

The Holocaust at School, between Remembrance and Oblivion

Claudia Gina Hassan*

Abstract. In the context of a broader reflection on memory, the paper analyzes, some didactic experiences of teaching the Shoah in different formats in three Italian regions. . The value dimension of individual and collective memory, its ethical value, the study of its transmission methods through the generations, also in relation to the intercultural changes that have taken place in our society since the 1980s, are the main object of interest of this project. The objectives indicated by the project are analyzed in their realization and implementation. Among these, of special importance are: transforming superficial information and simple commemorative memory into meaningful learning; enabling memory to become active participation; contributing to the linkage of the emotional and cognitive dimensions.

Keywords: Memory; Education; Shoah.

The saturation and absence of memory of the Holocaust are the two-faced Janus of the same difficulty of collective elaboration of a past that has always been distant from us in space and now also in time. The memory of the Holocaust has often occupied a mental and cultural, much more than physical and temporal, space far from Italy. Reflecting on the memory of the Holocaust and its representations means dealing with the ways in which a society interprets its past, the set of practices and symbols it puts into practice, the narrative structures and attitudes behind them. We are witnessing a veritable externalisation of memory that is profoundly changing the sense of remembrance. Going back in time, Assmann (2002, p. 165) emphasised how, unlike individual memory, “on a collective and institutional level this process is driven by a precise policy of remembrance, or, more precisely, by a precise policy of oblivion. There is no cultural memory capable of self-determination: it must necessarily be based on mediators and targeted policies”. This is why the idea of a construction of memory, of a political role in the choices of what to remember and what to forget, emerges in an evident and often non-random way.

These choices are at the heart of the formation of identity and the discourse between past, present and future. Remembrance cannot ignore the present dimension, its needs and urgencies. New paradigms open up around this need with regard to the relationship between memory-identity and cultural perpetuation. The regulatory, historical and narrative aspects establish the foundations of belonging and identity. Every culture develops its own "memories", uniting temporal and spatial dimensions with the social dimension. Numerous factors come into play here, with memory being an arena of meanings and forces that not only concern the past but also involve the image of the future.

In the immediate post-war period and until 1961, the year of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, no one spoke about the Holocaust. The construction of the debate on the resistance in Italy, the story of democracies conquering dictatorships in the United States, the patriotic and anti-fascist war in the Soviet Union and even the idea of new man, the pioneer, the *sabra* in Israel (Zertal, 2007, p. 96) meant that the elaboration of the Holocaust had to give way to the urgencies of reconstruction and post-war events. National stories needed heroes: the partisan, soldier and pioneer were the strong men on whom to build the future and the memory of the nations. The Holocaust was simply one of many crimes of World War II. What was going on in the concentration camps was semantically combined with other tragic events, mere “side effects” of conflict and ethnic hatred (Alexander, 2006, p. 27)

The survivor had no place in collective memories, the nameless victim received no attention, which

* Sociologist, *University of Rome Tor Vergata*, Italy. *Correspondence:* Via L. Manara 15, 00153 Rome, Italy, E-Mail <hassan@lettere.uniroma2.it>.

was all dedicated to the anti-fascist activist and the political deportee. And so in Italy, heroic history clouded the Holocaust, which the Italian conscience ignored.

There had certainly been no shortage of *signalmen* (Traverso, 2004) those who had been aware of the fracture in civilisation that Europe was leaving behind, but they were just a few isolated and marginalised intelligences, the group of German intellectuals who had emigrated to the United States and who, in their condition as exiles, managed, more than others, to maintain a critical and reflective view during and immediately after the war. These were scholars, like Theodor Adorno and Hannah Arendt, German Jews who had been educated during the Weimar Republic and had fled Germany when Hitler came to power. As Traverso points out, they were exiles and witnesses of a secular culture, they had followed European events from afar and had analysed every aspect of them, grasping and explaining the imminent tragedy even before it happened. Far from Europe but also from American intellectual circles, and unable to make themselves heard. They could see the catastrophe looming on the horizon, they grasped its boundaries and scope with lucidity, but were unable, in their position as exiles, to find space for their words. No one was willing to listen to them, even though they were able to sense the drama that was taking place in Europe.

