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Istituto nazionale Ferruccio Parri

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The Italian Communist Party in Somalia between colonial legacies and party pedagogy

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Questo articolo tenta di analizzare alcuni quesiti storiografici concernenti il rapporto tra comunismo italiano e colonialismo, sollevati dalla presenza di una sezione del Partito Comunista Italiano (Pci) sorta a Mogadiscio nel 1942. Innanzitutto, si contestualizza la nascita di questa sezione nella Somalia occupata dalle forze britanniche, focalizzandosi sui rapporti con l'amministrazione militare e con la comunità italiana. Ci si sofferma poi sull'attività dei comunisti di Mogadiscio e sui rapporti con il Pci, rispetto a cui la sezione sembrerebbe essere sorta in sostanziale autonomia. Se ciò conferma una notevole circolazione di idee e pratiche del movimento comunista al di là dei network della Terza internazionale, allo stesso tempo risulta un elemento atipico nel contesto politico di questi anni. L'articolo identifica poi il reclutamento di militanti attuato nei campi di prigionia inglesi da parte della sezione come una peculiare declinazione del "partito nuovo" togliattiano. Infine, ci si sofferma sull'atteggiamento paternalista e colonialista alla base dell'esclusione dei somali dall'orizzonte politico della sezione.
Parole chiave: Partito Comunista Italiano, Partito Nuovo, Somalia, Colonialismo italiano, Mogadiscio, Terza internazionale

This article addresses a number of historiographical questions about the relationship between Italian communism and colonialism. It does so by analysing the presence of a section of the Italian Communist Party in Mogadishu in 1942. After describing its origins and relations with the military administration and the Italian community in British-occupied Somalia, the article examines the activities of the communists in Mogadishu and their relationship with the party, from which the local section seems to have been quite autonomous. While this confirms that the ideas and practices of the communist movement circulated well beyond the networks of the Third International, it is also an atypical element in the political context of those years. The article then identifies the section's recruitment of militants in British prison camps as a peculiar variation of the Tolliattian 'new party', before concluding with a discussion of the paternalist and colonialist attitudes underlying the exclusion of Somalis from the section's political horizon.
Key words: Italian Communist Party, new party, Somalia, Italian colonialism, Mogadishu, Third International

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Introduction

The British occupation of Somalia and the rest of the Horn of Africa in 1941 put an end to the brief imperial experience of the Fascist regime, but it did not mean the end of the Italian presence in these places. Contrary to what happened in Ethiopia, where the immediate restoration of Haile Selassie's empire led to a more rapid erosion of the influence and size of the Italian community, Eritrea and Somalia were governed by the British Military Administration (hereafter BMA); for at least a decade, various Italian party sections emerged, while a substantial public opinion developed.[1] Somalia, in particular, was marked by more structured political experiences, capable of uniting and mobilising parts of the Italian community that were scattered throughout the territories of the former empire. This article aims to shed light on one of these political experiences, the Mogadishu section of the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano, hereafter PCI), founded in 1942 by a group of workers cooperating with the occupation forces, and to analyse a number of issues related to its work in Somalia.

To date, historiography on Italian colonialism has only sporadically studied the post-war occupation of Somalia before the Italian trusteeship. Some publications have placed the issue mainly within the diplomatic discussions that preceded the ratification of the 1947 Peace Treaty, thus focusing on the historical-diplomatic dimension.[2] Among the studies dealing with this transitional phase, which has received far less attention than the dark period of the empire and the Italian "return" in 1950, it is worth mentioning a work by Angelo Del Boca, a recent contribution by Annalisa Urbano and Antonio Varsori on the Mogadishu massacre and two articles by Giampaolo Calchi Novati.[3] Despite the different focus and perspectives, these texts manage to merge the intricate diplomatic events that determined the fate of the former Italian colony with the dynamics and actors that characterised this territory between 1941 and 1950. An analysis of the historiography of the decade of British occupation

[1] References can be found in Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale. La caduta dell'impero*, Milan, Mondadori, 2014; Antonio Varsori, Annalisa Urbano, *Mogadiscio 1948. Un eccidio di italiani tra decolonizzazione e guerra fredda*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2019; Antonia Bullotta, *La Somalia sotto due bandiere*, Milan, Garzanti, 1949.

[2] See, for example, the classic study by Gianluigi Rossi, *L'Africa italiana verso l'indipendenza (1941-1949)*, Milan, Giuffrè, 1980.

[3] A. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale*, cit.; A. Varsori, A. Urbano, *Mogadiscio 1948*, cit.; Giampaolo Calchi Novati, *Gli incidenti di Mogadiscio del gennaio 1948: rapporti italo-inglesi e nazionalismo somalo*, "Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente", n. 3/4, 1980, pp. 327-356; Giampaolo Calchi Novati, *Una rilettura degli incidenti di Mogadiscio del gennaio 1948 e il difficile rapporto fra somali e italiani*, "Studi Piacentini", n. 1, 1994, pp. 223-234. See also Annalisa Urbano, *"That is why we have troubles": The pro-Italia's challenge to nationalism in British-occupied Somalia*, "The Journal of African History", n. 3, 2016.

thus allows us to address questions that shift the focus away from international relations and towards the nature of the relationship between the three communities that coexisted in Somalia at the time: those of the British, the Italians and the Somalis. In this article, I will focus on the ambiguous position of the Italians as former colonisers, the Somalis' degree of political self-determination and the extent to which the British exercised their dominance over these components.

Studying the birth of a communist section in Mogadishu, mostly composed of workers who had emigrated to the empire and former military personnel, enables me to bring into dialogue two fields of historiographical research that generally do not communicate very well: the study of colonialism and that of communism, especially Italian communism. Within the latter strand, the recent works of Pons and Studer have highlighted the global dimension of communism, which they argue is characterised by a circulation of people and ideas capable of forming a network reaching far beyond the narrow circle of sections of the Third International. The existence of a communist movement governed by the USSR but with points of reference all over the world remained a constant feature from the foundation of the Comintern until 1991.[4] In recent years, scholars have also sought to study the case of the Italian party from this perspective; as a study by Borruso and a recent work by Siracusano on the relationship between the PCI and the decolonisation movements in Sub-Saharan Africa demonstrate, between the two wars and after the Second World War, the Italian communists managed to weave a dense network of international relations with very different actors.[5] Borruso emphasised that the PCI, in the context of African decolonisation, assumed a role of liaison with the anti-colonial struggle thanks to its "third" position, which contributed to supporting the 'African paths to socialism', but that it also became a reference point for the liberation movements themselves.[6] In this sense, the observation that European communists had to confront themselves with non-European realities and the impact of the communist message on places where Marxist thought had never penetrated open up new avenues of investigation.

Based on these historiographical premises, we can raise a number of questions about the Italian communists' intervention in Somalia, which I will try to answer in this article. How did the party's transformations in Italy translate

[4] Among the many studies on communism in a global perspective, it is worth mentioning Brigitte Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians*, London, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015; Silvio Pons, *La rivoluzione globale. Storia del comunismo internazionale 1917-1991*, Turin, Einaudi, 2012; S. Pons, *I comunisti italiani e gli altri. Visioni e legami internazionali nel mondo del Novecento*, Turin, Einaudi, 2021.

[5] Paolo Borruso, *Il PCI e l'Africa indipendente: apogeo e crisi di un'utopia socialista (1956-1989)*, Florence, Le Monnier, 2009; Gabriele Siracusano, *"Pronto per la Rivoluzione!". I comunisti italiani e francesi in Africa centro-occidentale (1958-1968)*, Rome, Carocci, 2023.

[6] P. Borruso, *Il PCI e l'Africa indipendente*, cit., p. 9.

into the context of Somalia during the transition? Who did the PCI section in Mogadishu address? And what spaces for political manoeuvre did its members carve out for themselves in occupied Somalia? First, I argue that the recruitment of militants held in the British prison camps by the Mogadishu communists is a peculiar declination of the 'new party', a definition that — among its various implications — reflects the PCI's evolution from a clandestine vanguard party to a mass party. In fact, two aspects of the new party line of Italian communism emerge in the section's policy and activity in the camps: a pedagogical function and mass recruitment. Second, despite the proportionally high numbers of militants that the communists managed to welcome in their ranks, one part of colonial society remained excluded from their discourse and political action: the Somali population. Starting from this absence, I will reflect on the exclusionary dynamics that characterised the history of the Mogadishu section and, in particular, how the application of racism in a communist discourse can shed light on the deep contradictions of an ideological-cultural framework that was fundamentally Eurocentric, despite its internationalist premises. In addition to existing scholarship, I will draw on archival sources held at the Fondazione Gramsci di Roma — in particular the papers produced by the section, gathered in the 'Pci, sezione di Mogadiscio', 'Mosca' and 'mf 312' collections — and the National Archives in London, including the 'War Office 230' and 'Foreign Office 371' series, which mainly contain correspondence and reports by ministerial and military officials. Although these sources provide a clear picture, we must bear in mind the particular needs and perspectives of the actors who produced them; just as the leadership of the Mogadishu section tried to put its activities in the best possible light in order to legitimise itself before the party in Italy, especially in the reports sent to the PCI administration,[7] the British authorities tended to soften the complexity of relations and political nuances within the Italian community. Moreover, in the British papers of the late 1940s (i.e. in the midst of the Cold War), it is not uncommon to find a concern about communist influence that sometimes seems disproportionate to the actual situation.[8]

The first part of the article focuses on the historical-political context of Somalia during the BMA, emphasising the relationship between the Italian community and the new occupiers. Next, I will analyse the activity of the Mogadishu section, especially its relationship with other Italian political forma-

[7] For example, Aldebrando Melelli, secretary of the Mogadishu section, pompously praised its activity: '[T]he section […] has served, in the face of the collapse of so many illusions and myths, as a driving force of the best energies and succeeded in making thousands and thousands of Italians meditate on the most serious problems that, as events unfolded, were posed to Italians at home.' Melelli's report on the political activity of the Mogadishu section, November 1946, in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci (FIG), Rome, Archivio del Partito Comunista Italiano (APC), Sezione esteri, mf 115, 476/483.

[8] See Effie Pedaliu, *Italy, Britain and the Origins of the Cold War*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

tions and the contacts with the PCI in Italy and its political culture. Assuming that the changes affecting the PCI after the Second World War influenced the section, I then interpret the recruitment of the Prisoners of War in the British camps as a kind of translation of the PCI's new political line into the context of occupied East Africa. To conclude, I will highlight the limitations and contradictions inherent in the actions of the communists in Mogadishu, especially the total exclusion of the Somali population as a political referent and the presence of paternalism and racism in their political discourse.

Public opinion building in the years of the BMA

On 25 February 1941, Commonwealth troops entered Mogadishu and put an end to Italian rule in Somalia. The BMA established a regime of military occupation, with the explicit and immediate purpose of ensuring order, starting a peace process and drawing on the resources of the territory to support the Allied war effort. For almost a decade of occupation, the lack of soldiers and means did not allow the BMA to go much beyond a semi-permanent state of exception. The promises to emancipate the Somali population after the end of Fascist rule were fulfilled to a much lesser extent than expected,[9] while the exponential rise in prices took its toll on local communities, preventing a substantial recovery of the economy.

Nonetheless, or perhaps precisely because of its limited reach, the BMA never sought to hinder the formation of public opinion among both Italians and Somalis. In particular, the British welcomed with some sympathy the emergence of Somali nationalism, mainly represented by the Somali Youth League (hereafter SYL). The League's main programme was to unite all the Somali-speaking regions of the Horn of Africa into a 'Greater Somalia',[10] an ambitious project involving the unification of Italian Somalia, British Somaliland, Djibouti and the Ogaden region, controlled by Ethiopia. This political design was supported by the former administrative division of Italian East Africa, in which all "Somalias" — including Ogaden — were united under a single governorate. Although it presented considerable political difficulties, especially in terms of its relationship with the Ethiopian Empire, the idea of a 'Greater Somalia' could count on the support of the British, to the point that in 1946 Foreign Minister Bevin called for its establishment during a conference prior to the ratification of the Peace Treaty.[11]

[9] Annalisa Urbano, *Between occupation and liberation: Italian Somalia under British rule, 1941-1945*, in Ashley Jackson, Yasmin Khan, Gajendra Singh (eds.), *An Imperial World at War. The British Empire, 1939*, London-New York, Routledge, 2016, pp. 31-32.

[10] Antonio M. Morone, *L'ultima colonia. Come l'Italia è tornata in Africa 1950-1960*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2011, p. 15.

[11] Cedric Barnes, *The Somali Youth League, Ethiopian Somalis and the Greater Somalia Idea, c. 1946-48*, "Journal of Eastern African Studies", 2007, n. 2, pp. 278-280.

In any case, the political activism that emerged as a result of the British occupation not only concerned the Somali population. Already by mid-1941, the Italia Libera movement was born with the aim of defascistising the Italian community. Founded by a former civil servant, Italia Libera claimed as early as January 1942 to have about five hundred Italians among its ranks, mainly office workers and members of the urban middle class.[12] However, it was not until the fall of Fascism that political formations truly proliferated. In a letter to the Office of the Intelligence and Security in Mogadishu, a BMA official stated that the majority of Italians had welcomed the collapse of the regime 'with undisguised joy'.[13] In fact, the relatively painless end of Fascism reassured many of those waiting to be repatriated, which could therefore take place in a safe context for their families.[14] Yet, this feeling of serenity soon made way for great concern about the uncertainty of the political situation, which was destined to evolve in a far from peaceful manner.

While the deep political divisions within the Italian community did not diminish after 25 July 1943, the most fervent pro-Fascists temporarily retreated: on the one hand, many of them feared forced repatriation to Italy by the British authorities; on the other hand, the fall of Mussolini increased hostility towards Fascist elements and fostered the development of a genuine anti-fascist public opinion. In the months following the armistice, protests within the British administration began to spread regarding the continued presence of ex-Fascists and Fascists in "institutions of public interest" and the BMA's tolerance of demonstrations of solidarity with the late regime. The new anti-fascist groups did not limit themselves to demanding that the authorities take a harder line against the exponents of the Fascist regime, but began to protest against the staggering increase in prices and to call for an overall improvement in living and working conditions. In general, demands began to emerge for a 'more enlightened' attitude towards the Italians, who had moved from the status of enemies to that of co-belligerents.[15] Apart from Italia Libera, which had since increased its support, the protagonist of these political demands was the Mogadishu section of the PCI.[16]

[12] Major General Chief Political Officer to the Minister of State, Cairo, 5 January 1942, in The National Archives [TNA], London, War Office [WO] 230/61. Somalia, relations with the Italians; political reports and social matters; the employment of Italian seamen.

[13] G. Hartman, Ag.G.S.O.III(I), British Military Administration, to Office of the Intelligence and Security, Mogadishu, Somalia, 24 August 1943, in TNA, WO 230/7. Somalia, administrative policy (1941 Feb.-1943 Sept.).

[14] G. Hartman to Office of the Intelligence and Security, 24 August 1943, in TNA, WO 230/7.

[15] Extract from Somalia Intelligence Summary No. 4 for period ending 12 Dec 43, 13 December 1943, in TNA, WO 230/61.

[16] In a historiographical context, this political formation and its birth are mentioned in A. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale*, cit., p. 1113; A. Varsori, A. Urbano, *Mogadiscio 1948*, cit. pp. 12-13; P. Borruso, *Il PCI e l'Africa indipendente*, cit., p. 37.

PCI, Mogadishu section

Created just over a year after the establishment of the BMA, the PCI in Mogadishu was an atypical political formation, with unusual features for a communist section. This is how Aldebrando Melelli, one of the founding members of the section together with Antonino Velonà, describes its genesis in a letter to Togliatti in March 1953:

> I was in Somalia for work when the war broke out, and in 1941 I was taken prisoner by the British troops who occupied that territory. Freed on parole together with some friends because they were 'collaborators', we started a political movement that soon (July 1942) led to the establishment of a party section.[17]

However concise, Melelli's words reveal some relevant aspects for understanding the composition and activity of this political formation. First of all, the original nucleus contained neither figures with a background in political groups opposing the regime nor militants of the Communist Party. Melelli was a carpenter and Velonà an interpreter; far from representing the existential trajectories of communists in the years of clandestine activity, which were characterised — to quote Studer — by the absorption of 'all or part of their lives to a distinctively total political commitment',[18] they are rather typical examples of Italian colonists who emigrated to the empire for purely work-related reasons. Looking at a sample of about three hundred of the more than three thousand personal files of section members, which mention personal data, profession, educational qualification, information on their political past, marital status and languages known, we can trace these characteristics in the majority of the militants.[19] While this cross-section describes a scenario that is in contrast to what Höbel calls a party of 'transnational cadres fully embedded in the networks under the Comintern',[20] it is also consistent with the composition of colonial society, in which the urban and rural proletariat was poorly represented.[21]

A second aspect that emerges from Melelli's letter, and which is confirmed by the papers produced by the PCI section in Somalia and the BMA documentation, is the apparent autonomy with which this political formation was created. The vast historiography on international communism in the years

[17] Melelli to Togliatti, March 1953, in FIG, APC, Sezione esteri, mf 408, 3013, singoli – M, Melelli Aldebrando.

[18] B. Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians*, cit., p. 2.

[19] Personal files from 3501 to 3800, in FIG, APC, Fondo Mosca, mf 372, 706 and 707, pac. 60.

[20] There is a vast historiography on the first 20 years of the PCI, initially called the Partito comunista d'Italia. For this reference to the 'party of cadres' as opposed to the 'mass party' of the post-war period, see — among others — Alexander Höbel, *I rivoluzionari di professione*, in Silvio Pons (ed.), *Il comunismo italiano nella storia del Novecento*, Rome, Viella, 2021, p. 60.

[21] E. Ertola, *In terra d'Africa*, cit., pp. 55-58.

of the Comintern, as well as the works on the clandestine PCI,[22] describe a broad network in which the relationship between the national and international central offices and the militant cells was regulated by a range of officials and peripheral delegates who acted according to the principles of democratic centralism.[23] There was generally very little room for spontaneous initiatives unless they had been approved by the party leadership, and in any case, they should remain close to the practice of a communist movement that — as pointed out by Pons — found its distinctive trait in the rigid discipline centred on 'subordination to the decisions of the International' and 'unconditional support for Soviet Russia'.[24] Thus, the creation of the Mogadishu section appears to be rather atypical; not only did its founding members have no previous ties to the Partito comunista d'Italia or the Comintern, but it was even set up without instructions from the Italian party's central offices.

It is not easy to explain this autonomy. The great isolation of the empire's former territories during the British occupation undoubtedly favoured unexpected political and social developments, of which the section's formation was probably an outcome. On the other hand, the Italians in Somalia could count on the dissemination of information through the BMA's newspaper, the *Somalia Courier*, which guaranteed a constant update on war-time events. We could therefore hypothesise that a part of the Italian community, disappointed by the collapse of Fascism's imperial ambitions and trapped in a situation of socio-economic precariousness, was influenced by the Soviet successes against the German war machine and embraced communism in the wake of the Red Army epic.

Whatever the circumstances that led to its birth, the section immediately expressed its position and political objectives. In the programme drafted on 25 July 1942, we read the following:

> The communist section of Mogadishu, interpreter of the collaborative legislation that has been established between the Russia of the Soviets (Headquarters of the Third Communist International) and the Allied powers, associates itself with the aforementioned powers to fight until the complete dissociation of the Axis, namely: Nazism, Fascism and Japanese feudalism, confident that it will thus contribute to the advent of an era of more equal justice and freedom, immune to egocentric and racial principles.[25]

[22] On the case of Bologna, see E. Pontieri, *Piccole sovversioni quotidiane. Microstoria di una periferia bolognese nel regime fascista*, Rome, Viella, 2022.

[23] Some of the most recent works include Paolo Capuzzo, Anne Garland Mahler (eds.), *The Comintern and the Global South: Global Designs/Local Encounters*, London-New York, Routledge, 2022; Silvio Pons, Stephen A. Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge history of Communism, vol. 1 – World Revolution and Socialism in One Country 1917-1941*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017; B. Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians*; Stephen A. Smith (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014.

[24] S. Pons, *La rivoluzione globale*, cit., p. 27.

[25] Programme of the Partito comunista italiano (Sezione della Terza internazionale Comunista), in FIG, Pci, sezione di Mogadiscio (1942-1951), s. 1 – organismi dirigenti (14 luglio

Hence, consistent with the international scenario that was unfolding, the section opted for collaboration with the BMA. However, it is not clear how exactly the PCI in Mogadishu and the military administration initially cooperated. Although some militants — including Velonà — were employed by the BMA and thus effectively cooperated, it was not until 1944 that any real initiatives were taken in this direction. Minutes of the executive committee meeting of 16 June tell us that the latter approved the proposal to 'submit a collective application for enlistment to the British authorities', in line with the 'policy that, in Italy, our party is carrying out aimed at the liberation of the country from the Germans and the Fascists'.[26] Despite the reference to the PCI and the National Liberation Committee (Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale, hereafter CLN), the decision to support the Allies' war effort did not respond to any instructions from Italy, but only to an interpretation of the party's policy based on press sources or other indirect communication channels.

The communists' proposal was met with a rather cold, if not hostile, response from the British authorities. After receiving the list of candidates for conscription, Lieutenant Colonel Duncan replied that it would be unwise to proceed with enrolment, since many were already doing useful work for the Allied cause as employees of the BMA.[27] The position of Brigadier Wickham was far less conciliatory. In a letter to Colonel Jameson of the East Africa Command in Nairobi, Wickham complained about the 'almost hysterical' insistence of the communists to fight alongside the Allies. Moreover, according to the brigadier, most of the volunteers on the list turned out to be unfit for arms due to their age and lack of training.[28]

Regardless of the unfortunate outcome of this proposal for collective enrolment, the PCI considered itself — at least until the end of the conflict — an ally of the British administration, which opportunistically tolerated its activities.[29] And yet, support for the BMA was never free from criticism and always characterised by a dialectic aimed at achieving the widest possible hegemony within the Italian community. Hence, for example, the protests for a more decisive defascistisation of the institutions, which were — according to the section — 'still led by people known for their Fascist past'.[30] In addition, the section

1942 - 9 gennaio 1949), fasc. 1 – Costituzione della sezione di Mogadiscio (14 luglio 1942 - 25 luglio).

