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## Table of Contents

David Meghnagi <i>Teaching the Shoah and training educators</i>	207
Italian translation: <i>Memoria e storia della Shoah. Una sfida per la didattica</i>	215
Piero Simeone Colla «Do you talk about God in this nursery school?». <i>Rhetoric and experience of the sacred in the reform of the Swedish childcare system (1968-1980)</i>	223
Claudia Gina Hassan <i>Femicide, visual culture, and education</i> [Femminicidio, cultura visuale ed educazione]	236
Emiliana Mangone & Giovanna Russo <i>Mediterranean migrations as experienced by migrants: Memories as a “lifeline”</i>	243
David Meghnagi <i>About a silent exile</i>	255
<b>Journals</b> <i>Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane</i> [Psychotherapy and the Human Sciences], 2020, Volume 54, Issues nos. 1, 2, 3 & 4 (Edited by Paolo Migone)	261

# Teaching the *Shoah* and training educators\*

David Meghnagi\*\*

**Abstract.** Educating on the history and memory of the *Shoah* is among the toughest challenges academics we face, principally because it involves disparate subjects and numerous specializations. Initially, research was limited to the War period only but, as time went by, it was gradually extended to encompass the precedent periods too. The depth of the matter, along with the establishment of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, has meant that teachers are now keenly aware of the many challenges ahead, that would be impossible to condense into refresher courses. These obstacles brought forth the classification of disciplines as well as the separation of knowledge. Contemporaneously, they indicate new methods of teaching which would have profound implications for each branch of knowledge.

**Key words:** Interdisciplinary Approach, Intercultural Education, Holocaust, Memory, *Shoah*.

**Riassunto.** La didattica intorno alla storia e alla memoria della *Shoah* è tra le sfide più complesse con cui confrontarsi perché mette in gioco competenze e specializzazioni molto diverse. Gli orizzonti della ricerca, in un primo momento fortemente limitati al periodo bellico, si sono progressivamente ampliati ed estesi ai periodi precedenti. La complessità delle questioni, con l'istituzionalizzazione del "Giorno della memoria", ha fatto emergere negli insegnanti difficoltà che non potevano essere risolte d'incanto, con uno o più corsi di aggiornamento. La sfida metteva in gioco la classificazione delle discipline e separazione dei saperi. Allo stesso tempo indicava un modo nuovo di fare didattica che aveva implicazioni per ogni ambito disciplinare.

**Parole chiave:** Approccio interdisciplinare, Educazione interculturale, Memoria, Olocausto, *Shoah*.

## 1. A Difficult Challenge

Educating on the history and memory of the Shoah is among the toughest challenges academics face, because it involves disparate subjects and specializations: history, geography, psychology, pedagogy, cultural anthropology, philosophy, literature. Not to mention the history of science and medicine, religious symbolism, economics and history of law. Just to give an example, think of the concept of genocide introduced by Raphael Lemkin for the first time in 1944 (Lemkin, 1944) and its implications and developments in the contemporary legal debate<sup>1</sup>.

The tragedy of the Shoah affected the whole of human civilization, not only in places where exterminations took place, but also in the lands where the fleeing people would seek refuge. The war involved the colonies and in the specific case of North Africa and the Near East, had the advance of the German Army not been halted at El Alamein, the Jewish communities of the Arab world and the Yishuv itself (the settlement of Jews which began with the Jewish national rebirth movement) would have faced a destiny not dissimilar to the one that many European Jews endured. Mobile gas

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\* An earlier version of this essay (Meghnagi, 2018a) has been published on the website of the Italian "Ministry of Education, University and Research" (*Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca* [MIUR]): [www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Linee+guida+nazionali+per+una+didattica+della+Shoah+a+scuola.pdf/98d90ec7-0e36-40cf-ba67-4d79836186a8?version=1.0&t=1531153062490](http://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Linee+guida+nazionali+per+una+didattica+della+Shoah+a+scuola.pdf/98d90ec7-0e36-40cf-ba67-4d79836186a8?version=1.0&t=1531153062490). The Italian translation of this paper, entitled "Memoria e storia della *Shoah*. Una sfida per la didattica", is published on pp. 215-222 of this issue no. 3, 2020, Volume 8, of *Trauma and Memory* (DOI: 10.12869/TM2020-3-02).

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<sup>1</sup> For an introduction see Bauer (2009), Lemkin (1944), and Meghnagi (2005).

chambers, which were being tested by the *Einsatzgruppen* during the advance of the German Army on the Eastern front, were ready to be put in use - with the support and backing of the followers of the Jerusalem Mufti - from Cairo to Alexandria, from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem to Baghdad, to Damascus (Meghnagi, 2010, 2018b, 2020). Nazi Germany would have lost the war all the same, but would have risked the destruction of North Africa and Near East Jewry. It is no coincidence that in the months during which British troops were faltering, Franz Werfel's novel on the extermination of the Armenians was one of the most widely read books from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (Werfel, 1933; Meghnagi in Mikhaelian, 2015).

Composed in Damascus in 1929, and published four years later, through tragic epilogues Werfel's book tells the story of the Armenian people's suffering. His fictional reconstruction was also an anguished foreshadowing of the danger looming over the Jews with the rise of the Nazis in Germany. As sensed by Benjamin & Scholem (1980) in their dense and painful correspondence, Kafka's works described the danger successfully. In a letter of 1934, Scholem writes: "The world of Kafka is the world of revelation (...) in the perspective in which it is dangled to its own nothingness" (Benjamin & Scholem, 1980). Echoing him, four years later, Benjamin affirmed with lucid premonition: "The world of Kafka, often so serene and popular by angels, is the exact complement of his era, which is about to suppress large masses of the inhabitants of this planet. It is not excluded that the experience that corresponds to the private man Kafka will be made by large masses only in the occasion of their elimination" (*ibidem*). When Benjamin and Scholem, separated by seas and continents, reflected on an uncertain future full of dangers, the war had not yet broken out. Furthermore, European diplomacy with the *Munich Agreement* preferred to close its eyes to the danger<sup>2</sup>.

Intertwining individual and collective destinies, against the background of massacres and deportations, Werfel gives a voice to the history of seven Armenian villages besieged on Mount Moussa Dagh, and of their tenacious resistance against the assaults of the Turks, until their eventual rescue by a French ship. In the months when German armies threatened British presence in the Near East from Cyrenaica, it was clear that a temporary withdrawal of British troops from the region in the event of a pincer attack from the Caucasus and Cyrenaica, would have risked the dream of a rebirth in the *Land of the fathers* being lost forever. The struggle would have been for a different death, exactly as happened later, in April 1943 for the fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto in April 1943 and the other ghettos of Eastern Europe (Krall & Edelman, 1985; Rotem, 2014; Rolli & Rotem, 2015; Meghnagi, 1985, 2005, 2014, 2016, 2019a). In those months, in the communes of the *Kibbutz*, there was discussion on how to organize the resistance - on the hills of Galilee and in the desert of the Negev where the fortress of Massada stands: a symbol of resistance from Roman destruction.

## 2. The Broadening of Research Horizons and the Consequences on Teaching

The horizon of research was initially limited to the war period, but as time went by it grew to encompass the period of incubation which preceded it: World War I and its devastating consequences on every aspect of private and public life. Followed by the cascade following this period that acted as a backdrop to the rise of Nazism. A concrete example of these developments are Poliakov's monumental research on antisemitism and Aryan myth (Poliakov, 1955, 1961-1996, 1976), and Mosse's research on the cultural origins of the *Third Reich* (Mosse, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1985, 1988a, 1988b, 1991). Without taking anything away from the peculiarities of each single phase, scholars

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<sup>2</sup> "The Munich Agreement" or "Munich Betrayal" was an agreement concluded at Munich on 30 September 1938, by Nazi Germany, the United Kingdom, the French Third Republic, and the Kingdom of Italy. It provided "cession" to Germany of the Sudeten German territory" of Czechoslovakia. The agreement was celebrated by European diplomats as an agreement that would avoid war. Hitler announced it was his last territorial claim in Europe. In reality it was a fundamental stage of a generalized aggression by the Nazi regime against the whole of Europe. The agreement seemed to be an appeasement. See <https://www.britannica.com/event/Munich-Agreement>.

have broadened the scope of their research to incorporate themes of short and long-term cultural history: *Social Darwinism* and eugenics, colonial ideology and medical culture with its prejudices, religious antisemitism and so-called “racial” antisemitism. It is no coincidence that Italian Fascism would have justified antisemitic legislation as a metropolitan extension to what has already been implemented in colonial possessions. Not to mention the Armenian tragedy commanded by the German militia (who had accumulated vast “experience” between 1904-1907 in Africa with the Herero, starved to death and poisoned the wells), having subsequently provided support to his ally in the destruction process that was implemented by the Turkish regime (Luther, 2018b; Morgenthau, 2007; Riccardi, 2002).

Didactics must be able to consider subsequent collective representations. As part of a clash between different systems and visions of politics, including culture and society, which in turn influence historiography, social sciences, psychology, theology, art and literature from within. The tragic case of the Herero was identified as a genocide in the United Nations Whitaker Report (1985). The report explains it as one of the first attempts of genocide in Modern History, explained as the “extermination of an entire population” in the twentieth-century ([https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerre\\_herero](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerre_herero)). As for the other European colonial powers, just to cite examples, Belgian domination in the Congo was responsible for the deaths of 10 million victims. Not to mention the Franco-Belgian co-responsibility in recent years for the Rwandan genocide. British domination in Sudan between 1882 and 1903 resulted in a population reduction from 9 million to 3 million, and in the war of aggression against Ethiopians, Italian troops made use of chemical weapons (<https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genocidio#Asia>).

A specialist training course presents the ideologies behind this tragic chapter of twentieth-century history, through the rehashing and reenactment of the historical record, and through techniques of transmitting collective memory, including negazionism, revisionism and distortions (Meghnagi, 2012, 2014b, 2019a, 2019c).

Due to these considerations, the current developments of anti-Jewish hatred in the Islamic Arab world are not to be considered the mere product of the conflict that has tragically opposed the aspirations of the Zionist movement for decades to those of Arab nationalism. They are also, and above all, the result of a broader and more complex historical process, which has roots in Islamic religious culture, and which invests the religious and nationalist narratives from within. These narratives formed the backdrop of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the end of the Caliphate, and in the 1930's saw an organic political and ideological alliance between important sectors of Arab and Islamic nationalism and the Axis Powers (Timmermann, 2003; Herf, 2009; Meghnagi, 2018b, 2020).

The teaching on the Shoah has struggled to find a disciplinary definition in the academic sphere and only since the 1960s, with the public discussion instituted by the Eichmann process, has it gradually conquered areas that initially remained on the margins. In particular those that were limited to exceptional contributions, specifically from exiled intellectuals or camp veterans who, in contrast to the commonplaces of the first decades following the war, were able to deal with the epochal fracture that had resulted from the tragedy of extermination. To name a few that from different perspectives placed Auschwitz at the center of their reflection: Primo Levi, Paul Celan, Elie Wiesel, Vassily Grossman, for literature and witness; Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Gunther Anders e Arendt, among the German Jewish exile in the USA (Alexander, 2006; Meghnagi, 2005, 2010b).

Despite the quantity and scientific quality of specialist works about the Shoah, they have little impact on the most widely distributed works Commemorative ceremonies and solemn declarations, important and necessary to keep the attention and awareness of current dangers alive, can risk becoming empty containers over time, and if they are not officially honored by schools, universities and the media, they can also risk erasure from the critical study.



### 3. The Day of Remembrance: Lights and Shadows

After being *repressed* or declassified and reduced in favor of less alarming and consoling readings, which also partly involved the Jewish world, the memory of the Shoah has gradually risen to the founding myth of what Europe and the world would no longer want if history was to be repeated.

In the crisis that involved the great ideological narratives of the twentieth century, the memory of the Shoah ended up filling a void of identity and belonging, taking on the value of a paradigm. The tragedy has risen as a symbol of absolute evil and a touchstone of every event and has also become a terrain of moral and cultural confrontation, as well as political (Alexander, 2006; Meghnagi, 2005).

In the name of impossible reparations, the role of *officiants* of a ritual that society has great difficulty in accepting has been entrusted to the Jews. And as defenders of such a ritual, they are also *guardians* of a new *orthodoxy* that sets out what the ritual consists of. And so, a new, multi-faceted and complex situation has been created, where light is mixed with shadow - a situation laden with unresolved ambiguities and potential dangers. In an ISPO survey published in 2004, 36% of Europeans (and 34% of Italians) are of the opinion that the Jews should stop acting as victims and talking about the Holocaust (Manheimer and Goldstaub, 2004, p. 19; Meghnagi, 2005, pp. 137-40). But if the Jews don't participate in this ritual "or officiate" in it, the danger is that others might take it on and risk transforming it into a weapon that can be ultimately used against them.

The surreal aspect of this practice was evident in the April 25 celebrations in Rome, where those participating in a procession following the insignia of the Jewish Brigade (who participated in the liberation of our country), found themselves the victims of an attack by those carrying the insignia of movements that for ideological and political reasons sided with the Axis powers during the Second World War (just think of the organic alliance of the Mufti of Jerusalem with Fascism and Nazism). If instead the Jews perform the rite, in exchange for the 'advantages' that derive from the role of 'priests' which they are called, the rite itself risks becoming futile, ending up belonging only to them.

Western society can illusorily think of freeing from an oppressive image and take its distance from it, thereby deluding itself that a false *lost sense of peace* has been found again.

In the long run, the management of the rite risks exposing the Jews to new false accusations that have as a background the banalization, and the memory of the *Shoah*, in the name of other memories: a form of symbolic cannibalism in which the old accusations are added and enjoy an alleged position income from which other peoples, with their sufferings, would be excluded. The more the ritual is entrusted to the Jews the more the tragic memories belong to them alone. It is inconsequential if the chosen date of 27<sup>th</sup> January is a symbolic date for everyone. If they renounce this role, it might be taken on by others who might officiate against the Jews and use the idea of the Shoah to accuse them of perpetrating the same suffering on others that they themselves once unjustly underwent. "How is it that a people that went through so much suffering can treat the Palestinians in the same way the Germans treated them?": This question is usually raised after a debate or a film-showing and some poor person is put in the difficult position of having to *justify* himself or herself.

In a two-decade conference at the Roma Tre Faculty of Letters, the decision was made to ban questions that were not on the subject. As if the themes were not intertwined, and the imposed and self-imposed silence (not to mention the consequences of a debate linked to the Middle East crisis) did not in itself constitute a defeat of thought in the face of a "new" antisemitism, which projects on reality the demonic images of a state and a nation that were once addressed to Jews. The decision was a sign of unease that put the organizers in the uncomfortable position of limiting the participants right to speak. The answer should have been quite different indeed. As entwined themes, it was necessary to enter into the merits of the problems, focusing on the drifts of a debate and the sick words that were the background to the development of a "new" antisemitism, one which projects demonic images onto a nation and State that were once aimed at Jews.

"How come", I asked a member of the public who'd proposed many of the *clichés* of Middle Eastern conflict, "when it comes to Israel people tend to ask with false innocence, how did yesterday's victims turn into 'executioners', while is this question never asked for others? How come the same people who hurry for the alleged transformation of the victims into executioners, when talking about terrorism of Arab and Palestinian nationalist and Islamist origin tend to understand and reroute, or

worse to justify in the name of the injustices suffered?". "Will this not be the way to argue the spy of an unresolved ambivalence in the relationship with Judaism that transforms Jews into symbols of someone else's speech and objects of projections that deny the concrete reality of their existence? ". "If, on the one hand", I added, "the Jews are arbitrarily and falsely accused of having betrayed a story, while on the other it comes to justify terrorism in the name of the injustices suffered, this will not be a problem that lies behind the discussion and that should be investigated and dissected? Isn't that where we should start if we want to cure sick words?"

Hypocritical aestheticism may be a justification in the case of other evils done in the name of injustice and suffering undergone, but not in the case of Jews. This was the ignoble attitude seen in the case of anti-Israeli suicide bombers before European cities began to be targeted too. Will this not be a political problem as well as a moral one, which calls into question the very codes with which reality is read? In this perverse logic, the trend of the Middle Eastern crisis sets the phases, the forms and the virulence of a debate that is upstream and that with the worsening of the Middle Eastern crisis can take on a virulent character, to the point that the Jewish institutions, which prepare to send witnesses for the rite, have taken to an unhealthy habit of supporting the witness with a young man prepared to respond on these issues. The witness from hell can only talk about hell, while the political expert can instead answer all other questions and deal with the distortions produced by misinformation and unawareness.

The "ritual" is safe, but not forever. The danger has only been averted for the time being, and Jews have been placed in the uncomfortable position of having to deal with a double form of blackmail: they are obliged to remember because others forget and are accused of placing others in a position of perpetual guilt.

After Auschwitz, antisemitism may be expressed in an apparently respectable way only if Jews are targeted as a State - demonizing Israel and deforming the tragic events of a now century-long conflict in such a way as to make it unrecognizable. This new type of antisemitism comes full circle when Jews are accused of wanting to keep other countries in a state of permanent guilt in order to acquire 'privileges' for themselves and to cover up any of Israel's apparent 'faults'

Personal memory involves emotions and thoughts, consisting of recollections and familiar stories. As an event gradually fades and is drained of ritual, such as the ritual of remembering the Resistance movement in Italy, those who don't recognize themselves as sharing western cultural values, or are actually openly opposed to Western civilization, risk identifying Jews with the evils of this society. Hatred of Hollywood becomes irritation at the memory of Auschwitz. Hatred of Western civilization and US power blends into hatred of Israel, and the fact that Israel is a small country surrounded by seemingly 'unfriendly' countries, infallibly exposed to danger and destruction is often overlooked.

In the psychoanalytic field, after the pioneering research of Bettelheim (1976) and the studies on the crypt by A. Torok (1993), and in the wake of the developments of the research on testimony, there has been a recovery of interest in the issue of the transmission of trauma and of the processes of mourning that had expired in the last works of Freud. Most notably in the three tormented essays on Moses (Meghnagi, 1992, 2015). In the wake of the debate that opened with the *Eichmann Process*, there has been a recovery of interest in the theme of evil and choice within the social and philosophical sphere. More recently, historiographic approaches have placed greater emphasis on juridical and social psychological dimensions. The experimental research conducted by Milgram (1974) on the mechanisms of obedience cast a new and disturbing light on the mechanisms that can be the background for the realization of an extermination project. Shifting the reflection from the theme of aggression to that of obedience, Milgram highlighted the role that the cognitive unity of a process for awareness of the dangers has, and the role played by the delegation in the process of splitting the functions of the Super-ego with the consequent need (in terms of the prevention and defense of the democratic order) to establish rules and constraints that strengthen people's ability to resist unjust and immoral orders. Milgram's experiments, heavily criticized for the trauma caused to those who participated in them, paved the way for a more mature reflection on the dangers inherent in contemporary society. This is due to the growing fragmentation of the functions performed at work and in every professional sphere.

## 4. Conclusions

The sheer depth of the matter, along with the establishment of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, means that the schools and teachers faced with cumulative difficulties in teaching the history of the *Shoah*, will never be able to magically debate and subsequently resolve the issues in refresher courses. Especially since the delay involved the academic world itself. The teaching challenge, deservedly accepted by the teaching staff, had to be confronted with the need to overcome the arbitrarily established boundaries between various disciplinary fields. Indicating a new way of doing teaching that would have implications for each subject area, showing in many cases the arbitrary characteristics and functionalities of reproducing the balance of power within universities, rather than the actual progress of research and knowledge.

This was one of the reasons why in the academic year 2005-2006 the “International Masters on Holocaust Studies, Second Level” was established at Roma Tre. At the beginning, the first question we asked ourselves when trying to get an initial answer, was how overcome these false antinomies, involving scholars from different disciplines, in a shared challenge, which called into question the rigid fences that separate the individual disciplines taught at the university. By working together on an educational project, psychologists have personally touched the danger of a “purely” psychological reading of problems that also call into question the social and historical dimensions of belonging. In the same way, historians understood from the inside the one-sidedness of an approach that did not consider the social, religious and psychological dimensions of the problems as well.

In this perspective, even those enrolled in the Masters course, who in their first year were largely scholars looking for an institutional recognition of a course of study and didactic experimentation that had accompanied them for years, should have belonged to different specializations, in the belief that the different curriculum, beyond the initial difficulties and due to the lack of basic historical knowledge (to be quickly filled with the compulsory reading of some fundamental works on the subject, in particular those of Hilberg (1995), Bauer (2001) and Bauman (1992), would have added value to teachers as well as the students as a whole, with priceless repercussions on school didactics. The choice of three such different authors is not only an invitation to familiarize yourself from the beginning with a complex and diverse variety of approaches that has no equal, but also an invitation to deepen their cultural matrices and genealogies. In this perspective the different historiographic approaches, as for the other disciplines, can be studied in their own becoming, becoming themselves the subject of historiographic research (one of the proposed modules was the ‘history of the historiography of the *Shoah*’).

To give concrete examples, it is enough to think about the repercussions on teaching the history of medicine and biology in schools. The discussion could be extended to other apparently distant disciplines such as nutrition, sports and pharmaceutical disciplines. In this perspective, no disciplinary area could really be considered outside the Memorial Day commemorations. In support of this way of teaching, the students of the Masters course have been involved in training courses for schools which involved over one thousand second and third year students from the Regions of Tuscany, Lazio and Piedmont, with an entrance test and an exit for the evaluation of the skills acquired, which for the first time also involved students of Maghrebin origin and of Islamic religion in Italy, assuming a safe and positive intercultural and inter-religious value, respecting the cultures of origin and sensitivities of the students and families.

In the belief that only by taking advantage of the experience of other European countries, by avoiding repeating their mistakes, can the challenge posed by the demographic and cultural changes that have affected our country be overcome<sup>3</sup>. I still remember what it was like today, the uneasiness of the Ministerial Officials and School Directors with whom I had made the first contact, worried

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<sup>3</sup> The project "Adopt a memory" was jointly conducted and implemented with Claudia Hassan (prof. at the *University of Tor Vergata*), in the context of the University of Roma Tre in collaboration with the *Europa Ricerca Association*, with the contribution of School Directorates of the Lazio, Piedmont and Tuscany Regions and the Municipality of Rome.



about the strong "Islamic" presence in some of the selected schools. "Wouldn't it be better to start" for those schools "an intercultural project", an Official of one of the regional school directorates involved worried me? "And what could be more intercultural", I replied tactfully, and doing everything possible to diffuse a situation I envisioned escalating, "of a challenge that has as its objective the construction of a feeling of shared citizenship?" "Isn't this," I added, "one of the fundamental objectives that schools should set themselves to encourage the cultural integration of students of all creeds and backgrounds? It would be tragic that for a misunderstood concern not to touch the susceptibility of families where there is a strong presence of connected anti-Jewish prejudices of Islamic origin, we should back away on a theme that deeply involves the construction of shared citizenship values. Italy is fortunate to be able to tackle the problem, drawing on the experiences of other European countries, avoiding repeating mistakes". Not entirely convinced the Official took charge of organizing the meetings and in the end she became passionate about the project, following its stages and developments, not only for a verification of what we were doing, but also for the theme that had ended up involving her.

The project was successfully carried out involving over one thousand middle school students (second and third class) as a whole. The results of the research were presented on three occasions: at the Liceo Visconti in Rome and at the School Directorate in Florence in 2007, on the occasion of the Turin Book Fair in 2008<sup>4</sup>. Publicly discussed with the participation of a large audience of operators and students, these results can be considered an example of best teaching practices of the *Shoah* on an intercultural level.

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<sup>4</sup> *Not to forget the Shoah ... the testimony of Liliana Segre*. Meeting with the students of the secondary schools of II degree, Book Fair of Turin, 12 May 2008. Speeches by F. De Sanctis (director of the regional school office of Piedmont), Colombo (Member of the Deputy Chamber), M. Palmizio (Senator). Presentation of the results: C. Hassan (University of "Tor Vergata"). Conclusions of D. Meghnagi (Roma Tre University).

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# Memoria e storia della Shoah. Una sfida per la didattica\*

## *Teaching the Shoah and training educators*

David Meghnagi\*\*

**Riassunto.** La didattica intorno alla storia e alla memoria della Shoah è tra le sfide più complesse con cui confrontarsi perché mette in gioco competenze e specializzazioni molto diverse. Gli orizzonti della ricerca, in un primo momento fortemente limitati al periodo bellico, si sono progressivamente ampliati ed estesi ai periodi precedenti. La complessità delle questioni, con l'istituzionalizzazione del "Giorno della memoria", ha fatto emergere negli insegnanti difficoltà che non potevano essere risolte d'incanto, con uno o più corsi di aggiornamento. La sfida metteva in gioco la classificazione delle discipline e separazione dei saperi. Allo stesso tempo indicava un modo nuovo di fare didattica che aveva implicazioni per ogni ambito disciplinare.

**Parole chiave:** Approccio interdisciplinare, Educazione interculturale, Memoria, Olocausto, Shoah.

**Abstract.** Educating on the history and memory of the Shoah is among the toughest challenges academics we face, principally because it involves disparate subjects and numerous specializations. Initially, research was limited to the War period only but, as time went by, it was gradually extended to encompass the precedent periods too. The depth of the matter, along with the establishment of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, has meant that teachers are now keenly aware of the many challenges ahead, that would be impossible to condense into refresher courses. These obstacles brought forth the classification of disciplines as well as the separation of knowledge. Contemporaneously, they indicate new methods of teaching which would have profound implications for each branch of knowledge.