It was necessary to wait for the so-called era of the witness, (Wieviorka, 1999) the eruption into the public sphere of the survivor, for the Holocaust to become part of the public and cultural debate of the time; the role of the media in particular was as important for the construction of the agenda as it was for the narrative grammar adopted. The general decline of ideologies, the crisis of progressive models and narratives gave way to a unifying narrative and the Holocaust took the place of all the other 20th century collective narratives. The Holocaust became the paradigmatic memory, the past by which Western culture measures itself, its present and its future. Since then, it has been a crescendo of initiatives and attention, but even at the end of the 1980s the memory of the Holocaust was defined as solitary and fragmented (Rossi Doria, 1998, p. 36). Today, seventeen years after the institutionalisation of Holocaust Remembrance Day with the law of 2000, we can hardly speak of choral remembrance, let alone unitary memories. Law 211/2000 was approved in the Chamber of Deputies where the racial laws had been voted for unanimously in 1938. Nevertheless, much work has been done since then. However, we have to (Hassan, 2016, p. 96) understand the implications of this commitment and these activities, the ability to create cohesion, collective memory and critical knowledge. The intentions of Holocaust Remembrance Day indicated a strong investment in building a sensitivity based on the relationship with the past. The real cultural node, however, is not based on general knowledge but on the changes that knowledge grafts onto mindsets, ways of being, collective experiences and, perhaps most importantly, on the non-superficial and temporary ability to empathise with the victims of yesterday and today. It is hard to imagine how Remembrance Day and commemoration will evolve, and even harder to imagine the meaning they will have in collective conscience. We are already witnessing a sterilisation of the emotional aspect that runs parallel to that of a cognitive nature. Remembrance cannot forget history and a memory of "repetition" is very different from critical memory. The multi-dimensional space of memory and its multiple symbolic functions demand that we overcome both the blind path of the sterile criticism of ritualisation and a mythical idea of memory, a sort of fetish to its own end.

The effect of overheating information, images and initiatives creates sacralisation whilst also emptying and trivialising the message. The trivialisation of discourse with improper comparisons and occasional forays into the matter definitely does not help the critical understanding of history. Therefore, with respect to this media cacophony, educational and pedagogical paths become an absolute priority to prevent memory from becoming a spectacular and self-referential idol. With respect to the collective and official removal of a past that is difficult even to think about and imagine, public and political discourse now seems increasingly attentive to the extermination of the Jews. This has become the subject of numerous approaches, involving thousands of students, countless civil and political initiatives, hundreds of TV broadcasts and a conspicuous film production every year, to the point where a real canon and style can be observed. A separate debate would be worth reserving for the journeys of memory, which have undergone significant transformation over the years, mirroring

society's depiction of deportation and the death camps. They have become part of the construction of Italian public memory and their time scales are very different. Until the fifties (Bisacca & Maida, 2015) in fact, the journeys were mainly those of the survivors, organised by Aned with a strongly celebratory intent ascribable in a semi-private memory. The political intent remained in the background and the resistance had not yet become the founding myth of the rebirth of a nation, that it was to become ten years later. In the meantime, journeys began to create a veritable geography of remembrance, civic sentiment and historical awareness. They became a ritual to be celebrated every year. Between the 1960s and 70s, the educational dimension of the journeys was predominant, with the participation of students and institutions.