[26] Minutes of ordinary meeting, 16 June 1944, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 1, fasc. 4 – Verbali del Comitato esecutivo (9 dicembre 1943 - 27 settembre 1948).

[27] Duncan to the political secretary of the PCI's section in Mogadishu, 22 August 1944, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 5 – carteggio (26 maggio 1943 - 4 gennaio 1951), fasc. 11 – "Relazioni con le Autorità Britanniche" (26 maggio 1943 - 18 gennaio 1949).

[28] Wickham to Jameson, East Africa Command, Nairobi, 29 August 1944, in TNA, WO 230/61.

[29] A. Varsori, A. Urbano, *Mogadiscio 1948*, cit., pp. 12-13.

[30] Section administration to the Chief administrator of Somalia, 4 December 1943, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 5, fasc. 11.

frequently called for fairer treatment of the working classes by the authorities in order to underline its consistency with a classist approach to the political struggle, despite the ongoing cooperation.[31]

Although the British administration was one of its main interlocutors, the PCI sought to expand its influence above all among the Italians and gain the consensus of the anti-fascist elements in the community. This is how the intention 'to favour by all means the separatist movement of the revolutionary groups (republicans and socialists) of the "Italia Libera" association' should be read.[32] Despite the low esteem in which the communists — along with the British — held this political formation, Italia Libera represented a potential recruitment base for militants. The presence in the association of different political sensibilities — apart from a more or less consistent group of opportunists — that could not express themselves in a consistent way allowed the PCI to gain consensus among the more left-wing exponents, who found a more organised structure with clearer political aims in the communist section. The framing of the more radical members of Italia Libera was necessary for the creation of a real trade union organisation, to be called Unione proletaria — one of the first political objectives expressed by the communists. However, this organisation never actually saw the light of day and it is likely that Melelli's talks with the exponents of anti-fascism in the former colony were unsuccessful, perhaps also because of the continued presence of a pro-Fascist core among the Italian workers.[33]

Although the trade union organisation did not materialise, the PCI nevertheless managed to pursue intense political activity through the promotion of initiatives and by spawning bodies parallel to the section. Firstly, the so-called Soccorso Rosso was set up in March 1944. This welfare institute was designed to collect and distribute funds for comrades in difficulty, following the model of International Red Aid, the homonymous organisation of the Third International. A library was also set up, which in addition to collecting various kinds of texts was to host the 'professional ten minutes', weekly meetings in which militants could voluntarily illustrate the rudiments of their trade, to then carry out practical tests in the 'technical corner'. But the most ambitious initiative was perhaps the creation of an Istituto di Cultura Proletaria, meant to provide the workers of the former colony with various degrees of education, from elementary to the 'highest forms'.[34] The section set out to involve as many suitable people as possible in the teaching, inviting lawyers, doctors and engineers to collaborate in this project.

[31] Minutes of extraordinary meeting, 9 December 1943, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 1, fasc. 4.

[32] Minutes of extraordinary meeting, 9 December 1943, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 1, fasc. 4.

[33] Luigi Candreva, *Comunisti e colonialismo italiano. Dalla guerra d'Etiopia all'indipendenza della Libia (1935-1951)*, PhD thesis in Storia contemporanea, Università degli studi di Roma "Tor Vergata", 2015, unpublished, p. 282.

[34] Minutes of ordinary meeting, 1 November 1944, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 1, fasc. 4.

Although the Istituto di Cultura Proletaria was officially founded in November 1944, it is difficult to assess the extent to which it pursued the aims at the basis of its creation and whether was actually successful among Italian workers.[35] What does seem to be relevant, though is the pedagogical and, in general, political education intentions that emerge from this and other initiatives of the section. On the same wavelength, in fact, periodic meetings were set up, called the 'Wednesday meetings', where the militants — under the guidance of the secretary — could discuss the most diverse political issues.[36] Despite the fact that these meetings usually degenerated into doctrinal disputes, the minutes of these meetings nevertheless reveal a rather lively debate that — if it did not produce particularly original or heterodox demands and positions — provided an opportunity for the section's various souls to exchange views.

Interacting with the PCI in Italy

One of the main problems the communists had to face, other than insufficient funds and means and the strong presence of a hostile component within the community, was the almost complete lack — at least in the early days — of direct contact with the party in Italy. While it is true that the militants could follow national and international developments in the *Somalia Courier* and, from 1944, had sporadic access to the communist press, the fact that only 'one newspaper every 15 days [was] made available to 100 people',[37] as reported by a discouraged Melelli, negatively affected the task of carrying out any propaganda activities that were consistent — as the section hoped — with the PCI line in Italy.

The reason for this difficulty lay essentially in the interruption of communication between Italy and the former colonies following the British occupation, which continued at least until the second half of 1944; at the end of June, Melelli sent a letter to the section assembly in which he resigned as secretary owing to the lack of means and political indications from the party's central office, and asked for permission to withdraw from political activity for a minimum of six months.[38] Yet, in August 1944, the reactivation of postal communications with the Allied-controlled regions of Italy finally allowed the communists in Mogadishu to contact the PCI. In fact, at the ordinary meeting of the executive committee on 28 August 1944, it was decided to inform the party leadership of the formation of a communist group in Somalia

[35] Minutes of ordinary meeting, 19 November 1944, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 1, fasc. 4.

[36] Wednesday meetings 1945 1945 – February, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 6 – proselitismo (5 marzo 1945 - 24 agosto 1946).

[37] Minutes of extraordinary assembly, 24 March 1945, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 1, fasc. 2.

[38] Letter from Melelli to the assembly dated 28 November 1944, to the CC and to the CE, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 1, fasc. 2.

and to 'briefly illustrate the past and present activities of the section'.[39] On 21 September 1944, Melelli — whose resignation had in the meantime been rejected — thus wrote the following letter to the party leadership:

> We undertake the welcome duty of informing the comrades of the leadership that on the initiative of some long-standing comrades and the benevolence of the occupying authorities, it was possible to set up an organisation on 25 July 1942, which we have decided to call the 'Mogadishu section of the PCI'. With the re-establishment of normal communications, we will give you an extensive account of what has been done in the name of the party in this remote corner of Italy.[40]

In its reply, the party leadership expressed encouragement for the group's initiative and, as we will see further ahead, made various appreciations of the political line that Melelli had described.[41] However, judging from a subsequent letter sent by the section, the party's missive never seems to have reached the communists in Mogadishu.[42] In fact, it took more than two years before they received instructions from the PCI, through a letter from Pietro Secchia dated 15 March 1947. In addition to informing them about the party's activities and successes in Italy, 'which currently has 2,200,000 members and enjoys a growing influence among the Italian people', the communist leader sent various propaganda materials — which were unfortunately not received — as an attachment, with the aim of updating the section on the PCI's political line, especially in terms of the attitude to be taken towards the former Fascists and the structure and orientation to be given to the 'new party'. While inviting the communists in Mogadishu to continue their activities and intensify their efforts, Secchia indeed judged, based on a card sent to him by a comrade from Lecce, the positions of the section to be outdated and no longer corresponding to the national and international situation.[43] From the second half of the 1940s, therefore, occasional communications were established that allowed the section to be updated on the PCI's programmatic positions. The most used channel was the sending of printed material by couriers who, at irregular intervals, travelled on steamships between Somalia and Italy. In this way, for example, Vittorio Leoncini — who succeeded Melelli as section secretary — sent a letter in November 1947 in which he thanked the party leadership for sending 400 copies of *Vie Nuove*, 'which the comrades read with enthusiasm and spread among their friends at work'.[44]

[39] Minutes of ordinary meeting, 31 August 1944, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 1, fasc. 4.
[40] Melelli to the PCI leadership, 21 September 1944, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 5, fasc. 12.
[41] PCI leadership to the Mogadishu section, 18 November 1944, in FIG, APC, Fondo Mosca, mf 312.
[42] L. Candreva, *Comunisti e colonialismo italiano*, cit., p. 292.
[43] Secchia to the PCI Mogadishu section, 15 March 1947, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 5, fasc. 12.
[44] Leoncini to the PCI leadership, 8 November 1947, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 5, fasc. 12.

Although contacts were established rather late and remained sporadic, by the end of 1944, the section had learnt of the political changes taking place within the PCI, probably through the "Somalia Courier" or "Fronte Unito", a newspaper published by Italian anti-fascists in Egypt and also circulated in the former colonies. In fact, during the executive committee's ordinary meeting of 19 November 1944, it was proposed to publish 'the report of the meeting of the Communist and Socialist Parties that took place in Rome on 8 August 1944' in a pamphlet.[45] Hence, if in 1947 Secchia informed the Mogadishu group of the birth of the so-called 'new party', the section had clearly already become aware of the PCI's new direction, at least in general terms. Indeed, the political initiatives proposed in the assemblies and in the publications reveal an attempt to interpret what Martinelli defines as the dual meaning of the 'new party': 'the material structure and programme that the unification between socialists and communists after the Resistance should have taken' and the overcoming of the 'ideological-formal model' of the national section of the Comintern.[46] From this point of view, it is relevant that in the letter of 29 September 1944, which informed the party of the section's creation, it is stressed that 'the initial small nucleus is now a flourishing section that enjoys a regular membership […] and has achieved the union of the anti-fascist forces by promoting the UNA (Unione Nazionale Antifascista)'.[47] If at first, in the context of post-war Somalia, the union of anti-fascist forces mainly translated into a policy of collaboration with the Unione democratica (a local section of Christian Democracy), the focus later shifted to the newly formed Socialist group, with which the section sought a close understanding that should eventually have led to the formation of a united group. In addition, a motion of the executive committee made even more explicit the need for practical and political cooperation with the socialists, along the lines of the Italian model.[48] In the following years, the role of privileged interlocutor that the socialists took on seemed to be confirmed both in the declarations of the communist leaders and through the sharing of initiatives and political spaces.[49]

[45] Minutes of ordinary meeting, 19 November 1944, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 1, fasc. 4.

[46] Renzo Martinelli, *Il Partito nuovo e la preparazione del V Congresso. Appunti sulla rifondazione del Pci*, "Studi Storici", n. 1, 1990, p. 47. Among the many works on the new party and the change of line and structure after the *svolta di Salerno*, see also Donald Sassoon, *Togliatti e il partito di massa. Il PCI dal 1944 al 1964*, Rome, Castelvecchi, 2014; Alessandro De Angelis, *I comunisti e il partito. Dal "partito nuovo" alla svolta dell'89*, Rome, Carocci, 2002; Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano*, vol. 5, *La resistenza, Togliatti e il partito nuovo*, Turin, Einaudi, 1975.

[47] Melelli to the PCI leadership, 21 November 1944, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 5, fasc. 12.

[48] Minutes of extraordinary assembly, 7 October 1944, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 1, fasc. 2.

[49] Minutes of fifth extraordinary assembly "luglio 1946" 3 August 1946, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 1, fasc. 2; Leoncini to the PCI leadership, 8 November 1947, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 5, fasc. 12.

However, while the Socialist Party represented the communists' primary referent and political ally, in strategic terms the party had wider horizons deeply rooted in the experience of anti-fascist unity. It is therefore possible to consider the new party as a project in the making, whose structural and immediate realisation primarily involved the socialists but whose long-term aim was, so to speak, more ecumenical. In fact, even in the specific case of the Mogadishu section, it is probably no coincidence that, at least until 1946 and the escalation of tensions between the blocs, an understanding was sought between all the anti-fascist political forces, first within the National Anti-Fascist Union (Unione Nazionale Antifascista, hereafter UNA) and then within the CLN, of which a section was also formed in Somalia precisely on the communists' initiative.

The search for continuity with the Resistance experience through the unity of anti-fascist forces and the failed prospect of a merger with the socialists were, however, only some of the aspects that characterised the new type of party that the PCI attempted to build in the post-war years and which the section under consideration here tried to implement in the occupied territories of the former empire, decline. Although an iron discipline closely linked to the principle of democratic centralism undoubtedly reflected continuity with the party of cadres of the years of clandestine activity, crucial aspects linked to earlier times were its pedagogical function and the mass and national dimension. As demonstrated by the works of Lussana, among others, already in the 1920s communist leaders were attending the Soviet schools of the Comintern for the theoretical and practical training of 'professional revolutionaries'. Furthermore, the Italian party had been characterised by the strong pedagogical thrust of the reflections of party secretary Antonio Gramsci from the beginning.[50] Forced to follow the rigid rules of conspiracy and with the entire leadership in prison or exile, it was not until the Second World War that the Italian communists managed to emerge from the dimension of a small vanguard party, in which the recipients of the 'party pedagogy' were first and foremost the cadres and, only in second place and with makeshift means, the rank-and-file militants. Thanks to its leading position in the Resistance and the end of the war, the PCI would later play a leading role in the process of democratic reconstruction, which was accompanied by a profound change in the communists' theoretical and strategic horizons. The conception of a mass national party that would 'act,' in Spagnolo's words, 'as a hinge between State and society',[51] and for which Gramsci's reflection was one of the main references, is also connected to Togliatti's elaboration of the *Lectures on Fascism*

[50] Fiamma Lussana, *A scuola di comunismo. Emigrati italiani nelle scuole del Comintern*, "Studi Storici", n. 4, 2005, pp. 967-1031.

[51] Carlo Spagnolo, *Il partito di massa*, in Silvio Pons (ed.), *Il comunismo italiano nella storia del Novecento*, Rome, Viella, 2021, p. 129.

and the communist secretary's reflection on the role and composition of the middle classes. In the project for the new party, the working class fulfilled its national function through the formation of a new social bloc, in which hegemony was achieved by making the question of the middle classes and peasants a central issue.[52]

The pedagogical function — which became a fundamental strategic element in the formation of this new social bloc, in the system of alliances and in the party's new identity and mass dimension — found multiple forms of expression in Italy, from the publication of a huge number of newspapers, pamphlets and books for militants to the creation of a dense network of party schools that proposed different training for all levels, from national leaders to rank-and-file militants.[53] As I have mentioned earlier, the communists in Mogadishu also tried, albeit on a small scale, to take a similar path through the creation of the Istituto di Cultura Proletaria, the 'Wednesday meetings', the publication of numerous pamphlets and press releases. It is also quite significant that during the general assembly of 5 January 1946, Melelli said that '[t]he educational task we set ourselves four years ago will not stop, nor will the work of preparing our comrades who will soon be called upon to contribute their faith, activity and love to the great work of national reconstruction'.[54] The fulfilment of the militants' 'educational task', subjected to the introjection of an ethos with Jesuit traits,[55] in which the responsibility in the face of the challenges of national reconstruction came to resemble a moral mission, is difficult not to inscribe within that authoritarian-like pedagogical conception of politics that was one of the characteristic features of Togliatti's new party. Perhaps the most important initiative in this sense was the section's intense recruitment activity in the British prison camps, where the party's pedagogical function went hand in hand with what can be considered a mass dimension for the occupied territories of the Horn of Africa.

Prisoners of War, communist cells and mass recruitment

The collapse of the Fascist empire in East Africa and the establishment of the British occupation regime was followed by the arrest and deportation

[52] A. De Angelis, *I comunisti e il partito*, cit, pp. 71-74, 82; on the question of opening up to the middle classes, see Palmiro Togliatti, *Ceti medi ed Emilia Rossa*, in Palmiro Togliatti, *La politica nel pensiero e nell'azione. Scritti e discorsi 1917-1964*, Milan, Bompiani, 2014, pp. 1671-1744.

[53] Daniela Betti, *Il partito editore. Libri e lettori nella politica culturale del Pci 1945-1953*, "Italia contemporanea", n. 2, 1989, pp. 53-74; Anna Tonelli, *A scuola di politica. Il modello comunista di Frattocchie (1944-1993)*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2017, pp. 12-13.

[54] Minutes of the general assembly, extraordinary session of 5 January 1946, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 1, fasc. 2.

[55] Mauro Boarelli, *La fabbrica del passato. Autobiografie di militanti comunisti (1945-1956)*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2007, p. 62.

of approximately seventy thousand Italian soldiers and civilians, who were interned in various concentration camps across the British possessions.[56] In addition to the separation between Prisoners of War and internees, as happened in the Ugandan camps, prisoner officers were generally divided from troop soldiers; in the case of East Africa, the former were held in the camps of Eldoret and Londiani, the latter in Burguret, Gil Gil, Naivasha, Ndarugu, Nakuru, Naniuki, Ginja and Mitubiri.[57] According to Red Cross reports, the living conditions in the camps were generally good, both in terms of hygiene and sanitation and the prisoners' relationship with the British. However, the situation of the internees improved considerably after 8 September, when the majority of Italian officers — led by General Nasi — decided to collaborate with the Allies. From the beginning of 1944, many were freed and sent to fight in the ranks of the British army, while others were employed in the colonial administration; some were simply repatriated.[58] The liberation of the camps continued throughout 1945 and 1946, when all internment facilities were permanently closed.

Despite the high command's decision to collaborate, the tensions and divisions between the prisoners — already evident before the armistice — worsened in the following months. Ugo Pini, who was in charge of discipline in the Burguret camp for a year, states that 'the Italians, in the prisoner camps, roughly made up three groups: most were Fascists; many were lost and uncertain souls; a few were anti-fascists. Those in the middle stood with the former in public. They only dared to approach the latter in private'.[59] The contrast between a Fascist majority and an anti-fascist minority also recurred in the documentation on Prisoners of War in East Africa produced by the Mogadishu section, which testifies to the extremely difficult conditions of the regime's opponents, harassed by the Fascists under the indifferent gaze of the British, who considered the issue as an internal settling of accounts within the Italian community.[60] An undated letter (probably from 1945), signed by the 'Sezione del Comitato Nazionale di liberazione tra i prigionieri di guerra del Kenia', refers in particular to the establishment, in April 1942, of 'Fascist action squads' on the initiative of senior Italian officers. 'Such squads,' the document reads, 'performed violent and terrorist attacks in the camps, of moral and physical aggression. They beat up and stabbed anti-fascist soldiers and

[56] Isabella Soi, *I deportati italiani nella British East Africa*, in Bianca Maria Carcangiu, Tekeste Negash (eds.), *L'Africa orientale italiana nel dibattito storico contemporaneo*, Rome, Carocci, 2008, p. 88.

[57] I. Soi, *I deportati italiani*, cit., p. 89; A. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale*, cit., pp. 1144-1145.

[58] I. Soi, *I deportati italiani*, cit. pp. 90-95; Flavio Conti, *I prigionieri di guerra italiani 1940-1945*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1986, pp. 304-306.

[59] A. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale*, cit., pp. 1144-1145.

[60] F. Conti, *I prigionieri di guerra italiani*, cit., p. 302.

civilians.'[61] The activity of these squads, confirmed also by Conti,[62] did not cease with the fall of Mussolini and the armistice, but continued — again according to the authors of the letter — well after the beginning of the co-belligerency. In fact, in 1944, the Italian high command suppressed the anti-fascist newspaper "Il Piave", probably produced by the CLN itself, and radio transmissions in Italian from Nairobi.[63]

Looking beyond the military high command and the deep political tensions between prisoners, what is particularly relevant is the existence of an organised group of anti-fascists within the British prison camps, which became part of a large network spread throughout East Africa, and of which the Mogadishu section was an essential part. An anonymous report of March 1946, probably sent to the PCI administration, testifies to the presence of communist cells among the internees in Kenya, the genesis of which is summarised as follows:

> The organisation and political preparation began as early as 1942, after the defeat of the Italian forces. Starting in the first months, the communists laid the foundations of a movement that could only develop later, when it was possible to establish contacts with Mogadishu, where a section of the PCI had meanwhile been set up.[64]

In Uganda, the military internees organised themselves into a section. The minutes of their meetings tell us that the group was formed on 20 March 1944 and that it was transformed from a 'Communist Cell' into 'a Communist Group, in accordance with the official nature that the Communist Party assumed in liberated Italy'.[65]

The communists in Mogadishu were not unfamiliar with the political ferment that had developed among the Italian prisoners; starting in the last months of 1944, they set up a subsection with the aim of establishing relations with the prison camps, spreading propaganda and recruiting internees.[66] The four main centres where the section's activities were concentrated were Nairobi, Eldoret, Hargheisa and the sorting centre in Nyeri, which — in turn — controlled a number of smaller camps to which the communists in Mogadishu sent delegates, creating a network that could guarantee the effectiveness of the recruitment work. This task of liaison was entrusted to men of

[61] Sezione del Comitato Nazionale di Liberazione tra i Prigionieri di Guerra del Kenya al Comitato Centrale Nazionale di Liberazione, n.d. (1945?), in FIG, APC, Fondo Mosca, pac. 36 I, mf 294.

[62] F. Conti, *I prigionieri di guerra italiani*, cit., p. 302.

[63] Sezione del Comitato Nazionale di Liberazione tra i Prigionieri di Guerra del Kenya al Comitato Centrale Nazionale di Liberazione, n.d. (1945?), in FIG, APC, Fondo Mosca, pac. 36 I, mf 294.

[64] N.a., *Coi prigionieri italiani nel Kenia*, March 1946, in FIG, APC, mf 312.

[65] PCI minutes, camp group n° 6 – Uganda (Italiani evacuati dall'Etiopia), in FIG, APC, mf 312, pac. 39.

[66] Minutes of ordinary meeting, 19 November 1944, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 1, fasc. 4.

proven reliability, 14 of whom have been identified through a section report; they include two former majors in the Royal Army, Euclide Francioni and medical officer Antimo d'Alessandro, who left detailed information on his activities. The section also sent typewriters and all available propaganda material to the larger centres, so that it could be redistributed among the militants in the smaller camps. According to a report sent by Melelli to the PCI leadership, thanks to this capillary organisation, thousands of copies of pamphlets produced by the section were printed and circulated among the prisoners.[67]

A good example of the concrete functioning of the network established by the communists in Mogadishu is provided by a report sent by d'Alessandro to the PCI administration in March 1946, in which he summarises his work as a section delegate in Nairobi as follows:

> On his departure to the concentration camp, the writer was appointed by the party as a delegate for Kenya with broad powers.
> I lived camp life for about two years and my work was guided by two main principles; the first was to create independent cells in each camp and all under my direct control; the second was to choose, among the masses, elements of proven communist faith but who had such intellectual capacity that they could be relied upon to hold positions of trust and seriousness […].
> Within a few months, I sent the Mogadishu office many hundreds of registration forms, including for many officers.