**Key words:** Interdisciplinary Approach, Intercultural Education, Holocaust, Memory, Shoah.

## 1. Una difficile sfida

La didattica intorno alla storia e alla memoria della Shoah è tra le sfide più complesse con cui confrontarsi, perché mette in gioco competenze e specializzazioni diverse: storia e geografia, psicologia e pedagogia, antropologia culturale, filosofia e letteratura. Per non parlare della storia della scienza e della medicina; del simbolismo religioso, della storia sociale ed economica e del diritto (solo per fare un esempio si pensi al concetto "genocidio", introdotto per la prima volta nel 1944 da Raphael Lemkin (1944) e alle sue implicazioni e sviluppi nel dibattito giuridico contemporaneo<sup>1</sup>. La tragedia della Shoah ha coinvolto l'intera civiltà umana. Non solo i territori in cui si è consumato lo sterminio, ma anche i luoghi verso cui le persone in fuga cercavano scampo. La guerra coinvolse le colonie e nel caso specifico dell'Africa settentrionale e del Vicino Oriente, se le forze dell'Asse non fossero state sconfitte a El Alamein, le comunità ebraiche del mondo arabo e lo stesso *Yishuv* (l'insediamento ebraico nato con il movimento di rinascita nazionale ebraica) avrebbe subito un destino analogo a quello riservato agli Ebrei europei. Le camere a gas mobili, utilizzate dalle

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[www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Linee+guida+nazionali+per+una+didattica+della+Shoah+a+scuola.pdf/98d90ec7-0e36-40cf-ba67-4d79836186a8?version=1.0&t=1531153062490](http://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Linee+guida+nazionali+per+una+didattica+della+Shoah+a+scuola.pdf/98d90ec7-0e36-40cf-ba67-4d79836186a8?version=1.0&t=1531153062490). La traduzione inglese di questo articolo, dal titolo "Teaching the Shoah and training educators", è pubblicata a pp. 207-214 di questo n. 3/2020, Volume 8, di *Trauma and Memory* (DOI: 10.12869/TM2020-3-01).

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<sup>1</sup> Per un'introduzione al problema cfr. Bauer (2009), Lemkin (1944), e Meghnagi (2005).

*Einsatzgruppen* nel corso dell'avanzata dell'esercito tedesco sul fronte orientale, erano pronte per essere usate, con l'appoggio e il sostegno dei seguaci del Muftì di Gerusalemme, al Cairo e ad Alessandria; a Tel Aviv e a Gerusalemme come a Damasco e Bagdad (Meghnagi, 2010, 2018b, 2020). La Germania nazista avrebbe comunque perduto la guerra, ma la distruzione dell'Ebraismo europeo e mediterraneo avrebbe rischiato di essere totale. Non a caso nei mesi in cui le truppe britanniche si trovarono in difficoltà, a Tel Aviv come a Gerusalemme, il romanzo di Franz Werfel sullo sterminio degli Armeni, era tra i più letti (Werfel, 1933; Meghnagi in Mikhaelian, 2015).

Composto a Damasco nel 1929 e pubblicato quattro anni dopo, il libro di Werfel racconta la storia di sofferenze del popolo armeno con i suoi tragici epiloghi. La sua ricostruzione romanzata era una prefigurazione angosciata del pericolo che incombeva sugli ebrei con l'ascesa del nazismo in Germania. Come intuito da Benjamin & Scholem (1980) nel loro fitto e doloroso carteggio, le opere di Kafka descrivevano bene il pericolo. "Il mondo di Kafka – scrive Scholem in una lettera del 1934 – è il mondo della rivelazione (...) in quella prospettiva in cui viene ricondotto al proprio nulla" (Benjamin & Scholem, 1980). Facendogli eco, quattro anni dopo, Benjamin affermava con lucida premonizione: "Il mondo di Kafka, spesso così sereno e popolato di angeli, è l'esatto complemento della sua epoca, che si accinge a sopprimere grandi masse degli abitanti di questo pianeta. Non è escluso che l'esperienza che corrisponde a quella dell'uomo privato Kafka sarà fatta da grandi masse soltanto in occasione di questa loro eliminazione" (*ibidem*). Quando Benjamin e Scholem, separati dai mari e dai continenti, riflettevano su un futuro incerto e carico di pericoli, la guerra non era ancora scoppiata e la diplomazia europea, nonostante la corsa al riarmo della Germania nazista, si illudeva con la capitolazione di Monaco, di poterla evitare<sup>2</sup>.

Intrecciando destini individuali e collettivi, sullo sfondo di massacri e deportazioni, Werfel ha dato voce alla storia degli abitanti di sette villaggi armeni assediati sul monte Mussa Dagh, e della loro tenace resistenza contro gli assalti dei Turchi, sino al loro salvataggio per opera di una nave francese. Nei mesi in cui le armate tedesche minacciavano dalla Cirenaica la presenza britannica nel Vicino Oriente, era chiaro che nel caso di un ritiro temporaneo delle truppe britanniche dalla regione nell'eventualità di un attacco tedesco a tenaglia dal Caucaso e dalla Cirenaica, il sogno di una rinascita *nella terra dei padri* avrebbe rischiato di andare per sempre perduto. La lotta sarebbe stata per una morte diversa, come accadde poi nel Ghetto di Varsavia nell'aprile del 1943 e negli altri ghetti dell'Europa orientale (Krall & Edelman, 1985; Rotem, 2014, Rolli & Rotem, 2015; Meghnagi, 1985, 2005, 2014, 2016, 2019a). In quei mesi nelle comuni dei *kibbutz*, si discuteva su come organizzare la resistenza sulle colline di Galilea e nel deserto dove sorge l'antica fortezza di Massada, luogo simbolo della resistenza alle distruzioni romane.

## 2. L'ampliamento degli orizzonti della ricerca e le conseguenze sulla didattica

Gli orizzonti della ricerca, in un primo tempo limitati al periodo bellico, si sono progressivamente ampliati ed estesi al periodo di incubazione che l'ha preceduto: la prima guerra mondiale con le sue devastanti conseguenze in ogni sfera della vita pubblica e privata e di lì a cascata sui processi di incubazione che hanno fatto da sfondo all'ascesa del nazismo. Un esempio concreto di questi sviluppi, sono la monumentale ricerca di Poliakov sull'antisemitismo e sul mito ariano (Poliakov, 1955, 1961-1996, 1976), e quelle di Mosse sulle origini culturali del *Terzo Reich* (Mosse, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1985, 1988a, 1988b, 1991). Senza togliere nulla alla specificità di ogni singola fase, gli studiosi hanno esteso la loro ricerca a temi della storia culturale di breve e lungo periodo: il darwinismo sociale e l'eugenetica, le ideologie coloniali e la cultura medica con i suoi pregiudizi, l'antisemitismo di matrice religiosa cristiana e quello "razziale". Non per caso il fascismo italiano avrebbe giustificato

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<sup>2</sup> "L'Accordo di Monaco" (la "Capitolazione", o "l'Appeasement di Monaco") fu un accordo siglato a Monaco il 30 Settembre del 1938 tra la Germania nazista e il Regno Unito., la Francia e il Regno d'Italia. L'accordo prevedeva la cessione ai danni della Cecoslovacchia dei territori abitati dai Sudeti. Celebrato dalle diplomazie europee come un accordo che avrebbe evitato la guerra (Hitler dichiarò che questa sarebbe stata la sua ultima rivendicazione territoriale), fu in realtà una tappa della politica di aggressione del regime nazista che sfociò nella Seconda guerra mondiale. Cfr. [www.britannica.com/event/Munich-Agreement](http://www.britannica.com/event/Munich-Agreement).

la legislazione antisemita come un'estensione metropolitana a quanto già attuato nei possedimenti coloniali. Per non parlare della tragedia armena in cui il Comando militare tedesco, che tra il 1904 e il 1907 aveva accumulato una vasta "esperienza" in Africa con gli Herrero, fatti morire di fame e di sete, avvelenando i pozzi, ha fornito un supporto al suo alleato nel processo di distruzione messo in atto dal regime turco (Luther, 2018; Morgenthau, 2007; Riccardi, 2002).

La didattica deve sapere tenere conto delle successive rappresentazioni collettive, come parte di uno scontro fra sistemi e visioni diverse della politica, della cultura e della società, che influenza dall'interno la storiografia, le scienze sociali, la psicologia, la teologia, l'arte e la letteratura. Nel caso specifico degli Herrero, la loro tragedia è stata identificata con il Rapporto Whitaker delle Nazioni Unite del 1985, come uno dei primi tentativi di genocidio, inteso come sterminio di un'intera popolazione, del XX secolo ([https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerre\\_herero](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerre_herero)). Quanto alle altre potenze coloniali europee, solo per citare degli esempi, la dominazione belga in Congo ha fatto 10 milioni di vittime. Per non parlare delle corresponsabilità franco-belghe in anni recenti per quanto avvenuto in Ruanda. La dominazione britannica in Sudan tra il 1882 e il 1903 ha avuto come conseguenza la riduzione della popolazione da 9 a 3 milioni. Nella guerra di aggressione contro le popolazioni etiopi, le truppe italiane fecero uso di armi chimiche (<https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genocidio#Asia>).

Un percorso di formazione specialistico deve sapersi confrontare con gli usi ideologici che di quella pagina tragica del Novecento sono stati fatti, con il racconto e la rappresentazione della storia e con le modalità di trasmissione della memoria collettiva (Meghnagi, 2012, 2014b, 2019a, 2019b).

Alla luce delle considerazioni svolte, gli sviluppi attuali dell'odio antiebraico nel mondo arabo islamico non sono da considerarsi il mero prodotto del conflitto che ha tragicamente opposto per decenni le aspirazioni del movimento sionista a quelle del nazionalismo arabo. Sono anche e soprattutto il risultato di un processo storico più ampio e complesso, che ha radici nella cultura religiosa islamica e che investe dall'interno le narrazioni religiose e nazionaliste che hanno fatto da sfondo al crollo dell'Impero ottomano e alla fine del Califfato e che negli Anni Trenta ha visto una alleanza organica politica e ideologica tra importanti settori del nazionalismo arabo e islamico e le Potenze dell'Asse (Timmermann 2003, Herf 2009, Meghnagi, 2018b, 2020a).

La didattica sulla Shoah, ha stentato a trovare in ambito accademico una sua definizione disciplinare e solo dagli anni '60, con la discussione pubblica avviata dal Processo Eichmann, ha progressivamente conquistato ambiti che dapprima erano rimasti ai margini o limitati ai contributi di eccezione, in particolare fra gli intellettuali esuli o reduci dai campi che in contrasto con i luoghi comuni dei primi decenni seguiti alla guerra furono in grado di confrontarsi con la frattura epocale che si era determinata con la tragedia dello sterminio. Per citarne alcuni che da angolature diverse hanno posto Auschwitz al centro della loro riflessione: Primo Levi, Paul Celan, Elie Wiesel, Vassily Grossman, per la letteratura e per la testimonianza; Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Gunther Anders e Arendt, tra gli esuli ebrei tedeschi in America (Alexander, 2006, Meghnagi, 2005, 2010b).

Nonostante la quantità e la qualità scientifica dei lavori specialistici sull'argomento, la ricaduta che se ne ha nelle opere di più larga diffusione non è all'altezza della sfida. Le cerimonie commemorative e le dichiarazioni solenni, importanti e necessarie per tenere viva l'attenzione e la consapevolezza dei pericoli attuali, rischiano di diventare col tempo dei contenitori vuoti, se non sono accompagnati nelle sedi deputate (le scuole, le università e i media) da un approfondimento critico oltre che da una divulgazione che sia all'altezza della sfida.

### **3. Il Giorno della memoria: luci e ombre**

Dopo essere stata *rimossa* o derubricata e ridimensionata a favore di letture meno allarmanti e consolatorie, che hanno in parte coinvolto anche il mondo ebraico, la memoria della Shoah è progressivamente assunta a mito di fondazione di quel che l'Europa e il mondo non avrebbero più voluto che si ripetesse.

Nella crisi che ha coinvolto le grandi narrazioni ideologiche del Novecento, la memoria della Shoah ha finito per riempire un vuoto identitario e di appartenenza, assumendo il valore di un paradigma. La tragedia è assunta a simbolo del male assoluto e a pietra di paragone di ogni evento ed



è anche divenuta un terreno di scontro morale e culturale, oltre che politico (Alexander, 2006, Meghnagi, 2005).

In nome di una riparazione impossibile, agli Ebrei si è *affidato* il ruolo di *custodi* di un rito che la società fatica a fare proprio. In quanto tali, essi sono chiamati anche a essere tutori di quel rito, *guardiani* di una nuova *ortodossia* in base alla quale stabilire che cosa debba rientrare nel rito. Si è venuta a creare una situazione nuova e complessa dalle molteplici sfaccettature, fatta di luci e ombre. Una situazione carica di ambiguità irrisolte e di potenziali pericoli. In una ricerca dell'Ipsò pubblicata nel 2004, risultava che il 36% dei cittadini europei (in Italia il 34%) era dell'opinione che gli Ebrei avrebbero dovuto smettere di fare le vittime e di parlare della Shoah (Manheimer e Goldstaub, 2004, p. 19; Meghnagi, 2005, pp. 137-40). Se gli Ebrei non partecipano al rito o non lo "conducono" in prima persona, il rischio è che altri se ne appropriino trasformandolo in un'arma puntata contro di loro.

L'aspetto surreale di questa pratica si è visto nelle celebrazioni per il 25 aprile a Roma, in cui chi partecipa al corteo al seguito delle insegne della Brigata ebraica (che ha partecipato alla liberazione del nostro Paese), si trova nella necessità di doversi difendere e proteggere dagli attacchi e dagli insulti di chi porta le insegne di movimenti che per ragioni ideologiche e politiche, nel corso del Secondo conflitto mondiale erano schierati con le Potenze dell'Asse (si pensi all'alleanza organica del Muftì di Gerusalemme con il fascismo e il nazismo). Se invece gli Ebrei assolvono al rito, in cambio dei "vantaggi" che derivano dal ruolo di "sacerdoti" a cui sono chiamati, il rito stesso rischia di essere svuotato, finendo per appartenere solo a loro.

La società occidentale può illusoriamente pensare di liberarsi da un'immagine opprimente prendendone le distanze e riguadagnando così la falsa *pace perduta*. Nel lungo periodo, la gestione del rito rischia di esporre gli Ebrei a nuove false accuse che hanno come sfondo la banalizzazione della memoria della *Shoah*, in nome di altre memorie: una forma di cannibalismo simbolico in cui alle vecchie accuse, si aggiunge quella di godere di una presunta rendita di posizione da cui altri popoli, con le loro sofferenze, sarebbero esclusi. Quanto più il rito è affidato agli Ebrei, tanto più la memoria della tragedia rischia di appartenere solo a loro. Poco importa se la data scelta del 27 gennaio, è una data simbolo per tutti. Se gli Ebrei rinunciano, il rito può essere assunto da altri anche contro di loro, per esempio rovesciando, in nome della Shoah, l'accusa di perpetrare su altri popoli quelle stesse sofferenze che essi hanno un tempo ingiustamente subito: "Come è accaduto che un popolo che ha tanto sofferto ripeta coi Palestinesi ciò che ha subito ad opera dei Tedeschi?". La domanda puntualmente arriva dopo un dibattito, o la proiezione di un filmato con il povero testimone nella scomoda posizione di doversi "giustificare".

In un convegno di due decenni presso la Facoltà di Lettere di Roma Tre, si arrivò alla decisione di vietare domande che non fossero in tema. La decisione era il segno di un disagio che metteva gli organizzatori nella scomoda posizione di limitare il diritto di parola. Ben altra avrebbe dovuto essere la risposta. Essendo i temi fra loro intrecciati occorreva entrare nel merito dei problemi, mettendo a fuoco le derive di un dibattito e le parole malate che facevano da sfondo allo sviluppo di un antisemitismo "nuovo", che proietta sulla realtà di uno Stato e di una nazione le immagini demoniache che un tempo erano rivolte agli ebrei.

"Come mai", chiesi ad uno che dal pubblico riproponeva molti dei luoghi comuni del conflitto mediorientale, "quando si parla di Israele le persone tendono a chiedere con falsa innocenza, come abbiano fatto le vittime di ieri a trasformarsi in 'carnefici', mentre tale domanda non si fa mai per gli altri? Come mai le stesse persone che si sbracciano per la presunta trasformazione delle vittime in carnefici, quando si parla del terrorismo di matrice nazionalista e islamista arabo e palestinese tendono al contrario a comprendere e a derubricare, o peggio a giustificare in nome delle ingiustizie subite?". "Non sarà questo modo di argomentare la spia di un'ambivalenza irrisolta nel rapporto con l'ebraismo che trasforma gli ebrei in simboli di un discorso altrui e oggetti di proiezioni che negano la realtà concreta della loro esistenza?". "Se da un lato", aggiunsi, gli Ebrei sono arbitrariamente e falsamente accusati di avere tradito una storia, mentre dall'altro si arriva a giustificare il terrorismo in nome delle ingiustizie subite, non sarà questo un problema che sta a monte della discussione e che

andrebbe indagato e sviscerato? Non sarà da qui che dovremmo cominciare, se vogliamo curare le parole malate?”

L'estetismo ipocrita può giustificare per una parte il male compiuto con la memoria della sofferenza patita. Con gli ebrei procede in un modo opposto. Lo si è visto in modo ignobile con il terrorismo suicida antiisraeliano prima che le città europee cominciassero tragicamente a vivere la stessa esperienza. Non sarà questo un problema politico oltre che morale, che chiama in causa i codici stessi con cui è letta la realtà? In questa perversa logica, l'andamento della crisi mediorientale fissa i tempi, le forme e la virulenza di un dibattito che sta a monte e che con l'acutizzarsi della crisi mediorientale può assumere un carattere virulento, al punto che le istituzioni ebraiche, che predispongono l'invio dei testimoni per lo svolgimento del rito, hanno preso la sana abitudine di affiancare il testimone con un giovane preparato a rispondere su questi temi. Il testimone tornato dall'inferno può parlare solo ed esclusivamente dell'inferno. L'esperto di politica può invece rispondere sul resto, entrando con ciò nel merito delle storture prodotte dalla disinformazione e dalla non conoscenza.

Il “rito” è salvo ma non per sempre. Il pericolo è solo momentaneamente allontanato, con gli Ebrei nella scomoda posizione di doversi confrontare con un duplice ricatto: l'obbligo di ricordare perché gli altri dimenticano unito all'accusa di costringere gli altri in una posizione di colpa perenne.

Dopo Auschwitz l'antisemitismo può esprimersi in modo apparentemente rispettabile solo se prende di mira gli Ebrei come Stato, demonizzando Israele e deformando la tragedia di un conflitto che ha ormai un secolo, sino a renderlo irricognoscibile. Il cerchio del nuovo antisemitismo si chiude con l'accusa rivolta agli Ebrei di voler fissare gli altri popoli in un sentimento di colpa perenne per acquisire “privilegi” e coprire le “colpe” di Israele.

La memoria coinvolge le passioni e il pensiero della gente, è fatta di ricordi personali, di storie famigliari. È una cosa ben diversa dalla storia insegnata. Man mano che l'evento si allontana e il rito si svuota, come si è svuotato quello della Resistenza in Italia che aveva il vantaggio di essere una memoria condivisa da tutto l'arco costituzionale, il rischio è che chi non si riconosce nei valori della società occidentale, o peggio è in aperto contrasto con essa, possa identificare gli Ebrei con i mali di questa società.

L'odio per Hollywood diventa una fonte di irritazione per la memoria di Auschwitz. L'odio per la civiltà occidentale e per il potere americano si trasforma in odio contro Israele. Poco importa che Israele sia un paese piccolo circondato sin dalla sua costituzione da paesi ostili e da sempre esposto alla minaccia di una distruzione.

In ambito psicoanalitico, dopo le ricerche pionieristiche di Bettelheim (1976) e gli studi sulla cripta di A. Torok (1993), sulla scia degli sviluppi della ricerca sulla testimonianza, si è assistito a una ripresa di interesse della tematica della trasmissione del trauma e dei processi di elaborazione del lutto che avevano ispirato le ultime opere di Freud, in particolare i tre tormentati saggi sul Mosè (Meghnagi, 1992, 2015). Sulla scia del dibattito che si è aperto con il *Processo Eichmann*, in ambito sociale e filosofico si è assistito a una ripresa di interesse sul tema del male e della scelta. Più recentemente gli approcci storiografici hanno riposto una attenzione maggiore alla dimensione giuridica e psicologico sociale. Le ricerche sperimentali condotte da Milgram (1974) sui meccanismi dell'obbedienza gettavano una luce nuova e inquietante sui meccanismi che possono fare da sfondo alla realizzazione di un progetto di sterminio. Spostando la riflessione dal tema dell'aggressività a quello dell'obbedienza, Milgram metteva in luce il ruolo che ha l'unità cognitiva di un processo per la consapevolezza dei pericoli e il ruolo svolto dalla delega nel processo di sdoppiamento delle funzioni del Super-io, con la conseguente necessità sul piano della prevenzione e della difesa dell'ordinamento democratico, di inerire norme e vincoli che rafforzino nelle persone la capacità di resistere a ordini ingiusti e immorali). Gli esperimenti di Milgram, fortemente criticati per il trauma arrecato a chi vi aveva partecipato, hanno aperto la strada a una riflessione più matura sui pericoli insiti nella società contemporanea per la crescente frammentazione delle funzioni svolte sul lavoro e in ogni ambito professionale.

#### 4. Conclusione

L'istituzionalizzazione del "Giorno della Memoria" ha trovato le scuole impreparate e gli insegnanti di fronte a difficoltà cumulative che non potevano essere risolte d'incanto, tanto più che il ritardo coinvolgeva lo stesso mondo accademico. La sfida della didattica, meritevolmente raccolta dal corpo docente, si è dovuta confrontare con la necessità di superamento dei confini arbitrariamente stabiliti fra i diversi ambiti disciplinari. Indicando un modo nuovo di fare didattica che avrebbe avuto implicazioni per ogni ambito disciplinare, mostrando in molti casi il carattere arbitrario e la funzionalità alla riproduzione degli equilibri di potere interni alle università, più che al progresso effettivo della ricerca e del sapere.

È stata questa una delle ragioni per cui quando nell'anno accademico 2005-2006 è stato istituito a Roma Tre il "Master internazionale di II livello per la didattica della Shoah", il primo interrogativo che ci siamo posti tentando una prima risposta, era come superare queste false antinomie, coinvolgendo studiosi di discipline diverse, in una sfida condivisa, che metteva in discussione i rigidi steccati che separano fra loro le singole discipline insegnate all'università. Lavorando insieme a un progetto didattico, gli psicologi hanno toccato con mano il pericolo di una lettura "puramente" psicologica di problemi che chiamano in causa le dimensioni sociali e storiche dell'appartenenza. Allo stesso modo gli storici comprendevano dall'interno l'unilateralità di un approccio che non tenesse conto delle dimensioni sociali, religiose e psicologiche dei problemi.

In questa prospettiva anche gli iscritti al Master, che nella prima annata erano in larga parte studiosi alla ricerca di un riconoscimento istituzionale di un percorso di studi e di sperimentazione didattica che li aveva accompagnati per anni, avrebbero dovuto appartenere a specializzazioni diverse, nella convinzione che il differente curriculum, al di là delle difficoltà iniziali per la mancanza di conoscenze storiche di base (da colmare rapidamente con la lettura obbligatoria di alcune opere fondamentali sull'argomento, in particolare quelle di Hilberg (1995), Bauer (*cit.*) e Bauman (1992)), avrebbe rappresentato per i docenti e per il funzionamento del gruppo classe un valore aggiunto, con ricadute inestimabili sulla didattica nella scuola. La scelta di tre autori così diversi non solo è un invito a famigliarizzarsi sin dagli inizi con una complessità e varietà di approcci che non ha pari, ma anche un invito ad approfondirne le matrici e le genealogie culturali. In questa prospettiva i diversi approcci storiografici, come per le altre discipline, possono essere studiati nel loro divenire, diventare essi stessi argomento di ricerca storiografica (uno dei moduli proposti era la storia della storiografia della Shoah).

Per fare degli esempi concreti, basta pensare alle ricadute che sull'insegnamento nelle scuole della storia della medicina e della biologia. Il discorso potrebbe essere esteso ad altre discipline apparentemente lontane come l'alimentazione, l'attività sportiva e le discipline farmaceutiche. In questa prospettiva, nessun ambito disciplinare potrebbe realmente considerarsi fuori dalle commemorazioni del Giorno della Memoria. A sostegno di questo modo di fare didattica, gli studenti del Master sono stati coinvolti in percorsi di formazione per le scuole che hanno riguardato oltre un migliaio di ragazzi di seconda e terza media delle Regioni Toscana, Lazio e Piemonte, con un test d'ingresso e uno di uscita per la valutazione delle competenze acquisite, che ha coinvolto per la prima volta in Italia anche studenti di origine magrebina e di religione islamica, assumendo una sicura e positiva valenza interculturale e interreligiosa, nel rispetto delle culture di origine e della sensibilità degli studenti e delle famiglie.

Nella convinzione che solo facendo tesoro dell'esperienza di altri Paesi europei, evitando di ripeterne gli errori, si può vincere la sfida posta dai cambiamenti demografici e culturali che hanno investito il nostro Paese<sup>3</sup>. Ricordo ancora come fosse oggi, il disagio dei funzionari ministeriali e delle direzioni scolastiche con cui avevo avviato il primo contatto, preoccupati per la forte presenza

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<sup>3</sup> Il progetto "Adotta un ricordo" è stato da me ideato e realizzato insieme a Claudia Hassan (docente presso l'Università di Tor Vergata), nel contesto dell'Università di Roma Tre in collaborazione con l'Associazione Europa Ricerca, con il contributo delle direzioni scolastiche delle Regioni Lazio, Piemonte e Toscana e del Comune di Roma.

“islamica” in alcune delle scuole scelte. “Non sarebbe meglio avviare” per quelle scuole “un progetto interculturale”, mi disse preoccupata una funzionaria di una delle direzioni scolastiche regionali coinvolte? “E che cosa c’è di più interculturale”, le risposi con tatto e facendo di tutto per non ferirla e per tranquillizzarla, “di una sfida che ha come obiettivo la costruzione di un sentimento di cittadinanza condivisa?” “Non è forse questo”, aggiunsi, “uno degli obiettivi fondamentali che la scuola dovrebbe darsi per favorire l’integrazione culturale degli studenti di ogni credo e di ogni provenienza? Sarebbe tragico che per una malintesa preoccupazione di non toccare la suscettibilità di famiglie dove vi è una forte presenza di pregiudizi antiebraici collegati di matrice islamica, si debba fare marcia indietro su un tema che coinvolge in modo profondo la costruzione di valori di cittadinanza condivisa. L’Italia ha la fortuna di poter affrontare il problema, facendo tesoro delle esperienze di altri Paesi europei, evitando di ripeterne gli errori”. Non del tutto convinta la funzionaria si fece carico di organizzare gli incontri e alla fine si appassionò al progetto, seguendone le tappe e gli sviluppi, non solo per una verifica di quel che facevamo, ma anche per il tema che aveva finito per coinvolgerla.

