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Appropriation and Displacement: Postmemorial Articulations of the Italian Antifascist Resistance

Abstract

Building on Marianne Hirsch's notion of "Postmemory" (1992), this article addresses the memory of the Italian Resistance, the 1943-45 partisan struggle against Nazi-Fascism. Although the Resistance was made up of people of varied political beliefs sharing an antifascist view and aiming at freeing their country from Nazi-Fascism, its memory remains divisive within the Republic. This article examines this controversial memory and offers a discussion of its ramifications in Italy today, arguing that the postmemory of the Resistance was informed by mechanisms of appropriation and displacement. The generations coming after 1945 were often overwhelmed by the stories of their predecessors: this undermined the political potential of the re-signification of the past in their time. The article contextualizes such displacement within the crisis of nation-states and discusses how, in a globalized context, historical memory can be instead a paradigm to connect to unfamiliar others in the name of common values.

1. Postmemory and displacement

With two world wars, a mass genocide, and the so-called 'Cold War' dropping down the curtains on the past, the twentieth century was a period to forget and compulsorily remember at once. After a time of latency, the 1990s turned into what Eva Hoffman defined as "the era of memory" (2004, 203) through an ever-growing culture of museums and anniversaries in Europe. In 1992, Marianne Hirsch wondered how the memory of a traumatic event such as the Holocaust could be maintained and transmitted across generations and focused on the relationship between those who were born after the catastrophe and the experience of their predecessors. Hirsch therefore contributed to the field of memory studies by coining the notion of "postmemory," indicating:

> the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their

own right. Postmemory's connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. (2008, 106-107)

In this light, Hirsch looks at the ethics and aesthetics of remembrance through second-generation art, fiction, memoir, and testimony regarding the experiences of predecessors. Because of the proximity to witnesses of traumatic events and because of the "affective link to the past" (111) developed by the postmemorial work, mechanisms of appropriation and displacement can often inform it. As Hirsch writes, "to grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own stories and experiences displaced, even evacuated, by those of a previous generation… These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present" (107).

This article seeks to apply Hirsch's notion of postmemory to the context of the Italian antifascist Resistance during WWII. There was a strong ethical and political involvement of those who were born during and after the 1940s in the memory of the Resistance as a harsh war of liberation from dictatorship. The central argument of this essay is that this involvement often resulted in the appropriation of the unexperienced time of the Resistance from those who were born after it and in a consequent displacement of the stories and political battles of their time. I will frame this in the historical context of contemporary Italy and offer a political and ideological reading of Hirsch's notion of postmemory.

2. The experience of the Resistance

"I'm in the wrong sector of the right side", says the protagonist of Beppe Fenoglio's novel *Johnny the Partisan* (1968), finding himself fighting in a Communist brigade on the Langhe hills in Piedmont (Fenoglio 1970, 48). "Erano comunisti, ecco che erano: ma erano partigiani, e questo poteva e doveva bastargli. «Commies, Red Star… but so far as they fight fascists…» […]". (Fenoglio 1970, 44): thus Johnny broods about the situation, while the partisans strike up the working-class anthem *Bandiera Rossa*. Johnny is a young officer who leaves the Italian army and joins the partisan struggle after 8 September 1943. He starts in a Communist brigade but later joins the so-called *badogliani*, a more moderate brigade made of bourgeois and military ranks.

One of the most relevant novels about the Italian Resistance, *Johnny the Partisan* shows the complexities behind the struggle for liberation in which

ideological divisions are superseded in view of a greater and common goal by showing Johnny's uneasiness among the Communists as well as his commitment to the cause of the partisans. Fenoglio's words set out the starting point of my analysis: namely, that the antifascist Resistance in Italy was made up of people of very different political views.