Reliable accomplices and militants placed in strategic positions were needed to keep such an organisational apparatus going and to maintain as stable a contact as possible with the section. If, in fact, the British authorities guaranteed a certain degree of political freedom, propaganda and the large-scale circulation of communist material inside and outside the camps were not well seen by the police, who often hindered the initiatives of the communist cells and delegates; on the other hand, the latter also had to face the much more violent and fierce hostility of the Fascist prisoners. In order to evade the controls, Major d'Alessandro therefore set up a cell within a manoeuvre unit of some three hundred Italian soldiers, who allowed the transport of propaganda material and enabled communication with Mogadishu.[68]

However, it was not only thanks to the delegates' work that the section managed to extend its influence to virtually all prison camps. The establishment of cells in all the main centres also allowed it to co-ordinate existing

[67] Melelli's Report on the political activity of the Mogadishu section, November 1946, in FIG, APC, Sezione esteri, mf 115, 476/483, Somalia; Relazione del Pci Mogadiscio alla segreteria del Pci sull'attività politica della Sezione di Mogadiscio, novembre 1946, in FIG, APC, mf 312.

[68] D'Alessandro to the PCI administration, Rome, 12 March 1946. Subject: Relazione politica a sfondo panoramico della situazione del Partito Comunista in Somalia e nel Kenia, tra i militari *italiani prigionieri – detenuti dagli inglesi*, in FIG, APC, mf 312.

groups, with which the Mogadishu communists had previously failed to make contact. This was the case with the aforementioned Ugandan section, which had Camp No. 6 in Entebbe as its headquarters. When the camp was closed in December 1945 and all the Italians were transferred to the Nyeri sorting centre in Kenya, the Ugandan communists immediately got in touch with the group of Mogadishu delegates; the leaders of the two groups agreed that they would merge into a single political formation within the Somali section.[69]

D'Alessandro's letter also reveals the great difficulties encountered in the training and placement of the recruits, up to the point that the delegate stated that 'the most difficult work, however, was the scholastic work, in the educational sense, since I found an unstructured mass of hotheads who called themselves communists, but who did not know, in the end, what communism really was'. The building of political consciousness and the emphasis on 'discipline, order, a sense of duty, work and honesty' to 'inculcate in everyone that sense of proper moral and party discipline',[70] as described by d'Alessandro, bear a significant thematic and methodological resemblance to the practices of party schools in the 1940s and 1950s.[71] Overall, between 1945 and the closure of the internment facilities, this system enabled the Mogadishu section to gain over two thousand new members, the vast majority of whom were soldiers who had never had anything to do with the party but who — as Ugo Pini argues — 'had come to communism via a moral rather than a political process; that is, they had come to politics through morality and to morality through repentance and intimate reflection'.[72]

If we consider that there were between 25,000 and 27,000 Italian prisoners in British camps in Africa,[73] these elements help to trace the contours of a communist network in East Africa, in which the hegemony of the Mogadishu section was exercised not only through the dissemination of propaganda material and the training of militants following the dictates of a political pedagogy, but also thanks to what can be defined as mass recruitment, which reached its peak in the period 1945-1946. At the same time, the experience of the communist sections and cells in the internment camps highlights the characteristics of a transitional phase from a clandestine party of cadres to a mass party and the surprising spread and expansive capacity of the communist message between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the post-war period. The huge logistical difficulties, the lack of means and the scarcity of commu-

[69] PCI minutes, camp group n° 6 – Uganda (Italiani evacuati dall'Etiopia), in FIG, APC, mf 312, pac. 39.

[70] d'Alessandro to the PCI leadership, 12 March 1946, in FIG, APC, mf 312.

[71] A. Tonelli, *A scuola di politica*, cit., pp. X-XII.

[72] Pini to the PCI leadership, 21 June 1945, in FIG, APC, mf 312.

[73] d'Alessandro to the PCI administration, 12 March 1946, in FIG, APC, mf 312; these data are confirmed by the personal files, which reveal an extraordinary growth in membership after 1945.

nications not only did not prevent the spread of communist propaganda capable of gaining significant consensus, but they also did not hinder a real attempt to "translate" the changes taking place in Italian communism in those years.

The relationship with the Somali population

If the activities of the Mogadishu section, its delegates and the cells in the camps had a large-scale educational function, presenting themselves as a truly democratic school to cope with the difficult reintegration of the Italians into society and the challenges posed by the nation's reconstruction, two other issues can give a more accurate picture of the experience of the Italian communists in Somalia during the British occupation. First, the communists' action seems to have been focused on the needs of the party in Italy; even where there was a commitment to the social and urban reality of the city, the constant increase in repatriations and the shrinking of the Italian community in Somalia made it difficult to develop political plans that went beyond the here and now. In appearance, the gaze was always and above all on Italy. Secondly, and probably in connection with the previous issue, the Somali population was absent from the communists' discourse. In fact, the section's activities focused exclusively on the Italian community, without paying any attention to the political changes that were affecting the territory beyond the narrow circle of the former colonists.

Among the many reasons for this lack of interest in Somalis, even in the face of the emergence of an increasingly influential nationalist movement, two elements stand out: I have already made some reference to the first, which concerns the precariousness linked to the uncertainty of the fate of the former colony and of the Italians in particular. The end of hostilities and the opening of talks to draw up the Peace Treaty had, in fact, marked the beginning of a long negotiation between the Allies and Italy on the fate of the former Italian colonial possessions, with the British initially in a position of resolute opposition to any form of return to the sovereignty of the former colonisers.[74] Under these conditions, with no guarantees on the near future and faced with the growing hostility of a BMA determined to weaken the influence of the Italians through more or less forced repatriations, the Mogadishu section could hardly have made the efforts and found the means to develop a structured political activity capable of involving the Somali population. Furthermore, it appears that the nationalists of SYL — by far the most important Somali political

[74] A. Varsori, A. Urbano, *Mogadiscio 1948*, cit., p. 4; Elena Aga Rossi, *Il futuro delle colonie Italiane nella politica inglese e americana durante la Seconda guerra mondiale*, in *Fonti e problemi della politica coloniale italiana*, vol. 2, Rome, Ministero per i Beni culturali e ambientali e Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici, 1996, pp. 782-783.

formation — rejected offers of collaboration from the PCI.[75] In reality, the main factor seems to have been a general attitude of paternalism and mistrust of Somalis, who were seen as essentially primitive and in need of civilisation more than politicisation.

Among the documents produced by the section, the one that reflects this aspect perhaps the most is the memorandum drafted for the Commissione d'inchiesta quadripartita, which visited Somalia in early January 1948 to evaluate the most suitable political solution for the territory. One of the few documents to consider the Somali population, it not only contains stereotypes and prejudices that would later become characteristic topoi of the myth of the 'good Italian',[76] but also a number of arguments aimed at justifying the potential assignment of a trustee mandate to Italy as a possibility of moral redemption after 20 years of Fascist dictatorship and colonialism. Hence, while the communists in Mogadishu claimed formal adherence to the anti-colonial principles of the UN and supported the self-government and sovereignty of all the peoples hitherto forced to live under the yoke of colonial oppression, the same section was decidedly in favour of adopting the trusteeship system, a sort of evolution of the mandated model of the League of Nations, which provided for the administration of a former colonial territory by one or more powers for a set period.[77] Although the trusteeship was conceived as a step towards overcoming the colonial system, as Aga Rossi argues, it suffered from a substantial lack of concreteness,[78] and its premises — the territory's administration by a great power in order to enable the population to meet the requirements for self-government — revealed a not-too-implicitly paternalistic perspective.[79] From this point of view, when the communists in Mogadishu claimed that their memorandum aimed at identifying the most suitable nation to administer the Somalis, so as to 'evolve the natives within a given number of years from the state of regression in which they find themselves to the minimum of progress necessary to govern themselves in a democratic and progressive sense',[80] they do not seem to deviate too much from the spirit of trusteeship.

Reviewing the various potential candidates for the administration of Somalia, the memorandum understandably devotes particular attention to Great

[75] Security Service paper on *Communist influence in the African continent*, in TNA, Foreign Office [FO] 371/73741, Communist influence in Africa. Code 60, file 1015 (papers 2406 - 4493).

[76] A vast literature exists on the myth of the "good Italian". See, among others, Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani brava gente?*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza, 2005 and David Bidussa, *Il mito del bravo italiano*, Milan, Il Saggiatore, 1994. See also Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano. La rimozione delle colpe della Seconda guerra mondiale*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2013.

[77] A. Varsori, A. Urbano, *Mogadiscio 1948*, cit., p. 52.

[78] E. Aga Rossi, *Il futuro delle colonie Italiane*, cit., p. 776.

[79] A.M. Morone, *L'ultima colonia*, cit., p. 8.

[80] Memoriale della Sezione alla Commissione d'inchiesta per l'assegnazione fiduciaria dell'ex Colonia Fascista della Somalia, January 1948, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 5, fasc. 18 – L'amministrazione fiduciaria italiana in Somalia. Appunti per il compagno Scoccimarro (7 gennaio 1948 - 9 gennaio 1950).

Britain, whose management of the territory during the occupation is harshly criticised. While it is true that the communists initially saw themselves as allies of the BMA, the end of the war and the change in the international scenario significantly affected relations between the section and the British. In addition, the British were extremely hostile towards Italy, and the dispute over the former colonies was a fundamental part of this hostility.[81] According to the communists, the absolute inadequacy of the British as a trustee power resided primarily in the fact that 'the greatest number of oppressed and exploited peoples under the old colonial system have, for centuries, been administered by this Great Imperial Power'.[82]

This state of affairs was to be imitated in Somalia by the Italian Fascists, who 'did not want to be inferior to the British; indeed, they wanted to surpass them in cruelty'. If Fascism therefore represented, from the communists' point of view, a sort of "quantum leap" in the exercise of colonial violence, it is worth noting that the British were deligitimised both through the concrete administrative modalities applied in Somalia and, above all, the very history of Great Britain and its empire; the latter constituted a precedent in which Fascist colonialism could be inscribed with substantial continuity. It is no surprise that the officials of the BMA — having betrayed the Somalis' hopes of independence after the British occupation — associated themselves 'with all the greatest bigwigs of the deprecated Fascist regime and, together, [would continue] as before, worse than before', hindering 'every action of the Communist Party tending to enlighten and evolve the retrograde minds of the Somalis'.[83] The communists were, then, in the vanguard of a civilising mission of which they would be the true custodians as opposed to the Fascist colonialists and the British occupiers. From this perspective, the Mogadishu section not only pursued what is presented as a true educational and pedagogical function towards the colonial masses, but by virtue of this it was also the interpreter of the best "progressive" traditions of the Italian people. This position was not distant from the one that dominated among the republican ruling class; as Morone points out, if the latter recognised 'faults in the failure of the pre-war colonial project, these were to be attributed to Fascism and not to the civilising mission that Italy was once again taking on'.[84]

Regardless of the almost complete absence of documentary evidence of initiatives by the section that involved the Somali population, this and the

[81] A. Varsori, A. Urbano, *Mogadiscio 1948*, cit., p. 53. See also E. Pedaliu, *Italy, Britain and the Origins*, cit.

[82] Memoriale della Sezione alla Commissione d'inchiesta per l'assegnazione fiduciaria dell'ex Colonia Fascista della Somalia, January 1948, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 5, fasc. 18.

[83] Memoriale della Sezione alla Commissione d'inchiesta per l'assegnazione fiduciaria dell'ex Colonia Fascista della Somalia, January 1948, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 5, fasc. 18.

[84] Antonio M. Morone (ed.), *La fine del colonialismo italiano. Politica, società, memorie*, Florence, Le Monnier, 2018, pp. 7-8.

following passages of the memorandum reveal that the process of including the Communist Party into a progressive political-cultural strand of Italian history may not be in contradiction to a colonial mentality.[85] 'The majority of the Italian people,' the document continues, 'was always endowed with generous democratic and progressive ideas, but never had on its side the material means of struggle with which to overthrow the reactionary and retrograde minority.' The traits of a fundamentally "good" people opposed to a repressive elite thus emerged. Defeated and reduced to passivity for 20 years by reactionary forces, the Italians allegedly regained an active role and fought in the last period of the war, when the moment of liberation from Fascism came. Thanks to the Resistance, the Italian people would have reaffirmed the democratic and 'progressive' ideas that had always distinguished it, demonstrating 'that the 20 years of Fascist brigandage was nothing more than a very brief, albeit disastrous, parenthesis in the brilliant, thousand-year Italian history'.[86] The Resistance experience thus took on the value of a civil and moral redemption, which provided many, including — it would seem — the communists in Mogadishu, with 'the feeling that the blackboard of history had been wiped clean'.[87]

If, on the one hand, the communists in Mogadishu explicitly affirmed their anti-colonial position, on the other hand, their attitude towards Somalis and the trusteeship mandate brought to light a racist cultural framework that — although not surprising in post-war Italian and postcolonial society — stood out in the context of communist political discourse. At an international level, this problem had already occupied a relevant place at the Comintern congresses, where in the 1920s polemics were raised against the 'white chauvinism' that still characterised the political action of some militants.[88] A

[85] Think, for example, of the constant references to the Risorgimento — in particular to Garibaldi and the Garibaldini — in party publicity and propaganda. See, among others, Palmiro Togliatti, *Una conferenza su Garibaldi*, in P. Togliatti, *La politica nel pensiero e nell'azione*, pp. 1238-1357. On the relationship that Togliatti's discourse established between the PCI and the rebellious and anarchist tradition of the Italian popular masses, on the one hand, and the materialist philosophical strand of Bruno, Vico, Spaventa and Labriola, on the other, see Franco Andreucci, *Falce e Martello. Identità e linguaggi dei comunisti italiani fra stalinismo e guerra fredda*, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2005, pp. 63-65; 74.

[86] Memoriale della Sezione alla Commissione d'inchiesta per l'assegnazione fiduciaria dell'ex Colonia Fascista della Somalia, January 1948, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 5, fasc. 18.

[87] Gaia Giuliani, Cristina Lombardi-Diop, *Bianco e Nero. Storia dell'identità razziale degli italiani*, Florence, Le Monnier, 2013, pp. 98-99.

[88] See, for example, the accusation of a complacent attitude towards French imperialism levelled by the Communist Federation of Tunisia at the white-dominated Algerian section of Sidi Bel Abbès in 1922 Mustapha Kraiem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien pendant le période coloniale*, Tunis, Institut Supérieur d'Histoire du Mouvement National, 1997, p. 113. On racist attitudes towards colonial populations by members of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), see Marika Sherwood, *The Comintern, The CPGB, Colonies and Black Britons, 1920-1938*, "Science & Society", n. 2, 1996, pp. 137-163.

new kind of party was thus emerging that marginalised the colonial masses, whose cultural distance prevented their incorporation into the horizon of the Mogadishu section and their consideration as political subjects. However, the memorandum ends by stating that the Somalis would be given the chance to emancipate themselves from their backward condition and join the ranks of civilised nations thanks to the assistance of a 'New, Democratic, Peaceful and Labouring Italy', which the PCI was helping to build — clearly the most suitable power to obtain the trusteeship mandate.[89] The rhetoric of development also returned in the communists' discourse, following a long and difficult path (again a pedagogical one, but at the level — so to speak — of literacy) that could make the Somali population suitable for the "club" of civilised nations. Hence, if Italy, given its glorious tradition and civilisation, was destined to take on the white man's burden of civilising the Somalis, this same mission was also a prize, a reward for having defeated Fascism and having washed its shame from its history.[90]

Although it was difficult for the communists in Mogadishu to imagine a political understanding or any form of collaboration with the Somalis, there were a few exceptions that — although isolated — had a certain relevance. In an interview with Urbano, for example, the former Somali nationalist activist Abdulkadir Ali Boolay stated that Yassin Haji Osman, the young and charismatic leader of the SYL, had been influenced by communist activity, so much so that he managed to get hold of Marxist readings through Francesco Pivetti, a coachbuilder from Modena who was registered with the section.[91] A letter dated February 1949, sent by the section's executive committee to the PCI leadership, then reports that comrade Francesco Marini was repatriated for 'communist propaganda among the indigenous population'.[92] In addition to these episodes, British documents provide further indications of sporadic contacts between Italian communists and Somali nationalists. A lengthy Foreign Office report on the spread of communism in Africa states that communist propaganda is making little progress among the indigenous people of Somalia, with the exception of a small circle in Mogadishu; the report makes reference to SYL secretary Abdullahi Issa, Lewis Salele, Hassan Elmi and Mohammed Ahmed Octavio, who in January 1950 even delivered a speech at a SYL assembly in which he called for its transformation into a communist organisation.[93]

[89] Memoriale della Sezione alla Commissione d'inchiesta per l'assegnazione fiduciaria dell'ex Colonia Fascista della Somalia, gennaio 1948, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 5, fasc. 18.

[90] January della Sezione alla Commissione d'inchiesta per l'assegnazione fiduciaria dell'ex Colonia Fascista della Somalia, January 1948, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 5, fasc. 18.

[91] A. Varsori, A. Urbano, *Mogadiscio 1948*, cit., pp. 16; 94.

[92] Pappalardo to the PCI leadership, 21 February 1949, in FIG, Pci Mogadiscio, s. 5, fasc. 12.

[93] Despatch from Mr. Gamble to Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 27 January 1950, in FO 371/80898. Communist activity in Somalia. Code JT file 10117 (1950), information regarding Mohamed Ahmed Ottavio's speech.

It is not clear to what extent these exponents of Somali nationalism were truly influenced by Italian communists and not, rather, by the propaganda disseminated by the Soviet embassy in Addis Ababa or by the contacts that a leader like Abdullahi Issa is suspected to have had with communist figures in England.[94] What is certain is that these few isolated episodes of communist influence on the SYL alarmed the British authorities much more than ten years of the section's activities aimed at the Italian community. While it is true that the discourse and, more generally, the contacts or references to communism by SYL members concern the period between 1947 and 1950, when — in a Cold War climate — the obsession with the spread of communism in Africa permeated the Foreign Office,[95] it is nevertheless significant to note the perception of a real danger in the possible collaboration between communists and the SYL. The tactical, even before the strategic, potential of this possible understanding was not — and perhaps could not have been — grasped by the Mogadishu section, which was decidedly more focused on the needs of the Italian community and party than it was on the political and social demands of a subaltern population that the communists probably did not have the means or the will to understand.

Conclusion

The history of the PCI section in Mogadishu offers a unique perspective from which to examine the social and political conditions of the Italians in Somalia during the BMA years. Firstly, my analysis has revealed a rather ambiguous relationship with the British, oscillating between peaceful coexistence and growing hostility, mainly linked to the occupiers' attempts to delegitimise a community that potentially threatened the aspirations that the British Empire still nurtured on the Horn of Africa. Secondly, I have shed light on the relations between the various Italian parties that implemented political projects and alliances developed at home in a context of occupation.

The Mogadishu section is, moreover, an emblematic and unique case in the panorama of the global communist movement. In the East African territories and British concentration camps, the Italian communists were in fact able to build a real network of former colonists and prisoners; these were regular members who communicated with each other, whose activities converged around common strategies and objectives, and who considered the Mogadishu section's directives as their main point of reference. Their experience testifies not only to an extraordinary organisational effort but also, and above all,

[94] *Report of communism in ex-Italian colonies of Eritrea and Somalia*, in TNA, FO 1110/246. Africa, spread of Communism (1949).

[95] A.M. Morone, *L'ultima colonia*, cit., pp. 16-17.

to the expansive capacity of communism during the Comintern years, which was consecrated by the USSR's war-time successes. However, this network also reflects a structural limit inherited from the Third International, namely the inability or, at least, the huge difficulty in effectively adapting its tools of analysis to political-cultural contexts other than Europe and the USSR; the approach towards the Somali population can be considered a reflection of this limit. At the same time, the almost complete autonomy from the USSR and the Italian Communist Party with which this network was built and then dismantled makes the experience of the PCI section in Mogadishu a very special case in the history of international communism.

Finally, the section's history offers historiographical insights not only into the communist movement; the militants' activities, communication and goals also shed light on the internal dynamics of postcolonial society in transitional Somalia. The structural presence of racism, which affected more or less all social and political components, as well as the civilising ambitions of the communists themselves tell a story in which the end of Fascism and the military defeat allowed a colonial mentality to take root in the new Italy: a mentality that was destined to flourish under the guise of the anti-fascist republic born of the Resistance.

Translated by Andrea Hajek

From anti-colonialism to anti-imperialism: African student associations and activism in 1960s Italy*

Valeria Deplano**

Con la fine degli imperi coloniali europei, l'afflusso di studenti universitari provenienti dai paesi di nuova indipendenza crebbe da entrambe le parti della Cortina di ferro. Questi si resero protagonisti di attività e mobilitazioni politiche tanto nei paesi del blocco orientale, quanto in Germania occidentale, Francia, Gran Bretagna. Gli studi su questi aspetti sono invece assenti per il caso italiano. Questo articolo intende proporre una prima ricostruzione della geografia dell'attivismo studentesco africano in Italia negli anni Sessanta, ricostruendone le modalità associazionistiche e proponendo una prima mappatura dei legami di tale attivismo con varie organizzazioni italiane, in particolare con alcuni gruppi studenteschi anticoloniali e con l'Ufficio Centrale Studenti Esteri in Italia, di matrice cattolica. L'articolo mostra come, nel corso del decennio, negli interessi dei gruppi africani l'anticolonialismo venga sostituito dall'antimperialismo, e come l'associazionismo africano subisca un processo di radicalizzazione in parte connesso alla similare trasformazione del movimento studentesco italiano, e in parte connesso agli sviluppi della politica africana.
Parole chiave: anticolonialismo, antimperialismo, terzomondismo, studenti africani, Modern Italy, movimenti studenteschi

After the end of European colonial rule, the presence of university students from the newly independent countries increased on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Although the students were involved in political activities both in the Eastern bloc and in Western Germany, France and Great Britain, there is a gap in academic research on this involvement in the Italian case. This article offers the first reconstruction of African student activism in Italy in the 1960s, tracing the modalities of association and mapping the links of this activism with various Italian organisations, in particular anti-colonial student organisations and the Catholic Ufficio Centrale Studenti Esteri in Italia. The article shows that throughout the decade, the African students' interests shifted from anti-colonialism to anti-imperialism and that their associations underwent a process of radicalisation, partly linked to the concurrent transformations of the Italian student movement, and partly to developments in African politics.
Key words: anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, Third Worldism, African students, modern Italy, student movements

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African and Asian students in Europe between colonialism and decolonisation

Although the colonial educational systems developed by imperialist states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were tailored to individual colonisation models, they shared a vision of education as a useful tool for building and maintaining the colonial system.[1] From this point of view, the system favoured elementary education, while higher levels of education were a viable option for a minority of the population — those who were more affluent or closer to the colonial power. University education was even more selective, also because the lack of academic facilities in the colonies forced students to move abroad; for reasons related to the recognition of qualifications or economic support, this move abroad often led the few students who could access university education to the European metropolitan centres. If this European transfer had to ensure that the colonisers could rely on educated people to maintain the colonial system, and to reaffirm the pre-eminence of European culture, the trajectories and histories of university students highlight the contradictions of this system; starting with the best-known cases of Léopold Sédar Senghor, Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral but also Gandhi, the students — far from being considered a passive tool in the hands of the colonisers — had the opportunity to weave networks and build relationships, and to gain knowledge that was decisive not only for the organisation of liberation movements but also for a reconsideration of the role of culture and education in the decolonisation project.