In the last twenty-five years of the twentieth century, the Holocaust took on a universal value on which Europe founded its identity. These were the years in which the film *Holocaust* was released. An anti-Semitism that had been hitherto latent re-emerged, with the attack on the Synagogue in Rome. The Berlin Wall fell and the 50th anniversary of the racial laws of 1938 provided an opportunity for new celebrations and reflections. In this climate of great media and popular attention, the journeys of memory also began to take on a significant numerical dimension. But the real explosion of mass travel came after the law of 2000. This veritable experiential fruition of the memory of the Holocaust reached a real detachment from historical facts to become a representation of absolute evil, a meta-historical evil. Not always does one start with an adequate historical baggage, one sets out to explore the absolute evil placed outside of history. As if history were just the irrelevant frame of a much more interesting picture. Only by placing knowledge of the facts at the centre of the picture can we establish a healthy relationship between history and memory. The weakening of the historical sense of the younger generations is accompanied by a dizzying dissemination of history in snippets through fiction and historical novels, creating a short circuit between truth and storytelling. In this perverse plot between the creation of events, the mediatisation of the Holocaust and education, Adorno's warning continues to be as relevant as ever.

Maestra Auschwitz

From the sixties, Adorno described Auschwitz as a priority in the pedagogical field, a fundamental ethical principle for every educational intervention (Adorno, 2006, pp. 315-333). Teaching takes on a central role due to the unavoidable anthropological questions it would pose. Who is man? Who are we if we went so far as to do what we did? And why did no one ever say anything and perhaps never even think about what was happening? Everything happened with the active involvement of few but with the silent consent of so many (Hughes, 2010)

Kant and Goethe failed dismally to curb Nazi barbarism. The refined culture that we are attached was stripped of all meaning, revealing its helplessness and inability to influence reality. How, deep in the heart of Europe, in the cradle of civilisation and culture, could a complete breakdown of civilization, a rupture of humanity, have happened? A fracture that undermined the very categories of thought and the structures of meaning created previously, destroying not only the idea of civilisation but even man's very trust (Neimann, 2011). Even theological thought was called into question. Where was God? His silence demanded an answer. And so began a reformulation of the very idea of divinity in both the Jewish and Catholic spheres. One of the most interesting answers is the hypothesis of a God no longer omnipotent, no longer lord of history, but, instead, a weak God (Jonas, 1997). So if God is weak, he must need us, man. Which means that there are no more alibis, that we are totally responsible.

It would be easy to answer and explain, as has been done, with an image of collective madness, an accident in history or even the idea of a detour along the glorious road of civilisation in progress. These are all reassuring answers that tell us that we are "something else", that we are different from that barbarism, which does not concern us directly. Even more disturbing is the reflection on the very nature of humanity, on ourselves and our responsibility.

In his monumental *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Raul Hillberg argues that, as a historian, he merely offers a simple description, not an explanation of the reasons behind the Holocaust. The

risk of giving unsubstantiated answers would have been too high. Better a brief description, a reconstruction using documents and a mountain of miscellaneous paperwork (Hilberg, 1995). We must at least start from there, from history, from what happened, from the way the process commenced and developed. With respect to the rituality of memory that succeeds, albeit misunderstood, in making memories a-historical, the knowledge of history allows us to stitch the pieces back together, to understand the mechanisms, the social structure and the ideology within which the Holocaust developed and became reality. Often, for *those who work with memories*, their job is reduced to the organisation of initiatives (be they original or repetitive). But commemorating Remembrance Day or organising a trip to Auschwitz does not mean that we know about history. Seeing, visiting and being moved does not mean that we understand. Sometimes, organisational efficiency and a limited knowledge of history can coexist. If Raul Hillberg's warning to reflect on how things happened, and consequently on historical facts, is very strong, I think the question of why is also unavoidable. The most important answer comes from cultural transmission and education. As Adorno said, while it is very difficult to make changes in the objective sphere, we can work on a subjective level. In other words, if we cannot change the world, we can nevertheless accomplish a great deal on an individual level, using all the educational tools available and through pilot experiences, capable, through targeted educational projects, of filling collective rituals that would otherwise be destined to weary repetition with meaning. An initiative that attempted to take this direction was the Research-Action Pilot Project *Adotta un Ricordo* (Adopt a Memory), which developed between 2004 and 2009 in different regional contexts, i.e. Piedmont, Lazio and Tuscany.