The Liberation struggle in Italy lasted from September 1943 until April 1945. After Badoglio's armistice on 8 September 1943, Italy's main political forces formed the *Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale* (CLN, Committee of National Liberation). The main political forces of the country took up a common liberation struggle against the Nazis, who had promptly occupied part of the peninsula and created the Salò Republic. From that moment, a number of partisan brigades fighting underground sided with the Allies in the war against the Nazi occupation, which ended with the Liberation of Italy in 1945. The *Brigate Garibaldi*, formed by the PCI (Italian Communist Party), were the most active and numerous; however, it would be historically inaccurate to identify the Resistance with a specific political faction: in the battle for liberation, there were people with various political views involved, who, while often opposed to each other, were united by common values and ideals of freedom. Up to 1945, the Resistance was comprised of both party-led and autonomous brigades (Pavone 1991, 124-168); generally speaking, this was a motley assemblage of different ideologies: Communists, socialists, liberals, monarchists, and anarchists. There were also different religions: Christians and Jews each had their own brigades fighting against the Nazi occupation. With such a variety of views and beliefs, the Resistance put in practice a long-standing opposition to the Fascist regime, which also found room in a vast and multifaceted cultural production in the years up to Liberation (Pasetti 2009, 1-17). In this light, the Italian Republic, born of the Liberation, can be considered to be anchored to 'antifascist' principles; indeed, the CLN planned to make the historical experience of the Resistance a founding memory for the nation and a framework of collective identity for present and future Italian generations (Cooke 2011, 9-15). However, things turned out differently.

3. The legacy of the Resistance: from experience to memory

As Philip Cooke has shown, the connection between the new-born Republic and the historical experience of the Resistance was troubled since the beginning (2011, 9-81). There were both historical and political reasons for this relationship to be

problematic. After the end of WWII, Italy entered the Cold War on the side of the Allies, joining NATO in 1949. In the context of the polarized politics of the Cold War, the politically heterogeneous Resistance movement, which included important participation from the communist side, did not preserve its unity. The first government – headed by Ferruccio Parri and comprising all of the Italian political parties active in the Resistance – lasted less than six months. Likewise, the ANPI (National Association of Italian Partisans) fragmented into three different formations, dividing the communists (ANPI), the liberals and the Catholics (FIVL), and the actionists and social democrats (FIAP). In turn, the PCI built its legitimacy in the polarized new political situation through a 'mythologizing' narration of the Resistance (Crainz 2009, 38; De Luna 2011, 44-5; Cooke 2011, 20), often eluding the contradictions, the complexity, and the tragic nature of the partisan struggle as an experience of war. Moreover, a new wave of violence took place in the first years after Liberation: through a number of summary executions, former communist partisans murdered members of the Fascist regime in prison, or even civilians who had been involved with the Fascist regime and even, sometimes, antifascists (Cooke 2011, 15-18). The delicate political balance of the Cold War, along with the backlash against the war's harshness, resulted in a political use of history that followed different political contingencies. As Cooke wrote, "much of the debate about the Resistance has been framed in stark terms – it is either condemned to imprisonment and disgrace or free to go to bask in the glory of absolution" (2011, 23). This undermined the possibility to develop a shared memory and a collective identity out of the experience of Liberation.

In the 1960s, the first 'generation gap' since WWII had an impact on these divisions in Italian political culture. A generational revolt against the past and its narratives was taking place across Europe. In this context, young Italian leftists contested the idea of the Republic as the product of a liberation from Fascism. They developed a counternarrative of continuity between the regime and the post-war state and reinterpreted the Resistance as a "failed revolution" (Forgacs 1999, 185-199). One event in particular fostered this postmemorial rereading of the antifascist struggle: the so-called "Tambroni affair" (Cooke 2011, 83-112). In 1960, the DC government headed by Fernando Tambroni made an alliance with the neofascist party MSI (Social Italian Movement), which had been founded in 1946 by veterans of the Salò Republic. On this occasion, the MSI planned to organize its congress in the historically antifascist city of Genoa. A series of protest demonstrations took place across Italy. The violent clashes between protesters and the police culminated in Reggio Emilia on 7 July, when Tambroni ordered