In addition, the coexistence of these opposing dynamics was an important key to understanding student mobility from decolonising or newly independent countries to Europe in the decades following the end of the Second World War. The possibilities for African and Asian students to attend European universities did not diminish when the decolonisation process began, but even increased; the emergence of independent states to replace the European colonies required trained technical and political staff who could not study in their own countries precisely because of the lack of well-structured educational systems, even

[1] Ana Isabel Madeira, Luís Grosso Correia, *Colonial Education and Anticolonial Struggles*, in John L. Rury and Eileen H. Tamura, *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Education*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 413-426; Bob B. White, *Talk about School: Education and the colonial project in French and British Africa (1860-1960)*, "Comparative Education", 1996, n. 32/1, pp. 9-25. Per il caso italiano: Richard Pankhurst, *Education in Ethiopia during the Italian Fascist occupation (1936-1941)*, "The International Journal of African Historical Studies", 1972, 5/3, pp. 361-96; Tekeste Negash, *The Ideology of Colonialism: Educational Policy and Praxis in Eritrea*, in Ruth Ben Ghiat, Mia Fuller (eds.), *Italian colonialism*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 109-119; Alessandro Pes, *Building a new colonial subject? The Fascist Education Systems in Albania and Ethiopia*, in Lars Berge, Irma Taddia (eds.), *Themes in Modern African History and Culture*, Padua, libreriauniversitaria.it, 2013, pp. 319-329; Matteo Pretelli, *Education in the Italian colonies during the interwar period*, "Modern Italy", 2011, n. 16/3, pp. 275-293.

if the elites of the liberation movements were working towards the de-Europeanisation of education. On the other hand, the prospect of training the future African and Asian elites to gain their loyalty was seen as an unmissable opportunity for all parties in the Cold War context; a well-known case is that of the USSR, which opened an ad hoc university in Moscow, the Patrice Lumumba, and more generally the case of the Eastern bloc states, which activated study programmes aimed at training African elites.[2] The United States, too, considered the training of African and Asian students as a soft power tool. For the Western European states with a recent colonising past, training students was part of the project to gain new influence on the African continent, not only by carving out a place for themselves in the new world balance dictated by the Cold War but also by maintaining a privileged relationship with their former colonies.

While they may have gone abroad as part of projects that often proposed a new version of Western superiority, as some scholars in educational history have suggested,[3] even here the students proved to be anything but passive pawns caught between the interests of the host countries and — in some cases — the governments that had sent them to Europe. Several studies have reconstructed the tensions that arose between Portuguese African scholarship holders in the Soviet Union and their host country, which they criticised not only for its racism but also for its imperialist foreign policy.[4] Likewise, African students in Western Europe were at the forefront of political struggles: Quinn Slobodian has highlighted the contribution that Congolese students made to the elaboration of an anti-imperialist ideology in 1960s West Germany; French scholars have studied the participation of African students in the 1968 movement, focusing on the role of the Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France; and in Great Britain, attention has been given to the role of West African students.[5] With regard to the latter, studies like the one that examines the links between Zimbabwean students in the UK and local organisations

[2] Michel Leclerc-Olive, Marie-Antoniette Hily (eds.), *Former des élites. Mobilités des étudiants d'Afrique au nord du Sahara dans les pays de l'ex-bloc socialiste*, "Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales", Dossier Thématique, 2016, n. 32/2; Patrice Yengo, Monique de Saint Martin (eds.), *Élites de retour de l'Est*, "Cahiers d'Études africaines", 2017, n. 226/2.

[3] Sharon Stein, Vanessa Oliveira de Andreotti, *Cash, Competition, or Charity: International Students and the Global Imaginary*, "Higher education", 2016, n. 72, pp. 225-239.

[4] Constantin Katsakioris, *Students from Portuguese Africa in the Soviet Union, 1960-74: Anti-Colonialism, Education, and the Socialist Alliance*, "Journal of Contemporary History", 2021, n. 56/1, pp. 142-65.

[5] Quinn Slobodian, *Foreign Front: Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany,* Durham, Duke University Press, 2012; Françoise Blum, *Années 68 postcoloniales?: "Mai" de France et d'Afrique*, "French Historical Studies", 2018, n. 41/2, pp. 193-218; Amady Aly Dieng, *Les premiers pas de la Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France. De l'union française à Bandung (1950-1955)*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2003; Hakim Adi, *West Africans in Britain 1900-1960: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Communism*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1997.

highlight how the transnational perspective offered by the history of foreign students — Africans, in particular — allows us to delve not only into the history of student movements and anti-colonial movements, but into the post-war political history of Western Europe at large.[6]

The case of foreign students in Italy has remained at the margins of the European debate on the subject. Only a small number of studies deal with this topic,[7] whereas research on immigration in the second half of the twentieth century has only recently started paying attention to foreign students. For example, Luca Einaudi has shown that the acquisition of a study visa was used as a trick to enter Italy before the first regulations were introduced to manage immigration.[8] According to ISTAT data, the number of visas issued by the Ministry of the Interior to foreign students rose from 3,000 in 1956-1957 to 28,000 20 years later; although the data do not give a clear indication of the continent of origin, statistics from the Central Office for Foreign Students in Italy (Ufficio Centrale degli Studenti Esteri in Italia, hereafter UCSEI) show that the percentage of Afro-Asian students was around 35 per cent until the end of the 1960s, dropping to 25 per cent by the end of the following decade.[9]

The specific case of students from decolonising and newly independent countries enrolled in Italian universities has barely been researched, nor have their voices and experiences received much scholarly attention, apart from a few autobiographies and individual case studies.[10] The delay compared to

[6] JoAnn McGregor, *Locating Exile: Decolonization, Anti-imperial Spaces and Zimbabwean Students in Britain, 1965-1980*, "Journal of Historical Geography", 2017, n. 57, pp. 62-75.

[7] Andrea Cammelli, *Studiare da stranieri in Italia. Presenze e caratteristiche degli studenti esteri nelle università italiane: il quadro internazionale di riferimento. 1954-1988*, Bologna, Clueb, 1990; Elisa Signori, *Università: tra orizzonte nazionale e internazionale: 150 anni di migrazioni, ostracismi e scambio scientifico*, "Il Politico" 2011, n. 76, pp. 267-285, here p. 286.

[8] Luca Einaudi, *Le politiche dell'immigrazione in Italia dall'Unità a oggi*, Rome, Laterza, 2007, pp. 84-85; Michele Colucci, *Storia dell'immigrazione straniera in Italia. Dal 1945 ai nostri giorni*, Rome, Carocci, 2018, pp. 28-31. See also UCSEI, *Studiare da stranieri nelle università italiane*, UCSEI, Rome, 2004.

[9] The data provided by ISTAT also indicate the students' continental origin, but the percentage of 'Don't know/doesn't answer' for the years under consideration is 80 per cent. The UCSEI's data seem to be more complete but less precise, given that the used system 'may count the same student twice and does not differentiate between long-course students or transient students; Institutes and universities: not all answer, and it happens that institutes report students following a short course who are then also reported by other universities'. Remigio Musaragno, *Fonti e criteri di rilevazione*, "Amicizia", 1970, n. 11, pp. 6-7.

[10] Exceptions include Mohamed Aden Scheik, *La Somalia non è un'isola dei Caraibi*, Reggio Emilia, Diabasis, 2010 and Joy Nwosu, *Cinema e Africa. L'immagine dei neri nel cinema bianco e il primo cinema africano visti nel 1968*, Rome, Aracne, 2014. In the introduction to the volume, a re-edition of a book published in 1968 when the Nigerian author was a student in Rome, Leonardo De Franceschi observes how the presence of African students in Italy is given space in some documentaries: *Africa chiama* by Ansano Giannarelli (1961); *Appunti per un'Orestiade africana* by Pierpaolo Pasolini (1970) and *Il colore delle parole* by Marco Simon Puccioni (2009). Leonardo De Franceschi, *Introduzione*, in Nwosu, *Cinema e Africa*, cit., pp. 14-15.

European historiographies is probably due to the smaller number of foreign students — and therefore their reduced visibility — in Italy, which also explains the delayed historiographical reflections on the first coloured people and communities in Italy after the end of the Second World War. However, recent studies on this latter issue have proved useful in understanding how the concepts of otherness and blackness have been dealt with — first and foremost at an institutional level — in the Republican era.[11] In this sense, studying foreign students in Italy allows us to take a step forward and examine whether even here, as in the rest of Europe, "African-ness" or "otherness" was not merely suffered, in a context where prejudice and racism persisted despite having been remodelled, but was rather claimed as a carrier of complexity in student and public debate. Immigration studies have proven useful here, in particular the works by Michele Colucci, who pointed out that 'political participation is important among the thousands of foreign students in Italy'.[12] Although this reflection does not concern African students alone, these offer a privileged vantage-point for a preliminary study as they began to arrive in Italian universities when decolonisation processes were still underway in the continent of departure, and liberation movements — with which the students had connections — were still active. Furthermore, the students were directly connected to the colonial history of the country of arrival, especially in the case of Somalis and Eritreans.

This article offers an initial mapping of African student associations and activism in Italy in the 1960s. It does so by reconstructing the types of associations that emerged throughout the decade, assessing whether the aims of and relations between the groups changed over time, and giving an initial reflection on the links of this activism with certain Italian political, associational and student groups, especially the UCSEI. The decade under consideration is that in which Third Worldism, in its various meanings, became a privileged approach in the political thought and practice of the institutional and non-institutional Left, but also of some Catholic circles; it is also the decade of a growing politicisation, mobilisation and transformation of the university. The histories of postcolonial students can help shed light on both themes.[13]

The starting point is the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, when the period of Italian trusteeship of Somalia was coming to an end and Italian policy towards Africa was entering a new phase. In the previous

[11] See Sabrina Marchetti, *Ragazze di Asmara. Lavoro domestico e migrazione postcoloniale*, Rome, Ediesse, 2011; Silvana Patriarca, *Il colore della Repubblica. "Figlie della guerra" e razzismo nell'Italia postfascista*, Turin, Einaudi 2021; Valeria Deplano, *La madrepatria è una terra straniera. Libici, eritrei e somali nell'Italia del dopoguerra*, Florence, Le Monnier-Mondadori, 2017.

[12] M. Colucci, *Storia dell'immigrazione straniera in Italia*, cit., p. 31.

[13] On both topics, see Marica Tolomelli, *L'Italia dei movimenti. Politica e società nella prima Repubblica*, Rome, Carocci, 2016.

decade, the presence of African students — and foreign students in general — had been very limited, but in those years, some features of Republican Italy's policy towards them were defined, a process that went hand in hand with the redefinition of the country's foreign policy. Faced with an investment in higher and university education that had been almost non-existent during the colonial occupation, after 1945, the first post-war governments — through the Ministry of Italian Africa — financed the studies in Italy of a few dozen Eritrean and Libyan students, mostly selected from families that were thought to be able to support Italy's attempt to maintain a role in the former colonies.[14] Attention to foreign students began to follow a logic less tied to the immediate circumstances (i.e. the maintenance of the colonies) and closer, instead, to the soft power functions that other countries ascribed to the student mobility programmes once the fate of the colonies had been decided, with Libya's independence in 1951, Eritrea's entry into the Ethiopian federation in 1952 and the trusteeship of Somalia by Italy from 1950 to 1960. Thus, from 1952 onwards, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was authorised to grant scholarships for foreign students not only from the former colonies, with a view to 'developing knowledge between peoples on a cultural level'.[15] By the middle of the decade, the number of foreign students (scholarship recipients but not only) also began to increase steadily; as far as the chronological span examined in this article is concerned, there were 3,689 students in 1960-1961 as opposed to 14,357 in 1970-1971. It was in this context, between the late 1950s and early 1960s, that the first African student associations began to take shape.

The Association of Somali Students in Italy: organisation and anti-colonialism

The first African students to gain visibility as political subjects in Italy were Somalis, 531 of whom arrived in the country during the years of the Italian trusteeship of Somalia, through the scholarships financed by Rome and regulated by the UN mandate.[16] Most of the scholarship recipients were members of the Somali Youth League (hereafter SYL), the party founded in 1943 that would lead Somalia's transition to independence, and which in the period between the end of the war and the establishment of the trusteeship had been the main opponent of Italy's neocolonial intentions.[17] Although the degree of

[14] V. Deplano, *La madrepatria è una terra straniera*, cit., pp. 64-85.

[15] Draft bill no. 2770, "Autorizzazione al ministero degli Affari esteri a concedere borse di studio", Parliamentary Acts, Chamber of Deputies, presented during the session of 12 June 1952.

[16] Valeria Deplano, *L'impero colpisce ancora? Gli studenti somali nell'Italia degli anni Cinquanta*, in Valeria Deplano, Alessandro Pes (eds.), *Quel che resta dell'impero. La cultura coloniale degli italiani*, Milan, Mimesis, 2014, pp. 331-350.

[17] Antonio M. Morone, *L'ultima colonia. Come l'Italia è tornata in Africa,* Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2011, pp. 96-140.

political activism of each individual student, as well as the nature of their relationship with Italy, varied from person to person, ministerial reports reveal that they had a broad political awareness of their role as young educated guests in what had once been the colonising centre. This awareness led some students to speak out on various occasions, in both public and private contexts. In 1955, for example, a report from the Perugia police headquarters referred to generic anti-colonial speeches made in public by some students of the University for Foreigners.[18] These first acts of "speaking out" worried the Ministry of the Interior, first because of the denunciation they contained, which was defined as anti-Italian, but also because they were interpreted as a sign of organised activism and, above all, of communist inspiration. The Italian government warned that Somalia — on the verge of independence — could turn to Socialism; the Italian Communist Party (Partito Italiano Comunista, hereafter PCI), instead, had until 1960 cultivated the expectation that the left-most wing of the SYL, which in 1956 separated from the latter to become the Great Somali League, would succeed in pushing through the socialist option.[19] In this climate, the political stance of the students who were destined to become the country's future elite aroused opposing interests, from which the young Somalis distanced themselves by creating the first organisation of African students, which is also mentioned in the ministerial documents: the Association of Somali Students in Italy (Associazione degli Studenti Somali in Italia, hereafter ASSI), founded in Rome in 1958. The association publicly spoke out in September 1959, when a brawl in the capital resulted first in the arrest of eight African students (including seven Somalis), and then in a press campaign against them. With the exception of "L'Unità" and "Paese Sera", the newspapers insisted on the students' alleged communist sympathies and on the fact that they, as recipients of ministerial grants, were doing politics and living the good life at the expense of the Italian state.[20] In a public statement, the ASSI distanced itself from the accusations:

> Let it be clear once and for all that the students in question are not involved in politics and exclusively devote themselves to their studies, which are moreover the sole reason for their stay in Italy, so much so that even when the Italian press has tackled issues concerning our country, and unfortunately in a way detrimental to our national dignity, they have refrained from giving a response on the subject, and this to respect the sensitivities of the Italian people.[21]

[18] Report from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 October 1955, in Archivio Centrale dello Stato (hereafter ACS), ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, G - Associazioni 1944-1947, b. 198.

[19] Paolo Borruso, *Il PCI e l'Africa indipendente*, Florence, Le Monnier, 2009, pp. 37-59. Borruso writes that the fact that this possibility faded in favour of a nationalist choice meant that the PCI lost interest in Somalia, until Siad Barre's coup.

[20] V. Deplano, *L'impero colpisce ancora?*, cit., pp. 343-346.

[21] Statement from Assi, attached to the letter to the Afis administrator, 23 September 1959, in Archivio Storico-Diplomatico del ministero degli Affari esteri (Adsmae), Direzione Generale AFIS, Cassa3, f. 18.

The ASSI also denounced the "racist campaign" fuelled by the newspapers, which reproposed demeaning stereotypes when talking about the young African students. If talking about racism was a sign of rupture at a time when Republican Italy claimed to have left behind the discriminatory attitudes of the colonial period, the moderation with which the statement addressed the issue of the students' relationship with the Italians and, indirectly, the issue of colonialism is striking: 'We would like to take this opportunity to reject the rumours reported in some newspapers that accuse Somali students of anti-Italian sentiments, and we would like to clarify that we have deep sympathy for the noble people who are currently our hosts, and with whom we have a part of history in common.'[22] The specific context in which the statement was made (i.e. the arrest of eight African students) must certainly be taken into account when assessing this position. After all, the Somali students — even ASSI members — had never stopped criticising Italian colonialism; thus, a lecture on the crimes committed by Italy in 1961 resulted in the then-medical student Mohamed Aden Sheikh being accused of discrediting the nation.[23] At the same time, this was not the main focus of the association's activities. Starting in 1960, the Year of Africa but also of Somali independence, ministerial documents reveal that the ASSI had strengthened its now explicitly political commitment; the latter was not an action controlled or directed by Italian left-wing parties,[24] but a form of intervention in African issues through collaboration with student and political groups that — as we will see — combined criticism of Italian and European colonialism with the aim of promoting activities to support the liberation struggles still underway and to face the new challenges of independent Africa.

The time was ripe for this kind of activism: throughout Western Europe, the beginning of the 1960s coincided with growing attention to the issue of anti-colonialism, and the Left — both the institutional and the independent Left — began to take an interest in Third Worldism as a perspective through which to 'redefine the project of European Socialism'.[25] Italy became a driving force for

[22] Statement from Assi, attached to the letter to the Afis administrator, 23 September 1959, in loc. cit. note 22.

[23] V. Deplano, *L'impero colpisce ancora?*, cit., p. 348. Mohamed Aden Sheikh, who first came to Italy in the 1950s to follow a teacher training course, returned there to study medicine. Back in Somalia, he served as minister to Siad Barre but was later arrested by the Somali president himself. Upon his release in 1989, he returned to Italy.

[24] Report from the police headquarters in Rome to the Ministry of the Interior, 20 February 1961, in ACS, ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, G - Associazioni 1944-1986, b. 200, fasc. "Studenti comunisti stranieri in Italia". Some students and the PCI were involved in a debate on African issues, as we will see. On the basis of this link, which was probably inconsistent, the police commissioner accused three students of the ASSI – Mohamed Aden Sheikh, Hassen (Hassi) Alì Gurrà and Mahmud Mohamed Hassan – of being pro-Communist.

[25] Marica Tolomelli, *Dall'anticolonialismo all'anti-imperialismo yankee nei movimenti terzomondisti di fine anni Sessanta*, "Storicamente", 2016, n. 12, pp. 1-33, here p. 11.

this theoretical elaboration; in the early 1960s, the Third Worldist militancy of Giovanni Pirelli and Joyce Lussu began, and after the Algerian War and the diffusion of Frantz Fanon's thought, the first anti-colonialist and Third Worldist movements were born.[26] It was in this context that the Somali students' association became more visible, precisely because it was less isolated and, instead, connected to the political ferment that also affected Roman circles. An example of the ASSI's involvement in Roman activism was an event held in March of that year, following the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa, when police killed 69 people demonstrating against the anti-black pass laws and the apartheid system. An assembly of the Comitato anticoloniale nazionale, an Italian anti-colonial committee founded a few years earlier by communist, socialist and radical intellectuals and politicians,[27] was organised in Rome. Sitting at the president's table, next to the writer Carlo Levi and the PCI parliamentarians Maurizio Valenzi and Ugo Bartesaghi, was Hassi Alì Gurrà, a member of the ASSI and a long-time political science student at the La Sapienza University of Rome, who had also been accused of being a communist sympathiser. Gurrà first denounced European colonialism, recalling 'stage by stage the appalling tribute of blood paid by African populations to colonial domination and racial segregation', and then went into the specifics of the South African situation, presenting segregationism as a consequence of the colonial system.[28]

In that same year, the young student and the ASSI also began to engage with and participate in the meetings and initiatives of a new organisation founded in Rome, the Associazione universitaria contro l'oppressione coloniale, which in 1961 would change its name to Associazione giovanile anticoloniale, to also make it accessible to high school students.[29] Chaired by Raffaele Chiarelli, an independent left-wing activist and economics student, the association brought

[26] M. Tolomelli, *L'Italia dei movimenti*, cit., pp. 112-129. Tolomelli notes that the Italian Left had difficulty reading Third Worldism 'outside the interpretative matrices of anti-fascism and class struggle'. On Third Worldism see Tullio Ottolini, *Dal soutien alla cooperazione. Il terzomondismo in Italia fra il Centro di Documentazione "Frantz Fanon" e il Movimento Liberazione e Sviluppo*, dissertation in Storia, culture e civiltà, XXX ciclo, Università di Bologna, 2018. In the most recent debates, scholars agree on dating the relevance of Third Worldism in Italian political debate and practice to the early 1960s, contrary to the historiographical reading that linked it primarily to the escalation of the Vietnam War.