Il progetto è stato portato avanti con successo coinvolgendo nel suo insieme oltre mille studenti delle scuole medie (della seconda e terza classe). I risultati della ricerca sono stati presentati in tre distinti momenti: al Liceo Visconti di Roma e presso la Direzione scolastica di Firenze nel 2007, in occasione della Fiera del Libro di Torino nel 2008<sup>4</sup>. Pubblicamente discussi con la partecipazione di un folto pubblico di operatori e di studenti, tali risultati possono essere considerati un esempio di migliori pratiche di didattica della *Shoah* a livello interculturale.

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<sup>4</sup> Per non dimenticare la Shoah... la testimonianza di Liliana Segre, Incontro con gli studenti delle scuole secondarie di II grado, Fiera del Libro di Torino, 12 maggio 2008. Interventi di F. De Sanctis (direttore ufficio scolastico regionale del Piemonte), Colombo (deputato), M. Palmizio (senatore). Presentazione dei risultati: C. Hassan (Università di “Tor Vergata”). Conclusioni di D. Meghnagi (Università Roma Tre).

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**«Do you talk about God in this nursery school?». Rhetoric and experience of the sacred in the reform of the Swedish childcare system (1968-1980)**

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**Abstract.** In the second half of the 20th century, the Swedish educational system was subject to two parallel processes of secularization and *moralization*. The decline of the state church's hold on schools was accompanied by a growing emphasis on ethics, sense of community and social commitment in curricula and teachers' mission. The establishment of a state-run nursery school (*förskola*) in the mid-1970s is a striking example of this cultural dynamic. Drawing on the development and promotion of the new guidelines for *förskola* in public debate, the article focuses on the interweaving of political and transcendent expectations linked to this project, beyond its patent utilitarian rationale: facilitating women's participation in the labour market. While standing as the culmination of the most authoritative psycho-evolutionary theories of the time, the 'work plan' for day-care staff converted these theories into a practical doctrine, regulating everyday interaction between adults and children: so-called dialogue pedagogics (*dialogpedagogik*). State-supported campaigns aimed at popularizing the *förskola* among broader segments of society (parents of young children, immigrants, etc.) were paralleled by the sacralisation of esoteric rituals, spatial arrangements and lexical choices that identify it. Systematically opposed to suffocating family bonds (or to the alienation of the commodity society), the *förskola* emerges – in the rhetoric of officials of the welfare state – as something greater than a childcare provider. It embodies an enchanted realm, where modern society may enact its redemption from harmful conflicts and detrimental bias, but also a non-adversarial universe impervious to rational assessment.

**Keywords:** Nursery school; Welfare State; Swedish Model; Protestantism

## 1. Social utopia within a rational design: the rise of the *förskola*

This article considers the extent to which the reform of Sweden's nursery schools has promoted a *sacred* cosmology at the core of a secular welfare apparatus. At first glance, intertwining these two semantic areas might appear somewhat provocative. This is even more the case if we focus on the process that, by the end of the 1960s, had made the newly established nursery school, the *förskola*,<sup>1</sup> a proud emblem of women's liberation and a laboratory for a state-sanctioned anti-authoritarian style of education.<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, in both common and scholarly perception, the sacred halo is usually not associated with an emancipatory drive but rather with notions such as hierarchy, obscurantism, and alienation. Consequently, a working hypothesis such as this<sup>3</sup> must involve a subversion of the common understanding of the boundary between the sacred and the profane. It calls on us to dive into

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<sup>1</sup> The term *förskola* literally means 'preschool', the official name, since 1975, for all types of *daghem*, or *dagis*, as day-care centres are called in everyday Swedish.

<sup>2</sup> On the ideological premises of the Swedish preschool system, see B. Hammarström-Lewenhagen (2013), *Den unika möjligheten. En studie om den svenska förskolemodellen 1968-1998* (Stockholm: Stockholm University) and P. Colla (2017), *L'héritage impensable. Conscience historique et technologies de l'identité dans la réforme éducative en Suède (1946-1980)* (Paris: EHESS. Unpublished doctoral thesis).

<sup>3</sup> Manifestly, the sociological definition of 'sacred' to which I adhere extends far beyond the boundaries of the study of religious belief. According to Durkheim, the sacred is at the core of the social construction of meaning (*De la définition des phénomènes religieux, L'Année Sociologique*, 2 (1887-98), 25-26). In accordance with L. Kolakowski's definition, myth encompasses all realms of human experience where individuals act according to an unconditioned instance of truth, irreducible to technological or utilitarian motives. L. Kolakowski (1989), *The Presence of Myth* (Chicago: Chicago University Press). Following such a broad definition, culture falls to a great extent into the category of 'sacred'. See F. Champion, S. Nizard and P. Zawadzki (2007), *Reformuler la question du sacré en modernité*, in F. Champion et al. (eds.), *Le sacré hors religions* (Paris: L'Harmattan).

the Christian roots of a distinct, Scandinavian variation of rationalism,<sup>4</sup> from which both the programmatic individualism of welfare programmes and the broad consensus for state intervention and social engineering<sup>5</sup> might have arisen.

At an explicit level, the theoretical foundation of the *förskola* rests on two unequivocally anti-mythological assumptions:

1) firstly, on the political level, the emphasis on the autonomy of the child, which is also extolled for its role in liberating the working woman;<sup>6</sup> and

2) secondly, on the pedagogical level, the reference to a programme that is underpinned by thoroughly scientific principles – taking pride in not neglecting any of the ‘natural’ stages in the neurological and cognitive development of each and every child.<sup>7</sup>

This article focuses on the main instrument used in this codification process: the work carried out by the *utredning* (‘state inquiry’) launched in 1968 under the leadership of the then-34-year-old (and future prime minister) Ingvar Carlsson.<sup>8</sup> Its conclusions, submitted in 1972, laid the groundwork for the Child Care Act of 1975, which made it the duty of every municipality to provide a nursery school place for every six-year-old Swedish child.<sup>9</sup> The inquiry also inspired the first official guidelines for the staff of the new institution.<sup>10</sup> Following this reform, the day-care system became the only part of the education system to be planned down to the last detail of its remit: everyday interaction and social games, greetings at the beginning of the school day, the design of furniture and common spaces, etc.<sup>11</sup> It is this aspiration to comprehensiveness<sup>12</sup> as a pedagogical tool that prompted me to approach the preschool ethos as an independent and coherent ideological system. When compared with other branches of the Swedish education system, it is the *förskola* that most clearly displays a move from conventional craft knowledge towards instrumental rationality and value freedom. That is why, when the ethnologist Billy Ehn turned his attention to the *förskola*’s professional culture in the early 1980s, he concluded that it was a metaphor for two concurrent claims: *uncertainty* (with regard to absolute moral truth) and *order*, whereby all professional practice is supposedly in line with a set of formal and articulated objectives.<sup>13</sup>

For the sake of clarity, I am not interested in tackling the influence of theological trends on public socialization in early childhood or the survival of denominational rhetoric in the design of the new nursery school. I will limit myself to pointing out some features of this iconic institution within the Swedish *folkhem*<sup>14</sup>, which could witness a return of a sacred worldview in public deliberation. By ‘sacred’, I mean, ultimately, the social claim of a redeeming source of truth and the construction of a

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<sup>4</sup> See N. Witoszek (1997), *Fugitives from Utopia: the Scandinavian Enlightenment Reconsidered*, in Ø. Sørensen and B. Stråth (eds.), *The Cultural Construction of Norden* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press) and (2011), *The Origins of the Regime of Goodness: Remapping the Norwegian Cultural History* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press).

<sup>5</sup> On the peculiar Swedish model of ‘state individualism’, see H. Berggren and L. Trägårdh (2006), *Är svensken människa?* (Stockholm: Norstedt).

<sup>6</sup> Hammarström-Lewenhagen (2013), 19–21 ff.

<sup>7</sup> See *Förskolan*, SOU 1972:26 (*del 1*), Chapter 1 (‘Theories on psychological development and the nursery school’s pedagogic programme’), 21–62, and Chapter 2 (‘Self-image, communication, conceptualisation’), 63–85.

<sup>8</sup> The *Barnstugeutredning* (‘National inquiry on kindergarten’), 1968–75. See *Förskolan*, SOU 1972:26 (*del 1*) and SOU 1972:27 (*del 2*). When Carlsson was appointed, he was the leader of the Social Democratic Youth League.

<sup>9</sup> *Lag om förskola*, SFS 1973:1205.

<sup>10</sup> Socialstyrelsen (1975), *Vår förskola. Arbetsplan för förskolan*, 1, Stockholm.

<sup>11</sup> Note the simultaneous creation in 1971 (and until 1980) of a council for the play environment (*Lekmiljörådet*), under the authority of the State Administration for Social Affairs. On physical planning as an educational tool for nursery schools, see the section *Stimulans för begreppsbildningen* (‘Stimulation at the service of conceptualization’) in the final report of the *Barnstugeutredning*. SOU 1972:26, 189–92.

<sup>12</sup> Or ‘logocentricity’, drawing on one of the definitions of Protestant ethos by a current research programme on the ‘Aesthetics of Protestantism’ (<https://nord.unistra.fr/activites-scientifiques/aesthetics-of-protestantism-in-northern-europe>). This characteristic still seems to distinguish the social identity of the *förskola* even if, in contemporary Sweden, it seems rather to act as a vehicle for the diffusion of the culture of free entrepreneurship and rational management. See R. Thedvall (2019), *Fast Childcare in Public Preschools: The Utopia of Efficiency* (London: Routledge).

<sup>13</sup> B. Ehn (1983), *Ska vi leka tiger?* (Stockholm: Liber).

<sup>14</sup> ‘The people’s home’, the usual Swedish metaphore (since 1928) for the National model of Welfare State.

social space separated from everyday experience<sup>15</sup> that is endowed with additional meaning and that sublimates the individuals who rely on it.

## 2. The *förskola* as a social imperative: tracking a metadiscourse

I will now single out three areas of research that move from the more articulate (political statements, legal texts, etc.) to the implicit and allusive. My source material comes from records of the decision-making process, the official guidelines that steer the work of professional actors, and the psychological and pedagogical expertise that the entire reform process was based on.

The first domain of ‘sacralization’ that I have found evidence of lies in the consistent claim of the providential status of a preschool institution in Swedish society today. The underlying assumption is a supposed collective responsibility on the part of the nation for the proper upbringing of children, within a specific institution and with a shared code. The best way to get a living picture of the self-image that the *förskola* projects – the way it markets itself – is to consider what it *refused* to see itself as during its reshaping process, as a distinctive branch of the Welfare State. The rhetoric used by its programmatic documents seems aimed at distancing the *förskola* from clichés that dismiss it as nothing more than a babysitting service provider : a ‘parking place’ for small children of busy parents.<sup>16</sup> The strategic reason behind the state’s decision to bring together, through the *förskola*, previous strands of childcare was apparently to invest them with a valued remit: as a report to the 1969 Social Democratic Party Congress put it, the aim consisted in equalizing the conditions for the upbringing of *all* Swedish children.<sup>17</sup> The trend of incorporating child welfare (as well as a new educational style) within a national set of shared values would grow stronger and stronger throughout the 1970s.<sup>18</sup> But was this trend really new?

When retracing the cultural origins of Swedish school reforms, I was struck by the fact that the symbolic appeal of preschool education took root well before its creation as a public institution in 1975. In the early days of the ‘Swedish model’, early childhood education was, in fact, very limited in scope, with fewer than 5000 places at the end of the 1930s and only 10,000 by 1950.<sup>19</sup> What is more, it was split into two opposing traditions. On the one hand, it was housed in part-time, high-quality educational centres (*barnträdgård* or *leksskola*), which were available to the urban elites, and, on the other, in full-time day-care centres for the working class (*barnkrubba*): a utilitarian arrangement with no proper cultural profile. Despite this weak identity, this is where the imagined kindergarten wins a place in the symbolic construction of a community of equals. We can see it creeping into a wider narrative that unites science, social consciousness, and utopia: the narrative about a new society blossoming from its biological core, from a new collective responsibility for sexuality and reproduction (see pictures 1 and 2).

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<sup>15</sup> In Durkheim’s reasoning, it is precisely the social construction of two opposing spheres that is the distinctive sign of sacralization.

<sup>16</sup> See C. Roman (2006), *Academic discourse, social policy and the construction of new families*, Working Paper 2 (Örebro: Örebro Universitet); and SOU (1972), 146. The promotion of the educational (and not only the utilitarian) value of the *förskola* would intensify when, following the reform of parenthood allowances (1974), the state proactively pursued the admission of children from birth up to three years of age. See Colla (2017), 653–61.

<sup>17</sup> See Hammarström-Lewenhagen (2013), 58–69. The speech given by L. Enqvist, secretary of the Social Democratic Youth League, at the 1975 SAP congress would state this point even more clearly: ‘all children at the *daghem*: that’s the *folkhem* (welfare state) realized’ (SAP’s 26<sup>th</sup> congress, *Protokoll*, 793).

<sup>18</sup> As witnessed by the proliferation of awareness-raising campaigns. See, on the one hand, the wide coverage of ‘enlightened’ educational habits and the legislation against corporal punishment in the family (1979) in the information material targeting immigrants, and, on the other hand, the reference to the expected awareness raising among immigrant populations in the surveys that accompany the reform of 1975. T. Hammar (1971), *Leva i Sverige* (Stockholm: Sveriges Radio), 93-97, and *Samverkan i barnomsorgen*, SOU 1975: 87, 123-30. See also Colla (2017), 698-700 and 707-708.

<sup>19</sup> As late as 1966, the rate of preschool attendance did not exceed 2 per cent of all children in Sweden (source: *Statistiska centralbyrån*).



It costs but the equivalent of a few cents a day for the care and support of little Bertil in the Public Nursery. Here is where he'll spend the days of his early life in play with children his own age, learning the elements of getting along with people.

**Picture 1**

Source: *Sweden speaks... to the world of tomorrow* (Stockholm, Royal Swedish Commission, 1939)



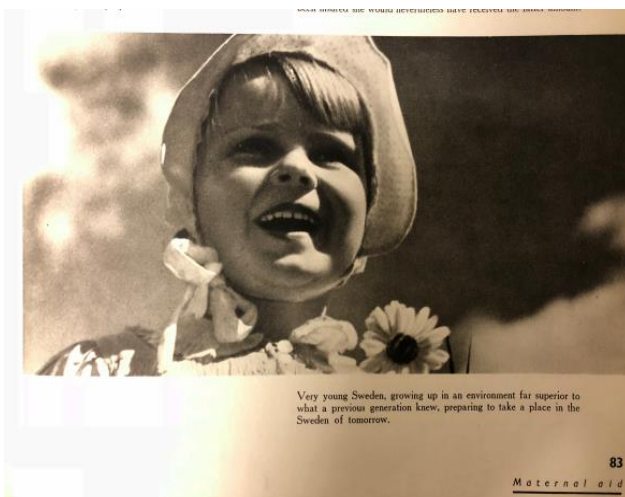
When mother is away at work during the day she may leave her offspring in the care of a public day nursery and kindergarten. Under expert supervision the child eats, sleeps, bathes and plays in the company of kiddies his own age. The charge varies according to the parents' income, from *nothing* to about one krona per day.

84

*Maternal aid*

**Picture 2**

Among the vectors of this utopia, we find public health campaigns, as well as union and party leaflets. The aesthetics of physical strength and modernity and the ethics of harmonious socialization in the public sphere merge into a unifying icon: a healthy, smiling, blond-haired child (see pictures nos. 3, 4, and 5).<sup>20</sup>



Very young Sweden, growing up in an environment far superior to what a previous generation knew, preparing to take a place in the Sweden of tomorrow.

83

*Maternal aid*

**Picture 3**

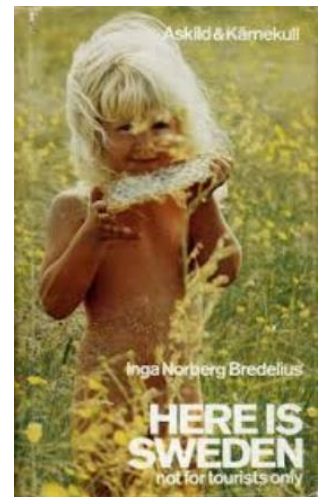
Source: *Sweden speaks...* (1939)



*Introducing*

**Picture 4**

Source: *Introducing Sweden* (1948).  
Stockholm: The Swedish Institute



**HERE IS SWEDEN**  
not for tourists only

**Picture 5**

Source: *Here is Sweden* (1970).  
Stockholm: Askild & Kärnekull

<sup>20</sup> In pictures nos. 3 to 5, the juxtaposition of the three photographs, from the 1930s, the 1940s and the 1970s, clearly shows the persistence of a mytheme.

As the *new* nursery school peeks out from the social housing projects of the emerging welfare state (see picture 6), it is blessed with the same qualities as the ‘new’ family or the ‘new’ factory, as the ideologists of the social democratic reform policy – so-called social engineers – picture them: cleanliness and order, interclassism, social harmony, and efficiency.<sup>21</sup> In comparison with other areas of public socialization, however, it brings with it one major added value: the utopia materializes in a fully artificial space, with no opportunities for the target of socialization to follow a different path. It provides a chance to plan the utopia into the social body, minimizing all risk of failure.



**Picture 6**

Source: HSB-Arkiv Stockholm, “Barn i sandlåda” Stockholm, 1930s

### 3. An oasis in a hostile world

The Swedish project for a universal nursery school foreshadowed the possibility of a society regenerated by the unifying mythologies of modernity. Still, an interweaving of psychological and cultural barriers would hinder the development of a nursery-school network for a long time. Its institutionalization in the early 1970s is marked by a different, more pressing argument that is found in every report and expert opinion drafted prior to the establishment of the *förskola*, i.e., that the takeover of public socialization by the professional childcare sector is in fact predetermined and inescapable.

On the one hand, the founding documents<sup>22</sup> present the development of public education as a self-evident social imperative steered by global processes, such as urbanization, the split between the sphere of production and domestic life, and a decreasing birth rate. On the other hand, they portray public education as an opportunity to be exploited. The first argument is merely functional: it suggests that an advanced society cannot do without the *daghem*<sup>23</sup>. The second argument, however, expresses a voluntary ambition, seeing the *daghem* as a project for nurturing better-socialized, more-considerate, and more-responsible human beings. The legitimacy of the *daghem* in the social arena would, in the end, rest on two uncontested principles: on the one hand, the objective dismissal of a

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<sup>21</sup> See Y. Hirdman (1989), *Att lägga livet tillrätta: studier i svensk folkhemspolitik* (Stockholm: Carlsson).

<sup>22</sup> See SOU 1972:27; Socialstyrelsen (1975), *Vår förskola*; Socialstyrelsen (1978), *Små barn i daghem. Arbetsplan för förskolan*, 5, Stockholm.

<sup>23</sup> See footnote 1 above.



diminished family unit as a socializing agent and, on the other, its maladjustment to new productive, hygienic, and psychosocial needs. From this moment on, two narratives – or rather two registers within one narrative – develop in parallel, with sociological accounts of the crisis of family ties, such as Rita Liljeström's,<sup>24</sup> as sources of inspiration. Within the latter register, the polemical canon we meet more frequently aims to undermine competing myths, countering the uniqueness of the remit of the *förskola*. Prejudices or narratives that trivialize the providential function of professional care for children must be swept away. A frequent topos – which is commonly found in the mainstream sociology of the family of the 1970s and has been the frequent subject of surveys – is, for example, the critique of the maternal role (the so-called 'myth of the mother', *modersmyten*); the doctrine of the new institution would make its best effort to desacralize its aura for the benefit of the child's access to a less exclusive bond: a horizontal community and a child-friendly environment, where solidarity rules.<sup>25</sup>

The shaming of a family group unable to see the link between correct educational methods and successful social adaptation is a recurrent theme in the early years of surveys on the reshaping of childcare. Assessing whether blaming the 'privatization' of education follows primarily from a pedagogical or ethical standpoint – from the health of the individual child or from unconditional claims about the unity of educational goals – is an impossible mission. Scientific and ethical standpoints are mixed up in the pedagogical programme outlined in the above-mentioned 1972 report, to the point of making them indiscernible. The idea underlying the programme is that applying the desired, objective approach (to the neuropsychological development of the child, to the conditions for socialization, to the need for independence) can only foster desirable social behaviours, or rather a desirable 'competence'.<sup>26</sup> The official goals of the *förskola* that were formalized between 1968 and 1972 are a patent expression of this oscillation between the two dimensions.<sup>27</sup>

Since the late 1970s, researchers such as Daniel Kallós have questioned the soundness of this construction, reporting that it did not meet any scientific criteria.<sup>28</sup> However, the hybrid status of this new pedagogical trend is, in my view, its most intriguing aspect and, in some respects, its most effective asset. My question here is not about the trustworthiness of a pedagogical theory but rather about the opposition it builds between the realm of knowledge — defined by a set of functional routines — and the realm of ignorance, which amounts in fact to a fault: betraying the developmental objectives for children, objectives that, as stated in the 1972 report, are necessarily 'ideological'.<sup>29</sup> These objectives therefore transcend the pragmatic sphere and engage the entire adult world.

One thing is certain: during the 1970s, pro-*förskola* rhetoric moved from an early psycho-cognitive focus on individual well-being and on techniques for achieving it towards a *sociological* register based on the synergy between collective intentions and educational principles. This trend implies a move towards more emphatic rhetoric when it comes to defining the institution's goals, as well as a more universal (or hegemonic) ambition

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<sup>24</sup> See R. Liljeström (1976), *Våra barn, andras ungar* (Stockholm: Liber); and Socialstyrelsen (1978), 18–22. On the politicization of family and childcare politics in the 1960s, see C. Florin and B. Nilsson (2000), '*Något som liknar en oblodig revolution*' (Umeå: Jämställdhetskommittén).

<sup>25</sup> See the supplement to the official working plan on the schooling of the youngest children at *förskola* (Socialstyrelsen, 1978). One of the recurrent themes is breaking the emotional exclusivity of families. There are self-assessment exercises at the end of each chapter that include items like the following: 'Is Mommy the best?' or 'I think that the youngest children should stay with their mothers. Why should I change my mindset?' (Socialstyrelsen 1978, 33).

<sup>26</sup> In the 1972 inquiry, this new key concept is still placed in quotation marks (SOU 1972:26, 59).

<sup>27</sup> This ambiguity is reflected in the simultaneous reference in the theoretical part of the *Barnstugeutredning* report of 1972 to a functionalistic (cognitivist or psychoanalytical) and utopian approach to development: Piaget and Eriksson, on the one hand, and Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, on the other (SOU 1972:26, 37 ff.) A frank examination of the connection between the political and psycho-developmental goals of the *förskola* programme can be traced in SOU 1972:26, 39–44.

<sup>28</sup> D. Kallós (1978), *Den nya pedagogiken* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand), 32–33.

<sup>29</sup> 'It seems essential to rely on a global political objective, which reflects the ideological background of the programme for *förskola*. This objective should clearly articulate the vision and care of the child that are specific to our society'. (SOU 1972, 41–42).

The goals set by the *Barnstugeutredning* concern the *förskola* to which every six-year-old child is entitled to be admitted. In other words, they apply, in principle, to the whole age group interested in its activities. This means that the goals that the Swedish Parliament has established apply to *all children* of pre-school age (SOU 1975, 1, 107-108).

The ideas that are conveyed by the *förskola* must be rooted in an ideology that can be encapsulated in the following key words: ‘democracy’, ‘solidarity’, ‘equality’, ‘security’ (Socialstyrelsen, 1981, 43).

To summarize this part of my analysis, a crucial element of the message circulated about the *förskola* is that one must think highly of it and regard its institutional ethos as the ideal embodiment of a responsible education. Unsurprisingly, image-building and universalization of the target become a growing concern for its development: both the adjustment of its internal organization<sup>30</sup> and its rhetoric are evidence of this.

Take, for example, the official guidelines, or *arbetsplan* (‘work plan’),<sup>31</sup> which was revised both in 1976 and then again two years later, in 1978, to cover successively broader audiences: immigrants at the *daghem*, young children at the *daghem*, etc.<sup>32</sup> The rewriting of the rules has often had the aim of directly making a desired target group familiar with the spiritual qualities and psychosocial objectives that only the *förskola* can embody. This is a sign of an interesting phenomenon: expert reports and even instructions for staff intervene on the social scene by making clear to the public – supposedly unaware or hostile – that the imaginary space that the institution delimits is endowed with a moral message. Nursery school appears now as an iconic place for *goodness* (see **picture 7**), and all necessary efforts are taken – in public reports and information sheets – to display the ethical qualities of the preschool environment.



**Picture 7**

Source: *Statens offentliga utredningar*, 25 (1981) Stockholm

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<sup>30</sup> Like the creation of introductory procedures for newcomers. See the chapter ‘Starting at preschool or in-home preschool’ in *Bra daghem för små barn*, SOU 1981:25, 211–31 and Colla (2017), 661–76.

<sup>31</sup> Socialstyrelsen (1975).

<sup>32</sup> Socialstyrelsen (1976), *Invandrarbarn i förskolan. Arbetsplan för förskolan*, 4, Stockholm; and Socialstyrelsen (1978).

What are the virtues conveyed by the iconography we just met? In the first place, the notions of generosity, reciprocity, and a lack of ulterior motives: The intrinsic value of the human exchanges taking place in the *daghem* is the argument that explains why young children, children without siblings, foreign children, should all have access to its care. This provides a hint about an important rhetorical shift taking place at the level of the production of professional standards: the necessity of the *förskola* is no longer rooted in its pedagogical practices but in its very essence. It is not what the institution does that matters but what it *suggests* through its connoted routines: the exemplary message it is spreading. Public inquiries will advocate, for instance, on behalf of the importance of the *daghem* as a natural meeting place for the local community.<sup>33</sup> It embodies, for example, a place where *parents* can be socialized and educated.<sup>34</sup> An additional shift is that rhetoric about the benefits of preschool education originates from outside the preschool context. The inflation of a semantics of space in reform rhetoric of the 1970s – *barnmiljö* (‘children’s environment’), *lekmiljö* (‘playing environment’), *barnkultur* (‘children’s culture’) – reflects this turn. All these political keywords refer to a dreamed-of unity and generate tools and practices for organized virtue. They help make the *förskola*’s unifying cosmology inescapable.