the police to fire on the crowd and five young protesters died. It cannot be denied that the Tambroni affair was symptomatic of a persistence of Fascism in the country. On the one hand, for the first time after the Liberation from Fascism, a neofascist party came to play an important role in the political sphere. On the other hand, the repressive management of protests by the police had resulted from a concrete legacy of fascism in the structure of the Republic (Forgacs 1999, 187; Crainz 2009, 53-4). As Patrizia Dogliani has shown, laws about the management of public order by the armed forces were left unchanged in the transition from Fascism to the Republic (2017, 15-30). The TULPS (*Testo Unico delle Leggi di Pubblica Sicurezza*) passed in the middle years of Fascism and remained unaltered until the late 1970s. In this framework, young leftists referred to the Resistance and appropriated its ideological underpinnings to oppose the government: "*La Resistenza è stata rossa e non tricolore*" (the Resistance was red, not tricolor) was one of the most significant slogans used at that time (De Luna 2009, 85; Cooke 2011, 111).

The 1960s were a watershed in the memory of the Resistance and determined its 'antagonist' re-elaboration and appropriation by future generations of leftists. Five decades later, Max Collini, head of the new wave and progressive-oriented band Offlaga Disco Pax (2012) devoted a song to a stadium chorus commemorating "i morti di Reggio Emilia… per mano della polizia fascista del governo Tambroni", which is part of his childhood memories. The band was based in Reggio Emilia and very active in the network of the *centri sociali*, a pivotal reality, as I will show later, for the postmemorial re-elaboration of antifascist Resistance in twenty-first-century Italy.

4. The postmemorial 'myth of the betrayed Resistance' in the 1970s

The 'Fascist danger' became blatant at the beginning of the 1970s. While the 1960s ended tragically with the bombing of Piazza Fontana, the new decade was inaugurated by a failed military coup d'état from Junio Valerio Borghese. Called *principe nero*, Borghese was the former head of the Marine Unit X Mas, which had sided with the Third Reich against the partisans after 8 September 1943. Progressive culture responded with a real 'Resistance revival': throughout the 1970s, songs, monuments, public spaces, historiographical studies and literary works were plentifully devoted to the experience of the partisan struggle (Cooke 2011, 113-8). As Cooke wrote: "One of the central aspects of the Resistance in the 1970s was what might be termed the 'generational problem.' That is the way in

which the message of the Resistance generation was perceived, reread, and recoded by successive generations who had not participated in the war itself, but who, in the 1970s were engaged in analogous battles and struggles" (118).

When a radicalized fringe of the extra-parliamentary left decided to switch over to violence, it turned the appeal to historical memory into a self-legitimating use of history for practical political ends. A blatant appropriation of the memory of the Resistance took shape in the narrative of leftist terrorists. They made the partisans the forerunners of their armed struggle and presented their actions as the result of an intergenerational passing of the baton: the Republic had disregarded the ideals of the partisans and it was their duty to carry them on. Terrorists developed the narrative of the 'betrayed Resistance' as their founding "political myth", defined by Christopher Flood as "an ideologically marked narrative which purports to give a true account of a set of past, present, or predicted political events and which is accepted as valid in its essentials by a social group" (2001, 44). The myth of the 'betrayed Resistance' generated views, collective imagery, and a common identity as a ground for action and militancy. Various organizations named themselves from the names of the partisan brigades (Cooke 2011, 119). Terrorists narrated themselves as direct inheritors of the partisan cause. A range of recognizable and recurring cores – *topoi* of a storytelling process – informed their memoirs, such as the choice of battle names, the recalling of fathers, uncles or grandfathers who fought in the Resistance, or the shipment of weapons:

> Non avevano più l'età per ritornare sulle montagne, e passarono a noi ragazzi le loro armi, con la certezza che le avremmo usate (Franceschini and Fasanella 2004, 40); I suoi racconti sulla Resistenza erano le mie favole.... Mio nonno... era un guerrigliero, un ribelle. (Franceschini and Fasanella 2004, 15); Non fu solo una consegna d'armi: mi stava affidando i suoi ideali, la sua giovinezza e la sua forza che non c'era più.... Sapevamo tutto di quegli anni. I nomi delle brigate, le azioni, il rilievo politico dei singoli comandanti. Erano i nostri padri, e un figlio diventa adulto quando gli viene passato un testimone. (Franceschini, et al. 1996, 4-6)

As these examples show, 1970s leftist terrorists appropriated the unexperienced time of the Resistance at the point of blatantly exploiting its memory to perpetrate violence in their time. Their narrative greatly informed the Italian cultural imagery of political violence. Indeed, immediately after the end of the *anni di piombo* (the Years of Lead) terrorists gained a high public profile through a number of TV programmes, interviews, and the conspicuous publication of their memoirs. In the following years, their self-narrations held great popularity in the literary imagery of terrorism. In Italian novels that

portrayed terrorism, the Resistance was often key to the literary character of the perpetrator. In Attilio Veraldi's *Il Vomerese* (1980), for example, Gerardo Guerra is a former partisan of the Resistance and leader of a 1970s left wing terrorist group. He is described through epithets such as 'the dad' or 'the old'. Not only does he hand the baton to young terrorists, but also practically coordinates their actions from above. In Nerino Rossi's *La voce nel pozzo* (1990), the protagonist is a former partisan and member of the DC who helps a friend, also a former partisan of the Resistance, to track down her son Luca who has joined the Red Brigades. A patronizing condescension marks the relationship between the two generations and is the main key to the reading of the novel, where the author portrays the terrorist as the 'prodigal son' of the partisans. The intergenerational relationship between partisans and terrorists also informs novels of the new millennium, like Gian Mario Villalta's *Tuo figlio* (2004), where the daughter of a partisan leaves her son in the custody of a family of former partisans when joining a terrorist cell. Authors born in the 1970s and writing on terrorism also adopted this narrative. In the parodic novel *2005 dopo Cristo* (2005) by Babette Factory – a collective of authors formed by Nicola Lagioia, Francesco Pacifico, Christian Raimo, and Francesco Longo –, for example, the protagonists re-enact the Years of Lead and carry out a (failed) terrorist attack against Silvio Berlusconi on the significant date of 25 April, namely the anniversary of the Italian liberation from Nazi-Fascism.

5. Manichean memories: the postmemory of the Resistance after 1989

In 1999, Luisa Passerini hoped for a change in the country's memory of the Resistance after 1989 (1999, 288-296). In her view, the polarized Cold War politics had made the memory of the Resistance a battlefield more than a consensual frame of reference. After the collapse of communism and the crisis of social and political ideologies there now was, she argued, "the possibility... of placing the recent past in a wider and more complex perspective... in which we no longer see ourselves and our adversaries as unambiguous and monolithic entities divided by a Manichean dichotomy" (296). In fact, after 1989 the relationship between the Republic and the memory of the resistance grew more conflictual. There are both historical and political reasons for this. At the end of the twentieth century, many European nation-states experienced a general crisis of identity, which undermined their relationship with historical memory (De Luna 2011, 19-38). In Italy during the 1990s and 2000s, journalists and politicians replaced historians in

the public debate, often in entertaining and sensational television formats (Pivato 2007, 5-74).