The pilot project *Adotta un ricordo*

The Holocaust education pilot project expands the methodological paradigm of the historian and brings a peculiar contribution, the result of reflections on memory and its policies, to studies on the relationship between memory and history, sociological and philosophical contributions on evil and the relationship between modernity and the Holocaust. The project is configured as a veritable education in memory, with due analysis on historical sources and testimonies, on the possible meanings of memory, and with reflections on the sense of memory in the present.

The project has brought together the two main approaches to teaching the Holocaust, that of the International School for Holocaust Studies, which focuses on documentation, and that of Enzo Traverso and the *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance*, which reflects on the ways in which the Holocaust is transmitted culturally and its significance. The essential cultural references that have posed fundamental questions about man and Nazi extermination are those of the Frankfurt School and Hannah Arendt, as well as those of reflection on otherness, from Lèvinas to Hans Jonas and Zigmunt Bauman. The policies of memory and the "didactics" of the Holocaust are closely linked, one influencing the other. The direct weight of political choices on didactics is evident but no less important, although not immediately perceptible, is the influence of the methodologies of the cultural transmission of the Holocaust. The institutionalisation of Remembrance Day in Italy was the strongest moment of acceleration for projects on the Holocaust in schools and elsewhere. The perspective adopted by the project is "both diachronic and comparative foreground (Traverso, 2002, p. 11). This means not limiting our attention to Germany and the 20th century alone. The Holocaust, a paradigmatic genocide, as defined by the IHRA, helps us understand other forms of mass violence, other genocides and other violations of human rights.

The document for the group working on Education on the Holocaust and other genocides (www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/italian_holocaust_and_other_genocides.pdf) contains the statement made by Linda Woolf of the Webster University: "mass violence, torture, violations of basic human rights and the mistreatment of human beings are not a new aspect of humanity; the documentation of such events is numerous in the historical archives. It is essential to develop a deeper understanding of the psychological, cultural, political and social roots of human cruelty, mass violence and genocide. We must continue to examine the factors that enable individuals to perpetrate, collectively and individually, evil/genocide and the impact of apathetic bystanders as

fuel for human violence. If an exact model for predicting mass violence/human cruelty is beyond the reach of human capacity, we have an obligation to develop a model that highlights the warning signs and predisposing factors for human violence and genocide. With this information we can develop policies, strategies and programmes to combat these atrocities". In this perspective, therefore, answering the question of whether the Holocaust is a unique event does not mean imposing a moral claim. It does not mean that the Holocaust was worse than other evils, such as the extermination of the American Indians or the genocide of the Armenians or the victims of the Stalinist gulags. We have neither the right nor the tools to quantify, assess or compare mass suffering. The project starts with the Holocaust to establish links with the present, with other genocides, with new deportations, segregations and new forms of racism. The *Adotta un ricordo* project has been implemented in three Italian regions promoted by the Level II International Master's Degree in Holocaust Teaching of Roma Tre and the non-profit organisation Europa Ricerca: Piedmont, Lazio and Tuscany, with the support of the Regional Schools Directorates and the Province of Rome. The project originated from the observation of a clear deficiency in many Italian schools: instead of stimulating an analysis of the Holocaust, Remembrance Day has been reduced to an emotional encounter with the past which, due to its immediacy, fails to translate into critical-reflexive elements. The model is partly related to constructivism (Cosentino, 2002), a model that better corresponds to the complexity of the societies in which we live and that places the student at the centre as player and protagonist of the learning process.

The value-based dimension of individual and collective memory (Meghnagi, 2009, p.188), its ethical value, the study of the ways it is handed down from generation to generation, also in relation to the intercultural changes that have occurred in our society, constitute the main focus of this project. With the aim, therefore, of involving students in this research, through active collaboration, they were offered the chance to take part in a survey and comparative analysis of the memories they had collected, conducting short interviews with their grandparents and parents relating to their memories and knowledge of the historical period in question and, in particular, to the events surrounding the history of the Nazi persecution and deportations, age permitting. The experiences differed, precisely because there is no hard and fast model of teaching, valid everywhere and always. In every local situation, the projects, while maintaining their basic structure, were enriched, responding to the needs and explicit requirements of the School Directorates. The different experiences in Rome, Turin and Florence did, however, maintain the same basic structure.