#### 4. A providential ‘dialogue’

To better capture what allows advocates of the *förskola* to credit its practices as a better alternative to the realm of everyday exchanges and relations, it is essential to change the plan of analysis. In other words, moving from the role the nursery school plays in the organization of social space – family and urban life – to the implementation of its doctrine.

To what extent can we call the *förskola*’s founding documents a ‘doctrine’? These documents – state surveys, expert opinions dealing with different types of users, etc. – provide a puzzling picture. The theory established between 1972 and 1975 is repeatedly reassessed during its first years of implementation,<sup>35</sup> often starting with empirical investigations carried out by the numerous university departments of psycho-pedagogy. The successive rewritings of the working programmes express, time after time, specific shifts in emphasis: from individual well-being to group dynamics, from free play to structured play, from autonomy to the value of clear rules. Let us dispel this ambiguity: the identity of the *förskola*, as an institution supported by a shared ideal, can hardly be reduced to a persistent theoretical construction. This does not prevent us from isolating a preschool ideology in practice, bearing in mind that this ideology is perpetuated not as a pedagogical project but as a diffuse body of expected behaviours and encouraged concerns: a mindset inculcated in professional operators, parents, and the broader public.

This is a further level of analysis I am giving priority to: the advent of a doxa embedded in power dynamics. We have already grasped the essence of this doxa: it is based on the *förskola*’s claim that it upholds the interests of the child in social space. The *förskola* claims to rule out all types of selfish intentions or interested manipulation; meanwhile, it stigmatizes the egoism of all other actors in a child’s life. The purpose of this stance could perhaps be to conceal what should not be thought of: namely, that the social logic of the actual proliferation of nursery schools is connected with the social

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<sup>33</sup> Connecting and equipping all areas of children’s lives with a coherent mission – from common political goals – is the aim of the *Barnmiljöutredning* (‘State Survey on the Children’s Environment’), 1973–75, which released eight full reports in one year.

<sup>34</sup> The working group on childcare (*barnomsorgsgruppen*) (1973–80) was tasked with drafting national guidelines for parental education from the period before a child’s birth until the child enters school (see the final report, *Barn och vuxna*, SOU 1980:27). Let us recall that the idea the committee initially defended was to make this preparation compulsory for every citizen.

<sup>35</sup> A first important ideological revision took place in 1981, with the adoption by the administration of social services of new guidelines for nursery-school staff (Socialstyrelsen, 1981). On this occasion, the issue of free dialogue between adults and children gives way to a greater demand for goal-oriented activities and integration with the group.

instincts that one is trying to discredit, i.e. the selfish interest of adults, the demands of the labour market, other concerns besides the well-being of children.

What we are concerned with here is the imaginary role of an ideology rather than its social roots. On this level, two principles emerge that can be related to some evidence found in Weber's examination of the logic of Protestantism: on the one hand, a sacrificial or ascetic element, i.e. the unconditional affirmation of the will to do well, in opposition to fanaticism, aggression, corporate interests; and, on the other hand, the rationalization of putting a bitter end to all spontaneous practices, especially those assigned to irrational feelings, unconditional love, or indifference to one's neighbour. Love can be shared; it can never be exclusive and must be goal-oriented.

If before it was Daddy holding [10-month-old] Johan in his arms, it is now up to Lisa, the nursery nurse, to take him on her lap [...] Daddy stays by and talks to Lisa in a familiar way. This is how Johan understands that the adults who care for him get along well (Socialstyrelsen 1978, 141).

The main pedagogical tool the *förskola* provides to its actors – the one encapsulated in the popular expression *dialogpedagogik* ('dialogue pedagogy') – can be seen as a synthesis of these two values. This teaching technique provides the main tool according to which professional childcare is predetermined and rationalized. It requires the removal of the hierarchy implicit in the adult-child relationship, as in human relationships in general, a shift that is praised both for its positive effects on how children are raised and because all of society is supposed to benefit from an examination of conscience.

The pedagogy of dialogue must begin with the adult's recognition of his or her own values and the way in which they influence his or her behaviour towards children and adults (Socialstyrelsen, 1975, p. 52).

Dialogue pedagogy can be defined as a standard technique for verbal exchanges. It requires controlled and fully conscious management of interaction. Every adult is called on to talk to small children, to approach them in a rational and respectful way, while encouraging them to engage in self-disclosure. In other words, dialogue amounts to a way of experiencing the world, with no obligations except for the obligation to open up, to show authenticity in order to trigger a general drive towards authenticity. Direct restrictions or injunctions aimed at children are forbidden, as is the use of assertive phraseology. The purpose of speech is always to act as an invitation for self-disclosure. A sentence from the first curriculum (1975), for example, discourages the teacher from responding to an odd sentence by asking the child to explain what he or she meant. The curriculum states that the teacher should never ask the question, Why? because requests for explanations would damage the general climate of empathy and intimacy.<sup>36</sup>

Both the normative texts and my main empirical field (the study of continuing on-the-job training for preschool teachers) convey a message: the virtues of the new pedagogical technique, i.e., dialogue, concern not only educational practice. "Dialogue" epitomizes a mental attitude: it is the *good* modality of one's relationship with a child, with colleagues, and with authorities.<sup>37</sup> In my view, the greatest misunderstanding associated with this scheme is the impression of spontaneity, of the absence of ends, that it creates. In the background, there is a moral metatext, an implied one. Exhaustiveness is one of these implied goals. All classical taboos (such as religion and sex) are rejected in a pedagogical machinery conceived as a maieutic tool. For example, children *must* talk and hear about what God is (or is not) and other existential questions, as the quote in the title of this article suggests. The quote below refers to children in nursery school up to three years of age.

In your *förskola*, can children encounter adults who speak frankly and in depth with them about issues concerning birth; illness and death; violence, hunger, and poverty; religion; God and the concept of divinity; the concepts of righteousness, honesty, and disloyalty; what happiness is? (Socialstyrelsen 2 1975, 69)

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>37</sup> That is why the term can also be found as an adjective, 'dialogue-pedagogical' in the normative texts, thus endowing specific language and modes of communication with the idea that they are correct and proper.

This warning clearly has a demonstrative (rather than pedagogical) value: It shows how the duty of sincerity must always prevail over prudence, privacy, secrecy. Here again, the *förskola* is presented as a space where ‘we’ relate to each other and speak to each other in a different way than in the rest of the (social) world. With the help of guidelines for the staff and in-house assessments, the social administration undertakes great efforts to bring into the actors’ consciousness the benefits of this practice: the virtues of norm-related dialogue.

## 5. Self-control and submission to the norm: some implicit injunctions of professional training

A field assessment by the representatives of preschool pedagogical theory can be taken as an example.<sup>38</sup> The investigation I carried out was mostly aimed at disclosing hidden power dynamics and status conflicts, concealed behind handy tips, praises and warnings to staff. Nonetheless, I was also able to identify a clear set of implicit moral patterns underlying the statements by experts on the performance of the preschool inspected. Through the interviews with the staff – whose main purpose is to clarify and emphasize the intentions of the new emancipatory doctrine – some patterns of Puritan ethics, as outlined by Weber, can easily be observed.

Obviously, tracking ‘symptoms’ of Protestant ethos in an impressionistic way is not a sound option: the goal of a sociological inquiry must be related to causal relationships. In the best of cases, this will help us get closer to the ‘utility’ of utilitarianism. What that flaunted pragmatism is for? A first striking element of the image of the ideal preschool that the above-mentioned implementing study articulates is the requirement that its pedagogy occupy the largest symbolic area: the experts make it clear that life in a nursery school must aim to stimulate all aspects of the physical, emotional, and moral life of the child – in line with the only legitimate aims, the three fundamental goals of the *daghem*.

We wanted to evaluate the children’s environment through the qualitative study of the processes that can lead to the overarching objective (Söderlund and William-Olsson, 1978, Introduction).<sup>39</sup>

When faced with deviations from the desired model, experts involved in participant observation do not hesitate to take on a tone of admonition:

You are very good at teaching children norms that explain the behaviour expected from them. You can see that children listen to you with ease. But the real issue is: How do we expect children to behave? (Söderlund and William-Olsson, 1978, 146)

To this extent, preschool code can be described as a move towards control and systematization, a move directed against all forms of hedonism, what Weber calls ‘the spontaneous enjoyment of life’.<sup>40</sup> Here, hedonism is simply synonymous with irresponsibility: It might cover all sorts of free emotional expressions. Even anger or moral indignation, when they are ends in themselves, can be related to a desire for pleasure, for emotional release. These behaviours are here objects of reprobation, on the ground of the duty of the educational community to stick to a single rule of practice. Staff members’ attitudes are considered in terms of their conformity with institutional goals and, more generally, in terms of conscious goal orientation.

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<sup>38</sup> The examples that follow in the main body of the text come mainly from a follow-up project carried out by the Stockholm school for teacher training between 1976 and 1977 in six nursery schools in the Stockholm area on the basis of the new official guidelines for nursery schools. A. Söderlund and I. William-Olsson (1978), *Försöka duger* (Stockholm: Högskolan för lärarutbildning).

<sup>39</sup> Söderlund and William-Olsson (1978), ‘Introduction’.

<sup>40</sup> M. Weber (2005), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge), originally published in 1905, trans. by A. Giddens, 18.



The above-mentioned field study also provides other information in the answers or free statements provided by staff members concerning the implementation of the dialogue technique; they become then secondhand sources of information concerning the common ethos of the institutions in question – a popular translation of the doctrine.

One of the primary forms that the rhetorical claim of the superiority of regulation and self-discipline takes is the discipline of *time* (when children are dropped off and picked up at nursery school) and the consequential criticism of parents who are in a rush as they leave their children or who fail to take the time to meet with the staff.<sup>41</sup> This is the most anodyne way of embedding a clear pattern of discipline in this radically non-directive institution. Whoever fails to find a way to adjust to the institution's ubiquitous rules is shamed, is criticized for not taking into account the prescriptions of dialogue. Most of the time, the sinners and heretics happen to be foreigners, or Swedes with values that differ from those of the majority,<sup>42</sup> although this fact almost always goes unsaid. The most recurrent concern I met in field observation reports is that of anxiety regarding conflicts and conflict resolution. The subject matter tends to be rather trivial: meals, how to dress the children, the extent to which children should be given direction. The authors of these reports articulate this by repeatedly questioning the staff on this topic. How do they deal with conflicts? How do they come to terms with conflict and channel it into the production of 'common rules'<sup>43</sup> and in discussions of an ever-increasing level of seriousness?

Why – one might ask – does a pluralistic and rational institution like the *förskola* assign such importance to morality? Why do God and the concept of Law have such an important place in the *förskola*'s doctrine? My answer is that this concern is *not* about metaphysics or about ultimate goals. Morality, as expressed in the form of a dialogue about values, or value consciousness, is mostly about a desire for collective efficiency and a way of enforcing consensus concerning an explicit goal. This is the purpose of specific preschool routines, such as the *samling* ('children's assembly'), which symptomatically enough appears in most iconographic representations of the *daghem*, as a summation of its identity. The ethical readiness the authors of the Stockholm study seem to value is an ethics of *action*, of communal action. That is why this morality is openly equated with everyday skills – familiarity with other forms of social discipline.<sup>44</sup> It helps to keep out otherworldliness, as Max Weber put.<sup>45</sup>

All this brings us to a tricky question: to what extent is the *förskola* genuinely operating according its official goals, i.e. fostering criticism and individualism? According to the *daghem*'s doctrine, everybody is supposed to be allowed to take the floor, to construct a moral stance. That is why increasing the interest and physical presence of parents at nursery schools and involving immigrant populations are objectives extolled by every assessment conducted between 1975 and 1980.<sup>46</sup> *Conflict*, or a *cultural clash*, is the key term found in these reports, which are dominated by the idea that the institution must operate in accordance with its democratic mission and generate educational rules and norms that are shared by all actors. On the other hand, this also shows that the ultimate concern – echoed in in-house training, quality evaluations, external reports – is always about strengthening consensus, halting resistance, reaching a deal – in other words, escaping pluralism.

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<sup>41</sup> See Ehn 1983, 69.

<sup>42</sup> Söderlund and William-Olsson (1978), 145–46, 175 ff. The most stigmatized fault is an excess of authoritarianism in relationships with the child, but also an emotional bond that is too strong or, on the contrary, indifference, both representing an infringement of the participatory logic of dialogue. See B. Ehn (1986), *Det otydliga kulturmötet* (Stockholm: Liber).

<sup>43</sup> This is also one of the few fields where the preschool doctrine assigns a pedagogic value to adults' conduct. 'Adults are also models for children. This is why it is considered essential that adults also resolve their own issues within the group of children' (Söderlund and William-Olsson 1978, 45).

<sup>44</sup> The 'activity stations' prescribed in the 1981 *förskola* programme range from 'talking to each other' and 'eating and resting' to 'discussing life's conceptions'. See Socialstyrelsen (1981).

<sup>45</sup> Weber (1905), 8 ff.

<sup>46</sup> Colla (2017), 643–676.

Pluralism is about value premises, while the official discourse about morality redefines every problem as practical, finalized. In the ideal *daghem*, the space of fantasy – but also tradition and preferences – is strictly confined. The observation reports are full of intriguing hints about this taboo: reprimands against *daghems* considered ‘too’ tidy and orderly, which might seem surprising, considering the extent to which conflict management was prescribed. The fact is that, in the view of the institution, even social harmony must be experienced within a rational framework. The communitarian ideal must be translated into a set of routines, where empathy and solidarity become the object of professional training. Dream-like harmony and emotional comfort are not legitimate goals.

The stated aim of both parents and staff is that the *daghem* should look like a HOME as much as possible. But what is meant by ‘a home’ is actually an ideal home: an idyllic place, very far from the reality of today’s families with children. A great, warm and good idyll, with the mother at the centre who solves everything [...] Does organizing an environment for the youngest babes mean escaping from reality? (Söderlund and William-Olsson 1978, p. 145).

But what does submission to reality (through a focus on ‘concrete’ concerns, ‘current’ topics, as the curriculum repeatedly stresses) mean if not simply submission to societal order? This can also explain the evocative status of manual labour that we meet in most visual representations of nursery-school life attached to the surveys and curriculum we have examined (see **picture 8**). After all, the subtext is praise for nothing other than voluntary submission to *fate*. It implies the inconsequentiality of the human being and the futility of individual rebellion. While being the apex of pragmatism, it is at the same time the apex of ascetism and spirituality. The ground where all human contradictions are dissolved, where free will and absolute discipline converge, is in essence the ground of mythical experience.<sup>47</sup>



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<sup>47</sup> ‘One can participate in mythical experience only with the fullness of one’s personality, in which the acquisition of information and the absorption of directives are inseparable’ (Kolakowski 1989, 128).

## Picture 8

Source: *Statens offentliga utredningar*, 25 (1981) Stockholm

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# Femminicidio, cultura visuale ed educazione

## *Femicide, visual culture, and education*

Claudia Gina Hassan\*

**Riassunto.** L'attenzione politica e mediatica sul femminicidio non ha ancora avuto un forte influsso nella scuola e nell'ambito educativo in generale. L'introduzione del tema implicherebbe la ricerca delle origini nell'ambito della violenza simbolica e in una cultura di dominio di lungo periodo. La comprensione della violenza e dell'orrore e la sua riduzione ad una didattica puramente emozionale pone molte criticità. Evitare questa diminuzione implica un'attenta riflessione sull'educazione di genere e le sue criticità, e sull'immaginario socialmente costruito del femminile e del maschile. La ricchezza di altre esperienze pedagogiche attente alla memoria storica conferma la rilevanza dell'arte come esperienza didattica ed estetica. L'articolo analizza questa strada educativa sottolineando la potenza dell'esperienza artistica immersiva e propone una selezione di opere utilizzate a fini educativi.

**Parole chiave:** Femminicidio, educazione, cultura visuale

**Abstract.** The political and media attention on femicide has not yet had a strong influence in the school and in the educational environment in general. The introduction of the theme would imply an investigation of the origins of the phenomenon in the context of symbolic violence and in a culture of long term domination. The understanding of violence and horror and its reduction to a purely emotional teaching raises many critical points. Avoiding this reductive view presupposes a careful reflection on gender education, its criticalities and on the socially constructed imagery of the feminine and the masculine. The richness of other pedagogical experiences attentive to historical memory confirms the importance of art as a didactic and aesthetic experience. The article analyzes this educational path emphasizing the power of the immersive artistic experience and proposes a selection of artworks to be used for educational purposes.

**Keywords:** Femicide, education, visual culture.

### 1. Cultura visuale ed educazione

Se esiste un riconoscimento unanime sulla capacità dell'arte di abbracciare il reale, lo spazio, il tempo e di riuscire a dare i grandi affreschi della società, meno consenso c'è sulla sua vocazione educativa, posta invece sotto la lente d'ingrandimento di studiosi di diversa provenienza. Ancora più controversa, per motivi evidenti, è la possibilità che l'arte possa indicare una strada o contenere un messaggio morale, soprattutto quando è strumentalmente e politicamente intesa. Posta oggi al confine con più discipline l'opera d'arte incrocia gli studi di cultura visuale, basati sociologicamente sull'idea di costruzione visuale della realtà, l'iconologia che studia il legame tra linguaggio e rappresentazione e i *media studies*, che connettono gli aspetti sociali e quelli artistici (Mitchell, 2018: 21). La cultura visuale è una vera e propria linguistica del campo visivo come sosteneva Gombrich, per aggiungere poi che l'immagine comporta nell'osservatore l'impressione e la percezione di osservare l'oggetto stesso. (Gombrich, 1965).

Da tempo infatti le scienze sociali hanno inglobato una sensibilità per le immagini che si è affiancata a quella rivolta verso il linguaggio. L'immagine sia essa artistica o proveniente dai media diviene così oggetto centrale d'indagine e non semplicemente sovrastruttura del discorso e del testo ed è soprattutto una spia e un segnalatore della realtà sempre più complessa e globale. Vista con sospetto e accusata di non avere una selezione precisa o di qualità sul materiale da adottare, la cultura visuale, anche se ormai accademicamente riconosciuta, ha faticato tuttavia ad imporsi perché vista come poco produttiva.

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Alle immagini e soprattutto alle rappresentazioni pittoriche dell'arte noi rispondiamo con l'interpretazione, con un'analisi semiotica, simbolica e ci interroghiamo sull'intento comunicativo, molto più raramente ne cogliamo la valenza educativa. Sul filone degli studi della cultura visuale, la domanda potrebbe quindi essere rovesciata (Mitchell, 2017: 107) che cosa vogliono le immagini da noi, cosa ci chiedono? E nella prospettiva di una pedagogia delle immagini e soprattutto attraverso queste, la domanda diventa come parlano, cosa dicono le icone e come la soggettività dell'oggetto può comunicare un messaggio educativo?

Il ruolo delle immagini è ampiamente più importante e potente rispetto al passato, il problema è quindi cosa fare con questa potenza supplementare. L'aura delle immagini artistiche nella loro unicità soggettivizza gli oggetti che vengono descritti se non vissuti come dotati di personalità, voce e volontà. La cosiddetta società dello spettacolo ha ampiamente reso evidente la centralità delle esperienze visuali sia per le élite sia per le esperienze popolari. (Debord, 1990)

La visione critica della società delle immagini, o dello spettacolo è allo stesso tempo ingenua ma anche inconsistente e poco proficua e colma di retorica sul potere delle immagini, che certo esiste e ha il suo peso, ma che andrebbe articolato e compreso più analiticamente.

Possiamo infatti leggere la centralità delle immagini nella cultura moderna come un collegamento alle società tradizionali non alfabetizzate (Ong, 2014).

L'arte dunque è lo strumento che più soddisfa le necessità della trasmissione della memoria di eventi tragici della storia, ma anche per una comprensione più profonda che contempra in sé l'aspetto cognitivo e quello emotivo. Con la distanza dagli eventi storici, con la distanza mediatica di alcuni temi, come per esempio è avvenuto per tanto tempo per il femminicidio incluso nella categoria di omicidi in generale, la valenza educativa delle testimonianze attraverso l'arte assume un significato particolare.

La percezione per Mc Luhan non avveniva mai solo con i sensi era una comprensione immersiva nei media caldi e nei media freddi. Questo vale per qualunque messaggio iconico, ogni medium figurativo ha una sua propria temperatura che si trasmette allo sguardo, al mediatore e al discente nel caso educativo. Il discorso artistico e quello sui media si fondono felicemente nel percorso educativo. Un approccio interdisciplinare rientra in alcuni concetti fondamentali di un'iconologia critica. Le immagini e parliamo anche di quelle inglobate nei processi educativi, non appartengono solo alla nostra epoca, sono anzi una figura del pensiero che si ripresenta più volte nella storia e ogni volta con una caratteristica peculiare data dalla situazione storica. Quando si parla quindi di svolta iconica, possiamo affermare che sia una tematica urgente anche nel campo della didattica contemporanea e non solo quindi nell'ambito della cultura di massa e della comunicazione politica. La conoscenza, l'apprendimento è mediato sicuramente dal linguaggio e dalle emozioni ma anche dall'intero ventaglio di pratiche rappresentazionali, tra cui emerge quella delle immagini. Le raffigurazioni quindi non sono semplicemente uno strumento didattico ma una vera e propria esperienza immersiva. Questa soggettivazione delle immagini non è caratteristica solo delle opere d'arte, ma viene trasferita a tutte le rappresentazioni iconiche.

Le teorie delle immagini partendo quindi dalla storia dell'arte hanno coinvolto così tanti saperi da dare vita a una lettura completamente nuova che viene indicata come iconologia critica. Occorre dunque distinguere all'interno delle raffigurazioni proposte la *picture* che sarà il quadro proposto nel percorso delle immagini nella storia dell'arte legate alla materialità del quadro o dell'icona in generale e invece l'immagine in senso stretto consiste in quello che resta come ricordo, come esperienza vissuta, come memoria. Il motivo ricorrente, cioè il femminicidio e le sue immagini proposte nel percorso educativo penetrano sotto forma di idea astratta e viene portata alla coscienza attraverso la percezione. Le immagini dunque innescano il meccanismo della comprensione ma soprattutto del riconoscimento, la certezza che si tratta di femminicidio nel nostro caso. Le opere d'arte qui analizzate appartengono ad epoche diverse; in quelle contemporanee sono evidenti gli elementi intenzionali di



denuncia del femminicidio, dovuti alla consapevolezza contemporanea assente nei quadri e nelle rappresentazioni del passato.

L'immagine che ne deriva, il segno iconico (Peirce, 2003) è dunque la percezione di una relazione di somiglianza in senso diacronico. In altre parole, cambiano le forme ma la sostanza del femminicidio rimane invariata.

La diade parola e immagine che accompagna il percorso educativo richiede non solo un'analisi formale e contenutistica ma anche una contestualizzazione storica assai feconda e generativa di significati.

La svolta iconica, (Walker & Chaplin, 1997) dunque incorpora il linguaggio e la semiotica e pone l'immagine come il punto d'intersezione tra discorso, visualità e lo sfondo istituzionale all'interno del quale agisce.

Anche se la cultura visiva appare scontata nella società di massa, il suo ruolo e la sua potenza in ambito educativo possono ancora essere esplorati. Le immagini quindi come esperienza al tempo stesso estetica ed educativa possono ricoprire un ruolo importante nella educazione di genere e nella comprensione profonda diacronica e sincronica del tema del femminicidio. È un'esperienza dunque che racchiude in sé un concetto antico e uno moderno, un modo di leggere le immagini inserito nel canone tradizionale della storia dell'arte, ma che viene anche stravolto da un'ottica visuale che accomuna l'elemento tematico del femminicidio, inteso come "tradizione culturale" di lungo periodo. All'interno di questa storia antica va inserita la necessità di una didattica che inquadri la relazione tra genere e violenza, ribaltando l'educazione che per secoli ha perpetuato la distinzione e la subalternità del femminile. È cambiata l'atmosfera educativa, un clima più consapevole è il terreno all'interno del quale le buone pratiche stanno pian piano facendosi strada, ma soprattutto si riscontra una sensibilità diversa, un'educazione informale di genere (Brambilla, 2016) che ha il suo peso e la sua incidenza. Tuttavia il clima e le atmosfere incidono solo parzialmente sulle strutture istituzionali e sulle organizzazioni. Se il clamore mediatico ci mette in contatto con una violenza di genere ancestrale, la quotidianità del lavoro, della famiglia e dell'istruzione non è però esente da micro discriminazioni cumulative che influiscono sulle scelte di vita e sulle opportunità che non si aprono. La violenza contro le donne è solo uno degli aspetti che vanno vivisezionati per comprenderne la portata e il loro radicamento profondo. Ai rischi di rispondere in modo emergenziale all'impatto mediatico e atmosferico le proposte educative con un orizzonte più ampio scavano e scardinano l'asimmetria dei generi. Il ruolo del mediatore è assolutamente fondamentale nello scardinare paradigmi involtari duri a morire, un certo modo di concepire l'insegnamento e la formazione. Il ruolo del mediatore può e deve essere assolutamente attivo e intenzionale, nello scomporre ed evitare le posizioni di cristallizzazione della posizione di asimmetria rispetto al maschile. Il lavoro va costruito sui due livelli della mediazione, quello dell'*empowerment* e quello dello svuotamento degli stereotipi. La certezza della modificabilità del cervello e della mente umana è la base su cui costruire la simmetria tra il maschile e il femminile. Non esistono confini prestabiliti, nessuno è necessariamente limitato dall'etichetta sociale seppure di lungo periodo.

