but indeed something very different: a potential for meaningful development *intrinsic* to Italy, a potential for harmonizing modernization processes with the historically imbedded virtues and vices of a complex population. In short, the missed opportunities were first and foremost internal to Italy’s own history. The parameters that justified what could be termed a ‘disappointing’ outcome in historical reality were primarily drawn from within, and with reference to the unfulfilled promise lying dormant but still alive in the country’s own past.

Second, it would also be wrong to argue that the discourse of ‘missed opportunities’ carries no relationship to empirical reality. It does, and also for another reason that we need to be reflexively aware of: the views from ‘outside’ that have constantly diagnosed Italy as ‘running behind’ have their own history—and they hold discursive power. And this view, as we have pointed out from the outset of this book, has on many occasions been acritically accepted by Italian studies scholars—Italians among them, of course—with reference to parameters external to the historical experience of those subjects who move through history.

Therefore, the ‘latecomer discourse’ has its own reality and thus cannot simply be dismissed. How often do Italian television debates not end on the resigning and almost fatalistic conclusion that Italy, compared to other nations, will never become really modern? But exactly this view needs to be scrutinized as a discourse of power, rather than accepted at face value. In terms of classification and categorization, Italy is placed in a highly ambiguous position: on the one hand, the country is a member of G8, founding member of the European Union, one of Europe’s biggest countries, and host to a civilizational cultural heritage without comparison. And yet, on the other hand, Italy is a ‘southern’ country, archaic and traditional, and has for decades been object to academic and popular Orientalism.



### *Orientalizing Italy*

Any Orientalizing discourse always has two faces, and both are extremely present in scholarship on Italy. The first is the condemning one: Italy has to catch up. Italy is ‘backward’, as Edward Banfield said. Italy has to change. Any form of Othering unfolds within spatial and temporal dimensions. The spatial ‘othering’ has for long consisted in elaborating the north/south axis, where north is up and south is down. The temporal dimension is expressed through a view where speed is contrasted with lack of speed or standstill.<sup>4</sup> The very phrase, ‘Italy has been slow to catch up with...’, presupposes an entire universe of spatiotemporal connotations, a semantic universe of taken-for-granted. This discourse is so structurally strong that it is present even when nothing condemning is said. This happens when Italy is seen as an ‘anomaly’, or a ‘pathological degeneration’ caused by the almost endemic incapacity to distinguish roles and a ‘blurring of genres’ allegedly evidenced in the lack of institutional differentiation of powers and derogatives: an economy ruled by politics or a politics ruled by the economy, but never a balance.<sup>5</sup>

However, there is a second kind of voice that sticks out in the popular choir: it is the celebratory one. Western Europeans were always fascinated by those ‘orientals’ they liked to despise and judge as underdeveloped. Those backward societies were fascinating because they preserved a vitality and an instinct that had gone lost in the more ‘developed’ world. Dreaming cages of desire, exotic lands, mysticism that opposed the cold rationality of the West. We are not here referring only to those stereotypical images foreigners hold before and after their visits to Italy, as a chaotic yet fascinating land of paradoxes. We are also referring to the scholarship that, mainly from leftist perspectives, has liked to see Italy as a country of resistance. The tendency is even present in the indeed valuable work of Jane and Peter Schneider on Sicilian culture and political economy.<sup>6</sup>

There was in the work of the Schneiders an implicit political agenda that was intellectually dominant in the 1970s: to analyze structural forms of dependency, and to work toward the dismantling of such dependencies, as they were created from within what we today call global capitalism. The Schneiders identified what they called ‘cultural codes’ among the Sicilians, and those codes of honor, friendship, and *omertà* were not surprisingly seen as reproductive of political-economic structures.

Jane and Peter Schneider were doing fieldwork in Sicily in the 1970s.<sup>7</sup> While advancing a political economy analysis at the systemic level, the

Schneiders did implicitly recognize local forms of knowledge and practice as containing the seeds of resistance within this system of domination. The theoretical framework they carried with them from New York was also American: it was that of Immanuel Wallerstein.<sup>8</sup> There is of course nothing wrong with theory coming from America. But a deep and penetrating analysis of Italian regions' 'dependencies' within unfolding capitalism had long since taken place within Italy itself, going back to the nineteenth century, through the work of Gramsci, but far from only. If the Schneiders would have wanted to study resistance to the capitalistic world system, they would have had an ample field of thought and practice right in front of them, and a vast selection of Italian theoretical discourse to draw on and discuss from, applied exactly to the Southern question. While the Schneiders looked for struggle and resistance in the Sicilian mountains, the Italian cities had long been ripe with revolutionary theory and practice. And, as we have discussed in earlier chapters, the Italian student movement had anticipated the events of 1968—clearly preceding American and European developments.