[27] These included Pasquale Bandiera, Ugo Bartesaghi, Giorgio Bassani, Arrigo Boldrini, Carmelo Carbone, Alberto Carocci, Giulio Cerreti, Carlo Levi, Lucio Luzzato, Oscar Mammì, Giacinto Militello, Giuliano Pajetta, Ferruccio Parri, Leopoldo Piccardi, Giovanni Pieraccini, Fernando Santi, Paolo Sylos Labini, Maurizio Valenzi, Paolo Vittorelli, Elio Vittorini, Bruno Zevi. On the origins of the committee, see Marco Galeazzi, *Il Pci e i paesi non allineati. La questione algerina (1957-1965)*, "Studi storici", 2008, n. 3, pp. 793-848, here p. 799.

[28] *Giovani di tutte le tendenze manifestano contro i massacri razzisti nel Sudafrica*, "L'Unità", 31 March 1960.

[29] Memo from the chief of police to the Ministry of the Interior, 21 March 1961, in ACS, ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, G - Associazioni 1944-1986, b. 200, fasc. "Associazione universitaria per la lotta all'oppressione coloniale".

together students of different political orientations: Communists, Socialists, Catholics and independent students who were affiliated to the aforementioned Comitato anticoloniale nazionale, but who also occupied an autonomous space within Roman university activism, even from the parties of reference of the individual activists. The association aimed to mobilise the student population in support of the various struggles for decolonisation, expressing its opposition to Western interference in the emancipation processes of African people. At the beginning of the 1960s, the main area of mobilisation was the Algerian War, the cruelty and complexity of which had struck a chord in Italian public opinion. The Associazione giovanile anticoloniale supported the struggles of the National Liberation Front (Front de Libération Nationale, hereafter FLN) and French groups opposing the army's actions in the North African territory. Echoing the French opposition and Jean-Paul Sartre, the young activists denounced the Algerian War, calling it a Fascist war. Furthermore, reflecting the tendency — typical of those years — to consider national and international phenomena closely connected, they compared the pro-FLN militancy with the struggles in Italy against neo-fascist associations, starting with the National Action University Front (Fronte Universitario di Azione Nazionale, hereafter FUAN).[30] In fact, the student groups that were active in Rome had taken a stance on the Algerian War; the representatives of the various progressive groups adhering to the Italian National University Union (Unione Nazionale Universitaria Rappresentativa Italiana, hereafter UNURI), the students of the Italian Goliardic Union (Unione Goliardica Italiana, hereafter UGI) and the Catholic students of the Intesa (joined by the representatives of the federalist movement and some middle-class students, like those of the Mamiani high school) participated in the activities of the anti-colonial association. Students close to the right-wing MSI had, instead, attempted to disturb these initiatives on several occasions, for example by breaking into assemblies and occupying the headquarters of the UNURI itself following its activism in support of the FLN.[31]

In addition to the Algerian War, other ongoing anti-colonial struggles caused further clashes between student groups. Thus, while the secession of the Katanga region (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and the subsequent assassination of Patrice Lumumba prompted the anti-colonial association to once again criticise the actions of European states and the UN, in early 1961, the neo-fascist Avanguardia nazionale giovanile promoted a 'university committee for the defence of European civilisation', which considered the events in Congo as a threat to the old continent.[32]

[30] *Manifestazione per l'Algeria nella città universitaria a Roma*, "L'Unità", 29 November 1960.

[31] *Giornata di lotta di studenti e lavoratori per Algeria libera e contro il fascismo*, "L'Unità", 30 November 1960.

[32] Press office memo from the police headquarters in Rome, 17 February 1961, in loc. cit. note 30.

The African students — especially the Somalis, the largest national group within a militant representation that included young people from Algeria, Nigeria and Sudan — had a peculiar role in all this. First of all, they massively took part in the assemblies and demonstrations organised by the anti-colonial association,[33] and this sometimes exposed them to the violence of the FUAN, which considered them the incarnation of the 'enemy at home',[34] as happened during the demonstration dedicated to Algeria on 29 November 1960. Most importantly, they actively participated in the discussions at the assemblies and in the political work of the association, of which some were full members. The best known among them is the aforementioned Mohamed Aden Sheikh, who spoke at the assembly preceding the demonstration of 29 November as a representative of both Somali students and the youth oppressed by colonial regimes such as the Algerians.[35] In other cases, the association and the Italian students used the direct experience of the Somali students to analyse current events. In 1961, Jusuf Harrì, one of the signatories of the ASSI's first statement in 1959 and who would become its secretary in 1963, took the floor at the assembly following Ethiopia's attack on Somalia to explain the political situation of the newly independent country and offer a key to interpreting current events: 'Talking about the latest events, he said that it was not a simple border incident but a real act of aggression by Ethiopia, which allegedly had the tacit consent of the British and the Americans, who would have supplied the weapons to the Negus.'[36] Harrì again spoke — on behalf of all Somalis — at the assembly held two years later, which was a prelude to the demonstration against the United Kingdom and its interference in the definition of the Somali border.[37]

[33] The police report an increasing participation of African students: while in 1960 there were about ten, in the two assemblies of 1961, Somali students made up half of the participants (31 out of 50 and 25 out of 55).

[34] There have been several cases of attacks on African students in Italy: Congolese students were attacked in Rome and Avellino after the Kindu massacre in 1961. See Matteo Caponi, *Con eterna voce al mondo intero ammoniscono fraternità: i martiri di kindu e il culto dei soldati caduti per la pace*, "Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà", 2019, n. 32, pp. 191-223, here pp. 203-204; in Rimini, in 1963, students from the Portuguese colonies were confronted by a group of young fascists shouting 'Fuori dall'Italia' ('get out of Italy') and 'viva Salazar'. Gianfranco Pintore, *UNURI. Iniziato il dibattito*, "L'Unità", 10 April 1963. In 1966, in a letter addressed to the Italian president, 50 professors from Sapienza University of Rome called for a ban on neo-fascist organisations, writing — among other things — that they threatened 'African students merely because of the colour of their skin'. *50 docenti chiedono a Saragat lo scioglimento delle bande fasciste*, "L'Unità", 3 May 1966.

[35] Report from the police headquarters in Rome to the Ministry of the Interior, 28 November 1960, in loc. cit. note 30.

[36] Report from the police headquarters in Rome to the Ministry of the Interior, 11 January 1961, in loc. cit. note 36.

[37] Report from the police headquarters in Rome to the Ministry of the Interior, 13 March 1963, in ACS, ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, G - Associazioni 1944-1986, b. 200, fasc. "Comitato permanente per la lotta contro il colonialismo".

The constant participation of Somali students in the anti-colonial activities organised in Rome in the early 1960s, both as individuals and as an association, testifies to the growth and development of their political action, favoured by the growing interest of the Italian students in anti-colonial movements. In these early years, the ASSI — which according to the Ministry of the Interior had about sixty members, mostly resident in Rome — made a qualitative leap in terms of both visibility and objectives, by now explicitly giving active support to the liberation struggles even within the host society. This was not an easy or risk-free step, because political activism among foreign students could lead to police controls and possibly be grounds for repatriation.

Nevertheless, in the mid-1960s, Somali student activism continued to grow and gained a new transnational dimension: the ASSI strengthened its contacts with Somali student associations in other parts of Western and Eastern Europe, entering fully into a dimension from which African students in Italy were hitherto excluded. In 1962, the Union of All African Students was founded, which represented the first attempt to link and coordinate the mobilisation of thousands of young Africans across Europe to obtain cultural and professional training. The initiative was launched by the London-based Committee of African Organisations and the Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France, but African students in Italy were not involved.[38] However, European networks of students linked to specific national experiences began to emerge in those same years, and the ASSI went down the same road; in November 1965, it organised an international conference in Rome, at the Marianum university centre, which was attended by about sixty young compatriots resident in various European countries, in particular the Soviet bloc. The conference, which constituted the fourth meeting of the Unione studenti somali all'estero,[39] was held in Somali, a decision deemed suspicious by the ministry, but which reflected a political choice. In fact, one session dealt precisely with the theme of language and its transliteration, an issue considered crucial in those years for the construction of the national identity of Somalis.[40] Moreover, the conference discussed the place of Somalia in independent Africa and the Horn of Africa, without neglecting issues related more to student life, such as the modalities of distributing scholarships and selecting scholarship recipients, the inclusion of students in Somali student communities in the various countries, and the discrimination suffered in Europe.[41]

[38] Telespresso form by Falchi to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Adsmae, Direzione Generale Affari Politici, Ufficio 7, b. 138, fasc. "Union of all African Students".

[39] Previous conferences were held in Prague in 1962, Moscow in 1963 and Leipzig in 1964. *Il IV convegno degli Studenti somali all'Estero*, "Amicizia", 1966, n. 1, p. 10.

[40] A. M. Morone, *L'ultima colonia*, cit., pp. 172-175.

[41] Report from the police headquarters in Rome to the Ministry of the Interior, 5 November 1965, in ACS, ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, G - Associazioni 1944-1986, b. 200, fasc. "Associazione studenti somali in Italia".

The African dimension and anti-imperialism: African student associations in the second half of the 1960s

In the early 1960s, the criterion of nationality — or rather, national affiliation — was the basis for the creation of several student groups, beyond that of the Somali students: the Associazione degli studenti etiopici in Italia, the Associazione studenti congolesi, the Associazione studenti nigeriani in Italia and the Unione generale studenti tunisini. Their political activity appears to have been less structured at this stage than in the case of the ASSI.

At the same time, the national dimension — without disappearing altogether — was accompanied by a continental dimension, heralded by the creation of several African student associations. It is not clear from the documents whether this decision was influenced by the establishment, in 1963, of the Organizzazione dell'unità africana, which institutionalised the willingness of the newly independent countries to coordinate their initiatives and act within a common horizon, characterised above all by the desire to overcome and eliminate colonialism. In 1964, an organisation of this kind was born in Rome, the Union of African Students in Italy (Unione Studenti Africani in Italia, hereafter USAI). Its promoters included both the ASSI and some students who were already part of the afore mentioned Associazione giovanile anticoloniale, including Asibey Ebenezer Layeras, a Ghanaian student with a scholarship from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who had actively participated in a debate on Congo promoted by the anti-colonial association after Lumumba's death, and the above-mentioned Somali student Mohamed Aden Sheikh. The organisational chart of the union's executive board also included Gabre Selassie Tesfay, an Eritrean student with a scholarship from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, acting as secretary; the chairman, Avani Daniel Edo (Anikwe), a Nigerian scholarship recipient and former member of the anti-colonial association; the Egyptian Salama Maamun (then a citizen of the United Arab Republic and government scholarship recipient, with a law degree); and Maanli Abducar Abdulle, a scholarship recipient from Somalia. The USAI, which ideally wanted to connect national groups and which, according to its statute, had no political aims but those of protecting African students and spreading knowledge of Africa in Italy, fuelled new concerns on the part of the ministry, which reacted by immediately subjecting 'the activity to controls and precautions, even taking coactive measures against them [*sic*]'.[42] However, in 1966, after the difficulty of acting on a national level and, above all, being recognised as a point of reference and coordination had emerged, the USAI changed its name to Association of African Students in Rome (Associazione degli Studenti Africani

[42] Communication from the Ministry of the Interior to the police headquarters in Rome, 1 July 1964, in ACS, ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, G - Associazioni 1944-1986, b. 200, fasc. "Unione degli studenti africani in Italia".

a Roma, hereafter ASAR); having a more limited range of action, this structure momentarily dropped the aspirations of creating a network of structured subjects to act through the direct militancy of individual students in Rome.[43]

Similar associations, based in cities and with different orientations and networks, were founded in other university cities where African scholars and students were present. The first of these seems to be the Associazione studenti africani di Firenze, founded in 1963, which in the following two years promoted both cultural exchange events (e.g. conferences on African cultures, film screenings, etc.) and political initiatives, including a debate on Congo in 1964 and the celebration of the Addis Ababa Charter in 1965.[44] It was followed by the establishment in 1964 of an association of African students in Padua, composed of both Italian and African students, which immediately started organising events about Congo,[45] and one in Milan in 1965, focused more explicitly on culture and welfare; the latter counted some fifty members after a year, including students from the Cattolica and Bocconi universities.[46] In 1966, an association of African students was founded in Verona, headed by a Congolese secretary and a Somali chairman,[47] as well as in Turin, which had its headquarters at the international centre Genti e culture, set up in 1963 by the fathers of the Society of Jesus to assist foreign students attending the university and the guests of the Centro internazionale per l'istruzione professionale. In that same year, the Turin association promoted city demonstrations against the film "Africa addio" (Farewell Africa), whose contents were considered racist and had triggered reactions from both African governments — like that of Kenya — and African students residing in other European countries and Italian cities.[48] The protests against the film represented the moment when the 'speaking out' of African students in Italy was reported in the press and gained visibility in the public debate.[49]

However, in the second half of the 1960s, African students actively took part in different types of mobilisation. First of all, young Africans continued

[43] Mohamud. M. Guled, *Che cosa è l'Asar*, "Amicizia", 1966, n. 5, p. 160.

[44] *Costituzione dell'associazione studenti africani di Firenze*, "Amicizia", 1965, n. 5, p. 165.

[45] From the police headquarters in Padua to the Ministry of the Interior, 21 December 1964, in ACS, ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, G - Associazioni 1944-1986, b. 200, fasc. "Associazione studenti africani".

[46] C.O., *Studenti africani a Milano*, "Corriere della Sera", 25-26 April 1965.

[47] From the Ministry of the Interior to the Servizio stranieri of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29 April 1966, in loc. cit. note 46.

[48] From the police headquarters in Turin to the Ministry of the Interior, 31 March 1966, in loc. cit. note 46. See also *Gli studenti africani a Torino protestano per il film "Africa Addio"*, "La Stampa", 24 March 1966.

[49] The ASAR wrote a condemnatory statement against the film, which it sent to the Presidency of the Republic, the Presidency of the Council, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Studenti africani a Roma, *ASAR, Documento contro "Africa Addio*, "Amicizia", 1966, n. 4, pp. 137-138.

to promote demonstrations directly aimed at raising awareness of colonial-style oppression in Africa. One of the hottest topics at the time was Rhodesia, where the white minority led by Ian Smith had declared independence in 1965, preventing the emancipation process of the former British colony and establishing a segregationist system. The Associazione studenti africani di Firenze published and circulated a report on the situation in the country,[50] while its counterpart in Rome organised some demonstrations. There were two demonstrations in 1968: the first, in March, brought some hundred African students to the streets, who were joined by Italian students, to protest against the Rhodesian government's execution of three Zimbabwean nationalists and the connivance of the British government, accused — as we can read in the association's statement — of having 'tolerated both the existence of the regime and the massacres that its own citizens carry out, with criminal intent and with the precise aim of stifling Africa's liberation movements'.[51] The second demonstration, still against Ian Smith's government, took place in September; a student intervened and explained that the racist system was instrumental to capitalist exploitation.[52]

The replacement of anti-colonialism with a discourse that had taken on explicitly anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist connotations is confirmed by the participation of African student organisations in various mobilisations centred around these concepts; although the examined documents do not offer information on the Africans' degree of involvement in mobilisations relating to the organisation of the university system, in the years of protest, this is the level on which their organisations and the Italian student movement engage with one another. One of the ways in which the latter defined its identity in 1966 and 1967 was by radically opposing the Vietnam War and promoting an anti-imperialist discourse; one of the crucial moments in this sense, which marked the affirmation of more intransigent positions,[53] was the demonstration of 22 May 1967 in Florence, called for by the Spring Mobilization Committee and organised by the UGI. Dominated by the interventions of Greek students, who described American anti-imperialism as something that unites different struggles, the demonstration saw the involvement of the African student association, along with that of the Latin American Student Association.[54]

Starting in the following year, this combination repeated itself several times, when formations were born that were more clearly positioned in the interna-

[50] Associazione studenti africani di Firenze, *Libro bianco sulla Rhodesia*, Florence, CLUSF, 1965.

[51] *Colpevole atteggiamento di Londra di fronte ai crimini di Salisbury*, "L'Unità", 9 March 1968.

[52] *Protestano gli studenti africani a Roma*, "L'Unità", 18 September 1968.

[53] Ermanno Taviani, *L'antiamericanismo nella sinistra italiana ai tempi del Vietnam*, "Annali della facoltà di scienze della formazione", 2007, n. 6, pp. 166-185, here p. 170.

[54] G.L., *Dalle fabbriche all'università, l'Italia cambi la politica estera!*, "L'Unità", 23 May 1967.

tional political scene; this was the case of the Federation of African Students in Italy (Federazione degli Studenti Africani in Italia, hereafter FSAI), founded in Florence in December 1968 to coordinate the organisations in which the now numerous African students in Italy were involved. Like the USAI, the federation presented itself as an instrument for action on Italian territory, but unlike the union founded five years earlier, it chose a real battlefield as it instantly joined the African student union in Europe, based in Prague. Despite failing to attract all the African students in Italy, from the beginning of the 1970s until at least 1977, the FSAI distinguished itself for its systematic activity and had, in any case, a certain attractiveness on the national territory; it published a bulletin, which in the second half of the decade was published irregularly, "Lo studente d'Africa", and it organised conferences and initiatives through local groups in Florence, Bologna, Turin, Milan, Perugia and Rome. The groups, in turn, were in touch with the local student movement. These relations became particularly evident in February 1969, when, on the occasion of US President Nixon's visit, an anti-American and anti-imperialist demonstration was organised in Rome, in the Piazza dell'Esedra.[55] The African students of the FSAI's Roman branch, carrying a leaflet that condemned 'the policy of US imperialism, neocolonialism and the regime of brutal exploitation that still keeps Africa in a state of subjection to big capital', joined the procession together with the activists of the Latin American Student Association; on their entry into the square, they were greeted with applause.[56]

These first public appearances highlighted the difference between the federation and the groups of the beginning of the decade, as will subsequently be made explicit in various documents. One of these is a manifesto presented at the beginning of the federation's third congress, which took place in Bologna in 1972.[57] The document reiterated the will to collectively address the problems related to the condition of students by 'counting mainly on our own strength'; it supported the 'militant unity with all African revolutionary youth', whose main objective was the decolonisation of the African school, accused of being subjugated to foreign, imperialist and neocolonialist, classist and individualist knowledge. The FSAI's proposal was for an Africanised school, accessible to young people from working-class and peasant families and capable of training 'revolutionary technical and intellectual managers at the service of the people'; next, it proposed the unity of oppressed African, Asian and Latin American peoples, in the struggle against imperialism and neocolonialism; finally, it

[55] Kino Marzullo, *Roma in stato d'assedio. Ora per ora la drammatica giornata antimperialista*, "L'Unità", 28 February 1969.

[56] *No all'imperialismo degli studenti africani e latinoamericani*, "L'Unità", 28 February 1969.

[57] From the police headquarters in Bologna to the Ministry of the Interior, 13 January 1972, in ACS, ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, G - Associazioni 1944-1986, b. 363, fasc. "Federazione degli studenti africani".

proposed cultural work as a tool for mobilising the masses.[58] If the Somali students had been suspected of being pro-communist ten years earlier, in the sense of being close to the PCI and the USSR, the FSAI had instead adopted an anti-imperialist position that included explicit attacks even on the Soviets. African associations in Italy therefore seem to follow the same trajectory that Marica Tolomelli has identified for the Italian movements born out of anti-colonialism; after a moment of growth and openness in the early 1960s, throughout the decade, they experienced a 'process of radicalisation and growing ideologisation', often coming close to Maoism.[59]

The birth of the Ufficio Centrale Studenti Esteri in Italia

The fact that associations of various sizes and with different inclinations flourished shows the growing need for African students to organise themselves in order to increase their capacity for political, cultural and trade union action. At the same time, the dialogue that these associations had with different kinds of realities (e.g. committees, other student groups, etc.) shows how the presence of foreign students aroused the interest of various actors, who considered the young Africans not only interlocutors but also subjects to be approached and actively involved in their activities, especially with regard to the themes of Third Worldism and anti-colonialism.

Ecclesiastical circles also expressed an interest in students. In particular, following the encyclical 'Fidei Donum' with which Pius XII called for missionary action in 1957, Bishop Pietro Sigismondi — a former apostolic delegate in Congo, Burundi and Rwanda, and secretary of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith — charged a priest in his early thirties, Remigio Musaragno,[60] with the task of studying, 'through the reports of the local churches, that kind of intellectual immigration on which the encyclical recommended pastoral care'.[61] In a book that reconstructed the initiative, Musaragno wrote that he was commissioned in 1960 to do a survey on foreign students in Rome and then coordinate the people in Italy who were interested in foreign students. To this end, the UCSEI was set up in Rome in 1962, before two more offices were opened in 1965, one in Bologna and one in Naples; in

[58] Political platform proposed by the executive committee at the 3rd FSAI congress, 6-9 January 1972, in loc. cit. note 58.

[59] M. Tolomelli, *L'Italia dei movimenti*, cit., p. 130.

[60] Musaragno (1927-2009) completed his priestly studies in Treviso. After the UCSEI was established, he dedicated his entire life to foreign students in Italy. In 1970, he founded the Centro culturale internazionale Giovanni XIII in Rome, a residence for foreign students that still existed at the time of writing this article.

[61] Remigio Musaragno, *Studenti esteri in Italia (1960-2000). Un itinerario d'impegno per lo sviluppo e di testimonianza missionaria*, Rome, UCSEI, 2001, p. 22.

1969, the UCSEI opened its own general secretariat in Perugia, a pivotal city for the history of African students since it was the seat of the University for Foreigners.[62] The office — which was private and would only become a recognised association in 1968 — set itself the goal of helping foreign students with various paperwork, of acting as a link between the host institutions, but above all of providing support and assistance during their stay in Italy. Although founded on request of the Propagation of the Faith, and explicitly placed within the Catholic realities that acted from what Musaragno called a 'missionary' perspective, the action of the UCSEI was not specifically aimed at Christian or Catholic students, nor did its activities concern the religious formation of young foreigners — as far as emerges from the available documentation.[63] Attention to religious issues was, instead, part of a more general interest in the life of foreign students in Italy: for example, a report on the situation of foreign students that the office prepared in 1965 pointed out that young university students, apart from those of the Catholic and Jewish faiths, could not count on religious assistance during their stay.[64]

The main purpose of the office's work (until the 2000s) was to reconstruct and analyse the presence of foreign students in Italy. With this in mind, in 1963, the office began the statistical collection of data on foreign students in the country's schools and universities, through a direct survey in individual institutes. This was an important working tool for the UCSEI, which thus gained an idea of the general situation of incoming student mobility, from which to start wider-ranging initiatives. The analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data was entrusted first and foremost to the annual conference organised by the office; held in various Italian cities, this was a themed event that addressed specific issues related to the presence of foreign students.[65] The first meeting took place in Rome on 4 and 5 October 1962 and dealt generically with the theme of foreign students in Italy. The following year, the conference took place in Florence, where the role of foreign students in Italian universities was addressed more directly.