Against this backdrop, the so-called 'death of ideologies' did not turn into an opportunity to approach the past through new, less factional lenses that were more mindful of the overall complexity of events. Finally, a radical transformation of the Italian political set-up in the early 1990s – known as the passage from the 'First' to the 'Second' Republic – provoked the dissolution of all the parties that had been involved in the partisan struggle and in the foundation of the Republic. As De Luna wrote, "tra il 1992 e il 1994... sparirono, letteralmente sparirono, tutti i principali contraenti del 'patto memoriale' fondativo della nostra Repubblica" (2011, 46-7). A new centre-right coalition formed of the newborn parties Forza Italia, Lega Nord, and Alleanza Nazionale filled this void and won the 1994 elections. Their propaganda was informed by a rhetoric of national reconciliation with the past. This was key to their self-legitimation: AN had its roots in the neofascist MSI and was now leading a country whose Constitution was anchored on antifascist principles (Cooke 2011, 154-7). The discourse on national reconciliation, then, coincided with a political use of history: the new parties placed emphasis on the most controversial aspects of the communist Resistance – such as the tragic wave of post-Liberation violence after 1945 – to equalize the two sides of the 1943-45 struggle and legitimate themselves in the new political order. Because they built a 'negative myth' of the Resistance, these parties overturned the 'mythologizing' narration of the Resistance made by the PCI in the immediate aftermath of WWII. Although both parties made a political use of history through a polarized narration of the liberation war, it is necessary to draw a distinction between the two contexts. On the one hand, the mythologizing narrative of the PCI was made by people who experienced the Resistance at first hand and found themselves as ostracized communist politicians in a NATO country within the Cold War. On the other hand, the deprecating narrative of the Resistance from leading 1990s right-wing politicians referred to a time they had never experienced and was mainly functional to gain electoral consensus by delegitimizing the Left and justifying the presence of a post-Fascist party within the coalition. These parties brought about what we could call a victimhood competition in the political discourse and put partisans and fascists on the same level. This narrative received a hostile response from the left, which, in turn, outspokenly maintained a difference between the two stances and kept militant antifascism as one of its pillars.

One of the contexts in which the rhetoric of militant antifascism gained great popularity was that of the *centri sociali*. The *centri sociali* were born in Italy in

the 1970s as self-organized spaces where activists of all kinds could gather together to develop ideas, diffuse information, or diversely carry out their activity through direct-action organization. In the 1980s and the 1990s, the concept spread throughout Europe as a form of social and urban antagonism opposed to the effects of neoliberalism and economic globalization on contemporary societies. The *centri sociali* are often unused buildings or urban spaces occupied by activists. A non-hierarchical model of interaction rules their social and political activity. In many cases, the *centri sociali* also promote, diffuse, or create cultural and artistic products through independent channels, as opposed to the large-scale culture industry. In the best cases, the *centri sociali* are an operative reality in the fabric of society, often compensating for policy shortcomings through social and communitarian activity. However, they are considerably overlooked in the public debate. Most of the time, they become visible only in relation to clearings and clashes with law enforcement (Piazza 2012, 1-17).

6. Carlo Giuliani: the postmemory of the Resistance after 2001

The *centri sociali* and the critique to neoliberal globalization gave a new spin to the memory of the Resistance after six decades from WWII. One event played a particular role in this respect: the G8 (Group of Eight) summit in Genoa in July 2001. The role of the G8 was very similar to that of the Tambroni affair in 1960. Both events, coincidentally happening in Genoa, brought a Fascist legacy in the Republic back to the surface.

The G8 was an annual political forum that brought together the leaders of the richest industrialized countries to discuss economic, political, social, and environmental issues of global interest. The city of Genoa hosted the summit between 19 July and 22 July 2001. The worldwide "new global" (Della Porta 2003)[1] community also gathered in Genoa to protest against the summit together with a number of other associations, networks, and trade unions. The protests were coordinated by the *Genoa Social Forum* network. The clashes between protesters and the police escalated to violence. Three events in particular turned the protests in Genoa into a tragedy. On 20 July, the *carabiniere* Mario Placanica shot dead

[1] As Della Porta has pointed out, "new global" – rather than anti-global – is the appropriate definition for the protest movement born in Seattle in 1999. This movement, indeed, does not oppose globalization. Rather, it opts for a 'new and 'different' globalization. Namely a globalization of human rights, social policies, and environmental solutions in place of a globalization of neoliberal economy.