In *Orientalism in One Country*, Jane Schneider writes: 'Italy was certainly affected by Orientalism.' In this vein, Said's framework can be considered crucial for an understanding of Southern Italy and the whole of the European South.<sup>9</sup> Yet, while there for some decades now has been some focus on representations of the Mezzogiorno and the 'othering' of the South, the same can to a much lesser extent be said about representations of Italy as such.

Applying Said's theoretical approach to investigate differences within Europe, literary studies scholars such as Manfred Pfister have introduced the concept of 'intra-European Meridionism'. This attitude influences eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British travelogs on Italy.<sup>10</sup> The consequence was the superimposition of spatial-temporal-cultural categories such as the South and the East on Italy's unstable position. Other European writers, including Romantic writers, depicted Catholicism in Italy (and elsewhere) as incompatible with modernity and progress, and catalogued the country as static, primitive, regressive, and exotic. In short, European writers—including Romantic writers—endorsed and proposed the vision of Catholicism (and Catholics) as substantially belonging to 'the Other'.

Such discourses have had crucial consequences for both external and internal understandings of the Italian case.<sup>11</sup> The crucial point here is that these attitudes of Orientalizing Italy do not only belong to eighteenth- to nineteenth-century travelers and poets writing about Italy, or Romantics writing of and sometimes against Catholicism: they belong to a historical

take on republican Italy,<sup>12</sup> and feed all the way into the political representation of the present.

In short, just as the Oriental is the inferior Other in a Western vision of history, so Italy is posited as an inferior and less important (southern) place in the West. As John Agnew has also pointed out, this means to exclude Italy from a European narrative based on modernity—with Italian-ness constantly equated with the *lack* of something.<sup>13</sup>

In very broad terms, it is this kind of orientalist discourse that has plagued the study of Italian culture, society, and politics. We need to move beyond it, once and for all. Tourists to the Italian peninsula can allow themselves to blend denigratory and celebratory commentary on the country and its inhabitants in that stereotypical bricolage one can pick up in almost every hotel lobby. Academics cannot. We need a more healthy analytical distance to dominant forms of categorizing, evaluating, and hierarchizing, discursive forms that are part and parcel of the social reality we want to study.

### *Italy and 'the South' as an Alternative Modernity?*

This entire discussion over power and representation and alternative modernities prompts a final question: can Italian developments and Italian-inspired ways of thinking the modern be used positively today? Can an 'Italian modernity' serve as some kind of model to be posited normatively against more general trends of global capitalism? In short, can we move the paradigm of 'multiple modernities' beyond the merely analytical?

More recently, exactly such an argument has been put forward by Franco Cassano. Cassano (who teaches sociology at the University of Bari) has argued for the necessity of a 'meridian thought'.<sup>14</sup> In Cassano's terminology, 'meridian thought' is a way to think about the specificity of Italy as positively opposed to global capitalism, and therefore a concept invoked and unfolded to articulate a conscious resistance against a 'Western' typology of development. Cassano's approach is clearly Gramscian, with a focus on 'hegemony' and how to resist hegemony, and with a particular stress on the role of intellectuals ('organic intellectuals') in this 'alternative' modernity. Cassano's book on *Meridian Thought* clearly echoes Said's point about an 'objectified' Orient, and a wish to give back agency and subjectivity to the represented, to the 'objectified': 'Southern thinking means, fundamentally, to give back to the south its ancient dignity as sub-

ject of thought; to interrupt a long sequence in which the south has been thought as an object by others'.<sup>15</sup>

However—and moving here beyond the arguments as, for example, represented by Jane Schneider and the authors collected in *Orientalism in One Country*—Cassano maintains that Said is too skeptical and suspicious about the category of 'difference'. Said largely considers 'difference' an artificial and instrumental construction created by Western societies, and exploited by local leaders to control local populations with traditional and authoritarian methods. Cassano instead recognizes that cultural differences *do* exist—which in his view are not only an expedient elaborated by European leaders and stakeholders and by conservative local leaders in countries outside or at the fringes of Europe. Cultural differences do exist, and they can be turned into a political vantage point.

It is exactly from the vantage point of such differences that Cassano proposes a southern and meridian modernity—alternative to the north-western, Atlantic modernity. He grounds this concept in four key concepts/ideas: drive to autonomy, the historical and geopolitical context of the Mediterranean, the search for measure, balance, and moderation, and above all else slowness. The idea is to elaborate an 'endogenous' and autonomous line of thought that emerges from the marginalized areas of the Global South (not only southern Italy) in order to re-orientate the spatiotemporal coordinates on which the Atlantic vision of the world rests: a vision based on acceleration, constant and restless dynamics, unlimited production, frenzied consumption, unrestrained capitalism; a vision that has evidently compromised the future of the world.