This was the start of a reflection that would continue for years and eventually became one of the main pillars of the UCSEI's activities: the battle to

[62] Musaragno states that the UCSEI was founded in 1960, but ministerial documents reveal that it was formalised in 1962. On the offices in Rome and Naples (closed in 1971), see: From the police headquarters in Bologna to the Ministry of the Interior, in ACS, ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, G - Associazioni 1944-1986, b. 200, fasc. "Ucsei".

[63] In 2020, the UCSEI archive was no longer kept by the Centro Giovanni XXIII in Rome, which continued part of the office's activities; at the time of writing this article, it does not seem to be kept elsewhere.

[64] *Rapporto sugli studenti esteri in Italia,* "Amicizia", 1965, n. 5, p. 163.

[65] Between 1962 and 2000, the UCSEI organised 39 national conferences and 78 regional conferences, seminars and round-table discussions.

guarantee foreign students more rights within the Italian university system and, above all, a specific and recognised legal status that would relieve them of the situation of uncertainty and vulnerability that they experienced on a daily basis. Students were, in fact, granted a tourist residence permit, which was highly restrictive and forced those who did not benefit from a scholarship — the majority — to work (inevitably) illegally, running the risk of being expelled from the country. From 1964, the office's theoretical and organisational work expanded and became more systematic thanks to the publication of the periodical *Amicizia* (Friendship); in the first three years of its existence, it acted mostly as a bi-monthly bulletin of the activities and initiatives of Musaragno and his closest group of collaborators, and as a practical newsletter aimed at students. The turning point came in 1967, when foreign students increasingly signed articles and interventions, thus becoming their own "spokespeople" and using the magazine to address — from the inside — issues related both to the situation in their countries of origin and to aspects of their presence in Italy, such as racism or their relations with Italian students.[66] Thanks to this approach, the periodical could, for example, host an important debate on the meaning of the student protests of 1968 in Italy — which it had covered — for foreign students close to the UCSEI.[67] It was coordinated by the Guinean student Abdullaye Bah, a future member of the editorial board of *Amicizia*, and involved three Italian students, who claimed the universal character of overthrowing power relations that the movement promoted, as well as a number of foreign students (five Africans and one Peruvian). The latter took different positions: the Guinean Touré M'Bemba argued that the protests anticipated a better study and life experience for African students as well, whereas a student called Abdollah claimed that the mobilisation could contribute to the socio-cultural formation of foreign students. Others raised doubts, especially with regard to the exemplary character of the protest: the Somali Arios Abdullahi saw the demands as being far removed from the interests of foreign students, while the Guinean student Keita Momadi Fallo criticised the student movement for being too influenced by individualism and partisanship to be an example to Africans. Josep Mukumbi, from Congo Kinshasa, highlighted that protests were already happening in Africa and that there was no need to 'borrow them from the West'. From a practical point of view, several called into question the additional difficulty for foreigners to take part in the protests, with the risk of being expelled from the country. The debate nevertheless ended with a recognition of the social and political, and not merely trade union, nature of the Italian protests.

Interestingly, the debate was sparked by a letter from a foreign student in Florence who complained that the protests were slowing down his university

[66] *Amicizia si rinnova*, "Amicizia", 1967, n. 1, p. 3.
[67] *Studenti esteri e contestazione*, "Amicizia", 1969, n. 3, pp. 14-17.

career. In fact, in the second half of the decade, the voices of foreign students began to find space not only in articles but also in a specific column hosting letters to the UCSEI. Although we cannot speak of a core of students who were "affiliated" with the office, given its functionalist nature, through its activities it nevertheless established itself as a point of reference for many foreign students, who read the articles, commented on them and sometimes criticised its approach. A very striking feature of both the 1960s and the following decade was Musaragno's willingness to host debates on thorny issues, both in physical meeting places and in publishing outlets, as well as criticism of the structure of the UCSEI and of Musaragno himself, as we shall see further ahead.

Another evident and essential characteristic of the UCSEI's action is the fact that it focused on what the periodical itself defined as students from developing countries, namely Africa, Asia and Latin America, with a prevalence of Africans in the 1960s and a growing focus on Latin Americans from the 1970s onwards, even though the office was formally interested in foreign students at large. Furthermore, European and North American students always outnumbered what the magazine referred to as 'Third World' students. What counted, though, was the reason that drove foreign students to mobility:

> Compared to other students, Third World students (we use this terminology for the sake of convenience) have a closer connection with the problems of their country of origin, which are problems of 'development': subject to colonialism for a long time, this prevented, among other things, the development of schools at all levels, but once they gained political independence, the first thing the new nations did was to spread education, at all levels, which is a condition of national and popular development. Unfortunately, though, the generalisation of education does not go hand in hand with the establishment of schools, institutes and universities, so, as I said, many young people are still forced to go abroad. It is in this sense that we speak of these students in Italy, as those who will play a large part in promoting development in their countries: let's say that they will be the future leaders, not in an aristocratic and elitist sense, but in the sense that they in turn will have to promote the development of their own populations.[68]

In line with the reasons for which it was created, the UCSEI's commitment to young foreigners consisted in helping them and supporting their demands as students in Italy: it conducted the first enquiries on the challenges of finding accommodation in the context of widespread mistrust of the colour of their skin, it highlighted the difficulties of accessing health care during their stay in Italy and, as mentioned above, it argued for the need to give them a legal status that would remove the risk of expulsion if they decided to work or engaged in political activity. It is not surprising that these issues mainly concerned students from newly independent countries; with the sole exception — in some respects — of Greeks, Europeans and Americans, these generally enjoyed

[68] R. Musaragno, *Studenti esteri in Italia (1960-2000)*, cit., p. 136.

greater financial resources, did not represent organisations linked to their countries of origin and did not embody "otherness" as opposed to Italians.[69] On the other hand, the office directed by Musaragno adopted a development cooperation perspective; the main objective of training students was that they could contribute to the cultural and economic growth of their places of origin on their return. This is why both at conferences and in *Amicizia*, emphasis was placed on the concept of "brain drain", that is, on the risk that the students would dissipate their potential elsewhere after completing their training in Italy. Without going into detail on the concrete attempts to support the employment of students in their countries of origin, nor analysing them in the context of the criticism of the very concept of cooperation, it is important to note that, given a generic definition of the 'foreign student', the UCSEI's action must be read within a reflection that concerns the processes of training people in the postcolonial world.

The UCSEI, the associations and the representation of foreign students

Having chosen to act on this terrain, from the beginning, the office had to collaborate with foreign student associations in Italy, including those of Africans. Shortly after its formation, the UCSEI promoted a federation of foreign students that could represent their interests before the Italian government and academic authorities. Unlike existing organisations, the project emphasised the foreigners' membership of the student body rather than their national, regional or political affiliation; this approach was in line with the interests of the UCSEI at that early stage, as the closure of *Amicizia* before 1967 also demonstrates, and with the interpretation of student activism as trade union representation rather than political militancy.

The proposal for a federation was first made during the second conference organised by the UCSEI, the one held in Florence in 1963. It was reproposed at the conference in Rome in 1964, entitled 'L'Università italiana e gli studenti stranieri', and then picked up again in an initial study meeting in March 1965, prepared by an organising committee that included representatives of the Iranian, Greek, Latin American and Ethiopian student associations, together with Musaragno himself. The meeting was also attended by delegates from 52 associations representing Latin American, Asian and Middle Eastern students (only Palestinian and Iranian students, and associations of Arab students with no indication of nationality), Africans, Afro-Asians and Greeks — the only Europeans present. The 12 associations representing the Africans and Afro-

[69] The Greeks were the most numerous and organised of all national student communities. After the 1967 coup d'état, they mobilised to gain public support for their opposition to the regime. On this occasion, the UCSEI's monthly magazine offered them support and space.

Asians were partly continental or regional; the national groups also contained Nigerians, Congolese and Tunisians, in addition to Somalis and the aforementioned Ethiopians. The proposal for a federation was widely debated, and the main challenge was the risk that a national group — specifically the Greek one, represented on that occasion by 14 associations — could make its own interests prevail within the federation. Furthermore, there was widespread hostility to overcoming pre-existing associational structures and a preference for groups of foreign students created on a city basis; the differences between many of the representatives and the UCSEI emerged most clearly in the principle of privileging the connection, interests and struggles linked to the condition of the student's home country or region over their foreign student status in Italy. Finally, the office itself presented a problem: Dominic Ekesi from Nigeria opened the meeting by asking that the federation not be created under the aegis — and with funding alone — of the UCSEI, which could have limited its autonomy. His reasoning was backed up by the Ethiopian representative Jahia Gaber, as well as by the Congolese Birhashiwirwa Chrysostone. Within such an articulated debate, one African specificity manifested itself: the firmness in demanding autonomy and a step backwards from the promoting office, whose future interference was feared. This was the first sign both of the associations' claim to autonomy and of the difficult relationship between the UCSEI and more structured groups, which would become more marked at the end of the decade.[70]

Given these premises, the project was never completed, but the UCSEI continued to raise the issue of foreign students' representation in the Italian context, pushing for solutions that would make the recourse to national or regional associations unnecessary, even suggesting a possible coexistence. Musaragno also urged UNURI on this issue, the "parliamentary" student union created after the war, and which disappeared precisely because of the principle of direct democracy supported by the 1968 movement. As we have seen, the UNURI intervened in the anti-colonial mobilisations in Rome and thus also interacted with African students through the committee; in 1963-1964, it had begun protesting against the university reform plan proposed by Minister Luigi Gui, officially presented in Parliament in May 1965. The UNURI's proposals against the reform plan aimed at democratising the university by enhancing student representation and giving it powers that, unlike those outlined in the decree-law, were not merely consultative.[71] Within this framework, the

[70] *La riunione di studio dei delegati delle associazioni estere degli studenti in Italia*, "Amicizia", 1965, n. 2. pp. 43-64.

[71] Gaetano Quagliarello, *La politica dei giovani in Italia 1945-1968*, Rome, Luiss University Press, 2005, pp. 243-250; Luciano Governali, *Prospettive di riforma ed evoluzione dell'Università italiana (1946-68)*, dissertation in Storia d'Europa, società, politica, istituzioni (XIX-XX) - XXVIII Ciclo, Università della Tuscia, 2016, pp. 169-183.

student representatives — urged by the UCSEI — also addressed the issue of the representation of foreign students; their space for action resided not in a specific structure, as the federation should have been, but in their full participation in a university community that had to be transformed and reinvented. Cristiano Zironi, a Christian Democrat student who handled foreign affairs for the UNURI, affirmed the importance of the

> insertion of the [foreign] student into the university community, an insertion that, in my opinion, does not happen perfectly, both for a series of technical, objective and material reasons, and mostly because in Italy there is no university community (that is, there is a type of university that, however, does not facilitate the student's insertion into the university community but makes it very hard to experience this community life as a life of scientific research).[72]

Musaragno himself supported this position, even if not immediately; on the occasion of the birth of the FSAI, he wrote that 'the interests of foreign students, as students, should be represented and defended within each university (and at the national level) by bodies made up of students from individual universities (regardless of whether they are Italian or foreign)'.[73] The change of direction was also influenced by the fact that, at the end of the 1960s, the increasing politicisation of the new student groups made it difficult to imagine proposing a purely trade union mobilisation or bringing together groups that shared the attitudes of their members/militants towards the host country but could be divided by different political convictions. Moreover, as we have seen, Musaragno's office had become a point of reference for certain sectors of the foreign student body, but the end of the decade was marked by an escalation of tensions with the more politicised groups, which distanced the possibility of any leadership role for the UCSEI. In 1967, the Somali student Abdulkadir Mao Omar, from the Associazione studenti africani di Torino,[74] accused Musaragno's office of 'protectionism and compassion towards students from underdeveloped countries':

> [T]hese students, contrary to what the editorialist [Musaragno] would have, are neither better nor cleverer than other students. And when someone says that a student comes from the Third World or an underdeveloped country, the person who hears this term, especially if they are Italian, cannot help but appeal to their moral sense to come to the aid of that 'poor fellow'; it is, therefore, necessary to avoid the charitable and compassionate element that the term 'underdevelopment' or 'Third World' evokes.[75]

[72] *L'Unuri e i problemi degli studenti esteri*, "Amicizia", 1965, n. 6, p. 206.

[73] Remigio Musaragno, *Come nasce una federazione?*, "Amicizia", 1969, n. 1, p. 15.

[74] The student had also attended the unsuccessful meeting in 1965, then as a representative of the Organizzazione Studentesca Internazionale di Torino (OSIT), the International Student Organisation of Turin.

[75] Abdulkadir Mao Omar, *Gli studenti esteri non vogliono protezione paternalistica*, "Amicizia", 1967, n. 9-10, p. 20.

Mao Omar then added that foreign students wanted to be able to approach their problems from the same position as their Italian counterparts, looking for solutions that were based on the existence of 'one level of civilisation'.[76]

Tensions increased with the creation of the new, more radical associations, in particular the FSAI. In November 1970, "Amicizia" published an open letter signed by the Milanese committee of the Federazione degli studenti africani and the Milanese branch of Latin American students, stating that the UCSEI

> intervenes by constantly trying to control foreign students by means of the smokescreen of assistance and the blackmail of the renewal of the scholarship […] The UCSEI, by supporting foreign students through social services, conferences and various initiatives, hides its main task, which is to act as a job placement office for foreign technicians trained in Italian universities to facilitate capitalist penetration and class exploitation in Africa, Asia and Latin America, in accordance with the principles of neocolonialism. […] We reaffirm our decision to stand on the side of the national patriotic liberation struggle of our peoples against imperialism, social imperialism and reaction.[77]

The federation's anti-imperialist position, which identified the liberation of oppressed peoples with that from capitalism and the creation of popular democracies, made the training and cooperation projects supported also by the UCSEI unacceptable to its militants, as they were considered an expression of neocolonial action.

After the 1960s

At the end of the 1960s, Third Worldism in Italy reached its peak and simultaneously became one of the terrains on which the split between movements and the institutional Left was consummated.[78] This Third Worldism still looked to Africa, in particular to the wars of liberation of the Portuguese colonies, but its symbol had by then moved to Asia, to the Vietnam War, where the end of imperialism was thought to be taking place. As we have seen, the perspective of African students in Italy was also marked by these turning points.

However, the radicalisation of the new African student groups was not only linked to the more general radicalisation among students; it also depended on the evolution of the situation within the African continent. At the end of the decade, inaugurated by the Year of Africa, the Portuguese colonies had not yet become independent, but other states on the continent were already experiencing the fragility of the order that had emerged after the end of European colonial rule. Hence, in opposition to some of the regimes established after

[76] A. Mao Omar, *Gli studenti esteri non vogliono protezione paternalistica*, cit., p. 20.
[77] *Un volantino da Milano,* "Amicizia", 1970, n. 11, p. 1.
[78] T. Ottolini, *Dal soutien alla cooperazione*, cit., p. 62.

independence, some student groups went beyond a generically anti-colonialist discourse to express more radical criticism: Siad Barre's coup d'état, for example, brought Somalia under communist rule nine years after independence. In 1972, a group of students resident in Florence reacted by founding the Unione nazionale studenti somali in Italia, which had a Maoist orientation and was affiliated with the FSAI; in its criticism of imperialism, it also explicitly included the Soviet Union and its presence in Africa.

In those same years, the case of Eritrea also emerged more clearly in the student scene; in 1952, the country had been included in the Ethiopian federation and indeed completely absorbed by it in subsequent years, only to become a province of Haile Selassie's empire in 1962. In support of the cause of independence, in 1968, the Italy-Eritrea association was founded in Rome on the initiative of some Eritrean and Italian students from the anti-colonial association.[79] Its establishment had created concerns in ministerial circles because of the effects it might have on Italy's relations with the Ethiopian government, with which Italy had resumed relations after the war. Once again, though, the fears turned out to be unfounded because in the first two years of its life, the association's activities — especially those of a propagandistic nature — appeared very limited, to grow from 1970 onwards. In the meantime, the Popular Eritrean Liberation Front — a division of the Eritrean Liberation Front, which would later lead the fight for independence — had also taken root in Italy. From the new decade onwards, then, the activism of young Eritreans took on very different characteristics and objectives from those of the African students analysed in this essay. The former sought contacts with trade unions and parties, and organised an annual conference (held in Bologna from 1974 to 1991) that attracted militants from all over Europe, with the concrete aim not simply of influencing Italian public opinion, but of organising and strengthening the African country's liberation movement by connecting the fighters with the Eritrean diaspora in Europe.[80]

For all these reasons, even in the case of African, Asian and Latin American students, the 1970s require a different — and separate — treatment that takes into account the specific context of that decade, namely the peculiarities of youth protests in Italy after 1969-1970 as well as the political developments in independent Africa and their repercussions in the international political debate. At the same time, when reconstructing subsequent events we must

[79] Communication from the police headquarters in Rome to the Ministry of the Interior, 6 October 1968, in ACS, ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, G - Associazioni 1944-1986, b. 200, fasc. "Associazione Italia-Eritrea".

[80] Agostino Tabacco, Nicoletta Poidimani (eds.), *Bologna. Testimonianze di lotta degli eritrei esuli in Europa*, Milan, Edizioni Punto rosso, 2001. The book shows that the first conference of Eritreans in Europe took place in 1970, while the first in Italy was held in Padua, in 1973. However, from the following year until Eritrea's independence, the annual conference would usually be held in Bologna.

not forget that it was in the 1960s that a part of foreign students — and specifically African students — in Italy (but not only) began to organise themselves at a local, national and occasionally transnational level. In Italy as in Europe, the activism of young Africans had a "diasporic" trait: it fuelled the internal debate within the communities of Africans in Europe concerning the future of their countries, as with the transnational conference of Somalis in 1965, and as will be more evident in the case of the Eritreans. From this point of view, reconstructing the presence and activism of foreign students in the peninsula allows us to include Italy in a broader reflection on Europe's role in the formation of African elites, from a perspective that is not only "institutional" — thus focusing on the role of scholarship programmes and that of university institutes — but which, instead, views the experience of young Africans as an opportunity for cultural and political self-formation. A biographical analysis, which is not possible here but is suggested by certain life paths, like that of Mohamed Aden Sheik, would make it possible to assess the impact of this experience and possibly also the legacies of the networks developed during the experience abroad.

At the same time, the liveliness and the structure of the African students' associational and political activism in the 1960s highlight how limiting it is to study their presence and experience merely from a diaspora perspective, hence as a European chapter of African history, or by identifying the students exclusively with liberation parties or movements whose action was focused on the country of origin. As emerges from my discussion, in Italy — even if in a less structured way than in other European contexts — students were part of a debate and activism that interacted with the institutions and society of the "host" country and continent. If their action only marginally concerned issues that were considered internal, such as the transformation of the university and relations within society, the students were nevertheless very active on themes like the relationship between Italy and the newly independent countries, or the Italians' perception of Africans and Africa. This approach is evident in the case of the overall contribution of Somali students to the protests carried out together with Italian students, whose space of action was that of Italian politics and public opinion. The same need to interact — albeit in a decidedly critical way — with the Italian environment can also be traced back to the subsequent opposition of some groups of African students to expressions of interest in their cause that they considered paternalistic. This meant, on the one hand, taking a stance as well as speaking out to claim one's autonomy and, on the other hand, criticising the approaches to the postcolonial world that were inherent in the concept of 'development cooperation', and which were gaining ground in Europe and Italy in the first two decades of the post-war period.

Translated by Andrea Hajek

From revolution to liberation. Feminist consciousness-raising and sexuality in the 1970s

Virginia Niri*

L'articolo propone uno sguardo sulla "rivoluzione sessuale" degli anni Sessanta e Settanta in Italia nella cornice interpretativa della storia emozionale, con un ampio ricorso alla metodologia orale. Attraverso l'analisi di inedite fonti orali e il contrappunto della "posta del cuore" dei rotocalchi femminili del periodo, l'Autrice si interroga sull'apporto del metodo femminista dell'autocoscienza nella recezione e nella modifica degli input della cosiddetta rivoluzione sessuale. Prendendo in esame il contesto italiano del "lungo Sessantotto" l'Autrice ha analizzato come i nuovi modelli di una sessualità apparentemente più libera siano stati incorporati e modificati all'interno della controcomunità emozionale creata dal femminismo autocoscienziale, nella direzione di ciò che sarà poi definita "liberazione sessuale", e si è interrogata sulle aperture e sui limiti che questo approccio ha comportato.
Parole chiave: femminismo, autocoscienza, sessualità, liberazione sessuale, storia orale

This article examines the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s and 1970s in Italy from the perspective of emotional history. Drawing mainly on unpublished oral sources and advice columns in women's magazines, it assesses the contribution of the feminist method of consciousness-raising to the reception of and reaction to the so-called sexual revolution. Focusing on the 'long 1968' as it unfolded in Italy, I analyse how the new models of an apparently freer sexuality were appropriated and adapted to the emotional counter-community created by feminists practising consciousness-raising towards what would later be defined as sexual liberation, and I discuss the openings and limits that this approach has entailed.
Key words: feminism, consciousness-raising, sexuality, sexual liberation, oral history

Introduction

Writing about the protests of the 1960s, Eric Hobsbawm said that 'making love and making revolution could not be neatly separated'.[1] Yet, women — in the

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[1] Eric Hobsbawm, *Il secolo breve*, Milan, BUR, 2010, p. 392. All translations of quotations originally published in English are those of the translator.