the 23-year-old demonstrator Carlo Giuliani. The following night of 21 July, the Italian *Polizia di Stato* burst into the "Diaz" school – the coordinating centre of the *Genoa Social Forum* – and violently beat up the unarmed demonstrators, severely injuring sixty-two of them, who were taken to hospital in critical condition. Finally, the police committed a range of physically and psychologically violent acts against the demonstrators who were transported from the Diaz school to the Bolzaneto barracks (Genoa) for identification. The armed forces humiliated, insulted, and forced those arrested to sing fascist songs and shout fascist slogans. These events were met with great indignation and a number of criminal proceedings followed. The European Court of Human Rights condemned the actions of the "Diaz" school as a crime of torture and Amnesty International described those in Bolzaneto as one of the most serious violations of human rights in Europe's recent history. A number of members of law enforcement faced sentences for their disproportionate use of violence against demonstrators. But this was not the case for Placanica: in fact, the judges ruled that he had acted in self-defence and no condemnation followed.

Because of this, because of his youth, and because of his death, Carlo Giuliani became a symbol of the tragic events in Genoa and a highly divisive figure in the Italian political debate. On one hand, the Right defended the actions of the police and identified Giuliani (and the entire network of movements demonstrating in Genoa) with the so-called *Black Bloc,* a group characterized by violent and riotous manners and comprised of undercover provocateurs. On the other hand, the Left made Giuliani a martyr. His victimhood became a catalyst for the identity of the latest generation of leftists: as a victim of State repression, Giuliani was turned into a generational hero. Young activists chiefly remember and celebrate Giuliani through the epithet of "ragazzo" (boy). *Per sempre ragazzo* is the title of an anthology of poetry and short stories dedicated to Carlo Giuliani edited by activist and writer Paola Staccioli (2011). "Carlo Giuliani, ragazzo" is inscribed on a commemorative stone in piazza Alimonda, where Placanica shot him dead. It is also the title of a documentary by Francesca Comencini (2002), in which the director makes a comparison between Giuliani and the partisans of the Resistance. The protagonists of the novel *2005 Dopo Cristo* (2005) also mention Carlo Giuliani when reflecting on the inability of the latest generation of leftists to organize themselves into a real rebellion: "Ha un grande carisma. È come Carlo Giuliani. Che è morto. Ma a noi ci serve qualcuno vivo" (Babette Factory 2005, 315). The year before Comencini's documentary, the directors Marco Giusti and Roberto Torelli produced *Bella ciao* (2001), a documentary on the events of Genoa, which begins with the funeral of Giuliani and focuses on police violence.

"Bella ciao" is the title of a song traditionally associated with the partisan struggle. A must in any leftist protest, this song gained great popularity throughout the decades. In 2011, the Italian presbyter Don Andrea Gallo, activist, pacifist, and the founder of the San Benedetto al Porto community in Genoa, celebrated the tenth anniversary of Giuliani's death in Genoa by singing "Bella ciao" on a truck passing through the streets of the city, crammed with people participating in the commemoration. Three years earlier, in 2008, the organizers of another commemorative ceremony in piazza Alimonda played a tape from 25 April 1995 in which Carlo Giuliani read letters by condemned partisans on the occasion of the Liberation anniversary. The juxtaposition of Giuliani and the partisans of the Resistance also informs the graphic novel *Carlo Giuliani. Il ribelle di Genova* by Manuel De Carli and Francesco Barilli (2011), where the authors develop an epic narration of Giuliani's story and present the new global movement as the last link in a chain of social movements in the country's history, which includes the Risorgimento, the Resistance, and the protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s. As these examples show, a generation of writers, artists, directors, and activists who were born decades after the Resistance appropriated the memory of that unexperienced time to read their present. To some extents, it is only by recurring to the memory of the liberation struggle that they seemed to be able to lend credibility to the political battles of their time.