## **2. Esperienza estetica ed esperienza educativa.**

Il processo formativo è fortemente modellato dallo strumento comunicativo che viene utilizzato. Utilizzare dunque le opere d'arte che raffigurano il femminicidio nel processo educativo produce degli effetti che non riguardano solo l'apprendimento ma un insieme di mutamenti rilevabili per l'intersecarsi di molteplici fattori come la fruizione estetica e l'impatto emotivo con la violenza. L'attenzione mediatica sul femminicidio, il numero delle vittime stimate in una ogni tre giorni e le iniziative politiche e giuridiche non hanno ancora avuto un forte influsso nella scuola e nell'ambito educativo in generale. L'introduzione del tema implicherebbe la ricerca delle origini nell'ambito della

violenza simbolica e in una cultura di dominio di lungo periodo. (Bourdieu, 1988:7). Questo tipo di approccio non è sufficiente per comprendere pienamente nella modernità la violenza di genere che avrebbe invece bisogno di rapportarsi e dialogare con quello dei cambiamenti delle identità e dei ruoli, e non solo con il dato di fatto del patriarcato. (Corradi, 2009:124)

La spettacolarizzazione, anche all'interno dell'educazione scolastica, di temi centrali del Novecento ci dice quanto difficile sia la comprensione della violenza e dell'orrore e la sua riduzione ad una didattica puramente emozionale. Evitare questa diminuzione implica un'attenta riflessione sull'educazione di genere, le sue criticità e sull'immaginario socialmente costruito del femminile e del maschile. (Durst, 2006). La ricchezza di altre esperienze educative attente alla memoria storica conferma la rilevanza dell'arte in tutte le sue dimensioni.

L'arte ha la capacità di esprimere (Dewey, 1951) e portare alla luce ciò che è implicito in ogni esperienza vitale ma a cui è difficile accedere senza di essa. L'espressione artistica è quindi in quest'ottica la prova della capacità umana di ripristinare l'unità di senso e azione. Come ho messo in evidenza sottolineando l'importanza della svolta iconica, i due campi dell'estetica e della pedagogia hanno bisogno di incontrarsi attraverso un linguaggio comune. L'educazione estetica poco più di un secolo fa era rivolta all'insegnamento delle belle arti, poi si è trasformata concentrando l'attenzione sul bello e sulla sensibilità e solo da qualche decennio è approdata all'idea generale di educazione attraverso l'arte che oggi è ampiamente ibridata con le nuove tecnologie. Mettere insieme estetica e pedagogia è operazione che appare poco estrosa, oggi, grazie a quel filone dell'estetica che si coniuga felicemente con l'approccio fenomenologico e l'attenzione per il quotidiano (Griffero, 2017). Questo approccio fenomenologico ben si presta all'educazione con e attraverso le immagini, quindi non una teoria dell'arte ma una teoria della conoscenza sensibile e corporea, un'esperienza patica ed empatica. L'estetica ha tradizionalmente dato un grande contributo alla pedagogia e le esperienze educative attraverso l'arte hanno messo in evidenza la rilevanza dell'arte nella formazione dell'individuo. L'educazione attraverso l'arte è spesso stata bagaglio delle esperienze pedagogiche aperte verso il futuro, e pronte a percorrere strade nuove. Nell'educazione attraverso l'arte si riescono a condensare mancanze della didattica tradizionale, soprattutto se ci riferiamo a temi difficili da maneggiare con implicazioni umane tragiche ed universali o quando si vuole comunicare un mondo di violenze ancestrali e difficili da spiegare. Non è dunque più l'educazione al bello, ma l'educazione attraverso le rappresentazioni iconiche. Un mutuo avvicinamento dell'estetica e dell'esperienza pedagogica è la strada maestra che aiuta a colmare le difficoltà educative nella trasmissione di temi come quello del femminicidio. Le riflessioni alla base di una pedagogia esemplare che riesca a coniugare coscienza sociale e istruzione sono suffragate da molte esperienze pratiche ma raramente sono teorizzate. Sono temi degni della massima attenzione sia filosofica sia pedagogica. Diverse teorie estetiche possono interagire con l'educazione di genere. La tesi bergsoniana (Bergson, 1958:12) del comprendere esteticamente il mondo aiuta a fondare la validità della nostra proposta nella direzione di un affinamento della percezione sul tema della violenza mediante un contatto con l'arte. Un secondo punto è quello della esperienza estetica che permette una dilatazione cognitiva e sensoriale, quindi una maggiore empatia con il nostro tema. Il terzo punto di vista è quello che invece considera la funzione terapeutica dell'arte. In questo senso le teorie estetiche che attribuiscono all'arte il ruolo di contatto con il mondo sono quelle che più si sposano con una pedagogia del genere. L'arte ci mostra per Bergson nella natura e in noi stessi cose che non colpiscono esplicitamente i nostri sensi e la nostra coscienza. Osservando l'arte osserviamo noi stessi. L'arte è mediatrice come lo è anche l'educazione.

Il bombardamento mediatico sul tema del femminicidio raramente si ferma ad una riflessione o anche ad un'esperienza patica del tema. Le immagini sono utilizzate ampiamente ma non ugualmente pensate e soprattutto vissute. Le immagini digitali sono ampiamente utilizzate nella didattica, tanto che si è arrivati a parlare di una pedagogia del concreto. Gli audiovisivi, sostituendosi all'esperienza

personale, suppliscono al contatto diretto soprattutto quando questo non è possibile. Ma i fatti di cronaca non possono certo essere esperienza educativa se non adeguatamente mediata. Le immagini proposte in sé non comportano necessariamente nessuna dimensione storica, sono sincroniche e funzionano in virtù della loro funzione simbolica. Le immagini hanno una forza unica nello stimolare risposte emotive.

Per Dewey l'esperienza estetica è una ricerca qualitativa della realtà che si compie attraverso una rielaborazione unitaria dei dati dell'esperienza e di tutte le sue componenti : mente, affetti, emozione, percezione e impulso.

Per Dewey l'uomo è concepito come un essere che si serve dell'arte. Il prodotto artistico, qualunque esso sia è diverso da un'opera d'arte che proviene dalla cooperazione dello spettatore con questo prodotto e ha come suo fine il provocare un'esperienza. Non a caso la performance di Ana Manieta durata un'ora con lei ferma e immobile a rappresentare lo stupro aveva colpito enormemente gli spettatori che ne erano diventati parte attiva. La cooperazione dello spettatore diventa così la premessa dell'opera d'arte. Si dà e si riceve. Attraverso l'arte (Dewey, 1951) l'uomo vive una realtà più profonda e si proietta fuori da se stesso. Ogni forma artistica comunica, cioè fa partecipare e rende comune. Questo carattere immediato dell'effetto emotivo lo ritroviamo nella body art che molto si è occupata del corpo delle donne.

Partendo da queste considerazioni nulla più delle espressioni artistiche è in grado di denudare i meccanismi della violenza contro il corpo della donna e di far ritrovare nelle diverse epoche il filo rosso che l'ha tenuta viva per secoli.

### 3. Immagini patiche per pensare<sup>1</sup>

La rappresentazione iconica della donna attraverso l'arte in differenti epoche storiche e alle più diverse latitudini ci racconta molto del modo in cui la società la percepisce, cristallizza, idealizza o la demonizza. Simbolo di fecondità nell'iconografia antica, quasi sparisce nel mondo romano, si fa Madonna nel Medioevo con le immagini sacre e ritorna ad umanizzarsi nel Rinascimento.

Il tema del femminicidio così presente sotto forma di denuncia e di consapevolezza nell'arte contemporanea non era estraneo neanche ai tempi di Tiziano e Botticelli.

Negli affreschi della scuola del Santo a Padova (1511) Tiziano rappresenta in una scena un marito geloso che pugnalava la moglie.

È una scena drammatica di femminicidio, il marito tiene la donna per i capelli, ha un lungo e affilato pugnale in mano e si vede il sangue zampillare dal petto della donna atterrita. Nella stessa scena ma sullo sfondo il marito ringrazia Sant'Antonio per aver fatto resuscitare la moglie perché era stata ingiustamente accusata di adulterio. Il Miracolo del marito geloso<sup>2</sup> ricalca una storia toscana che narra la rinascita della donna dopo la morte violenta perché il marito pentito chiede la grazia. Il nostro sguardo va al centro della scena violenta. Il marito è determinato e sicuro, la donna si divincola, alza il braccio in una inutile difesa. La scena non lascia dubbi sulla forza dell'azione. Proporre questa immagine lontana nel tempo ci permette di seguire un percorso che parte da lontano, radicato profondamente nel tempo. La donna è colpevole e va punita con la morte: è scritto nel volto del marito. Si salva perché non è adultera.

In un'altra opera dell'epoca si compie un femminicidio; nel dipinto a tempera su tavola Botticelli ha messo in scena, una delle Novelle del Decameron di Boccaccio Nastagio degli Onesti. Il protagonista è innamorato della figlia di Paolo Traversari ma non è ricambiato. La giovane donna si

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<sup>1</sup> Ringrazio la professoressa Rossana Buono, storica dell'arte dell'Università di Roma Tor Vergata per avermi segnalato alcune delle opere d'arte riportate nell'articolo.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/t/tiziano/01\\_1510s/11padua3.html](https://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/t/tiziano/01_1510s/11padua3.html)

convince a cedere alle sue richieste dopo aver visto la fine tragica che fa un'altra donna che non aveva corrisposto all'amore di un pretendente. I quadri sono quattro di cui tre si trovano al museo del Prado di Madrid. Nel primo quadro la donna è raffigurata nuda nel bosco mentre scappa e viene azzannata dai cani e colpita dall'uomo che la rincorreva a cavallo.<sup>3</sup> Nel secondo episodio<sup>4</sup> si compie il femminicidio, la donna è colpita a terra nuda e l'uomo la finisce con la spada. Nastagio assiste alla scena inorridito, ma crede che questa immagine possa tornargli utile per conquistare con il terrore la giovane fanciulla che lo aveva rifiutato. I quadri ci parlano chiaro, anche qui la donna è colpevole. In Tiziano per adulterio qui perché ha osato non esaudire il desiderio dell'uomo. Negli altri due quadri l'amata di Nastagio terrorizzata dall'orrore della scena si convince a sposarlo. Entrambi i quadri sono complessi e li possiamo leggere in tanti modi ma riflettono senza dubbio un giudizio negativo sulle donne secondo i valori morali dell'epoca. Nel quadro di Tiziano l'adultera va uccisa, Sant'Antonio la salva ma solo perché è onesta. La donna è quindi un angelo o un demone, pura o impura, peccatrice o innocente.

Nell'arte contemporanea il discorso si capovolge. Le artiste qui riportate fanno tutte un'operazione di denuncia del femminicidio. È un fatto sociale e l'arte in modo diverso dal passato ne è un testimone. Le donne sono protagoniste in quanto artiste e lo sono come presenza attiva di denuncia. Il corpo trafitto nella rappresentazione di Tiziano e Botticelli diventa corpo che agisce nelle performance delle artiste.

Le artiste impegnate su questo tema sono cresciute negli anni, qui ne propongo quattro di diversa provenienza e con diversi stili.

La prima, Ana Mendieta, un'artista dalla grande forza espressiva è una cubana vissuta negli Stati Uniti. La possiamo inserire pienamente nel filone della body art soprattutto per quello che riguarda le sue performance di denuncia della violenza sessuale. In seguito allo stupro e femminicidio di Sara Ann Otten, una studentessa dell'università dell'Iowa, dove Ana Mendieta studiava con l'artista tedesco Hans Breder decide di inscenare nella stanza della sua casa uno stupro. Si fece infatti trovare da studenti e professori piegata su un tavolo e spogliata dalla vita in giù. Il sangue le gocciolava lungo le cosce e i polpacci. E una pozza di sangue era visibile per terra. La scena era illuminata in modo da far risaltare la drammaticità della scena. La sua testa e le sue braccia, che sono legate al tavolo, non sono visibili nell'oscurità; stoviglie rotte e vestiti insanguinati scompaiono nell'ombra sul pavimento alla sua destra. Una performance di denuncia, molto dura, potente dal forte impatto simbolico e narrativo con il suo corpo violato messo in scena. *Untitled (Rape performance)* del 1973.<sup>5</sup> Rimase ferma per circa un'ora e come ricorda l'artista fu scioccante per il pubblico. Nessuna teoria dirà in seguito ma la risposta personale ad una situazione.

In altre due performance è stata fotografata sdraiata semi-nuda e spruzzata di sangue in vari luoghi all'aperto sui perimetri del campus universitario (*Rape Performance Viso*). Nello stesso anno ha creato molti altri *tableaux* usando il sangue. In un'opera intitolata *Clinton Piece, Dead on Street*, l'artista giaceva immobile in una pozza di sangue come se fosse un incidente o una vittima di un crimine, mentre un collega studente si fermava su di lei a scattare foto con una fotocamera flash come se stesse registrando l'incidente per la stampa o la polizia.

Infine, in una fattoria abbandonata ha creato una scena di caos con materassi strappati e altri detriti domestici su cui ha versato vernice rossa, per implicare una brutale lotta tra una vittima e il suo aggressore - *Untitled (Bloody Mattresses)*. Lo scopo di queste opere era di stimolare una risposta da parte del pubblico.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.alamy.it/la-storia-di-nastagio-degli-onesti-i-1483-sandro-botticelli-il-museo-del-prado-madrid-spagna-image61302165.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.greatbigcanvas.com/view/story-of-nastagio-degli-onesti-from-boccaccios-decamerone-1483,2257914/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://thesteroscopicseye.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/anamedietarape.jpg>

L'artista Giosetta Fioroni con un'installazione a parete di ceramica e smalti policromi intitolata *Il male inflitto alle donne* (2008) denuncia attraverso 66 riquadri, come delle lapidi riportano le morti di altrettante donne morte di femminicidio nel 2006. L'opera è molto grande e al centro di questa troviamo l'immagine di una donna scomposta quasi a rappresentare il corpo infranto e che non potrà più tornare integro. Una donna che sta per crollare perché non ha più nulla che la tiene in piedi. È un'installazione che rappresenta la violenza con minore impatto emotivo, ma non con meno profondità.

La messicana Elisa Chauvet nel 2009 a Ciudad de Juarez colloca in uno spazio pubblico la sua opera *Zapatos Rojos*, un'invasione di scarpe rosse cariche di significato e di valenza emotiva. Sono rosse come il sangue ma anche come un malinteso amore. La sua opera è diventata sinonimo di denuncia, è un simbolo riconoscibile e riutilizzato in diverse varianti.

Paola Volpato nel 2017 ha realizzato l'installazione *femminicidio- donne uccise dal 2015 a 2017* esposta nella Sala del Cenacolo del Complesso di Vicolo Valdina – Camera dei Deputati di Roma, in occasione della Giornata Internazionale contro la Violenza il 25 novembre 2017.

“Femminicidio” è una specie di gigantesco cubo nero della memoria, una grande scatola ricoperta di ritratti: sono i volti delle donne uccise fra il 2015 e il 2017 ritratti con la china. Sono 200 ritratti che offrono al visitatore lo sguardo di un'assenza, e la denuncia di un crimine che si ripete. È l'arte che rende ognuno di questi oggetti e di queste performance densi di significato che altrimenti sarebbero incomprensibili ed inespressivi. La ragione profonda di ognuna di queste opere è la creazione di una nuova esperienza. Ogni opera racchiude in sé un linguaggio che vive nelle esperienze individuali e nelle esperienze educative. Il legame tra esperienza estetica ed esperienza educativa ha la possibilità di essere ampliato e intensificato, grazie ad un'azione pedagogica strutturata.

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# Mediterranean migrations as experienced by migrants: Memories as a “lifeline”\*

Emiliana Mangone\*\* & Giovanna Russo\*\*\*

**Abstract.** Research on migration mostly focuses on its quantitative aspect, often neglecting the foreigner’s point of view. This shift is, however, necessary, as reception and integration stem from two-way processes pivoting around the immigrants’ social representations of the host society and their intangible resources (cognitive and relational). This contribution analyses how the autobiographical material (“memories”) included in the application for refugee status can become a “lifeline”. The idea underpinning this exploratory study is that the experience of “suspended life” linked to such application has become an element of contemporary collective memory, due to its specifically performative and experiential character. This type of narrative constructs in-group belonging based on the shared memory of a founding past linked to trauma and violence. We focus on three key concepts: identity, social representation, and public memory. We analyse 53 statements of asylum-seekers transited in Italy through SPRARs and other reception projects between 2011 and 2014, collected in the Province of Bologna. Our aim is to bring out the narrative of the “trauma” linked to the experience of the asylum application as a symbol of a contemporary social drama. Our findings show that the migrants’ narratives followed a precise script sequence and become common heritage, enhancing solidarity and constructing collective memory.

**Keywords:** Migration, Asylum-seekers, Public memory, Narratives, Identity, Social representation.

## 1. The Mediterranean and the encounter with the foreigner

The great challenge faced by societies is whether they should be configured as closed (unwelcoming) or open (welcoming) systems towards “other cultures” – what Baumann (1999) called “the multicultural enigma”. Culture, like identity, is not absolute. Both are in continuous movement: the benefits of culture depend on its rebuilding processes, and the dominant discourse of culture as an immutable legacy is only a sub-component (often a conservative one) of a process. It follows that multiculturalism is a new way of conceiving cultural dynamics. The concept of multiculturalism does not stand for that of culture multiplied by the number of “other cultures” in a given territory, being a new way of dealing with the simultaneous presence of cultural diversity in daily activities (Hannerz, 1996) resulting from these subjects/actors coming from other countries. On this issue, Donati states the need for “new” multiculturalism for modern citizenship based on “relational culture”. In his words, «[w]e need a new vision of human existence to manage the cultural borders in such a way as to preserve the differences while taking care of what links them and can be shared by them. This amounts to find out a new “relational culture”, *i.e.* a culture of social relations that can be able to see and deal with the “enigma” of the borders themselves» (Donati, 2016: 25) that can connect different individuals, lifestyles, affiliations and nationalities, without reproducing their separation or pitting them against each other.

Every form of relationship oscillates between exchange of information and symbolic action on the Other, thus embodying some ambiguity. The relationships implemented and experienced by individuals are a problematic action that rarely allows for reciprocity between the subjects. That is

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why cultures and identities are transformed by entering a relationship with the *Other*. The subject constructing his life project recognizes not only himself but also the other as different from himself. When this process does not attain mutual recognition, it can lead to conflict. The attitudes and actions of individuals are influenced by many multidimensional factors including the culture and the indissoluble bond with the individual's biography. We thus switch from a research approach for social phenomena oriented towards the search for the cause (causality) to one focusing on the overall interactions between individual, social and environmental variables (relationality).

In the relational perspective (Donati, 2011a; Donati & Archer, 2015), social relationships are seen not as constraints for individuals, but as the elements promoting their self-determination based on reflexivity (Donati, 2011b) that becomes the sphere defining both their distance and their integration. On this reality (the social relationships) depends if and in what form, measure, and quality the individual can choose to be detached or engaged towards other subjects, the institutions, and more generally the dynamics of social life. In other words, individuals, through relational reflexivity, must orient themselves to the reality that emerges from interactions and reflects on the subjects themselves because it goes beyond the powers of individuals and aggregates.

The idea of "otherness" is almost always linked to that of "extraneity" and therefore to the foreigner. However, each society has its own "foreigners". In Simmel's work (1908) the category of foreigner is characterized by dichotomies: close/distant, similar/different, inside/outside the community. Today, they no longer apply only to a subject coming from distant places and with a specific symbolic dimension but also to those (others) among us who create ambiguity or undermine our degree of certainty as they cannot be easily ascribed to a specific category. The *Ego/Alter* relationship is no longer based on aspects of inequality (how) but of differentiation (for whom). Researchers should focus on the attitudes of *Ego*, who perceives himself as similar to/different from *Alter* in a given symbolic sphere, as well as to *Alter's* responses within a relational framework built on expectations that determinate closeness/distance and openness/closure. The construction of identity occurs over time through differentiation and integration and changes according to the relational situations experienced by individuals in their daily life.

The individual constructing his identity – since it is a matter of social construction – recognizes himself, the other as different from himself, and himself as the other. The emerging differences should not limit or hinder action but prompt the integration, pooling and sharing of skills and daily experiences. The individual, as a subject, exists in the social system and is in turn socially identified through the process of categorization. This applies also to groups: each has an identity that corresponds to its definition and that allows it to be placed in society. Identity is both inclusion and exclusion: it identifies the group and distinguishes it from other groups (Cuche, 1996) and it thus seems a way of categorizing the distinction between Us and Them based on cultural difference.

Attitudes and actions towards others depend on our idea of them, our interpretations of their past and present actions, and our predictions about what they will do in the future (Berger & Luckmann, 1969). Attitudes (understood as positive or negative orientation) towards others are thus oriented by our perception of them through the attribution of a judgement (Hewstone, 1983). The social reality of individuals springs from both the social meaning and the products of their subjective world. Individuals build their schemes of action based on of the meaning they attribute to their everyday life; they find a world of meanings and events that become real for them only because they are perceiving and conscious social beings. These are social representations (Farr & Moscovici 1984), which can be considered a set of cognitive matrices with the task of coordinating words, ideas, images and perceptions that are shared by a wide category of people who identify with each other. Social representations are understood as actual systems of interpretation for the social environment. In short, social representations constitute social reality because they determine the meaning of actions and events. They also define the experience of reality by identifying the limits, meanings, and types of interactions, thus reducing the ambiguity of information (they make the non-family familiar), and they make the meanings of actions unequivocal.

Social representations, therefore, act as a descriptive tool to understand the process and the mechanisms of construction and functioning of the category "other". When an individual or a group

judges (in positive or negative) another person or group, they build shared social representations. In the case of negative orientation, they lead to the attribution of responsibilities that may go as far as establishing prejudices and excluding these individuals, considered “enemies” (Mangone & Marsico 2011). In recent years, this often happened with migrants landed on European coasts from the Mediterranean Sea (Mangone & Pece 2017a). If we analyse this process considering representations as a cognitive-descriptive process that leads to the creation of the construct of the “foreigner”, it emerges that individuals do not attribute the “otherness” only to immigrants. Their construction of “otherness”, and consequently its recognition, refers to a broader and more complex process of categorization that leads to the visibility of the Us-Them nexus (the basis of social identification) and simultaneously makes the close-distant dimension visible. As this process is strengthened, we risk reproducing cultural prejudices – which can be exacerbated into racial prejudices – that are in fact “defence of one’s own world” and “competitive orientation” towards the “Other”. Prejudice is nothing more than a form of categorisation with social implications for the victim (Allport, 1954), but it is a completely normal cognitive process for its producers: it is not negative *per se* but only in its effects. In daily life, prejudice is a preconceived opinion, socially learned, shared by the group of belonging, which has a negative value towards the category that is the object of prejudice (the “Other”) by orienting attitudes (Taguieff, 1999). Prejudice defines a certain type of orientation towards categories rather than single individuals. Based on this definition, we can state that individuals produce prejudice towards the “Others” not because of their difference but because they are classified into the broader “migrant” category.

## 2. Mediterranean migration and European policies

The “formal” dismantling of the geographical borders in global society – *e.g.* the Schengen Agreements in Europe, at least until the latest wave of terror (Mangone & Pece, 2017b) – should allow for people’s voluntary and peaceful movement. And yet today this does not happen (see the construction of the Hungarian-Serbian border in 2015, or the increased surveillance on the border between Italy and Austria, or Italy and France). This gives rise to dynamics in which different cultures find themselves “forcibly” having to meet and co-exist, permeating the social and cultural processes of both the home and the host society.

Migration is a sector of operational commitment that calls for a clear reference framework appropriately calibrating interventions and trying to interpret future trends. On the latter, which is an extremely delicate action because it affects immigration policies, we should start from a non-ethnocentric reading of migrations with reference to different territorial areas and individual regions. For example, we could consider historical events such as the “Arab Springs” that have modified the flows, the channels, and the countries of emigration. Or we could focus on a little-studied aspect of migrations which nevertheless allows for an “objective reading” of the other point of view: the social representation that the immigrant builds of the host society and its citizens. The foreigner is an actor who, within the resources and constraints provided by his contexts, faces the need, on the one hand, to maintain a link with the culture of his home society, and, on the other, to be open to the values of the host society. While most research focus on the quantitative aspect of migrations, few adopt this outlook (La Barbera, 2015). The observation of the foreigner’s point of view stems from the need to follow a paradigm shift on how to conceive the processes of reception, inclusion, and integration. These are no longer seen unilaterally but by enhancing the perspective of those who are often vulnerable and, on the ground of their cultural references, wish to join in their host society. The *Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals* (European Commission, 2016) confirms that integration “is an evolutionary process” and the development of related policies must be linked to local realities, to support access to services, education, language learning and the fight against discrimination.

The dynamics of migration – particularly forced migration – challenge the institutional capacity of welfare systems to promote effective processes of reception, inclusion, and integration. This may lead to the assumption that forced mobility causes disturbances in the subjects’ daily lives. Forced migration differs from voluntary migration, which usually entails the search for a better life, although it is not always possible to distinguish between economic migrants and refugees or between voluntary and forced migration. The latter includes refugees and asylum seekers, who in any case are a small part of the migrants living in European countries.

At the end of 2019 (UNHCR, 2020a), migration reached its highest levels ever: an unprecedented 79.5 million people fled their country, over half of which are minors. Of these, some 26 million are refugees. Over two thirds (68%) came from just five countries: Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Most of them seek shelter close to their home country: the main host countries are Turkey (keeping in mind the agreement signed on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2016 with the EU on the management of migration flows), Colombia, Germany, Pakistan, and Uganda.

If this is the general picture, the state of affairs in the Mediterranean, and particularly in Italy, is hardly rosier: the UNHCR figures until December 2019 (UNHCR, 2020b) show that more than 123,000 people have landed on the coasts of Italy, Spain and Greece and in a smaller part in Cyprus and Malta, while over 1.319 died or were lost at sea. According to the same source, in the first six months of 2020 about 30,000 people landed on the northern coasts of the Mediterranean (just under 10,000 in Italy and Spain, a little more than 10,000 in Greece and about 2,000 in Cyprus) and an estimated 370 are dead or missing.

Figures from the Italian Ministry of Domestic Affairs (2020a) account for 6,812 landings in the first semester of 2020 (updated 30<sup>th</sup> June), mainly from Tunisia (19%), Bangladesh (18%), and Ivory Coast (11%). According to the same source (2020b), as of 31 December 2019, asylum applications amounted to 43,783. In 2019, 76,798 applications out of 95,060 were rejected (81% of the total). The numbers are much higher than in the previous year (91.576 applications examined, of which 60.147 rejected, 66% of the total).