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increasingly 'eroticising of social life' — once again discovered that they were the object and not the subject of the revolution.[2] 'Girls say yes to boys who say no': the slogan used to encourage men to refuse conscription in the United States perfectly expresses the new paradigm of a sexuality that was suddenly supposed to be free and emancipated (in opposition to the prevailing myth of virginity), but still at the service of male desire.[3]

The feminist movement of the 1970s,[4] which in Italy must be read in the context of the 'long 68',[5] played a decisive role in this dynamic, allowing female pleasure to take centre stage and marking the transition from sexual revolution to sexual "liberation",[6] thanks in particular to the political method of consciousness-raising.[7] It is worth noting that this was not the only polit-

[2] Jeffrey Weeks, in Sheila Jeffreys, *Anticlimax. A feminist perspective on sexual revolution*, New York, New York University Press, 1990, p. 67.

[3] Like 1968, the sexual revolution has multiple, simultaneous centres of expression and its dynamics travel from one country to another, from one continent to another. For a broad overview of this simultaneity, see Gert Hekma, Alain Giami (eds.), *Sexual Revolutions*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014; Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe. A Twentieth-Century History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011, chapter IV; David Allyn*, Make Love, not War. The Sexual Revolution, an Unfettered History*, New York, Little, Brown and Company, 2000.

[4] Maud A. Bracke, *Women and the Reinvention of the Political: Feminism in Italy, 1968-1983*, New York, Routledge, 2014; Teresa Bertilotti, Anna Scattigno (eds.), *Il femminismo degli anni Settanta*, Rome, Viella, 2005; *Anni Settanta,* "Genesis. Rivista della Società Italiana delle Storiche", III/1, 2004; *Il movimento femminista negli anni '70*, "Memoria. Rivista di storia delle donne", n. 19-20, Turin, Rosenberg & Sellier, 1987.

[5] On the debate on the concept of the 'long 68', see Angelo Ventrone, "*Vogliamo tutto". Perché due generazioni hanno creduto nella rivoluzione, 1960-1988*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2019; Francesca Socrate, *Sessantotto. Due generazioni*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2018; John Foot, *Looking Back on Italy's "Long 68"*, in Ingo Cornils, Sarah Waters (eds.), "*Memories of 1968", Cultural History and Literary Imagination*, Vol. 16, Bern, Peter Lang, 2010; Anna Bravo, *A colpi di cuore. Storie del sessantotto*, Bari, Laterza, 2008.

[6] On the 'feministisation' of the sexual revolution, see Joe B. Paoletti, *Sex and Unisex. Fashion, Feminism and the Sexual Revolution*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2015; Lillian Rubin, *Erotic Wars. What Happened to the Sexual Revolution?*, New York, Harper Perennial, 1991.

[7] By consciousness-raising, I mean a political method, derived from the United States and adopted in Italy with a highly original theoretical approach and a practical application that was influenced by the peculiarities of the Italian long 68. Theorised first and foremost by Rivolta femminile, especially in Carla Lonzi's writings, consciousness-raising spread like wildfire across Italy in more or less orthodox ways compared to the initial theory. While most of the consciousness-raising groups were short-lived, lasting from a few months to a few years, some women continued to meet, sometimes for decades, practising a form of consciousness-raising that gradually took on more and more specific features. Talking today about consciousness-raising means analysing a new language, a new way of doing politics, of being together among women. From the outset, the Italian approach was outward-looking, with a few exceptions: "feeling better" was only possible in a different structure from the patriarchal one, and working on oneself was only useful to the extent that it led to increased political awareness, to the possibility of changing reality. Consciousness-raising moved on two tracks: it was both a new political practice within the extra-parliamentary Left and a personal practice of women searching for a new identity in the changing world. These two inputs have not always been balanced out, and

ical instrument adopted in the feminist context as a reflection of the slogan 'the personal is political'; moreover, the changing nature of consciousness-raising collectives does not allow us to assess the diffusion of this practice. However, it is an approach that deserves attention because of the potential counter-narrative it has offered for the women who practised it. Moreover, it is now proving to be particularly interesting for the study of a subject that often presents problems of communicability, and which the small consciousness-raising groups were concerned with: sexuality.

So how did women manage to break free from the conflicting guidelines on sexuality that came from the family, institutions, media and the youth movements, in which they were immersed? What was the contribution of consciousness-raising in this sense? Which knots were untied, and which remained? And were new ones created? These are some of the questions that the research on which this article is based has sought to answer, focusing on the Italian context and drawing on a collection of unpublished oral sources,[8] on the one hand, and a selection of letters taken from the advice columns of a number of illustrated magazines, on the other.[9]

consciousness-raising as a daily practice has not always had the impact on politics it was hoped to have; turning points and great personal changes were followed by relational and political disappointments, the difficulty of finding oneself, of patching oneself up, of adapting to the new role so painstakingly constructed. The history of consciousness-raising is a history of attempts, of many and diverse paths leading in the same direction.

[8] I interviewed 51 women and 3 men, in ten different parts of Italy. For the selection, I used the snowball sampling method, the only criterion being that the participants had had consciousness-raising experiences. The oldest interviewee was born in 1933, the youngest in 1955; the average age difference between me and the participants was 40 years. I conducted the interviews alone, with the help of a video camera (sometimes used only as an audio recorder, at the request of the interviewees); most of the meetings took place in the participants' homes. Unfortunately, the choice of such a large sample did not allow me to do an in-depth biographical analysis of each participant, especially in the context of collective interviews. This was not the result of superficiality on my part, but my attempts to go in this direction often clashed with the interviewees' emphasis on the pervasiveness of the consciousness-raising method, so much that it overpowered the specificities of the participants' individual lives. However, I have tried to analyse the noteworthy features of the interviewees' life experiences, especially where interesting topics emerged for the study of awareness-raising and sexuality. This approach prevented me — mainly as a result of time constraints — from giving due consideration to the life stories of each interviewee: this was a historiographical limitation, but it allowed me not to force the narrative, achieving good results with regard to such a delicate topic as sexual history. Finally, although the interviews were conducted throughout Italy, this article only contains testimonies from women from the large central-northern cities (Genoa, Milan, Turin and Florence); therefore, the socio-geographical specificities of provincial cities and, above all, southern Italy remain to be analysed.

[9] I have analysed the columns published in the following sources: *Grazia* (from 1958 to 1960, answers by Mike Bongiorno and Donna Letizia); *Bolero film*, later renamed *Bolero teletutto* (from 1960 to 1974, answers by Enrico Dallarno); *Confidenze. Settimanale di vita femminile* (from 1958 to 1960, answers by Bianca Maria; from 1960 to 1967, answers by Mike Bongiorno; from 1968 to 1972, answers by Alberto Lupo); *Arianna* (from 1960 to 1972, answers by Enrica

I approach the subject from the analytical perspective of the history of emotions,[10] which is at the heart of a field that has by now gained a certain visibility, especially in the Anglo-American context. Understanding the emotional states of the agents of history enables us to examine the expressive/repressive context in which these feelings developed and to understand the close link between events and emotions from a historical perspective. In other words, it is a question of identifying the 'emotional communities' that exist in each society,[11] the extent to which they represent a common standard,[12] and the changes — real and potential — that these standards undergo.

Feminist awareness and demands have led to the demolition — or transformation — of highly significant cultural and emotional models: not only a re-evaluation of that universe of feelings hitherto considered "feminine", hence worthy of neither a man nor an emancipated woman, but also a social request to recognise and interpret new emotional roles. In its 'karstic path',[13] neo-feminism was thus able to create a new emotional community,[14] as part of an array of proposals for new emotional models that had already emerged with the cultural revolution of the 1960s and underground culture. In particular, it created what Maud Bracke defines as an 'emotional counter-community': one that consciously rejects the hegemonic emotional standard in a given context and proposes a shared political alternative.[15]

Cantani). I also used the selection of answers that Brunella Gasperini gave readers in *Annabella* and *Novella* contained in Brunella Gasperini, *Più botte che risposte*, Milan, Baldini&Castoldi, 1997.

[10] In reference to the contemporary era in particular, see at least: Rebecca Clifford, *Emotions and Gender in Oral History: Narrating Italy's 1968*, "Modern Italy", May 2012, vol. 17, n. 2; Penelope Morris, Francesco Ricatti, Mark Seymour (eds.), *Politica ed emozioni nella storia d'Italia dal 1848 ad oggi*, Rome, Viella, 2012; Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions. An Introduction*, Croydon, Oxford University Press, 2005; Jeff Goodwin et al. (eds.), *Passionate Politics. Emotions and Social Movements*, USA, University of Chicago Press, 2001.

[11] Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Worrying about Emotions in History*, "The American Historical Review", June 2002, vol. 107, n. 3, pp. 821-845.

[12] Paul N. Stearns, Carol Z. Stearns., *Emotionology. Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards*, "The American Historical Review", October 1985, vol. 90, n. 4, pp. 813-836. For a discussion of the difference between emotional standards and emotional communities, see Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns*, "History and Theory", May 2010, n. 49, pp. 237-265.

[13] Maria S. Palieri, *"Ce n'est qu'un début". E le donne hanno fatto il resto*, in Paola Cioni et al. (eds.), *Donne nel Sessantotto*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2018, p. 14.

[14] Although I am aware of the many different forms of neo-feminism that have existed, I have decided here to talk about it in the singular to highlight the collective, pervasive and 'karstic' bearing that the women's movement had in the 1970s, beyond the distinctions proposed by different groups and collectives. It was not a denial of the particularities of each political expression, nor a simplification of the plurality of the feminist cultural landscape, but rather an attempt to highlight commonalities rather than divergences: common points that, from a historical perspective, trigger, create and pursue important cultural and social changes.

[15] Maud A. Bracke, *Building a 'Counter-community of Emotions': Feminist Encounters and Socio-cultural Difference in 1970s Turin*, "Modern Italy", May 2012, vol. 17, n. 2, pp. 223-236.

As an emotional counter-community, the feminist movement made extensive use of non-verbal expressions; the importance that philosopher Robert Solomon attaches to bodies and the social order in which they move, when 'making' emotions,[16] is perfectly embodied by 1970s feminism. The latter brought physicality into play in an active and meaningful way, very different from the culture of words that characterise 1968; the dances in the squares, the theatrical performances and the music of the feminist demonstrations are a world apart from the self-restrained and masculine rigidity of the "political" demonstrations, where the body was used as a tool of passive resistance during sit-ins or for warlike violence.[17]

At the same time, feminism as a global movement put into practice a fundamental aspect of the proposal for a new emotional standard, which in fact gave its title to a key text of those years: *Les mots pour le dire*.[18] Not only did emotions change, or what was expected of them, but also how they were communicated: the women's movement undertook a thorough self-analysis — through consciousness-raising, self-reflection and theoretical writings — of a female lexicon that was found lacking, if not stigmatising. Finding the words to express your feelings — old and new — meant appropriating them but also making them public, bringing them out of the private sphere of feminine sensitivity (not emotionalism).

In my research, I have analysed the emotions involved in the process of sexual liberation: emotions understood as the feelings of individuals, as agents of social change and, finally, as factors contributing to the creation and cohesion of the feminist movement itself, according to the paradigm outlined by James Jaspers.[19] In this sense, consciousness-raising proves to be a perfect ground for the investigation of emotional history: as Ida Dominijanni brilliantly suggested, it is simultaneously a *presa di parola* — the finding of a voice — and a bodily practice.[20] In the transition between the 1960s and 1970s, finding the words to talk about sexuality sometimes forced women to

For a definition of 'emotional community', see Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, New York, Cornell University Press, 2006, p. 2: '[Groups in which] people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value — or devalue — the same or related emotions.'

[16] See M. Scheer, *Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is that Makes Them Have a History)?*, cit., p. 194.

[17] On the importance of movement and music as cohesive factors in a social movement, see James M. Jaspers, *Emotions and Social Movements: Twenty Years of Theory and Research*, "Annual Review of Sociology", August 2011, n. 37, pp. 285-303.

[18] Marie Cardinal, *Le parole per dirlo*, Milan, Bompiani, 1976. On the importance of the lexical context for changing emotional standards, see P. N. Stearns, C. Z. Stearns, *Emotionology,* cit.

[19] J. M. Jaspers, *Emotions and Social movements,* cit.

[20] In Barbara Sandrucci, *Aufklärung al femminile. L'autocoscienza come pratica politica e formativa*, Pisa, Edizioni ETS, 2005, p. 291.

go beyond the emotional meaning, as they lacked the ability to describe their organs, their ailments and their intimacy; not coincidentally, many consciousness-raising groups started their exploration of sexuality precisely from manuals.[21] There were simply no words to think, say or describe female pleasure because it had not yet been explored by science.

Sexual revolution: new forms and old legacies

The year is 1969. Over the past decade or so, the pill has spread from the United States throughout the Western world, despite legislative resistance and the moral directives issued by Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae*.[22] The sexual revolution is everywhere, in the way people consume — from the miniskirt to pornographic magazines mainly produced in Denmark — and behave.[23] Starting in San Francisco, the 'Summer of Love' invited girls and boys around the world to make love freely and without limits, proposing nudity as a revolutionary alternative to the military uniform and the banker's suit. Similar imperatives spread from the barricades of Paris in May 1968 to West Germany, Italy and every single country in Western Europe, each with its own peculiarities.[24] Attention to sexual issues became compelling even beyond the Iron Curtain and in non-aligned countries,[25] while pressure in this direction was also exerted in European countries,[26] as well as in Latin American countries emerging

[21] The most popular manuals were The Boston Women's Health Book Collective, *Noi e il nostro corpo*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1974 and William Masters, Virginia Johnson, *L'atto sessuale nell'uomo e nella donna*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1967.

[22] Lara V. Marks, *Sexual chemistry. A history of the contraceptive pill*, New Haven/London, Yale University Press, 2001.

[23] D. Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe*, cit., p. 140.

[24] See, for example: Michel Brix, *L'amour libre. Brève histoire d'une utopie*, Paris, Molinari, 2016; Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011; Fiammetta Balestracci, *La sessualità degli italiani. Pratiche, consumi e culture dal 1945 ad oggi*, Rome, Carocci, 2020; Hannah Charnock, *Teenage Girls, Female Friendship and the Making of the Sexual Revolution in England, 1950-1980*, "The Historical Journal", 2020, vol. 63, n. 4, pp. 1032-1053.

[25] Dan Healey, *The Sexual Revolution in the USSR. Dynamics Beneath the Ice*, in G. Hekma, A. Gami (eds.), *Sexual Revolutions*, cit., pp. 236-248; Angieszka Koscianska, *Sex on Equal Terms? Polish Sexuology on Women's Emancipation and "Good Sex" from the 1970s to the Present*, "Sexualities", 2016, vol. 19, pp. 236-256; Zsófia Lóránd, *'A Politically Non-Dangerous Revolution is Not a Revolution': Critical Readings of the Concept of Sexual Revolution by Yugoslav Feminists in the 1970s*, "European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire", 2015, vol. 22/1, pp. 120-137.

[26] Nikolaos Papadogiannis, *Confronting "Imperalism" and "Loneliness". Sexual and Gender Relations among Young Communists in Greece, 1974-1981*, "Journal of Modern Greek Studies", 2011, vol. 29, pp. 219-250; David Beorlegui Zarranz, *«"Detrás de lo que quieren que seamos, está lo que somos". Revolución sexual y políticas sexuales feministas durante las décadas de los setenta y de los ochenta. Una aproximación al caso del País Vasco»*, "Feminismo/s", 2019, vol. 33, pp. 199-223.

from dictatorship.[27] Counterculture emphasised sex in demonstrations, artistic expressions, and hippie communes; the publishing market opened up to the new stimuli, publishing manuals on the "joys of sex" and on family and couple management that no longer ignored carnal love.[28]

Nevertheless, this ferment, which presented itself as universal, had its limitations. First of all, as John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman noted, it completely excluded forms of sexuality that were judged unacceptable or even pathological, from homosexuality to sadomasochism: 'The sexual liberalism of midcentury perpetuated notions of good and bad, and drew a sharp line between what was judged acceptable and what was labeled deviant.'[29] Moreover, the focus was essentially on male sexuality, and not even the most radical advocates of sexual liberation raised the issue of gender equality in the sexual sphere or, more generally, of female pleasure. William Masters and Virginia Johnson, authors of the groundbreaking *Human Sexual Response*,[30] which in 1966 had introduced sexuality — both on a personal level and in the media — to a wide, non-specialist audience, declared themselves fiercely anti-feminist, going so far as to claim that 'emancipated women' risked causing 'sexual dysfunction in the male'.[31] Largely absent from the debate, women saw their role in the mainstream sexual paradigm change, and the duty of purity was replaced by the duty of promiscuity.[32] In the United States, a boom in sex and love education

[27] With the obvious specificity of countries marked by instability and democratic transition. See Karina Felitti, *La revolución de la pildora anticonceptiva y la cuestión demografica en Buenos Aires. Apropiaciones y resignificaciones de un debate internacional*, in Kathya Araujo, Mercedes Prieto (eds.), *Estudios sobre sexualidades en América Latina,* Quito, FLACSO, 2008, pp. 161-178.

[28] On this theme, see Anna E. Ward, *Sex and the Me Decade. Sex and Dating Advice Literature of the 1970s*, "Women's Studies Quarterly", 2015, vol. 43, pp. 120-136. One of the most widely used manuals is Alex Comfort, *The Joy of Sex. A Gourmet Guide to Lovemaking*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1972, but it was anticipated by Helen Gurley Brown, *Sex and the Single Girl*, New York, Bernard Geis Associates, 1964 and by "J", *The Sensuous Woman,* USA, Lyle Staurt, 1969. In Europe, German Oswalt Kolle's sex education films were also well known (D. Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe*, cit., p. 137). The volumes by Alfred Kinsey and Masters & Johnson, instead, had a more scientific slant: Alfred Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Philadelphia/London, Saunders Company, 1948; Alfred Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, Philadelphia, Saunders Company, 1953; William H. Masters, Virginia E. Johnson, *Human Sexual Response*, Boston, Little, Brown & Co., 1966. For an analysis of the impact of these publications in Italy, see Fiammetta Balestracci, *The Influence of American Sexual Studies on the 'Sexual Revolution' of Italian Women*, in Ann-Kathrin Gembries et al., *Children by Choice? Changing Values, Reproduction, and Family Planning in the 20th Century*, Munich, De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2018, pp. 145-163.

[29] John D'Emilio, Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters. A History of Sexuality in America*, New York, Harper & Row, 1988, p. 277.

[30] Published by Feltrinelli in Italy the following year as *L'atto sessuale nell'uomo e nella donna*.

[31] S. Jeffreys, *Anticlimax*, cit., p. 170.

[32] See Massimo Perinelli, *«Second Bite of the Apple». The Sexual Freedom League and Revolutionary Sex in 1960s United States*, "Genesis", 2012, XI/1-2, pp. 41-66.

manuals helped girls to break away from 1950s decorum and the new "revolutionary" impulses by showing them the limits and boundaries of what was "right", albeit in a heteronormative and premarital logic,[33] as these examples show: 'Clean hair is sexy. Lots of hair is sexy too. Skimpy little hair styles and hair under your arms, on your legs and around your nipples isn't. […] Smiles are sexy… Talking all the time about anything is unsexy. Sphinxes and Mona Lisas knew what they were doing.'[34] In Italy, the main problem remained the lack of information on the subject; if, in private, girls learnt about the workings of their bodies only through the few conversations with family and friends, at a "public" and popular level, it was mainly illustrated magazines that talked about sexuality. The best reflection of the ambivalent nature of women's magazines were advice columns, those 'dichotomies between cultural and social models that characterised the emancipation of Italian women'.[35] Girls in the 1950s and 1960s conquered a small degree of autonomy by turning to an "other" authority, outside the family or institutions. In this way, the magazines interpreted a rupture that was immediately "frozen", made systemic, but which had in the meantime found its own way of expressing itself: through the 'socialisation of problems'.[36]

A good example of this ambivalence is Mike Bongiorno's answer to a young girl in the columns of *Grazia*, in 1958, who asked why she could not have a boyfriend like American girls: 'In Italy, a 15-year-old girl is considered a child (which she in fact is), and therefore in need of help and guidance. At 20, 21, she is a woman who, in most cases, does not yet know what path she will take.'[37] Bongiorno kept a column with an American progressive approach, but never missed the opportunity to highlight those age limits that the Italian

[33] By "heteronormative" I refer to a cultural model where heterosexuality is perceived as normal, expected and taken for granted, at the expense of other sexual expressions and orientations. Michael Warner introduced the concept (*Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet*, "Social Text", 1991, n. 29, pp. 3-17), which spread rapidly in the field of LGBTQ+ studies.

[34] H. Gurley Brown, *Sex and the Single Girl*, cit., p. 78. A few years later, Gurley Brown became the editor of *Cosmopolitan*.

[35] Manuela Di Franco, *Rotocalchi femminili nell'Italia Fascista. Grazia (1938-43)*, "The Italianist", 38/3, 2018, pp. 402-417, p. 413.

[36] Anna Del Bo Boffino, *Prefazione*, in B. Gasperini, *Più botte che risposte*, cit., p. 14. For references on the historiographical use of advice columns and women's magazines, see Anna Bravo, *Il fotoromanzo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2003; Penelope Morris, *The Harem Exposed: Gabriella Parca's* Le italiane si confessano, in Penelope Morris (ed.), *Women in Italy, 1945-1960. An Interdisciplinary Study*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp. 109-130; Ead., *Problems and Prescriptions. Motherhood and Mammismo in Postwar Italian Advice Columns and Fiction*, in Penelope Morris, Perry Willson (eds.), *La mamma. Interrogating a National Stereotype*, New York, Palgrave, 2018, pp. 77-104; Alessandra Gissi, *Corpi e cuori della Repubblica: privato e politico nella produzione di Anna Del Bo Boffino*, in Stefania Bartolini (ed.), *Attraversando il tempo: centoventi anni dell'Unione femminile nazionale (1899-2019)*, Rome, Viella, 2019, pp. 145-163.