Artists and intellectuals also mobilized the figure of Giuliani to retrospectively reinterpret past periods of the country's history. Staccioli's anthology of short stories set in the 1970s presents ten writers rereading the stories of ten young leftist protesters killed by the police during the Years of Lead. Staccioli dedicated the anthology "a Carlo Giuliani, e a tutti i caduti nella lunga lotta per l'emancipazione e la giustizia sociale" (2005, 7). She places Giuliani into a tradition of fighters against oppression and emphasises the political value of their commemoration. The dominant discourse of the ruling parties on the memory of the Resistance, she suggests, was the main driving force for her to reread the stories of those of her generation who were killed by the armed forces:

> Tutti i racconti sono dedicati ai "nostri" compagni. Anche per rifiutare i tentativi di identificazione dei percorsi umani e storici degli oppressi con quelli degli oppressori, di equiparazione dei martiri della Resistenza con i ragazzi di Salò. È un crimine storico cercare di cancellare il passato, ponendo sullo stesso piano due opposte e inconciliabili concezioni del mondo. (12)

The figure of Giuliani drew out some long-standing ideological divisions in the country's history. A song written in 2002 by the songwriter, philologist, and

collaborator of the satirical journal *Il Vernacoliere* Pardo Fornaciari, whose father, Pierino Fornaciari, was a teacher and communist partisan in the Resistance, sheds further light on this. Fornaciari dedicated a song to Carlo Giuliani and entitled it "Vi ricordate quel 20 di luglio". In the lyrics, he suggests that Placanica killed Giuliani while he was defending the other demonstrators from their violence and makes him a symbol of freedom. Fornaciari models the lyrics on the communist folk song "Vi ricordate quel 18 aprile", written in 1948 by the poet Lanfranco Bellotti. In that song, Bellotti referred to the communist discontent after the Italian elections in 1948, the first democratic elections after the Liberation War, in which Christian Democracy gained a majority. In particular, Bellotti focuses on the figure of Mario Scelba, the Minister of the Interior at the time, whose management of the protests attracted much criticism because of the excessive use of repressive means. Bellotti ends the song by stirring comrades up in the struggle for freedom. Fornaciari connects the two periods of the country's history and looks at the repression of protests as a longstanding dividing line between the Left and Right.

7. From postmemory to memory?

This article looked at the intergenerational articulation of the memory of the antifascist Resistance. As a consequence of events and political circumstances that have taken place since the 1960s, those who were born during and after WWII have developed works, memoirs, and collective practices related to the Resistance and its legacy in their own time. The Resistance is an experience that "they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up" (Hirsch 2008, 103). These generations have constantly interwoven (and often stratified) different temporal levels and have looked back at the Resistance "by imaginative investment, projection, and creation" (107).

As part of WWII and a war in itself, the antifascist struggle cost the lives of tens of thousands of people. In her theorization of postmemory, Hirsch ponders the ethics of remembrance regarding traumatic past events that are transmitted to future generations: "What do we owe the victims? How can we best carry their stories forward without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn, having our own stories displaced by them? How are we implicated in the crimes?" (104). Mechanisms of both appropriation and displacement informed the intergenerational transmission of the memory of the Resistance in Italy. On the one hand, political parties have appropriated the

memory of victims – whether by mythologizing or vituperating them – for contingent political purposes. This often has resulted in a 'politics' (rather than an ethics) of remembrance. On the other hand, the stories from the Liberation War have often overwhelmed post-1945 generations. In the 1960s and particularly in the 2000s, young leftist militants felt the need to return to the unexperienced time of the Resistance to legitimate their actions and ideals, or even to make their victimhood and suffering more credible. As stated by Chiara Ingrao in the foreword of the graphic novel *Carlo Giuliani. Il ribelle di Genova*:

> Non è semplice, rispondere a questo attacco concentrico senza farsi travolgere dalla retorica. Non serve a capire e a scambiarsi le esperienze, raccontare Carlo come un martire della Resistenza, o i movimenti anti-Gelmini come un nuovo '68, o le donne del 13 febbraio come la fotocopia del femminismo anni '70. Per chi ha 20 anni nel 2011, appiattirsi sui miti delle generazioni precedenti può essere un abbraccio soffocante, anziché un punto di riferimento. (2011, 2)

The 'postness' of these self-narrations illustrates what Hirsch herself recognized in the notion of postmemory: "Postmemory shares the layering of these other "posts" and their belatedness, aligning itself with the practice of citation and mediation that characterize them, marking a particular end-of-century/turn-of-century moment of looking backward rather than ahead and of defining the present in relation to a troubled past rather than initiating new paradigms" (2008, 106).