The data show that asylum-seekers reaching Europe via the Mediterranean largely come from The Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. For the former, migration is mainly due to political instability, religious persecution, and civil wars; while African asylum-seekers reach Europe for a variety of reasons (persecutions and civil wars – particularly in the countries of the Horn of Africa, such as Somalia and Eritrea – or poverty and unsustainable economic conditions – particularly in West African countries such as Nigeria, Senegal, Guinea, etc.). In short, these countries are theatres not only of war but also of extreme poverty and the reasons why the migrants leave are often manifold.

Recent humanitarian crises, particularly in Syria, have led to a significant increase in the number of applications for international protection in the EU. Since asylum legislation differs between countries, the EU issued directives on reception, qualifications, and procedures for applying for asylum. At present, there are three types of European protection: a) *refugee status*, granted for persecution (or a well-founded fear of) in the country of origin for the reasons listed in the Geneva Convention (5 years); b) *subsidiary protection*, granted to those who risk “serious harm” in the country of origin (3 years); and, finally, c) *humanitarian protection*, granted for humanitarian crises that do not involve personal persecution suffered by the applicant (from 6 months to 2 years). A special fund for the management of asylum applications has been established since 2008, replaced in 2014 by the *Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund* (AMIF) to standardise asylum procedures in Member States and deal with crises. The EU’s objective to establish a *Common European Asylum System* (CEAS), instead, seems far into the future due to the differences between the Member States.

The EU also introduced the *European Dactyloscopy* (EURODAC) System, a fingerprint database for asylum-seekers. When someone applies for asylum anywhere in the EU, their fingerprints are transmitted to the EURODAC Central System. Since its inception in 2003, it has

proven paramount for providing comparative fingerprint evidence to help determine the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in the EU. Its main objective is to support the implementation of the Dublin Regulation, which was last revised on 26 June 2013 (EU Regulation 604/2013). These two instruments together constitute what is commonly referred to as the “Dublin system”.

Lastly, the European Agency for the Management of International Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the EU, better known as Frontex (acronym of “*Frontières extérieures*”) was established in 2005 to coordinate the patrolling of the external air, sea and land borders of the EU Member States.

The EU’s commitments go beyond these interventions. In 2013, it finances the humanitarian operation known as “Mare nostrum”, managed by the Italian Navy, that patrolled the Mediterranean Sea up to its international waters. This operation mission was twofold: “to guarantee the protection of life at sea” and “to bring to justice all those who profit from the illegal smuggling of migrants”. In 2014, it was substituted by operation Triton (originally called Frontex plus), entrusted to the Frontex agency but coordinated by Italy. It aims to patrol Europe’s maritime borders, controlling the international waters up to 30 miles from the Italian coast. Triton is a joint border police operation that reaches the maritime borders of the Schengen area, but it does not replace the responsibility of EU Member States to control their borders. Finally, operation Sophia – officially called the European Union Naval Force Mediterranean, also known by the acronym EUNAVFOR Med – is a military operation launched by the EU following the shipwrecks in April 2015 of several vessels carrying migrants from Libyan ports. It aimed to neutralise the established trafficking routes of migrants in the Mediterranean.

In recent years, especially after the North African emergency in 2011 and the Syrian crisis in 2015, migrants and refugees have become a major issue on the political agenda of European countries, and the EU’s commitment is judged to be lacking by many. Since the spring of 2018, the Italian government has been pushing for redefining the Union’s migration policies, without real results. Currently, partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the amendment to the Dublin Rules of Procedure is still unresolved and Operation Sophia itself is being questioned.

The most evident consequence has been the growth of xenophobic parties and movements (besides boosting the groups already strong in countries like Hungary and Poland), such as the *Front National* in France, the *Alternative für Deutschland* in Germany and the *Lega* in Italy (formerly *Lega Nord*). Many countries have implemented hostile policies towards refugees, not least those of the Italian government when Matteo Salvini was Minister of Domestic Affairs, with the so-called security decrees to crack down on the arrival of migrants. The continuous influx of migrants has cast doubts about the very resilience of the European Union and one of the reasons that contributed to Brexit was probably Great Britain’s fear of these strong migratory flows.

In this scenario, the reception and integration of immigrants derive from two-way processes in which their social representations of the host society (before and after their arrival) and their intangible resources (cognitive and relational) are paramount. Integration processes are not mechanically determined by the structure of the reception system or local policies, but result, at least in part, from strategic paths chosen by the migrants themselves, acting in a context of options whereby choices are made in the light of specific social frameworks of knowledge.

### **3. Memory as a “lifeline”**

The migratory phenomenon is a structural fact whose importance goes beyond its quantitative significance. It fascinates sociologists for its effects on the construction of the processes of collective and individual identity. In particular, in the face of the many victims of immigration, it seems useful to try to understand the paths through which migrants have the right to a “new life”, while the community must remember (Tota *et al.*, 2018). The role of public memory (Jedlowski,



2007, 2016), as memory studies - which developed in the social sciences (Grande & Affuso, 2012) - have long held, is also to highlight those processes, allowing for a traumatic past to be collectively re-elaborated.

Within this framework, our contribution aims to analyse how the autobiographical material (“memories”) included in the legal-administrative process of application for refugee status can become a “lifeline”. The specificity of such documentation is expressed in a narrative<sup>1</sup> with a specific symbolic dimension as an expression of those fleeing human persecution or destiny (Ahmed, 1999; Colombo, 2018). The passage from the status of “migrant” to that of “refugee” allows for another outlook for observation and knowledge, less tied to stereotypes and more open to acceptance and acknowledgement.

This type of narrative is performative, useful for the construction of a collective and social memory linked to the dimension of trauma and violence. We refer, of course, to Halbwachs (1950) and Assmann (2006) who consider collective memory as a social construct emerging from a group with a limited function in time and space that cannot be autonomous from individual memories and their limits. In this sense, it is a concrete memory with respect to identity, *i.e.* it constructs in-group belonging based on the common memory of a founding past (Bartoletti, 2007). The concepts of place, travel, body, trauma, etc. take on new meanings and force a change of direction: between memory and oblivion, between emergency and need for protection, a new social space opens up in which memory (individual and collective) is the protagonist, constructing and de-constructing the representation (not only medial) of new subjectivities today traversing Europe.

Migrating and waiting for refugee status lead to a “suspended” life: the migrant almost always ends up between a not-anymore and a not-yet (Dal Lago, 2004). This makes this path (from the reception to the recognition of refugee status) a privileged field of analysis for both the observation and the construction of subjective memories and the attribution of meaning in the reconstruction of a new contemporary world (Tota, 2001), creating significant links between memory and conscious citizenship.

Migration de-structures the identity of the individual, but also that of the community that is left behind. In some cases, and for certain countries, this form of “disorientation” still seems to permeate the lives of citizens years after migration. This “fracture” often remains unhealed and is accentuated between generations (*e.g.*, the second- and third-generation migrants born in Italy). Often, everything that existed before leaving is sent into “oblivion” as if to accelerate a “new birth” from the day after arrival in the landing country, thus marking a discontinuity (Jedlowski, 2002) with what was before. The date of departure from the country of origin leaves deep wounds, linked to those for a “loss” (mourning), since migrating means almost always to leave family members in the home country, but the trauma is also attributable to identity loss. For example, many first-generation Italian migrants at the beginning of the last century never renounced Italian citizenship – and in many cases have never asked for citizenship in the landing country. It is almost as if they wanted to keep alive the (very remote) hope of returning to Italy, or claim “foreigner” status. Conversely, their children and grandchildren (second and third generations) prefer dual citizenship. If there is no collective memory of the “place” of origin, there has been no *re-composition* of the past. *Re-composing* is not only preserving the memory, but it entails its *re-construction* according to the present. This process implies the relationship with the other (both as an individual and as the subject’s group) within a context – a framework, to use Halbwachs’ terminology – which contains objective and objectivable references. In other words, the migrant’s past life has fallen into “forgetfulness” by implementing the opposite process to “fixation”. Both processes, however, are configured as a construction of reality – Berger and Luckmann’s phenomenology (1966) or Assmann and Czaplick’s socio-constructivist conception (1995) – which seeks for a meaning (or meanings) for the present.

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<sup>1</sup> Narration takes two forms (Czarniawska, 2004): a) as a mode of knowledge; b) as a mode of communication. Since knowledge enables the development of systems of ideas and communication and their diffusion, it is easy to understand how narration is paramount for social change.

The relationship between memory, identity, and sense of belonging is, therefore, very close because the latter is an active element of affirmation and recognition of identity (Crespi, 2004). Such identifications are needed both by single individuals and by the whole of the collectivity (in this case the collectivity of migrants) – the latter in order to carry on “existing”. Due to the problematic nature of this relationship, the complexity of its ambivalent concepts, and the identity changes happening in modern society, we here wonder how and by which means is it possible to substantiate memory as a strong element that generates the sense of belonging to a foreign territory, and what is its function in the territory development process.

### 3.1. Theoretical and methodological framework of the "exploratory" study

Reflecting on the suspension that asylum seekers experience in the host territories requires a “certain outlook” (Dal Lago, De Biase, 2002), whose knowledge is not necessarily codified in a manual but able to observe and grasp marginal, unusual, or little-known aspects of the surrounding reality. This means adopting the gaze of a «subject (the researcher) who is himself part of society and who therefore runs the risk of adopting presumptions and prejudices, but the main defence for this danger is precisely the critical interpretation of socio-cultural phenomena» (Mangone, 2019: 7, personal translation) which can take place between participation and scientific detachment, between interpretation and disorientation, aware of adopting inevitably partial viewpoints.

The analysis of the memories of asylum seekers, presented below, starts from these premises. It aims at bringing out their experience by placing the reader “on the side of the subject”, by pointing out the experience of “transit or suspension” in the host territories as categories of meaning and novel representations of this path with an uncertain outcome (Eastmond, 2007).

This “exploratory” study is not without a critical vision of the genesis of the texts considered, since the intention of the writers (the migrants) is to provide the Territorial Commission with the tools to judge their right to receive international protection. These texts, therefore, need a contextualization about the administrative procedure framing their writing and that characterizing the reception path.

The underpinning idea is that the experience of “suspended life” linked to the request for international protection has now become an element of contemporary collective memory, due to the specifically performative and experiential character that it conveys. The *supplementary statements* are attached to the so-called C3 model filed with the Central Police Station by those who intend to apply for asylum (“Minutes of the declarations of foreigners applying in Italy for the recognition of refugee status” according to the Geneva Convention 28/07/1951, Law 189 of 30/07/2002) and which contains information on the subject and his family, the reasons for leaving his country, the journey, etc., and which grants a three-month permit pending recognition. To the C3 model, the applicant can attach the *supplementary statement*, the story of his personal experience in his original language, in which he can explain all the reasons that led him to expatriation and the asylum request. This act of writing begins the work that asylum-seekers must carry out on their personal history to obtain international protection. The fragments of remembrance and experiences lived are almost always assembled with the operators (often psychologists and cultural mediators) and the lawyers who support the applicant within the reception facilities.

We analysed 53 statements of asylum-seekers transited in Italy between 2011 and 2014 (Federici & Degli Esposti Merli, 2014), collected in the Province of Bologna and belonging to subjects accepted in the SPRARs and other reception projects (ENA, Mare Nostrum and Step Italy). This number should not be considered as statistically representative of the phenomenon. Since ours is a qualitative methodology, it does not base its legitimacy on the high number of cases observed but favours the semantic and thematic analysis of the issues. The material considered here should be interpreted with the aim of “covering” the variety of the interlocutors, capturing the issues of most relevant interest (Corbetta, 2003). Our aim was to bring out the narrative of the “trauma” linked to the experience of the asylum application as a symbol of a contemporary social drama. As Alexander

claims (2012; Alexander *et al.*, 2004) traumas are not merely psychological experiences, but also collective ones (culture shock), and they play a key role in the definition and resolution of critical situations experienced by the subjects.

The experience of “suspended life” as an expression of contemporary culture is revealed in its public, communicative, and dramaturgical dimension. It is performance, representation, a social drama that involves actors and spectators and presupposes the mediation of media (Russo, 2011) as made explicit by the pragmatic and performative turning point of cultural sociology (Alexander, 2005). According to Turner (1982; 1993), the performance qualifies a series of events that are mainly expressed as forms of live communication starting from social drama, *i.e.* a critical situation of sudden change involving a group, a community or even an entire country. The drama is for the author the most present performative way in the complex society: it becomes a performance that involves the actors as much as the audience in the reciprocal implementation and enjoyment of cognitive and emotional experiences that can be questioned on stage. The performance constantly provides material for social life, especially insofar as it is capable of representing the self (Goffman, 1959) in an authentic circle in which the individual, by representing his own (social or cultural) dramas on the stage of life, reveals himself. In the face of traumatic events that leave an indelible mark on the collective consciousness, and hence on the group’s memory and identity formation, the performance can produce new meanings and offering symbolic answers “embodied in an object” (Griswold, 1994).

The integrative memories analysed here take the form of a performative cultural object, able to explain the “dramatic” occasions that call into question the physical and cognitive involvement of the “writers” – the migrants who are both producers and spectators at the same time (Melucci, 2002). The performance becomes a creative and essential element of the migrant’s experience to the extent that it produces meaning. The experience takes on the tones of “living through” and the experimentation of the facts of life is also a way to reflect on both past and future.

Our hypothesis is that the experience of the asylum-seeker is a cultural performance that draws from the social drama, capable of building a collective representation whose details feed the contemporary social imaginary of migrations. This strengthens the relationship between memory, identity, and belonging since the latter is an active element of affirmation and recognition of an identity. Because of the problematic nature of this relationship and the complexity of its ambivalent concepts, as well as the ongoing changes in identity and belonging in contemporary society, the question is: how or through what forms or ways can memory be substantiated as an element that generates belonging and solidarity? Memory is not only the narration of the lived experience but represents the very “life” of the individual because it is «the continuity of the past in the lasting present. It is precisely in this continuity that the images of the past are constantly rethought, reshaped and selected on the basis, not of philological perfection, but adaptation to the needs of everyday life» (Ferrarotti, 1997, p. 14, personal translation). Memory becomes a priority also for the need to begin anew, to reconnect the thread of life of individuals and the community, to seek a plan that can bring the community out of a crisis (imbalance).

#### **4. The narrative of asylum seekers**

Narration is highly rhetoric. The issue, then, is to go from rhetoric to action, *i.e.*, how narration becomes the “recovery of memory” by placing individuals at its centre. Narration resulted in the implementation of a real biographical method as the stories of asylum seekers all lie between biography and autobiography (Rampazi, 1991).

This kind of method, which is also an analysis of narration (production, diffusion, appropriation), cannot omit the dimensions of space and time (Ricœur, 1969, 1983-1985; Schütz (1932): the world of narration is always a temporal and situated world. As Mencacci (2012) observes, the supplementary statements are a fundamental tool for gaining international protection. Their

narrative is not free because, beyond the reconstruction of the subjective experience of these individuals, they must be aimed at drawing the profile of someone who falls into the “refugee” category. The plot must be precise and highlight certain aspects (traumatic events or episodes of persecution) rather than others; this implies not only a narrative capacity but also an introspective capacity for deep self-work.

With this in mind, we broke down the texts (units of analysis) into recurring items which led to the construction of the scripts<sup>2</sup> (Goffman, 1959). All the units of analysis were characterized by a narrative following this script sequence: a) beginning (information about one’s geographical, ethnic, or family origin) that introduces the existence of a problem at the basis of the traumatic life change; b) focus on a crucial episode that is the reason for the escape (a traumatic, violent or very risky event); c) consequences of such episodes on the body (scars, mutilations, etc.); d) the journey; e) the stopover in Libya which has a double representation: those who have spent a more or less long working stay there and those who remember it as a moment of suffering, torture and new persecution; finally, f) the crossing of the Mediterranean, an experience linked to hope, nightmares, fear and the saving image of the “Great Ship” (referring to the rescue ships that were part of the Mare Nostrum programme).

Although the lexicon is often poor and repetitive, we can see precision in dates, places, and distances, fundamental to the positive definition of the procedure. The anonymous excerpts of the supplementary statements proposed below (only the country of origin is revealed) exemplify the script sequences.

At the beginning of the narrative, the migrants highlight their origin and the problems leading to their escape. In this part of the script, the emerging categories represent various situations: the militancy in opposition parties, the oppressive presence of the family of origin and the customs handed down in determining the life choices of young people; the impossibility of freely living one’s religious beliefs or homosexuality (almost always hidden at the level of the collective imagination in the country of origin); the presence of rebels or forced enlistments; the extreme poverty of living conditions.

I have been fighting against compulsory military service in Turkey since 1998. I was captured in I. and I was imprisoned for 65 days in the military prison where I tried to commit suicide twice. I think that’s the most disgusting place in the world [Turkey]

I have no memories of Afghanistan; I was less than a year old when my family fled that country and took me with them. They saved me, but in a country where we had no rights. That’s why I couldn’t go to school [Afghanistan].

I’m from Pakistan, 39 years old, a wife and three children. I’m a Christian and I’m a street sweeper. On my street Christians and Muslims live together... every Sunday I went to church. One day a Muslim boy got angry, he slapped me because after prayer I said that God is one... [Pakistan]

Subsequently, the attention focuses on the main event, the decisive reason for the escape. These are, in most cases, traumatic, violent, high-risk events, repeated during the journey from Africa or Asia to Italy. They are almost always associated with the memory of the physical violence suffered (the consequences), whose scars find their main stage in the body:

The main reason why I left Iran is my choice to change religion. I converted from Islam to Christianity, following the arrest I suffered in 2009 for taking part in the protest demonstrations that broke out after the results of the presidential elections in June. I took part with other fellow citizens in the demonstrations organized by the Green Party... they surrounded us and started beating us. Then they took us to jail and left us blindfolded for 3 days. I refused to sign their statements and then they

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<sup>2</sup> Scripts are complex structures of knowledge about an ordered succession of actions, which define various situations known from experience. The use of this form of knowledge does not require specification or explanation of what one does.

beat me with a rifle, tortured me, urinated on me, insulted me, broke my right ankle, and threatened me with death [Iran].

I was born in Nigeria in 1985. My family and I lived in the state of B for missionary reasons... in April 2013 I went to visit my family to participate in three days of prayer in my father's church. On the third day, some people I had never seen before arrived to stop. They broke into the church and my family was killed. The attackers tied me up and blindfolded me and took me away. It was a terrible day. Many people were killed, I saw many human skulls and body parts. They also sexually abused some of us... every time they came to get me to rape me, they were masked [Nigeria].

They came every day and beat me; I still have the mark on the face of one of their fists. They threatened me that if I didn't pay them, they'd kill me; I didn't eat for 7 days. Then one day an old man came and helped me escape [Gambia]

I come from Bangladesh from a very religious Muslim family... I found out I was gay when I was 12 years old, I had my first experience with a much older relative. When I rejected him, he raped me and threatened to expose everything... I was terrified [Bangladesh].

A transversal element is the theme of the journey. Its description includes details of the intermediate countries crossed to reach Italy. The narrative often mentions the pain of the death of the companions, the hunger and thirst in the desert, the fear of the sea and the shipwreck, the abuse of power. A common point is the permanence in Libya, a place at high risk of potential new persecutions. The departure from Libya is also characterized by recurring elements: the difficulty of paying for the crossing, the total unawareness of the conditions of the trip. The subjects who narrate the rescue through the Navy mainly recall the image of the Big Ship:

I was born in D., Syria, and I am of Palestinian nationality. I am the son of Palestinian refugees in Syria since 1948...I was forced to stay at home and I went out only out of necessity. My family's diaspora had begun: my father had had to flee Palestine 65 years before to build a new life in Y. And now a second escape began...we went to Egypt, but even there finding a job was impossible. I stayed for about 22 days. It is well known among Palestinians and Syrian refugees that it is possible to reach Europe by sea. I paid \$2,000 to a smuggler who told me to be ready at any time. At the meeting, there were about 100 people and minibuses were loading 14 people at a time and taking them to the embarkation point. We boarded a boat that could hold 50 people but there were more than 200 on board. The voyage of death lasted 8 days: we were out of fuel and stationary for 2 days, we had no food and at the end not even a drink...we saw a ship and asked for help waving our vests. Also, 2 boats of the Italian coast guard arrived, and they transferred us in 2 big ships [Palestine].

From Iran, I decided to continue my escape to Turkey and then to Greece. On the way from Turkey to Greece, we pierced the dinghy and had to swim for 10 minutes to the beach, so I lost all my documents. From Greece, I managed to get to Italy [Afghanistan].

I decided to leave for Libya. I travelled in a truck hidden with other people from the Horn of Africa. Once we reached Benghazi the driver asked us 800 dollars for the transport and threatened to report us to the Libyan police for irregular immigration. I was seven months pregnant, I only had \$300 on me. The driver took me to Tripoli in front of the Somali consulate... when the war broke out, I paid \$500 to embark with my daughter and 300 other people. We were at sea for 4 days until an Italian fishing boat found us and called for help [Somalia].

I entered Libya loaded into the back of a pick-up truck and arrived in Tripoli. I paid 10,000 dinars (about 300 euros) to get to Tripoli. There I looked for work in the square when the cops stopped us and put me in jail where I was 3 months. We were many, we ate very little, they beat us. One day the cops took us to the sea and forced us to get on a boat. I didn't know where we were going, I was so scared. Only when the big ship saved us did I know that we were going to Italy [Senegal].

## Conclusions

The analysis of the supplementary statements confirms what has been repeatedly claimed by memory studies: that memory is an elaboration and, as such, represents a form of construction of the actualized reality. It cannot ignore the interaction between the various actors involved in the *re-composition* process, which in this case requires a dialogue between subjects belonging to different territorial and cultural contexts that can be metaphorically identified in a “sacred system” (operators and mediators) and a “profane system” (migrants). Memory is linked to the narrative-biographic method indispensable for such an analysis. However, this method does not guarantee the real correspondence between what is narrated and what happened – intrinsic truth (Bertaux, 1981). The range of meanings emerging from the analysis of supplementary statements confirms that biographical writing is an active tool in the construction and affirmation of the representation of the trauma experienced by asylum seekers, essentially linked to drama and performance. If the “suspension” emerges as a container able to describe the condition experienced by these subjects for a large part of their path, such narratives need recipients to exist. From this point of view, the individual narratives produced for the asylum application become common heritage and produce new solidarity, while contributing to the construction of a fundamental aspect of collective memory.

Analysing the supplementary statements of asylum seekers, going beyond the judicial procedure linked to them, allows to widen the gaze to the possibility of self-narrative of the migrant subject, through which he can self-represent, recognized as a subject bearer of rights and duties, deconstructing commonplaces. The narration of these memories feeds the construction of a social discourse that aims to move from the individual to the collective dimension, with the force that transforms a “simple” declaration of one’s experience into an object that is part of the present culture. Within an ever-changing present, and in a social context that seems more and more devoted to forgetfulness than to memory (Doni, 2010), the experience of the trauma of migrants has a social implication: the awareness of the representation of an increasingly unbearable “South of the world” that requires collective, universalist recognition, beyond the European vision and its increasingly blurred borders.

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## About a silent exile\*

David Meghnagi\*\*

**Abstract.** The author was born and raised in an Arab country that he left forever after a bloody pogrom, the third in the history of his family in just over twenty years. Over the course of two decades, between fifties and sixties, hundreds of thousands of Jews were forced to abandon their homes and possessions in every part of the Arab and Islamic world. The Jewish minorities had not participated in the war of destruction waged by the armies of the Arab League against the nascent State of Israel and were of no danger to anyone. They were in fact hostages. Their escape was a silent one, ignored by the international press. When the Jews disappeared from the Arab world, it was the turn of the remains of the ancient civilizations that had populated the Near East before the Arab invasions. Only recently has the enormous symbolic value for a more balanced vision of the conflict begun to be understood. Remembering the suffering of Jews in the Arab countries is a healthy reminder of the complexity of the problems and of reality. If one accepts that they too are an element of the complex and multi-faceted Middle Eastern mosaic, things appear in a different light.

**Keywords:** Antisemitism, Exile, State of Israel, Jewish refugees from Arabic Land, Palestinians refugees, Pogrom.

«The tongue has the power of life and death» (*Book of Proverbs*, 18, 21)

«I wish to express the confidence that you will never do or say anything – an author’s words, after all, are deeds – that is cowardly or base, and that even at a time which blurs judgement you will choose the right way and show it to others» (Letter from Sigmund Freud to Thomas Mann, June 6, 1935)

“Even at a time which blurs judgement” – wrote Freud in a letter to Thomas Mann – “an author’s words are deeds”. Fortunately, those times are behind us<sup>1</sup>. The warning however is still valid. The world today is overfull with danger. We cannot let down our guard before the “sick” words that surround the debate on the Arab-Israeli conflict. And sick words need treatment, just like people.

I was born and raised in an Arab country that I left forever after a bloody pogrom, the third in the history of my family in just over twenty years. Over the course of two decades, hundreds of thousands of Jews were forced to abandon their homes and possessions in every part of the Arab and Islamic world.

The Jewish minorities had not participated in the war of destruction waged by the armies of the Arab League against the nascent State of Israel and were of no danger to anyone. They were in fact hostages. Their escape was a silent one, ignored by the international press. When the Jews

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<sup>1</sup> An echo of Freud’s considerations can be found in Wittgenstein’s 1945 statement “words are actions”, “even words are actions”. See the letter from S. Freud (1935) to Thomas Mann, June 6, 1935, in S. Freud, *Lettere alla fidanzata e ad altri corrispondenti: 1873-1939* [Letters to his Girlfriend and Other Correspondents: 1873-1939], Turin, Boringhieri, 1990; L.W. Wittgenstein, *Pensieri diversi* [Different Thoughts], edited by G.H. Von Wright with the collaboration of H. Nyman, Italian edition edited by M. Ranchetti, Milan, Adelphi, 1980; L.W. Wittgenstein, *Ricerche filosofiche* [Philosophical Investigations] (1953), Turin, Einaudi, 1974, p. 193.

disappeared from the Arab world, it was the turn of the remains of the ancient civilizations that had populated the Near East before the Arab invasions.

The centrality of the Holocaust in the debate on the legitimacy of Israel's existence has meant that the memory of the suffering of the Jews from the Arab world has long been hidden, even from the eyes of the Israelis. Only recently has the enormous symbolic value for a more balanced vision of the conflict begun to be understood.