Cassano's academic project is yet another example of innovative approaches to the question of modernity. His ideas of 'meridian thought' have strong and significant parallels with the 'Mediterranean modernity' that was articulated in the work of Eric Voegelin and further developed by Augusto Del Noce—connections which the leftist and 'progressist' intellectual Cassano would certainly consider as an anathema, but that are real enough at the substantial level to warrant attention.

For those who write—respectively born or married into that Italian South, and now trying to 'think' about Italy from institutions located in the Atlantic North—it is tempting indeed to embrace Cassano's position. We indeed live in a world of constant social acceleration, as Hartmut Rosa has argued,<sup>16</sup> a particularly problematic world of 'permanent liminality'.<sup>17</sup>

The Slow Food movement, which of course started in Italy, is a concrete and hugely successful example of how 'slowness' can offer a real

alternative to industrial food production and mass consumption. But how exactly can Italy and its south come to function as an autonomous political alternative? How, in practice, can a presumed ‘reasonability’ and sense of measure oppose Northern European rationality? How can we translate ‘traditions’ and elements of meridian thought into viable political practices and strategies to empower the global South, challenging north-western modernity?

Does Cassano’s meridian-ism not risk becoming a mirror image of what it wanted to oppose? Does it not risk essentializing the Mediterranean, even whilst underlining its hybrid forms? There is an extent to which meridian thought becomes an Occidentalism. When Cassano describes the north-western modernity (limitless production, abstract universalism, anticulture, destruction of social bonds, etc.), he perhaps tends to overlook that this Atlantic modernity is far from homogenous. Countercultural movements thrive also in the ‘North’, and against a general process of secularization and social dis-embedding, one can witness various returns to the sacred, various projects of re-enchanting the world, novel forms of communitarianism. And it is also very much in the ‘North’ that novel yet ‘traditional’ forms of exchange, gift-giving, and reciprocity are being experimented at the local levels (down to neighborhood fraternities) to counter the logics of global capitalism.

So, we might well ask: where is the ‘South’? Is Dubai not part of the ‘South’? Is a little town in Iowa or Mississippi part of the South or part of the North? Could one not say that quite a few of the meridian concepts are now widely scattered and operating in the various Norths, brought there by generations of southern migrants? Where is the ‘South’, we repeat? In Hermann Hesse’s novel *Klingsor’s Last Summer*, we hear about a spiritual pilgrimage of a group of Germans who move to an exotic southern land, placed in the Swiss canton of Ticino.<sup>18</sup> Hesse himself moved to the Swiss south at the age of forty-two to realize himself—but from the perspective of any southern Italian, he moved to a place that practically epitomizes the ‘North’. So how can we epistemologically locate this South? Are the Syrian boat refugees crossing the sea part of a ‘Mediterranean’ culture? People crossing into Italy from the coasts of North Africa, what do they think about the Mediterranean? Maybe the Mediterranean can be posited as a cluster of values and a symbolic worldview for organic intellectuals, but it all depends quite a lot on who is doing the positing.

Where is the ‘North’ and where is the ‘South’? Rather than using Italian narratives to answer either question in the affirmative, it seems to

us that thinking about Italy rather forces one to take a distance to or at least relativize such spatializing strategies altogether.

And how exactly might we think about Italy or Southern Italy as ‘slow’? Naples was one of the first ‘modern’ cities in Europe and already the beginning of the seventeenth century a buzzing trading port, a nodal point of international trade, the biggest European city after Paris, and an artistic-cultural capital. And, by virtues of its late fifteenth-to-sixteenth century architecture and town planning, Ferrara, as Jacob Burckhardt famously put it in his *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), became the first modern European town.

Italy and its coasts have for millennia been the scene for important waves of migration, people movement, dynamic encounters between cultures, languages, lifestyles. Perhaps Italy is the migratory country of Europe par excellence, not because it was ever running slow, but because the country stood at the crossroads of things accelerating.

For the fact remains that Italy was never lacking in modernity. Quite the contrary, the country’s political history was always characterized by an abundance of multiple modernities. That is why the history and present of Italy can and must be analyzed with respect to those unfolding modernities and their inherent tensions.

The Italian debate works as a reminder that rather than insisting on the single validity of secular Enlightenment rationality, and the modernization built onto it, alternative modernities do exist and with a different set of genealogies of values—also *within* Europe, and *within* different European countries. In short, what emerges from a critical understanding of Italy’s roads to modernity should not simply serve as an adjustment of the Italian picture; it must relate to a revision of the very discourse of ‘modernity’, and a series of tensions between politics, culture, and society that unfolded so differently within Europe itself—and that keep unfolding within today’s multiple and global modernities.

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