In Florence, the project was welcomed by the Regional Schools Directorate and included the possibility of independent continuation of the experience the following year. Each school which hosted the project became a reference point for another twinned school. The pilot project consequently became self-regenerating in a chain that optimised the results and multiplied good practice.

In Turin, the experimentation focused on the comparison between different memories. Schools and classes where the multicultural, particularly Maghreb, component appeared to be prominent, were chosen. The intention was to create and transmit a shared memory among young people, including those from families which had no experience of the Holocaust for geographical or cultural reasons.

In Rome, the project brought children from the Jewish school together with those from the state school. In this case, the comparison of memories was experienced directly through different family stories. The various local structures of the project respected the educational autonomy of the teachers, supported by tutors in the education of the children.

In some cases, the terrain had already been sown with previous experiences of value, while in others, some vague work had been done, creating an immediate response that made it possible to build a high-quality teaching path. A constant feature of the various projects was the teacher training sessions offered by the Master in Holocaust Teachings at Roma Tre, directed by Professor David Meghnagi. An educational programme attended by scholars from different Italian and foreign cities who offered the best of their research in the field and personalised bibliographical indications.

This Master is the only structure in Italy that offers continuous and specific training on the subject. There is no shortage of high-quality courses but they all offer just a few days of training. Some of the tutors working on the project¹ attended this Master. The training process involved several phases: that aimed exclusively at the teachers, but also that aimed particularly at tutors who entered the classes in the presence of teachers. A lesson for the students, of course, but also for the teachers who adopted the relational approach, the methodology and the selected contents. A lesson both on how to teach the Holocaust and on the historical framework essential to its understanding. A work of support to teachers who then proposed it in other schools and in other contexts, creating a virtuous circle of good practices. The initial disorientation of some of them has turned into positive action towards other teachers and other schools. Many difficulties were declared by the teachers at the outset, ranging from the inadequacy of the educational system to competition from other training agencies, especially the media, from bias if not blatant hostility of families due to the emotional overload. They were all addressed and resolved in the initial meetings, dedicated exclusively to teachers.

The theme has been analysed both in a transnational sense and with reference to the specific Italian situation. The stages that led to the genocide, anti-Semitism, ghettos and camps are just some of the topics dealt with, along with denialism, moral dilemmas and the definition of the enemy. In some cases, preparation of the teachers was lacking and their teaching methodology neglected the historical development that led to the genocide. Books or films were often proposed without the correct historical support or even placed in an abstract meta-historical dimension. Once the historical framework had been offered by the tutors, the teachers chose many different pedagogical paths with excellent results, from music to art, and from theatre to creative writing. Of course, teaching the Holocaust requires a knowledge of the facts but also the use of appropriate language, attention to words to avoid confusion, the ability to steer students towards the use of sources, and the ability to ask questions correctly. In complete autonomy, the teachers have chosen and applied their teaching

Just to make an example, the students in Florence did a series of drawing studies on hands on barbed wire which were very moving, or played the music that the prisoners had composed while they were imprisoned in the concentration camps. Of course, I am not going to list all the works, even if they deserve to be valued beyond the project. The teachers worked on a cross-disciplinary basis, with extensive involvement of the students, who became researchers themselves in direct contact with the sources. Attention was always twofold, on both a cognitive and emotional level, the two levels proceeded in parallel, crossing and integrating. To make a last example that exemplifies these two levels, Lanzmann's film *Shoah* and Spielberg's film *Schindler's List* were compared.

The first questions himself and us about the gas chambers, the inexplicability of those deaths and that "unspeakable" abyss, looking for traces and human testimony. The second focuses on those who were "saved", who escaped the horror of that death, leaving open the door of human hope. Death and the survivors are the two shores upon which the memory of the Holocaust is built, the cognitive plane with its questions on the whys and wherefores of history does not contrast but integrates with the emotional dimension, projected towards the future. Spielberg's hope and Lanzmann's questions, build collective memory, critical memory and excellent didactic tools that allow us to imagine and think about the "unspeakable" aspects of the Holocaust, about places like Birkenau and the disintegration of humanity.