As regards to the antifascist Resistance, it is worth considering the context in which such displacement of 'postness' took shape, namely the threshold of globalization as the time in which the frameworks of identity of nation-states started losing their symbolic potential. On the one hand, a desire to preserve historical memory from politically driven oblivion lied behind the generational attitude of reading the present through narratives of the past. On the other hand, such rereading has also prevented those who did not experience the Resistance from developing their own narration of their times; and it has also undermined the political potential at the core of their opposition. As Roland Barthes wrote in his review of Pasolini's *Salò* in 1976, "Fascism is too serious and insidious a danger to be dealt with by simple analogy.... Fascism constrains us: it *obliges* us to think it exactly, analytically, politically; the only thing that art can do with it, if it handles it, is to make it credible, to *demonstrate* how it comes about, not to *show* what it resembles." (qtd in Forgacs 1999, 199).

In her theorization of postmemory, Hirsch examines the role of art in re-animating past events and setting a "*living* connection" between the "post"

generations and the events that preceded their births (Hirsch 2008, 122). Among other sources, she focuses on Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus* (1987) as a successful example of a postmemorial re-elaboration of the trauma of the Holocaust. In light of all this, it is worth concluding this article with a few panels from a contemporary Italian graphic novel. Zerocalcare's *Kobane Calling* (2016) focuses on the conflict between the Kurdish people and ISIS fundamentalists in the autonomous region of Rojava, in Northern Syria. In one panel, Zerocalcare offers a reflection on war. He highlights different motivations to engage in a war with its atrocity. Beyond any simplification, he calls attention to the self-defence struggle through the figure of the Roman partisan Carla Capponi and makes it a term of comparison with the struggle of the Kurdish people:

In this panel, Zerocalcare disentangles the memory of the Resistance from a Right-Left frame of reference and uses it to represent some basic aims of freedom against oppression. Above all, Zerocalcare disentangles the memory of the Resistance from a merely national framework and mobilizes it towards a transnational, global understanding of the struggle for self-determination. The

antifascist Resistance becomes his term of comparison when he empathizes with the others. Unlike the authors and activists mentioned above, Zerocalcare projects the memory of the Resistance on an 'other' different to himself or to those who share his political convictions or national belonging. He bridges his own cultural memory – which Jan Assmann defined as a "concretion of identity" (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 130) – with the condition of someone who is both geographically and culturally unfamiliar. There is no aim of self-legitimation in this re-elaboration of the Resistance. Rather, the memory of the Resistance legitimates the struggles of another. As Jan Assmann wrote, cultural memory "exists in two modes: first in the mode of potentiality of the archive whose accumulated texts, images, and rules of conduct act as a total horizon, and second in the mode of actuality, whereby each contemporary context puts the objectivized meaning into its own perspective, giving it its own relevance." (130).

It is in the actuality of memory's objectivation into lived reality – where the past resignifies the present rather than displacing it – that the prerogative of remembrance lies. Above all, Zerocalcare's panel and Marianne Hirsch's considerations on the risks of postmemory as a tendency "of defining the present in relation to a troubled past rather than initiating new paradigms" (Hirsch 2008, 106) lead us to a further question, namely the possibility of memory, as a framework of identity, to become a cognitive tool for connecting with others in a time of inherent interdependency. A time in which our cultural horizons will be less and less confined to national borders and increasingly global. Multicultural globalization, indeed, interrogates us on the values through which to inhabit a new era of interdependency; that is to say it interrogates us on our identity, of which memory is the home.

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