Remembering the suffering of Jews in the Arab countries is a healthy reminder of the complexity of the problems and of reality. If one accepts that they too are an element of the complex and multi-faceted Middle Eastern mosaic, things appear in a different light.

If the Arab states had accepted the partition vote of the United Nations Assembly, perhaps history would have taken a different turn. On the day on which we celebrate the birth of Israel, the Palestinians could have celebrated too. With their policy towards the Jewish minorities, the Arab States provided – assuming it was necessary – further legitimacy for the existence of Israel. For a heterogenesis of purposes they provided the *raw material* that the Jewish State needed to survive the demographic challenge after the extermination of European Jews<sup>2</sup>.

The refugees were on both sides, with one difference. In the case of the Jews, they were defenceless communities far from the theatre of war, while the Palestinians were an active component of a war desired by the Arab world.

The Jewish settlements that had fallen into the hands of the Arab armies were erased from the face of the earth, the people were killed, forced to flee or taken prisoner. Within Israel, a large part of the Arab population remained or were able to return to their homes<sup>3</sup>.

When it was founded, the State of Israel had about six hundred thousand inhabitants. Apart from the survivors languishing in European camps waiting for a country to take them in, the only place they could resort to in order to replace Judaism was the Arab East. Designed to resurrect the “new Jew” in the ancient land of the fathers, Zionism could only be saved with the arrival of the survivors of the concentration camps and their oppressed brothers from the East.

Israeli society welcomed its exiles with incomparably high emotional intensity. The arrival of immigrants was seen as a value, besides being necessary in order not to succumb to the demographic challenge.

Despite the difficulties of the early years, life in the shacks and a sense of dissatisfaction and alienation that came to light in the decades that followed, Jews of Afro-Asian origin were considered – and still are – part of a process of national rebirth and redemption after centuries of humiliation. The situation faced by the Palestinians was different. Due to a political decision made by the Arab States, their status as refugees became ontological. Although the Arab world was immense and the displacement was, in some cases, limited to a few kilometres from the ancient villages, the idea of integrating them into neighbouring or distant Arab countries was violently opposed. The religious and nationalist verdict was unavoidable: the creation of a Jewish homeland in the heart of the Arab nation and the Islamic *Umma* was a violation of divine and earthly orders. Whoever tried to reach an agreement was a traitor to be eliminated. So it was for King Abdullah of Jordan in the aftermath of the conflict, for having negotiated secretly with the Zionist leadership. And so it was, three decades later, for the Egyptian president Sadat over an agreement that returned to Egypt all the territories lost in the 1967 war in exchange for a peace that remained cold.

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<sup>2</sup> R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1985), Italian translation edited by F. Sessi, Turin, Einaudi, 1999; D. Meghnagi, *Ricomporre l'infranto. L'esperienza dei sopravvissuti alla Shoah*, Venice, Marsilio, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> On this painful page of history, see the dense and touching pages of the autobiography of A. Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (2002), published in Italian with the title *Una storia di amore e di tenebra*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2005, pp. 412-455.

Considering the existence of Israel as a sin that could only be cleansed by returning to the *status quo ante* was the great moral and political fault of Arab nationalism, the sign of political immaturity, the origin of a more general failure.

The matter of the refugees could be seen as one of the many painful exchanges between peoples that took place after the Second World War. Just like the German populations in Poland, Yugoslavia and the USSR, the Greek and Turkish populations in the war between Turks and Greeks, the Hindus and Muslims when Pakistan and India gained their independence. And Italy, with the refugees from Istria who for decades were transformed into ghosts deprived of a shared space for pain.

By demonising Israel, the Arab ruling classes avoided facing two facts that were psychologically disturbing to them. In the wars that had periodically marked the history of the region, it was not the colonial and imperial armies that had won. A good half of the soldiers who destroyed the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian armies in the war of June 1967 was made up of the sons of the *mellahs* and the *haras*, people despised and deemed “unfit” for war who, in the vision that Islam had of them, could at best aspire to be “protected” in exchange for an act of submission<sup>4</sup>.

Not being able to “solve” the Israeli problem with the “methods” adopted by the Turks against the Armenians forty years earlier was the source of an unhappiness that, in its delirium, transformed crimes absent into “Holocausts endured”.

For as long as it was possible to explain the humiliation of 1948 with the corruption and betrayal of the old ruling classes, and that of 1956 with the joint Israeli and Anglo-French aggression, self-deception succeeded in preserving a semblance of reality. The narcissistic wound became more bearable, the Arab honour renewed by the promise that things would be different in future.

When the Arab armies were defeated in a matter of days in the 1967 war, the flight from reality was complete. Israel became the embodiment of evil.

The death knell for the nationalist regimes was delayed by massive support from the Soviet Union in rebuilding the Egyptian and Syrian armies after their defeat in 1967, and in supporting the 1973 conflict in which Egypt regained its “lost honour”.

The crisis of pan-Arab nationalism paved the way for fundamentalism and the re-reading of the Arab-Israeli conflict in terms of a wider clash between the Christian West and Islam, with Israel playing the role of “Crusader State” and of “little Satan” in the service of the “great Satan”. According to the Islamist rationale, the Palestinian jihad “is not just about the Palestinians but about the whole of Islam”<sup>5</sup>. “The Shame of *Nakba*”, an idea that became established in the Arab world after the First World War in response to the European colonial divisions, is the episode of a broader sequence that leads back to the dawn of Islamic civilization.

After the flight of the Jews from the Arab world, the agony of what was left of the Christian civilisation of the East began. Once the local differences had disappeared, the negative images of the “vanquished peoples” dominated by Islam were projected onto Israel. In a growing delirium, Israel

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<sup>4</sup> The status of inferiority of the *dhimmi* has ancient origins. The “Omar Pact” established the rules in 717 until the impact with the European civilisation and colonial penetration brought up the codes according to which Islamic dominion was based on the remains of ancient religious and cultural civilisations that once flourished. For an overview from different angles see Bat Ye’or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam*, published in Italian with the title *Il declino della cristianità sotto l’Islam*, Milan, Lindau, 2009; B. Lewis, *What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East*, published in Italian with the title *Il suicidio dell’Islam. In che cosa ha sbagliato la civiltà mediorientale*, Milan, Mondadori, 2002; A.A. Wheatcroft, *Infidels: A History of the Conflict Between Christendom and Islam* (2003), published in Italian with the title *Infedeli. 638-2003: il lungo conflitto fra Cristianesimo e Islam*, Bari, Laterza, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Statement by Ayatollah Kameney. See *La Repubblica*, April 15, 2006, p. 19. President Ahmadinejad can echo this and say: Israel is “an injustice and by its very nature a permanent threat. It was created to endanger the region and the fact that it continues to exist is a way to perpetuate this threat” (*ibidem*).

became the symbol of the evils that oppress Arab and Islamic civilisation. Later, violence exploded in the heart of the *Umma*, with hundreds of thousands of innocent victims making no headlines.

The Jewish communities of the Arab and Islamic world are just a faint memory today. Yet not so long ago they were a constituent element of reality and made significant contributions in every field.

If you were to take a trip back in time to Alexandria in Egypt, on your return you could tell of a world that is now gone, which made its cultural fabric rich and varied. The same applies to Damascus and Baghdad, Cairo, Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers, Rabat and many other important cities in the Arab world.

Reducing the matter of the Jewish refugees from the Arab countries merely to the Arab-Israeli conflict is a rejection of all critical capacity and thought. Their vicissitudes under the Islamic yoke are little known, their humiliations ignored and their pain invisible.

Welcomed in the land of their fathers, as freed or redeemed, the Jews of the Arab world struggled before they saw their profound identity, culture and history recognised. Animated by the hope of a different life in the land of their fathers, constrained by persecution, they responded en masse to an ancestral call kept alive in the sacred texts and prayers. Apart from the more affluent and those who had links in European metropolises, the majority found it natural to ascend to the land of the fathers, carrying with them seeds of spices and aromas to be planted in order to bring the land back to life.

The Jews of Yemen crossed the desert, bringing with them the *Sefer Torah*, the *Talmud* and the *Zohar*<sup>6</sup>. The planes that brought home people who had been robbed were perceived as the living representation of an ancient prophecy come true.

The only capital that those who had preceded them from Galicia three decades earlier to found the first kibbutz had with them was a copy of *Das Kapital* and a copy of *The Interpretation of Dreams*<sup>7</sup>. For the Jews arriving from Libya after two murderous pogroms, to which a third was added in 1967, the ships were great cradles that restored joy and hope.

Amidst enormous difficulties, the Jews of the Arab world turned exile into exodus. Today they are part of a free nation. An important minority has rebuilt its life in the West by contributing to the development of new adoptive homelands.

For a long time I lived as if the experience of my childhood belonged to the remote past. It was a fracture in time and space. A great watershed divided my life. Before and after were irreducible. Yet only a few years had gone by.

By dealing with the problem also from a professional point of view, working with people who have experienced collective trauma, I understood that my feelings reflected a pattern. Those people might have spent their childhood and youth a thousand miles away from the places they currently live in: Rome, Paris, New York, London and Tel Aviv. But the inner fracture follows the same pattern. Only much later, thanks to the new generations who have not experienced trauma directly, can the bonds be rekindled, renewing interest in the places of the past.

I wasn't alone in my pain. In working through my story, I was able to help those who, under different conditions, had experienced being uprooted and were looking for a way to make the experience of loss and pain bearable. As an analyst I have had the opportunity to work with European and Israeli patients, Arabs and Iranians, Jews, Muslims and Christians.

Concern about the existence of Israel has accompanied me since early childhood. Even if I had forgotten, and I would never have been able to, the legal erasure from the maps of that tiny point called Israel was the symbolic projection of a programme made explicit by the verbal violence of Arab radio broadcasts.

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<sup>6</sup> The *Sefer* (plural: *Sefarim*) *Torah*, are the five books of the *Pentateuch* written following a particular and complex procedure for use in religious service. The *Talmud Bavli* is a collection of the age-old discussions of the rabbis of the academies of Babylon. The *Talmud Yerushalmi* contains the discussions of the academies of Jerusalem and the Land of Israel. The book of the *Zohar* is the most important text of Jewish mysticism.

<sup>7</sup> See the letter from Chaim Weizman to Ernest Jones, December 7, 1920, in E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (1953-57), published in Italian with the title *Vita e opera di Freud*, Milan, Garzanti, 1977, vol. III, p. 46.

Committed to supporting dialogue and to a political settlement of the conflict that tears apart the Near East, the idea of returning to my birthplace, even for a brief visit, had never crossed my mind. There was nothing left to link me to that past. I thought I was lucky because I had come out alive.

The bond between the generations had not broken, children were able to meet their grandparents, people were able to recreate a free life in more hospitable places. But there is still something disturbing about being lucky because others have met an unspeakable fate. Emotions can unravel when we encounter the scents of our childhood, while we wait for a connecting flight, on the train, sitting at a bar or watching our children playing.

Many years ago, as I was waiting at the airport in Rome, on the board indicating the departing flights, two distinct indications (Rome-Tel Aviv, Rome-Tripoli) looked to me as if they were overlapping, due to the fatigue caused by the wait. For a moment I had the feeling that one place led to another and vice versa. As though in a dream, I could leave and return, be at home everywhere, because the whole world is a home and the whole of mankind is a single family.

My city had always travelled with me. It was part of my dream world along with the rich and expressive rhythms of oriental music, the love songs and liturgical verses that made our synagogues joyful; the nostalgia I feel remembering my lost friends, the intensity of the scents of my native country and its sea breeze; the fantasies I conjured up in my head as I watched the departing ships, imagining myself on board; the pleasure I felt in passing from Arabic to Hebrew and from Hebrew to Arabic, in composing an essay in Italian as if it were Latin, until a teacher asked me: “Why don’t you imitate the prose of the French illuminists? They wrote clearly because their ideas were clear. It would enrich and improve your Italian”. The change was immediate and the results were not long in coming. For a long time, I continued to be inspired by 18th century French writers when writing in Italian, until I found a way to distil the mixture of languages and worlds in which I grew up and dissolve them inside myself.

The path of reconstruction of a life is never linear, especially when it involves complete human groups. In order to heal, wounds need to be nourished by hope. Otherwise, older fears merge with more recent ones and the past can obscure the present. Without a vision that keeps future hope alive, even the present becomes foggy and can become unbearable.

This is why I promised myself not to do or say anything that I might one day be ashamed of in front of my children and that, at least internally, I would do everything I could to keep the barriers that separate our worlds open. Despite the painful events by which they are divided, Jews and Muslims, Arabs and Israelis are not condemned to be hostile forever. There is and must be a way out and if this possibility is not immediate, it doesn’t mean that we have to deny it to the future.

What separates creative realism from Machiavellian cynicism lies in the loss of the ability to dream. By imagining different scenarios, the weight of the past and the difficulties of the present become more bearable. We can tolerate the sacrifices that the difficult situation imposes.

In the Jewish tradition, the element of choice is essential. Even if relations in the external reality seem to be broken forever, on an internal level everything must be done to preserve freedom. In the Kabbalah, the world of Pleroma is also based on divisions that man has to reconcile. The prayers and invocations that ascend from the world serve to reconnect what has been broken in the celestial world. In the meditation of the *Shema*, the most sublime of Jewish invocations, evoking the unity of the divine helps to actualise it. The word *echad* (one) corresponds in Hebrew to the number thirteen, half of the number that corresponds to the unpronounceable Tetragrammaton. Focusing with his intellect and heart on the unity of God, man contributes to the process of reunification of the higher and lower worlds<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> The *Shema* is the fundamental prayer of Israel in which God’s unicity is affirmed. It is recited in the morning service (shacharith) and in the evening service (‘*arvith*).



For centuries, Christian civilisation has been engaged in the physical persecution of Jews, but today this is no longer the case, and many of the walls that once separated Jews from those who oppressed them have fallen. It took the Catholic Church half a century after Auschwitz to fully accept the existence of Israel.

When, at the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Paul VI visited the places where Jesus preached, he always referred to the Holy Land, never the State of Israel. The word was taboo. Before making his historic visit to the Western Wall, Pope John Paul II waited until the end of the millennium, making sure that he visited every other country in the region first. Despite the contrasts and disappointments, relations between Israel and the Vatican, talks and visits by the popes to synagogues are a reality.

The Germans and the French fought each other for ages, but this didn't stop them from being the driving force behind the European unification process.

Despite the Nazi crimes, the Israelis did not close their hearts to Germans who were born later. They did not condemn the children for the sins of their fathers, welcoming them as visitors to their painful country. When the time came, many Israeli citizens of German origin, while retaining their nationality, obtained German citizenship too.

Despite the pogroms of 1946 against the survivors who returned to their homes, despite the anti-Semitism of Gomulka in 1968, many Israeli citizens who turned to the Polish diplomatic offices to obtain citizenship.

Why shouldn't Arabs and Jews, Israelis and Palestinians return to talking to each other someday? Why shouldn't Arabs acknowledge that the expansion of the Islamic civilization has been a form of colonisation that has led to the progressive extinction of older civilisations someday? Why shouldn't the European left make the pain of the *dhimmi* people its own someday? Why shouldn't the Turkish people acknowledge the terrible pain inflicted on the Armenian nation someday? Why shouldn't a Palestinian be able to identify with the history of Jews of Afro-Asian origin? Why shouldn't the grandson of a survivor open up his heart to the tragedy of the grandchildren of the 1948 war refugees?

Finding an answer to these distressing questions in my childhood was not easy. There were no symbolic spaces in which to formulate them. In my country of birth, even a basketball match could degenerate into a generalised physical assault on all the Jews at the stadium, if it was a critical game and the "Jews" won. Anxiety and fear were a constituent element of our daily lives.

The illusions that arise from despair but can keep the hope of a different life alive, can include that of exaggerating the possibility of influencing reality. Subjectivism can alter the ability to distinguish what is possible from what goes beyond. Under the blows of the profound transformations that Israeli society experienced in the 1980s and 1990s, and in the impact with the first Intifada, a significant part of the country had reached out and been able to feel empathy for the suffering of its counterpart. Then things turned out differently to expectations, as was predictable by those who could see the ambiguous reality of an agreement that postponed the discussion of the most important issues until the final phase of the peace process.

It is not a question of abdicating the sense of reality, but of keeping the feeling of hope alive – together with the awareness of the opportunities and dangers that the future may hold – without which a project of life and society could not exist.

If the boundaries of the spirit remain open – and at certain times it may be necessary to preserve psychological integrity against the madness of the world – the persecutor does not install himself in the soul, poisoning it.

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#### **Table of Contents and Abstracts of year 2020, Volume 54**

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Edited by *Paolo Migone*\*

#### **Issue no. 1, 2020, Volume 54**

Aurel Kolnai, *Psychoanalysis and sociology (1920)*

*Abstract.* After a brief introduction by Paolo Migone and Ulrich Wienand, the first chapter (pp. 5-13) of Aurel Kolnai's book *Psychoanalyse und Soziologie. Zur Psychologie von Masse und Gesellschaft (Psychoanalysis and Sociology)* is translated into Italian. This book, that was published in 1920 by the *Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag* of Vienna as volume no. 9 of the *Internationale Psychoanalytische Bibliothek*, was written by Kolnai when he was 20 years old at the request of Sándor Ferenczi (both Ferenczi and Kolnai were of Budapest). It shows how the topic of the relationship between psychoanalysis and sociology had been discussed, and competently, already one century ago.

Elizabeth Allison & Peter Fonagy, *When is truth relevant?*

*Abstract.* The experience of knowing and having the truth about oneself known in the context of therapy is not an end in itself; rather, it is important because the trust engendered by this experience ("epistemic trust", or trust in new knowledge) opens one up to learning about one's social world and finding better ways to live in it. The consequences of a lack of epistemic trust in terms of psychopathology are discussed. The role of mentalizing in the therapeutic relationship is emphasized, and it is suggested that although the *Mentalization-Based Treatment (MBT)* developed by Anthony Bateman and Peter Fonagy may be a specific and particular form of practice, the "mentalizing therapist" is a universal constituent of effective psychotherapeutic interventions.

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*Discussions of the paper by Elizabeth Allison & Peter Fonagy “When is truth relevant?”:*

Morris N. Eagle, *The relationship among epistemic trust, truth, and social learning*

*Abstract.* The article by Elizabeth Allison & Peter Fonagy “When is truth relevant?”, originally published in *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* (2016, 85, 2: 275-303) and translated into Italian in the previous pages of this issue of *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane* (2020, 54, 1: 17-44), is discussed. In particular, some critical reflections are made on the following issues: epistemic trust and social learning; forced choice between skeptical realism and belief in a truth to be found; the complex consequences of learning the truth about oneself; disorders of mental representation *versus* disorders of mental process; transference as a means to historical truth; moments of meeting as moments of truth; distinction between mentalizing and reflective function; observational learning and imitation; epistemic trust and truth; trust in the therapeutic situation.

Mauro Fornaro, *Which meaning of “truth” for psychoanalysis?*

*Abstract.* Allison & Fonagy (2016) do not define formally what do they mean by the term truth. After having reminded the classical distinction between truth as correspondence and truth as disclosure, it is argued that Allison and Fonagy oscillate between these two definitions. The central thesis of epistemic trust does not seem to imply the certainty in finding the truth that Allison and Fonagy seem to attribute to it, since the process of mentalization would require a series of intermediate steps and mental inferences.

George Silberschatz, *Reflections on epistemic trust and its role in psychotherapy*

*Abstract.* Fonagy and his colleagues have recently proposed that deficits in epistemic trust are a centerpiece of severe personality disorder and that therapists’ efforts to build epistemic trust are central to the psychotherapeutic process. Their model builds on solid developmental research but lacks clarity and precision in delineating the process of building trust. This is a unidirectional process whereby the therapist provides “ostensive cues” that enable the patient to temporarily suspend hypervigilance or epistemic mistrust. A bidirectional model that takes into account the patient’s ostensive cues or tests of the therapist would provide greater precision, clinical rigor, and empirical validity to the model.

Elizabeth Allison & Peter Fonagy, *Response to commentaries by Morris N. Eagle, Mauro Fornaro, and George Silberschatz*

*Abstract.* The article by Elizabeth Allison and Peter Fonagy “When is truth relevant?”, published on pp. 17-44 of this issue no. 1/2020 of *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane* (and in its original edition published on pp. 275-303 of issue no. 2/2016 of *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*), has been discussed in the interventions by Morris N. Eagle (2020), Mauro Fornaro (2020), and George Silberschatz (2020), to whom Elizabeth Allison and Peter Fonagy here reply. Some problems raised in these three interventions are clarified. The following issues are discussed, among others: the relationship between transference and truth, the difference between mentalization and reflective function, the meaning of truth and epistemic trust, the role played by trauma, hypervigilance, the concept of “now moment”, etc.

Dario Alparone, *Stupidity and psychoanalysis: An ethical problem*

*Abstract.* Intellectual inhibition may fall into the categories of mental retardation or mental debility. These categories are discussed from the viewpoint of dynamic psychology with contributions of post-Freudian approaches, reinterpreted in light of the Lacanian theorization of the concept of mental debility. From this perspective, mental debility is not only a specific psychopathology, but also a potentially constitutive condition of anyone’s mental life and, since stupidity concerns ethics, it is the political aspect of mental debility. In contemporary society, social relations are founded on an imaginary level, encouraging defense mechanisms in subjective mental functioning which are connected with a limitation of mental functions. The result of this restriction of thinking can be political, as the Adolf Eichmann’s case seems to show.

## Traces

Pier Francesco Galli, *Tales of war. Psychoanalysis, mental health and institutional practices, yesterday and today, in Italy*

*Abstract.* After a brief introduction, the first chapter of the book edited by Paola Cuniberti & Luigi Caparrotta *Psicoanalisi in trincea. Esperienze, pratica clinica e nuove frontiere in Italia e nel Regno Unito* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2012) is reprinted. In this chapter, Pier Francesco Galli traces his professional itinerary and his cultural and scientific approach regarding some fundamental issues of psychiatry and psychoanalysis. Also with excerpts of previous works, the following topics, among others, are discussed: historical aspects, issues of method, technique and theory of psychoanalysis, therapeutic identity, psychiatric and psychoanalytic diagnosis.

## Clinical Cases

*Comments on the case of Linda* [n. 4/2019]: Jeanne Magagna; Luisa Bonfiglioli; Cristiano Lastrucci; Eleonora Marcelli

## Book Reviews

### *Book Review Essay*

Renato Foschi & Marco Innamorati, *Storia critica della psicoterapia*. [A Critical History of Psychotherapy] Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2020 (Vittorio Lingiardi)

### *Book Reviews*

Luisa Brunori, *La città ideale. Tra psicologia, neuroscienze ed economia, alla ricerca di una formula win-win della convivenza*. [The Ideal Town. Psychology, Neuroscience and Economy in Search for a Win-win Formula of Knowledge] Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2019 (Vittorio Gallese)

Luigi Antonello Armando, *Passaggi ponti pontefici. Viaggio tra le religioni*. [Passages, Bridges, Popes. A Voyage Among Religions] Rome: Armando, 2019 (Giorgio Meneguz)

### *Forgotten Books*

Ralph R. Greenson, *Esplorazioni psicoanalitiche*. Turin: Boringhieri, 1984 (original edition: *Explorations in Psychoanalysis*. New York: International Universities Press, 1978) (Antonella Mancini)

### *Book Notices*

Roger A. MacKinnon, Robert Michels & Peter J. Buckley, *Il colloquio in psichiatria e psicologia clinica*. [The Interview in Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology] Preface to the Italian Edition by Filippo Di Pirro. Florence: Giunti Psychometrics, 2019 (original edition: *The Psychiatric Interview in Clinical Practice*. Third Edition. Washington, D.C. American Psychiatric Publishing, 2016) (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

Gilberto Corbellini, *Nel paese della pseudoscienza. Perché i pregiudizi minacciano la nostra libertà*. [In the Country of Pseudoscience: Why Prejudices Are a Threat to Our Freedom] Milan: Feltrinelli, 2019 (Silvia Marchesini)

Massimo Recalcati, *Le nuove melanconie. Destini del desiderio nel tempo ipermoderno*. [The New Melancholies. Fates of Desire in the Hypermodernity] Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2019 (Mario Mattioda)

Daniel J. Siegel, *Diventare consapevoli. Una pratica di meditazione rivoluzionaria*. Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2019 (original edition: *Aware: The Science and Practice of Presence. The Groundbreaking Meditation Practice*. Los Angeles, CA: Mind Your Brain, 2018) (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

Nicola Palumbo, *Maria Montessori e Anna Freud: una storia femminile della psicologia del bambino*. [Maria Montessori and Anna Freud: History of Women in Child Psychology] Rome: Edizioni Universitarie Romane, 2019 (Adriana Grotta)

### *Books Received*

## Journals

*The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 2019, Volume 200, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (Pietro Pascarelli)

Pietro Pascarelli, *Comment on The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*

*Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 2019, Volume 83, no. 4 (Paolo Migone)

*Psychological Review*, 2019, Volume 126, no. 6 (Paolo Migone)

*Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 2020, Volume 67, no. 1 (Paolo Migone)

*Enfance*, 2019, Volume 74, no. 4 (Paolo Migone)

*Metapsychologica. Rivista di psicanalisi freudiana*, 2019, Year 1, no. 1 (Paolo Migone)

## 2020 Program: “International Seminars of *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane*”

### Information for subscribers and readers

## Issue no. 2, 2020, Volume 54

Paolo Migone, *Editorial*

Morris N. Eagle, *Interests as object relations*

*Abstract.* Neither traditional psychoanalytic theory nor psychoanalytic ego psychology adequately accounts for the development and psychological significance of having interests. Both developmentally and in terms of ongoing everyday functioning, interests are best understood as object-relational phenomena. As is the case with more traditionally understood object relations, interests and related phenomena play a central role in maintaining personality intactness and integrity, particularly in extreme circumstances. It is suggested that neither traditional Freudian instinct theory nor ego psychology does justice to the object-relational nature of interests or to the critical role that interests play in personality functioning. It is concluded that an interest in objects is a critical feature of the development of object relations, based on the inborn propensity to establish cognitive and affective links to objects in the world.