The three experiences that started out with different institutional interlocutors adapted to the needs of the different territories, making it possible to make a comparative analysis of the different memories: comparison between Jewish and non-Jewish schools, comparison with second-generation immigrant children, comparison between centre and periphery, and generational comparison, between grandparents and grandchildren. Thanks to this analysis, students were offered the chance to

¹ The tutors who entered the classes were: Rossana Pierangeli, a former student of the Master who also trained at Yad Vashem in Israel, Professor Sandra Corvi, also a former student of the Master and a former middle school teacher, Professor Paola Valabrega, also at the school, well-known scholar Alberto Cavaglion, and the then young PhD student in Paris, Diego Guzzi.

personally undertake a critical recovery of the memories held within their families, with the consequent ability to extend the knowledge acquired to other areas of historical and urban reality.

In this first phase of the project, students were able to approach the facts of history not only through the cognitive component, but also at emotional level. In this task, the active role played by the student, the collection of the testimony within his or her own family gave rise to the perception and awareness that he or she is an integral part of that history which has been the object of study.

In this way, starting from a specific story collected from fragments of individual memory or documentary sources, the group of students reconstructed the general historical framework of the time, starting from the comparison between history and the stories collected.

Parallel to an in-depth knowledge of the historical period in question, the project has given extensive space to learning using film footage, literature on the subject, interviews collected from students and, last but not least, direct testimony. The recognition of emotions and empathy play a particularly important role in the use of these teaching tools. The experiential condition of "feeling" the other plays a fundamental role in the management of interpersonal relationships, by helping us to manage emotions. But, from an intellectual point of view, it is central to learning, enhanced with the help of personal emotions. In this case, for example, thanks to the analysis of the emotional experiences of Holocaust survivors and witnesses who lived through the Nazi-Fascist period, the project has supplemented the cognitive level that was the foundation on which everything else was built. Learning has stimulated the development of the empathic and socio-affective behaviour of the student. Testimony has always been one of the most touching and significant moments in all projects. Several witnesses have intervened. Liliana Segre intervened twice, in Rome in the main hall of the Visconti High School, and at the Book Fair, after completing nine months of work with students in Turin. The silence that reigned in a large Aula Magna full of students was unusual. You could have heard a pin drop. Everyone listened to the story in religious silence and intense emotional tension held everyone in suspense. The students were already prepared, they knew what she was talking about, they knew what the death march was, they knew how the camps were organised and they also knew about the phase before the deportation. The testimony brought their knowledge, their readings, the films they had seen and the documents they had analysed to life. The project was fused with the same ideal tension, the same intensity and the strong ethical and moral intent with which Liliana Segre spoke in her testimony. The children were particularly impressed by the conclusion of her speech, when she said that she could have killed a German soldier after being freed from the camps, but preferred not to, choosing life instead.

Testimony always has enormous educational value, due both to the physical, human presence, which represents a deviation from the stereotype of the Jew, an abstract idea full of prejudice, and because the singularity of presence is a counterpoint to the abstract numbers of mass exterminations. The unspeakable is personified, restoring humanity and dignity. It was the peak of the children's educational path, making it possible to adopt critical thought and an ethical dimension: a living ethical message, with open questions on individual and collective responsibilities. It was an opportunity to stimulate the growth of a civic awareness and active citizenship in the youngsters. Students become witnesses of the testimony given. I saw very clearly the retransmission of memory in the students I accompanied to Auschwitz. After the trip, they wanted to invite Sami Modiano, a survivor of the Auschwitz death camp, to the University of *Tor Vergata* of Rome. They contacted him, went to see him and organised the event.

With this multiplicity of interventions, the didactic course has transformed superficial information and simple commemorative memory into meaningful learning; it has allowed memory to become active participation; it has achieved a passage from pure knowledge to the understanding of the historical meaning of the event, but also its current implications, by welding the emotional and cognitive levels together.

The integration of the historical dimension with memory and its transmission through the generations envisaged three distinct moments: the study of historical sources (documents and historical facts of the period); the analysis of autobiographical testimonies on the events experienced by Jews born before 1945; their comparison with the memories in their own family.

Thanks to this analysis, the students had the chance to personally undertake a critical recovery of their families' memories and extend the knowledge acquired to other areas of historical and urban reality.

The project used archive materials from Rome's Jewish Community. More specifically, the students analysed the testimonies and questionnaires collected during the project for the distribution of the "Fund for Holocaust victims in need", between September 1999 and March 2001. The documentation can be found at the Jewish Deputation.

The analysis of texts and interviews was supplemented by the study of historical documents and history lectures, as well as suggested factsheets and books necessary to their critical understanding. Of course, there were also essays, novels and testimonies on the subject; the viewing and discussion with teachers of historical documentaries, films and interviews collected by Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation; the direct meeting with witnesses of the tragedy.

By listening to life stories, the students rediscovered the value and wealth of the past and memory, which they then processed in different forms and presented in the final event. Each research group presented a work (an audio-visual piece, theatrical performance, concert, choir ensemble, a series of drawings, a composition of everything - and many other creative ideas) with a critical reflection matured within a rich and articulate path that lasted about nine months. In some cases, in Florence, the work began in March, ended in around January the following year. This allowed time for elaboration and independent study during the summer.

By interviewing their grandparents, memory also became a source of dialogue between generations, identifying fractures and passages by reconstructing family memories and comparing them with the reality of historical events and the way they have been culturally elaborated. In this perspective, they became a bridge between individual subjective memories, collective memory and historical reality.

So memory becomes a tool with which to reread and analyse the events that have marked the past of a city, and a moment of comparison between subjectivity and objectivity, allowing a better understanding of the historical complexity.

The works produced by the children were presented on the final day of the project. In Florence, a day of study accompanied the result of their work. In Rome, there was an exhibition in the hall where they listened to the testimony of Piero Terracina. In Turin, they wrote and performed a play before the testimony of Liliana Segre at the Turin Book Fair, in the presence of Furio Colombo and others. The final day of one of the Roman projects was attended by Yale historian Steven Katz, Professor Umberto Gentiloni representing Nicola Zingaretti, and the curators of the project.

Conclusions

This reconstruction of the four projects on Holocaust teachings, two of which in Rome, can but be partial, because each of them had its own specific development and particular characteristics, showing that the ideal methodology is one that focuses on the relationship, which differs according to the context and the interlocutor. I have tried to convey a sense of the complexity of a work that lasted nine months for each year and was articulated in various stages, demonstrating that the teaching of the Holocaust can give positive results at all levels, and can transform attitudes, prejudices, clichés and trivialisations. The teaching of the tragedy of the extermination has undergone many changes and enhancements in recent years, reaching an exemplary, paradigmatic approach that looks to the past to interpret the present and project itself towards the future. But without confusion, with a linguistic, scientific and human rigour to teach that use of the distinction typical of our critical and self-critical intelligence. Between total silence and the mediatic and celebratory uproar that consumes everything and empties it of meaning, educational paths are a counterbalance to the reactions of disinterest if not annoyance that we witness (Meghnagi, 2005).

If we retrace the teaching of history in Italian schools we can see how the Holocaust occupied a marginal space for a long time. It was only after the Berlinguer decree that a reflection on the didactics of 20th century history and consequently on memory and its transmission, but also on a possible

political use of history and its teaching, began. Since then, many schools and methodologies have dealt with 20th century history, from the linguistic turning point to culturalism. Starting with reflections on the Holocaust, violence becomes one of the themes of education, a paradigm from which to start, a key to interpreting the structure of our societies, a thermometer of the state of health of the environment in which we live. In this sense, the teaching of the Holocaust is a knowledge of history but also, and above all, an attempt not to escape the disturbing questions of yesterday and today, embracing one of the most important educational challenges: transforming the duty of remembrance into a work of memory.

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