Alberto Angelini, *Sergej M. Ejzenštejn, psychology and psychoanalysis*

*Abstract.* Sergej M. Ejzenštejn was very much involved with psychology and psychoanalysis. He was an important friend of Lev Vygotskij, founder of cultural-historical psychology, and of Aleksandr Lurija, father of modern neuropsychological assessment: both Vygotskij and Lurija in the early 1920s were among the supporters of psychoanalysis in Russia and members of the Moscow Psychoanalytic Society. In Ejzenštejn’s writings on film language we find psychological concepts of Vygotskij, such as “agglutination” and “internal speech”, that were present in the theory of film editing. As far as psychoanalysis is concerned, Ejzenštejn was very much interested in the concept of regression: the art lover, including the movie spectator, must regress and at the same time activate the most mature part of the psyche. Ejzenštejn was friend of Hanns Sachs and knew Otto Rank, Sándor Ferenczi, Franz Alexander, and Wilhelm Reich. In 1929 he gave a lecture at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute. In the USSR and in the USA he had two short experiences of psychoanalytic therapy.

Cesare Romano, “*The Uncanny*” (1919) and *Freud’s family secrets*

*Abstract.* Freud’s 1919 paper *The Uncanny*, written during troubled times after First World War and often considered problematic and confused, is discussed. This paper deals with the interpretation of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s 1815 novel *Der Sandmann*, where the recurrent reference to the eyes is brought back by Freud to the castration complex. Discussing Kohon’s (2016) paper on aesthetic

experiences where he states that (whether for the writer-artist or the reader-spectator) these experiences will always be autobiographical, and Rand & Torok (1994) for whom Hoffmann's novel has no reference to castration but to a family secret, it is argued that Freud's concern with this novel could be unconsciously rooted in some family secrets related to his childhood that the little Sigmund was not able to uncover. Freud must have read the novel *Der Sandmann* autobiographically according to Kohon's theory. In reference to Jentsch's (1906) paper "On the Psychology of the Uncanny", where the source of the uncanny is seen in the intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not, it is argued that this statement could have brought back unconscious memories of the brother Julius' death, from whom Freud would have protected himself moving to the castration topic. Some scholars found in Hoffmann's novel a hidden reference to the primal scene, that is another uncanny background in Freud's childhood. Another uncanny episode occurred to the little Sigmund when he lost his beloved nanny. It is argued that these three topics were the unconscious factors that compelled Freud to write about the uncanny choosing Hoffmann's novel.

## Traces

Aurel Kolnai, *Psychoanalysis and Sociology* (1920): Chapters 2, 3, and 4. With an introduction by Pier Francesco Galli

*Abstract.* After an introduction by Pier Francesco Galli, the first Italian translation of chapters 2, 3, and 4 (pp. 14-70) of Aurel Kolnai's book *Psychoanalyse und Soziologie. Zur Psychologie von Masse und Gesellschaft* (Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1920; English translation: *Psychoanalysis and Sociology*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922) is published (chapter 1, with an introduction by Paolo Migone and Ulrich Wienand, was published in the previous issue of *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane*, 1/2020, pp. 9-16). This book was written exactly 100 years ago, when Kolnai was 20 years old, at the request of Sándor Ferenczi (both were of Budapest); it shows how the relationship between psychoanalysis and sociology had been discussed, and competently, already at the origins of psychoanalysis.

## Clinical Cases

Leonarda Galiuto, Annamaria Mandese, Piero Petrini & Luigi Janiri, *The case of Elena*

*Comments on the case of Elena:* Giorgio Meneguz; Piero Porcelli; Gaia Cattadori; Cinzia Zuchi, Isabella Tritto & Giuseppe Ambrosio; Paola Morra; Alessio Gori; Leonarda Galiuto, Annamaria Mandese, Piero Petrini & Luigi Janiri

## Book Reviews

### Book Reviews

Nicoletta Gosio, *Nemici miei. La pervasiva rabbia quotidiana*. [My Enemies: The Pervasive Daily Anger] Turin: Einaudi, 2020 (Simona Argentieri)

Antonello D'Elia, *La realtà non è per tutti. Voci dalla legge Basaglia quarant'anni dopo*. [Reality is Not for Everybody. Voices from the Basaglia Law Forty Years Later] Catania: Edizioni Villaggio Maori, 2019 (Paolo Migone)

Giorgio Meneguz, *Le straordinarie cognizioni di un gatto morente*. [The Extraordinaire Knowledge of a Dying Cat] Viterbo: Alter Ego, 2019 (Luigi Antonello Armando)

Benoît Verdon & Catherine Azoulay (editors), *Psychoanalysis and Projective Methods in Personality Assessment. The French School*. Göttingen: Hogrefe, 2020 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

### Forgotten Books

Viktor Tausk, *Scritti di psicoanalisi* [Collected Psychoanalytic Papers] Rome: Astrolabio, 1979 (original edition: *Oeuvres psychanalytiques*. Paris: Payot, 1975) (Antonella Mancini)

*Regarding "forgotten" books: A conversation between Antonella Mancini and Gioele P. Cima*



### Book Notices

Marco Conci, *Freud, Sullivan, Mitchell, Bion, and the Multiple Voices of International Psychoanalysis*. Preface by Stefano Bolognini. New York: International Psychoanalytic Books, 2019 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

Elvio Fachinelli, *Grottesche. Notizie, racconti, apparizioni*. [Grotesques: News, Tales, Appearances] Edited by Dario Borso. Trieste: Italo Svevo, 2019 (Gioele P. Cima)

Rita Biancheri, *L'epoca dell'individualismo affettivo. Come cambiano le dinamiche di coppia*. [The Age of Affective Individualism: How Couple Dynamics Change]. Pisa: ETS, 2019 (Antonella Mancini)

Edward R. Shapiro, *Finding a Place to Stand*. Bicester, UK: Phoenix Publishing House, 2020 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

Andrea Castiello d'Antonio & Luciana d'Ambrosio Marri, *Conflitti. Come leggere e gestire i contrasti per vivere bene*. [Conflicts: How to Read and to Handle Them in Order to Live Well] Preface by Silvia Bonino. Florence: Giunti, 2019 (Antonella Mancini)

### Books Received

### Journals

*Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 2019, Volume 67, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (Jutta Beltz & Luisella Canepa)

Jutta Beltz & Luisella Canepa, *Comment on the Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*

*The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 2019, Volume 88, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

Andrea Castiello d'Antonio, *Comment on The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*

*Culture & Psychology*, 2020, Volume 26, no. 1 (Paolo Migone)

*aut aut*, 2020, Year 70, no. 385 (Paolo Migone)

*La Psicomotricità*, 2020, Volume 2, no. 1 (Paolo Migone)

### 2020 Program of the “International Seminars of *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane*”

#### Information for subscribers and readers

### Issue no. 3, 2020, Volume 54

David Rapaport *et al.*, *David Rapaport's seminars of 1957 on psychoanalytic metapsychology*.

Introduction by Pier Francesco Galli.

Presentation by Paolo Migone.

*Seminars on elementary metapsychology*.

*Seminars on advanced metapsychology*.

*First pages of Volume I of Seminars on advanced metapsychology*

*Abstract*. In 1957 David Rapaport (1911-1960) gave a series of seminars on psychoanalytic metapsychology to the first year candidates of the *Western New England Institute for Psychoanalysis* (New Haven, Connecticut). These seminars were never published, but only audio-recorded and then typewritten and assembled in seven folders edited by Stuart C. Miller in 1959: three volumes on “elementary metapsychology” and four volumes on “advanced metapsychology”, for a total of about 700 typewritten pages. The participants, beside Rapaport who was always present, were Helen G. Gilmore, Nathaniel J. London, Seymour L. Lustman, George F. Mahl, Stuart C. Miller, John P. Plunkett, Herbert S. Sacks, Roy Schafer, Virginia Sutfenfield, and Robert B. White (in some seminars there were also Paul E. Emery, Jean Schimek, David Shapiro, Eugene Talbot, Eugene E. Trunnel, and Ess A. White Jr.). After an introduction by Pier Francesco Galli and a presentation by Paolo Migone, the detailed programs of the seminars

of all seven volumes, with the bibliographies and the assignments, are published. At the end there is also the translation of the first pages of the first of the four volumes of “advanced metapsychology”. This publication aims at showing the method that David Rapaport had in studying theoretical problems, based on a careful conceptual clarification, analysis of original texts, comparison of the definitions of different authors etc.

*The Interlaken affaire. Second episode*

Introduction by Pier Francesco Galli

Berthold Rothschild, *The Interlaken affaire. Second episode*

*History of a “canceled congress” (1974)*

*Abstract.* Three papers are published. In the first paper Pier Francesco Galli, in a brief introduction, emphasizes the importance of the historical role played by Swiss psychoanalysis in the training of many Italian colleagues. In the second paper Berthold Rothschild describes, also with the reproduction of a correspondence, the vicissitudes that brought to the cancellation of his invitation to a meeting titled “Psychoanalysis, culture, and politics” that was planned for June 6, 2020, in Geneva, sponsored by the *Centre Psychanalytique Raymond de Saussure* (CPRS) of the Swiss Psychoanalytic Society (*Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Psychoanalyse* [SGPsa]); this cancellation was due to the protest of some German speaking psychoanalysts of the Swiss Psychoanalytic Society who still remember the split that occurred in 1977 between the “Zurich Psychoanalytic Seminar” (*Psychoanalytisches Seminar Zürich* [PSZ]), of which Rothschild is a member, and the Swiss Psychoanalytic Society; this split followed the controversies that ended up with the cancellation of a meeting that was planned in 1974 in Interlaken (this is the reason why the words “second episode” appear in the title). In the third paper, the material of the “Interlaken affaire”, which originally appeared in issues nos. 4/1975 and 3/2015 di *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane*, is reprinted; this material, that contains also the reproduction of several letters exchanged in 1973 and 1974, has been published only in Italian.

Mario Erdheim, *Paul Parin, hunting and ethnopsychanalysis*

*Abstract.* The practice of ethnopsychanalysis means also, as ethnopsychanalysts such as Paul Parin and Mario Erdheim have emphasized, the freedom to follow our own curiosity (Erdheim for example did field research also on high school students). A book by Paul Parin on hunting (*Die Jagd. Licence for Sex and Crime. Erzählungen und Essays*. Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag, 2018) is discussed not simply as an appreciation of Parin’s literary work, but as contribution to ethnopsychanalysis and its methodology. Paul Parin (1916-2009) had often talked about the project of writing a book on the issue of power, but he believed he could not write it. However, in 2003 he wrote this collection of tales on hunting which is in effect also a book on power. It is an important study on power fantasies and processes, to the point that it can be somehow associated to Elias Canetti’s 1960 book *Crowds and Power* and also to Sigmund Freud’s 1910 essay *Psychoanalytic notes on an autobiographical account of a case of paranoia (dementia paranoides)* (Case history of Schreber). A version of this paper was presented at a meeting for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Paul Parin’s birth at the *Sigmund Freud University* (SFU) of Vienna, September 1-4, 2016.

Aristide Tronconi, *Aspects of transsexuality. From the first interview to the analytic relationship*

*Abstract.* The DSM-5 and ICD-11 manuals of psychiatric disorders have not only replaced the terms transsexuality and transsexualism with other words, but have also conceived this behavior out of the pathological context in which it was included in previous editions. This revision can be considered an important stimulus in looking at the phenomenon of transsexualism with different eyes. This line of thinking is followed, and it is suggested that also in psychoanalytic treatment the therapist should not try to bring the patient back to the straight path of so-called normality, regarding both gender identity and sexual orientation. On the contrary, it should be given the transsexual person the opportunity to meet a therapist who is able – as much as possible – to be free from conscious or unconscious prejudices coming from culture, education, and professional

training. To this regard, a clinical case is illustrated, with considerations on transference and countertransference dynamics; the patient is a twenty-year-old man who requests a psychoanalytic consultation in order to receive a certificate for sex reassignment surgery. During the consultation, both therapist and patient are able to better explore the wish for sex reassignment before taking a decision, knowing that it is a choice that is not only important, but also irreversible.

## Traces

Marianna Bolko & Alberto Merini, *The frame of psychoanalytic therapy* (1988)

*Abstract.* After an editorial note, a paper by Bolko & Merini on the frame of psychoanalytic therapy (originally published in issue no. 2/1988 of *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane*) is reprinted. Reflections on this aspect are useful especially today when, after the COVID-19 pandemic, on-line therapy has become widespread and this “new” therapeutic setting is often discussed. After having defined the psychoanalytic frame as the setting and the time of therapy, some discussions of this concept that have been put forward by several authors, beginning with Freud, are discussed, namely Balint, Bergeret, Bion, Bleger, Eissler, Galli, Greenacre, Greenson, Heimann, Macalpine, Meltzer, Stone, Menninger, Modell, Rycroft, Thomä & Kächele, Winnicott, etc. It is argued that while originally the psychoanalytic frame was conceived as the background of therapy, with little influence of the psychoanalytic process, since the 1950s it changed its meaning and has become a therapeutic agent in itself, important especially in severe psychopathologies.

## Discussions

Saverio Ruberti, *A cognitivist view on truth and epistemic trust. Comment on the paper by Elizabeth Allison and Peter Fonagy (2016) “When is truth relevant?”* [no. 1/2020]

*Abstract.* The paper by Elizabeth Allison & Peter Fonagy (2016) “When is truth relevant?” (translated in issue no. 1/2020 of *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane*) is discussed from the viewpoint of cognitive therapy, in particular of the recent cognitivist perspective influenced by the contributions of the Italian researchers Vittorio Guidano and Giovanni Liotti and by attachment theory. This new perspective within cognitive therapy includes a constructivist approach to knowledge and values the intersubjective dimension of mental processes, with an emphasis to the role of the therapeutic relationship in the treatment strategies. The theoretical and clinical aspects of a dialogue between the cognitivist and the psychodynamic approaches are discussed, in particular regarding the concepts of “truth” and “epistemic trust”; the cognitivist and the psychodynamic approaches have specific differences, but old oppositions could be overcome and these two approaches can come closer to each other.

## Clinical Cases

Marco Piccinelli, *The case of Atride*

*Comments on the case of Atride:* Pietro Pellegrini; Paolo Migone

## Book Reviews

*Book Review Essay*

Sonia Gojman De Millán, Christian Herreman & Alan L. Sroufe (editors), *Attachment Across Clinical and Cultural Perspectives. A Relational Psychoanalytic Approach*. London: Routledge, 2017 (Daniela De Robertis)

*Book Reviews*

Giuseppe Craparo, Francesca Ortu & Onno van der Hart (editors), *Riscoprire Pierre Janet. Trauma, dissociazione e nuovi contesti per la psicoanalisi*. Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2020 (original edition: *Rediscovering Pierre Janet. Trauma, Dissociation, and a New Context for Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 2019) (Davide Cavagna)

### *Book Notices*

Gian Paolo Scano, *Leggendo Freud. Nascita, costruzione e sviluppo della teoria psicoanalitica (1892-1939)*. [Reading Freud. Birth, Construction, and Development of Psychoanalytic Theory (1892-1939)] Carbonia (South Sardinia): Susil, 2020 (Silvia Marchesini)

### **Journals**

*Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 2019, Volume 55, nos. 3 & 4; 2020, Volume 56, no. 1 (Paolo Migone)

Paolo Migone, *Comment on Contemporary Psychoanalysis*

*Revue Française de Psychanalyse*, 2019, Volume 83, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 (Mauro Fornaro)

Mauro Fornaro, *Comment on the Revue Française de Psychanalyse*

*Psicologia Sociale*, 2020, Year 15, no. 2 (Paolo Migone)

*PreText. Libri & Periodici, del loro passato e del loro futuro*, 2020, Year 8, no. 12 (Paolo Migone)

### **2021 Program of the “International Seminars of *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane*”**

### **Information for subscribers and readers**

### **Issue no. 4, 2020, Volume 54**

Arnold D. Richards, *The left and far left in American psychoanalysis: Psychoanalysis as a subversive discipline*

*Abstract.* This article – that originally appeared in *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 2016, 52, 1: 111-129 (DOI: 10.1080/00107530.2015.1126690) – explores the political commitments of the European-born *émigré* psychoanalysts in the United States and a group of American-born psychoanalysts who had a far left (Communist or fellow traveler) past. It describes the national and local struggle for power and ascendancy in these two groups. Also, the article explores the impact that Marxism had on the theory and practice of what I call “American Communist Psychoanalytic Thought Collective”, in particular on pragmatic optimistic and dialectical theory. The downside was rigidity, a sense of certainty, and lack of tolerance of dissent and organizational authoritarian power structures. The article ends with a plea to restore the balance between control and risk in order to restore the vitality of psychoanalysis and assure its growth. After years of repression, exclusion, and schisms, we need to subvert entrenched power and advance the thesis of rigid institutional roles and the antithesis of insurgency. At the end of the paper (pp. 545-547) there is a *Post Scriptum* added by the author on October 19, 2020, with some additional information.

*Discussions of the paper by Arnold D. Richards “The left and far left in American psychoanalysis: Psychoanalysis as a subversive discipline”:*

Mauro Fornaro, *Authoritarianism: A disease of left-wing psychoanalysts?*

*Abstract.* That conservative and authoritarian psychoanalytic institutions open to innovation in theory and pluralism in the management of power is Arnold Richards’ strong commitment. According to the Author, however, substantial innovations are unlikely as long as psychoanalysts linger on embroidering on the Master’s thought and struggling in internal feuds, rather than seriously confronting research methods alternative to the clinical one, as well as the results of neighboring disciplines (which have made important progress since Freud’s time). With regard to the adhesion to Marxism and Communism of many North American psychoanalysts, the Author shows – working on four *topoi* that we can see in the background

of Richards' paper – how mild is the influence of this adhesion on their conceptions of mental processes; furthermore, the correlation of the same adhesion with the authoritarian practice, once those psychoanalysts reach power, is questionable.

Luciano Mecacci, *The psychoanalytic “thought stile” and the risk of self-referentiality*

*Abstract.* In Arnold Richards' (2016) analysis of the psychoanalysts linked to the *Communist Party of the United States of America* (CPUSA) there are three themes that deserve to be explored. In the first place, there are complex historical-political factors dependent on the peculiarity of American communism, in relation both to the emigration of the left intelligentsia between the two World Wars and to the formation of *élite* groups in which the Jewish component is fundamental. The second critical aspect concerns the fact that it is not sufficient to consider a perspective as Marxist if it incorporates the concepts of conflict and dialectics, but without specifying what concrete effects they have at the level of social praxis. Finally, precisely the concepts of “style of thought” and “collective of thought”, which Richards borrowed from Ludwik Fleck, lead to a reflection on the historical reconstructions of psychoanalysis understood as a self-referential conceptual system.

Giorgio Meneguz, *Subversives in the ivory tower*

*Abstract.* Arnold D. Richards' (2016) article “The left and far left in American psychoanalysis: Psychoanalysis as a subversive discipline” is discussed, and some aspects deemed to be more interesting are analyzed, namely the following: (1) the methodology based on sociology of science; (2) the questionable discussion on the consequences of the ideological change on the part of some Marxist psychoanalysts; (2) the constructive suggestion that, on the basis of the illusory idea that psychoanalysis is a subversive discipline, the psychoanalysts' subversive passion should be revitalized.

Maria Luisa Mantovani & Maria Maffia Russo, *Gender violence: Strategies for recognition and prevention*

*Abstract.* The actuality of gender violence is analyzed, with its interpretative categories. The focus is on the consequences of gender violence on women's health, particularly at the psychological level. The *World Health Organization* has been very active in providing the relevant information in preventing violence and suggesting the “Ecological Model”. The concept of “Intimate Partner Violence” (IPV) is particularly helpful in understanding and helping women who have been raped in intimate relationships. A reference point is the “cycle of violence” studied by Lenore E.A. Walker in 1984. The feminist movement played an important role in seeing gender violence as a social problem and in identifying its roots in the gender power gap on a social, cultural, economic and political level. In the 1980s, with the second wave feminist movement, Anti-Violence Centres were created.

Giuseppina Romeo, Rossana Borsi, Karen Di Prisco & Paolo F. Peloso, *What remains under the Morandi Bridge of Genoa. The effects of a collective trauma on the work of a Community Mental Health Center*

*Abstract.* Aim of this paper is to reflect on the work at a Community Mental Health Center (CMHC) on the occasion of a recent catastrophe. Although the involvement started from the first moment, it focused in the post-emergency and was implemented in a range of interventions, from ordinary psychological consultations, to mixed psychological and psychiatric consultation, individual psychotherapy, group psychotherapy, EMDR technique or the intensification of ordinary assistance for residents already followed by the CMHC. In the debate on trauma during and immediately before WW1 as in this experience, the mismatch between the entity of the trauma and the intensity of the symptoms, and the complex emotional dimension of the issue of financial compensation, tend to constantly clutter the post-traumatic scene. At times this complicates both the relationship between groups affected by the same trauma in different ways and extent, and the therapeutic relationship itself.

Stefano Terenzi, *An introduction to Schema Therapy*

*Abstract.* Schema Therapy is a cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) approach that integrates theoretical assumptions, empirical acquisitions, methodologies and therapeutic procedures derived from different psychological and psychotherapeutic approaches (it incorporates also aspects of psychodynamic approaches, such as Gestalt therapy, Transactional Analysis, attachment theory, etc.). Schema Therapy has proven to be an effective psychotherapy in patients with personality disorders or highly resistant to change. A brief and general update on the state of the art of Schema Therapy and of the different clinical areas of its application is presented, with the description of the theoretical model and of its therapeutic procedures: Limited Reparenting, Imagery with Rescripting, and Chair Work.

## Traces

Alberto Merini, *Introduction*

*Abstract.* The paper “A country psychiatrist”, that anticipates some excerpts of a forthcoming book by Margherita Galeotti, is introduced. The period in which Margherita Galeotti was trained in psychiatry by Alberto Merini in the 1970s and 1980s, when he was the Director of the Service of Community Psychiatry of the Department of Psychiatry of the University of Bologna (Italy), is remembered. Those years were characterized by great enthusiasm because the community mental health movement was just beginning in Italy, and psychiatric hospitals were gradually closed down due to the Italian Law no. 180/1978. Italian psychiatry of the 1970s and 1980s, mostly based on careful attention to the patient/therapist relationship, on team work and on supervisions, is contrasted with the psychiatry practiced today, based mostly on medication; this change is seen also within the social and political transformations of the last fifty years.

Margherita Galeotti, *A country psychiatrist*

*Abstract.* Excerpts of some chapters of a forthcoming book entitled *Una psichiatra di campagna* (“A country psychiatrist”) are pre-published. After a brief introduction, parts of chapters 7 (“New York”), 17 (“Scandiano”), 18 (“The Support Center”), 26 (“The transition to the new residential facility”), 27 (“The group on subjectivity”), and 28 (“The Cybercafé”) are published. Chapter 7 contains an account of some aspects of an internship in 1977 at the *St. Vincent’s Hospital* of New York. The other five chapters deal with the work done since 1980 in the Community Mental Health Center of Scandiano (Reggio Emilia, Italy), in a period in which there was much enthusiasm for community psychiatry, and psychiatric hospitals were gradually closed down due to the Italian Law no. 180 of 1978. In particular, daily work is described (team meetings, supervisions, discussions with colleagues, etc.), and the cultural climate of those years is emphasized, characterized by a strong motivation for a project of psychiatric reform and by a shared approach based on the importance of the patient/therapist relationship and on the understanding of mental disorders in light of the patient’s life history and social environment.

## Clinical Cases

*Comments on the case of Atride* [n. 3/2020]: Pierrette Lavanchy; Cinzia Giubbarelli; Pier Francesco Galli

## Book Reviews

*Book Reviews*

Michael Tomasello, *Diventare umani*. Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2019 (original edition: *Becoming Human: A Theory of Ontogeny*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019) (Paolo Migone)



### *Forgotten Books*

Georg Groddeck, *Il linguaggio dell'Es. Saggi di psicosomatica e di psicoanalisi dell'arte e della letteratura*. Milan: Adelphi, 1969 (original edition: *Psychoanalytische Schriften zur Psychosomatik. Psychoanalytische Schriften zur Literatur und Kunst* [1917-1933]. Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1964); Georg Groddeck, *Il libro dell'Es. Lettere di psicoanalisi a un'amica*. Preface by Lawrence Durrell. Milan: Adelphi, 1966 (original edition: *Da Buch vom Es. Psychoanalytische Briefe an eine Freundin*. Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1923) (Antonella Mancini)

### *Book Notices*

Melanie Klein, *Lezioni sulla tecnica* [1936-58]. Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2020 (original edition: *Lectures on Technique by Melanie Klein*. London: Routledge, 2017) (Francesca Tondi)

Vamik D. Volkan, *Large-Group Psychology: Racism, Societal Divisions, Narcissistic Leaders and Who Are We Now?* Bicester, UK: Phoenix, 2020 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

Silvia Amati Sas, *Ambiguità, conformismo e adattamento alla violenza sociale*. [Ambiguity, Conformism, and Adaptation to Social Violence] Preface by Anna Ferruta. Introduction by Federico Perozziello. Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2020 (Silvia Marchesini)

Franca Feliziani Kannheiser, *Sigmund Shlomo Freud. Le radici ebraiche della psicoanalisi*. [Sigmund Shlomo Freud. The Jewish Roots of Psychoanalysis] Presentation by Silvia Vegetti Finzi. Livorno: Belforte, 2019 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

Roger Amos, *Portrait of a Life. Melanie Klein and the Artists*. Bicester, UK: Phoenix, 2019 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

### *Books Received*

### **Journals**

*Psyche. Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse und ihre Anwendungen*, 2019, Volume 73, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9/10, 11 & 12 (Silvano Massa)

Silvano Massa, *Comment on Psyche*

*British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 2020, Volume 59, no. 4 (Paolo Migone)

*The International Journal of Forensic Psychotherapy*, 2020, Volume 2, no. 1 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

*Clinical Social Work Journal*, 2020, Volume 48, no. 3 (Paolo Migone)

*The Lancet*, 2020, Volume 396, October 19 (Paolo Migone)

*Nunatak*, 2020, Year 16, no. 56 (Paolo Migone)

### **Contents and indexes of Year 2020, Volume 54**

### **2021 Program: "International Seminars of Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane"**

### **Referees and proofreaders of year 2020**

### **Information for subscribers and readers**