[37] *Grazia*, "Parlate con Mike Bongiorno", 25 May 1958.

middle class would not question for more than a decade to come. The failure to accept the fact that adolescent girls were growing up fast and that times were changing went hand in hand with a lack of sex and love education, sending girls off the rails with innuendoes and vague reassurances. It was a paralysing situation that compromised personal and relational freedom in the name of an unspecified moral virtue whose guidelines, however, were not known; despite the different editorial lines and chronological time frames,[38] this seems to be a perfect application of the Foucauldian theory according to which the replacement of the metaphysical categories of sin and virtue with the categories of normality and abnormality is one of the fundamental ways in which sexuality is socially controlled in the Western world.[39]

At the same time, not even "medical" (the inverted commas are necessary) popularisation succeeded in undermining the pervasiveness of morality. In 1960, the readers' questions were not mentioned in a column published in *Grazia*, 'I consigli del medico' [The doctor's advice]. The expert responds allusively, referring to the 'failed arrival of the stork' when talking about infertility and describing the Ogino-Knaus method as 'the only physiologically and morally acceptable method for the prevention of pregnancy',[40] all the while using suggestive italics: 'Rossella's fear… does not seem to be *seriously* well-founded';[41] 'from *that perspective*, she is no more different than she thinks from many of her peers';[42] 'does she not think she can *personally* contribute to [her husband's] recovery?'[43] The reasons for concern remain unknown, albeit imaginable. The 'answers in disguise', as Enrico Dallarno called them in *Bolero film*,[44] or Bongiorno's 'salacious letters' in *Confidenze* give clarity neither to the modern reader nor to the anguished girl who scanned the magazines in search of even the slightest reassurance, trapped by the ignorance of her anatomy that filled her with unnecessary anxiety: 'I have to have an appendicitis operation and I am worried that the doctor will notice that I am no longer pure.'[45]

[38] For a detailed examination, see Penelope Morris, *A window on the private sphere: Advice columns, marriage, and the evolving family in 1950s Italy*, "The Italianist", 2007, n. 27, pp. 304-332.

[39] Michel Foucault, *La volontà di sapere*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1978.

[40] *Grazia*, "I consigli del medico", 24 July 1960.

[41] *Grazia*, "I consigli del medico", 7 August 1960.

[42] *Grazia*, "I consigli del medico", 24 July 1960.

[43] *Grazia*, "I consigli del medico", 23 October 1960.

[44] For example: 'You can be perfectly at ease. The same answer applies to Viriani Fi, La ragazza con un dubbio atroce, Contadina catanzarese, Ragazza in pena 20271, Giuseppina Roma, Maria di via Castelmanzo, Carpediem 1888, Ragazza ansiosa E 104 B […],' *Bolero film*, "Chi sono?", 31 December 1967. *Bolero film* was the second Italian periodical to publish photo-stories, aimed at a young audience, as shown in the description of the column 'Chi sono?' [Who am I?]: 'If you have doubts about matters concerning yourself or others, turn to "Who Am I?" […] Who am I? will be a slightly wiser and more experienced friend, who will always be happy to give anyone advice or clarification.'

[45] *Bolero film*, "Chi sono", 26 November 1967.

In the 1970s, sexual liberation first had to pass through the knowledge and liberation of one's own body, which was meticulously analysed and compared in a search for self-knowledge that had until then been prevented both in practice and in theory. Thus, in 1970, the first anatomically detailed response appeared in *Bolero film*, with an explanation of menstruation and the hymen.[46]

The situation was no better in the family context, as the oral sources tell us. 'Educastration',[47] as Mario Mieli called it, began with modesty about the female body — to be hidden, as opposed to that of the brothers — and continued with missing information, omissions and, at best, allusions. There is no mention of menstruation, pregnancy or childbirth, let alone sexual pleasure or intercourse, and the transmission of knowledge about sexuality was entrusted to confidential conversations with friends, to whispers under the stairs. Although local parish priests sometimes distributed small premarital manuals, these glossed over sexual matters as much as possible, at most illustrating the physiological functioning of the reproductive apparatus.

Maternal recommendations hardly conveyed a positive sense of sexuality; in a well-known survey conducted by Lieta Harrison in 1972, women talked about (marital) sex in terms of 'a vice', something done 'like dogs', 'like a kind of beast' and 'degrading'.[48] Even in environments where sex was not a taboo (e.g. peasant communities), sex education was not on the agenda. In this case, what was lacking was not so much physical contact but actual pleasure and familiarity with the subject and with bodies.

Self-discovery: menstruation and masturbation

One of the great educational taboos of the 1950s was undoubtedly menstruation. A 1966 survey by Harrison found that only 18 out of 256 parents had tried to discuss sex education with their daughters; 14 of these had limited themselves to explaining the menstrual cycle.[49] Menstruation was not discussed at school, and mothers vacillated between total reticence and some practical rules about hygiene. A few deviating indications were sometimes passed on by older sisters or friends, with half-truths that only added to the sense of prohibition and taboo that surrounded menstruation. Harrison shows us that the information available to girls was confusing ('it's ovaries that haven't been fertilised and that burst and break every month'),[50] when not completely wrong

[46] *Bolero film*, "Chi sono?", 28 June 1970.

[47] Mario Mieli, *Elementi di critica omosessuale*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2002, p. 17.

[48] Lieta Harrison, *La donna sposata. Mille mogli accusano*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1972, p. 26.

[49] Lieta Harrison, *L'iniziazione. Come le adolescenti italiane diventano donne*, Milan, Rizzoli, 1966.

[50] L. Harrison, *L'iniziazione*, cit., p. 39.

('it's crazy blood that we all throw away. Sure, men have them too').[51] The first period is a moment of transition from childhood to puberty. Many of my own interviewees had bad memories of their first period, as the women in the family only spoke about its negative aspects, thus implicitly condemning the female condition; the underlying message was that you are a woman, you can no longer play, have fun, you have to behave like a "decent" person. This is how Francesca, born in 1947 to a working-class family from Genoa,[52] described it:

> Back home, my aunt clearly told my mum, [and] my mother says to me (to think that my mother has always talked to me in Italian, even though she spoke Genoese dialect, because she didn't want to). She said: 'Vui, vegni chi!' [You, come here!]. She addressed me with the formal 'voi' pronoun. In Genoese, 'voi' can indicate respect, but it can also mean detachment. 'Vui, vegni chi!' I went, I followed her into the bedroom and there were six linen sanitary pads with fringes […]. And she says to me — I don't know how to say it in Genoese: 'You know very well what these things are for!' And I felt ashamed.

Ignorance could have tragic consequences, as emerges from one of Harrison's interviews with a girl who, convinced that she was bleeding to death like a cousin who had been in a motorcycle accident, drank bleach to speed up her death. Rushed to the emergency room, she explained her fears, which were met with 'mad laughter' from the doctors on duty and the girl's relatives.[53]

On the other hand, even when the topic was approached calmly, the results were not always positive, owing to the climate of sexophobia that prevailed in families. It was not easy for daughters to accept that their mothers talked about intimate topics, and embarrassment could turn into anger, as Emilia — born in 1946 in Genoa — told me:

> I remember my mother telling me — quite well, I must say — the whole story about menstruation. As a result, I remember very well that when I had my first period, I even had a stomach-ache, and I yelled at her: 'I got it! Did you see?' In the sense of 'you bitch', as if she had made me get it.[54]

[51] L. Harrison, *L'iniziazione*, cit., p. 46.

[52] The long interviews with Francesca proved valuable material for my research. The friendship that binds us — and a general nonchalance on her behalf — allowed me to gain her confidence in discussing certain elements of sexuality that I was unable to discuss with other participants, as well as to contextualise her experiences within a life story that Francesca told me on several occasions. The frequent references to her interviews are therefore not meant to make her representative of an entire generation; they are an attempt to trace an "ideal" biography of a 1970s girl who discovered her sexuality in the feminist context. The interviews were conducted in 2014, 2016 (collective) and 2017, at Francesca's home, and are now preserved at the Archivio dei Movimenti di Genova.

[53] L. Harrison, *L'iniziazione*, cit., p. 44.

[54] Collective interview conducted in Milan in October 2017, at Emilia's home. Five women were present, all members of a consciousness-raising collective formed on a professional basis (high school teachers) and still active today.

Where the female social network was still strong, the first period represented, if nothing else, entry into the community.[55] Thus, another interviewee reported that she 'finally felt like a woman worthy of being considered',[56] with the possibility of sharing ancient 'female knowledge'. Ferdinanda, born in 1949 into a Turinese family in which the social value of menstruation — as a distinction between women and men, as a moment of rest and sometimes even as a means of escape — was clearly still visible, describes her experience in the following words.

I was with my grandmother and she had had daughters who were suffering a lot. So she says: 'Ah, come here my child!' She pours a big glass of brandy and says: 'Drink it up.' 'Look grandma, I'm fine.' 'Don't think about it: drink it all up.' So I ended up feeling great, but I was completely drunk.[57]

The period was usually accompanied by a series of superstitious prohibitions that made the experience even more traumatic, as in the next extract from my interview with Francesca, cited earlier on, which shows how the prohibitions turned into physical paralysis. Francesca recounted the very first day of menstruation, before returning home and suffering her mother's "reproaches":

I knew what menstruation was because some of my friends had had it before me — in fact, I couldn't wait to get it, too, so that I could grow up. I told my aunt. She was nice, my aunt, I don't remember anything in particular, [but] she gave me a sanitary pad, still the linen ones. I remember the woman who hosted us, she said a phrase in Genoese that has stayed with me. She said: 'Oh, a l'è sciupà a tumata.' The tomato burst. Terrifying, I still remember it now. 'Ah, good, you're a young lady now.' Then my aunt says to me: you must be patient now, you can't come to the sea with us, you can't wash your feet or your head, you can't do anything — you can't wash yourself. And I say: 'Auntie, not even partially?' 'No.' 'Because my hair is dirty…' 'No.' So I stayed there. […] And I remember spending hours reading […], there in the house. By the way, something happened… I remember it well. I remember the light beam… I remember I washed my head. I couldn't resist. My hair was dirty, with salt maybe — I don't know. And I sat by the window where this light beam was coming in, to dry it. And then I did this [to get up] and I couldn't get up. I felt a terrible twinge in my uterus, in my vagina, I don't know where. I didn't try again, thinking my aunt's prophecy had come true. And so I stayed there for a long time, until they came… that was my first period.

In other testimonies, too, the first period is associated with a sense of immobility that is imposed on young girls on several levels. It is the shock of discovering blood — possibly followed by a reaction of fear and/or fascination — but

[55] A similar case is that of the female boarding schools, where "menstruating" women were often entitled to a separate bathroom, and thus to a "superiority" status in the eyes of their female companions.

[56] Paola, Milan, born in 1933.

[57] Collective interview conducted in May 2017 in Turin, in the studio of one of the interviewees. In addition to Ferdinanda, three other women were present, linked by a ten-year friendship but who had not shared the consciousness-raising experience.

also a kind of moral paralysis (e.g. the need to behave like "young ladies", the end of childhood activities and company, etc.) that often turns into a feeling of physical paralysis, that is, the idea of no longer being able to move because of pain or fear.

Italian girls growing up between the 1950s and the 1970s learnt to manage their period from an exclusively hygienic point of view, and the prescriptions only exacerbated the sense of social stigmatisation. The discussion was difficult also in the feminist field, and even Simone De Beauvoir — one of the intellectual symbols of the movement — was not at all comfortable talking about her own period: 'And once the first surprise has passed, the monthly annoyance does not disappear, time after time the maiden finds the same distaste for that foul, rotten smell rising from her body — a smell of swamp, of withered violets.'[58]

Similar taboos surrounded autoeroticism. To defy the prohibition of masturbation was to defy not only your parents but also divine wrath, in a travesty of magical thinking that marked an incomplete transition from childhood. During the 1970s, the feminist magazine "Sottosopra" often published excerpts of conversations that took place within feminist collectives: these quotations were used at the time to provide insights, and we can use them today as subtle guides to understand the feelings of that emotional community. For example, a woman talks about autoeroticism in an article titled 'Alcune testimonianze tratte dalla riunione su educazione cattolica e sessualità' [Some excerpts from the meeting on Catholic education and sexuality]: 'When I tried to masturbate, violating one of the main prohibitions of repressive Catholic education, I was terrified of being punished by the people I loved (the death of my grandma).'[59] When Harrison asked her 300 respondents if they had ever masturbated, she discovered that 53 per cent had done so between the ages of 12 and 13, but only 26 per cent continued to do so in adult age.[60] The condemnation of the autoerotic act places blame on the sexual body (especially the female body), one's anatomy and one's pleasure, as we can read in "Sottosopra": 'Masturbation was the first guilt-induced confrontation with my body. Mum discovering me, disapproving, excluding me from her love: the biblical fable repeats itself. You lose someone's love: you have sinned.'[61] Autoeroticism thus emerges as the discovery of the "sinful" body, removed from the purity of childhood, which included nudity: a body that, in the case of women, had

[58] Simone De Beauvoir, *Il secondo sesso*, Milan, il Saggiatore, 2002, p. 367.

[59] "Sottosopra", 1974, n. 2, p. 81.

[60] L. Harrison, *L'iniziazione,* cit. According to Alfred Kinsey's studies, as of 1948, more than 90 per cent of male respondents in the United States were masturbating; five years later, the same habit affected 60 per cent of women (A. Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, cit.; A.Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, cit.).

[61] *Alcune testimonianze tratte dalla riunione su educazione cattolica e sessualità*, "Sottosopra", 1974, n. 2, p. 75.

already been punished by menstruation and which, through masturbation, lost all social legitimacy. In Italy, the taboo on masturbation took on religious connotations that added to pseudo-medical superstitions; it was the priest who watched over the good deeds of young men and women, creating a universe of untruths that were inevitably confusing and guilt-inducing for young boys and girls, summed up in the commandment 'when you sleep, put your hands on the sheets', which many interviewees remembered as an unbreakable rule, however obscure.

If, in the consciousness-raising groups, the theme of menstruation emerged spontaneously from the very first discussions and was confronted openly, the discovery of masturbation was one of the turning points for many feminist collectives — whether it was practised collectively to compare the various sensations or discussed to analyse modalities and break taboos. In the following extracts, two interviewees — whom I consider to be representative of a certain political generation — from different cultural backgrounds but with the same need to experiment evoke memories of the way they explored their intimacy: 'When I masturbated, I thought I was the only one in the world who did it. Because you didn't talk, and if you talked to your friends, you knew things in a distorted way, [because] nobody talked to you about these things, there was no literature, there were no films, there was nothing' (Mariangela, born 1950 in Turin);[62] 'I looked at my vagina in the mirror, I masturbated in front of a mirror, I wanted to see what happened, how I reacted… I did all these things' (Francesca, Genoa).

Consciousness-raising collectives rarely went so far as to analyse the symbolic value of menstruation and autoeroticism for women's bodies. While reflection on the menstrual cycle developed a few years later, in the context of a form of feminism that was more concerned with restoring harmony with the earth and with one's own deepest being,[63] the works of Betty Dodson proved to be most representative for female masturbation.[64]

[62] Mariangela was part of the only "mixed" consciousness-raising collective that I have come across, which briefly gathered feminist women and homosexual men in Turin. The interview was conducted in July 2017 at the participant's home.

[63] In Italy, Luciana Percovich has worked extensively on this topic, from the translation of Barbara Eherenreich, Deirdre English, *Le streghe siamo noi*, Milan, La Salamandra, 1975 to her own book *La coscienza nel corpo. Donne, salute e medicina negli anni Settanta*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2005. For a more detailed analysis, see Elise Thiébaut, *Questo* è il *mio sangue. Manifesto contro il tabù delle mestruazioni*, Turin, Einaudi, 2018; Sophie Laws, *Issues of Blood. The Politics of Menstruation*, Houndmills, MacMillan, 1990.

[64] Betty Dodson, *Liberating Masturbation. A Meditation on Self Love*, New York, Dodson, 1978.

Virginity, first times and frigidity

The "ultimate proof" of one's "dedication" was something that a girl from a good family should never concede. '[H]ow can you still be such a silly girl at 20?' wrote Donna Letizia in June 1958,[65] answering a young woman who had asked whether her partner's requests were appropriate. It is through advice columns that we can trace the ideal development of the concept of virginity that was proposed to the "model reader".[66] The myth of virginity had unclear boundaries; in response to a girl worried about compromising herself, Enrico Dallarno wrote — a few years later in "Bolero film" — that at the age of 24, '[a] kiss can take nothing away from your purity'.[67] Another recurrent element is the bugbear of one's own morality, which indicates the right direction and the right measure, as Mike Bongiorno suggested in "Confidenze", in 1966:

> We cannot make ultra-careful and detailed lists of what a girl can and cannot do with her boyfriend, of what is permissible and what is not. You gave the answer yourself: an honest girl defends herself instinctively and controls herself following her instincts, and she knows very well what she must and must not concede. However, there is a very charming popular saying: An honest girl concedes nothing, and when the lover begs or threatens her, she concedes even less. Very nice, isn't it? You must behave accordingly.[68]

The myth of virginity was at the root of the double standard in Italian society.[69] Sociologist Laura Carpenter has identified three interpretative frameworks within which the loss of virginity can be inscribed, and which can be useful — in analytical terms — in the Italian context: gift (i.e. expression of the subject's value), stigma (discrediting the subject) and passage (loss of virginity as a transition to adulthood). The frames sometimes overlap (for example, when virginity is seen as a female gift and a male stigma),[70] and in the 1960s moral "variants" occasionally emerged that sought to integrate the double standard into the new models of adolescent intimacy, as Francesca explained:

> Love. Love above all. You can do anything for love. When there is love… well, my father even told me explicitly, when I was a bit older: if I had come home pregnant they would have welcomed me with open arms if I had done it for love. Ça va sans dire, that I would have

[65] *Grazia*, "Saper vivere", 22 June 1958.

[66] See Umberto Eco, *Lector in fabula*, Milan, Bompiani, 1979.

[67] *Bolero film*, "Chi sono?", 5 June 1960.

[68] *Confidenze. Settimanale di vita femminile*, "Confidenze con Mike Bongiorno", 13 February 1966. *Confidenze*, founded by the writer Liala and directed for almost forty years by Emilio d'Emilio, was aimed at a popular audience.

[69] The concept of the "double standard", introduced by Keith Thomas in 1959, refers to the different expectations in terms of sexuality that society imposes on men and women (Keith Thomas, *The Double Standard*, "Journal of the History of Ideas", 1959, vol. 20, pp. 195-216).

[70] Laura Carpenter, *Virginity Lost. An Intimate Portrait of First Sexual Experiences*, New York-London, New York University Press, 2005.

done it for love! […] It was all about falling in love/not falling in love: falling in love was a good thing. Sex without love would have been the most perverse thing.

On this topic, the experiences described by the interviewees are highly diverse, and it is impossible to find a social pattern in the families' reactions.[71] Analysing the excerpts of three interviews with women coming from similar social contexts (working-class families in northern Italy), I came across extreme statements ('Either you change your life or you have a day to pack your bags'),[72] moral condemnations ('When my parents found out that I was sleeping with my boyfriend, they took me to a psychologist because it was not normal for me to say that I wanted to sleep with him. Then they told me: "Society has absolved you, but we haven't"'),[73] and lukewarm positions ('I alone created this virginity reticence of mine').[74] Each family set its own emotional standard, which seemed to be much more elastic and varied than the women's press suggested.

If women were still virgins when they got married, virginity presented itself to them in all its drama, loaded with a symbolic-sacral value that could certainly not put the newly-weds at ease. In addition, the "loss of virginity" marked a break between love games and "adult", reproductive sexuality. This was a real loss of innocence — or carefreeness — and of the equal relationship that may have existed during the engagement, as Paola (born in 1933 in Milan) said:

When I got married and went on my honeymoon, G. did not penetrate me for 15 days. We tried many times, and on each occasion I pulled back […] while when we were engaged, I remember that in the evening we went to a place where the power station was, a bit secluded, where we would make out passionately. But I was always very careful that he didn't penetrate me because my mother had told me that men are rascals, that they first get you pregnant and then don't marry you. So I told him: 'Until I get married I don't want to do that thing.' Then when I got married, I couldn't do it any more![75]

The women who met in the consciousness-raising groups therefore came from various repressive contexts and questioned the concept of virginity at length,

[71] I would like to stress that even the paradigm of a more liberal North as opposed to a more conservative South did not emerge from the interviews I conducted. Although the sample is not representative in a statistical sense, I believe that the myth of "southern virginity" has yet to be investigated.

[72] Piera, Genoa, born in 1950 (?). Interview conducted at the Archivio dei Movimenti di Genova in April 2017.

[73] Toni, Milan, born in 1955. Interview conducted at the participant's home in June 2017; in addition to her, three other women from the same consciousness-raising collective were present.

[74] Rosalba, Turin, born in 1943. Interview conducted in May 2017 in Turin, in the studio of one of the interviewees.

[75] Interview conducted in June 2017; in addition to her, three other women from the same consciousness-raising collective were present.

trying to move from the interpretative paradigm of the 'gift' to that of the 'passage', defending the personal relevance of the "first time" while denying its social value. This is what "Our Bodies, Ourselves" — the most popular feminist manual on sexuality at the time — wrote on the topic:

> The loss of virginity, and hence the loss of the state of purity and innocence, is viewed as a proof of maturity, a definite breaking away from parents and a move toward autonomy and independence. Autonomy is surely a good thing, but the cost of sexual exploration should not have to be a sharp, brittle separation if that doesn't seem necessary.[76]

Virginity is presented as something alien, something that does not belong to one's real experience. Hence, just as young girls in the 1950s anxiously wrote to the magazines about not being able to "understand" whether they were still virgins or not (which testifies to the social and non-biological construction of the concept), feminists once again overturned the model and began to point to virginity as a male myth to which it was better not to succumb — at least on a theoretical level. Within the New Left, virginity thus became something to get rid of as soon as possible, precisely in order to not submit to the bourgeois blackmail of waiting for the "right" man — that is, the one with whom to walk down the aisle — or to that of sex (and virginity itself) as the only power in women's hands. In this regard, the interviewees often spoke of a 'burden': 'At one point, it became an issue for me: "Here, I can't be a virgin any more!"';[77] '[I]t was something I had to get rid of, I was almost ashamed to say it, at my age';[78] 'Enough. There I decided I would give it away without being married. It seemed too much of an insult to my intelligence'.[79] They also claimed to have waited 'a long time' before they had sex for the first time, which reflects a generational anxiety to free oneself from virginity. In reality, almost all of them lost their virginity between the ages of 19 and 21, reflecting a stable trend that belies the fears of every single woman,[80] but the testimonies report the urgency felt at the time.

Tales of first times are often tragic: on the one hand, there was the urge to free oneself from virginity, from the bourgeois heritage that prohibited free love; on the other hand, the inexperience of one's body, combined with

[76] The Boston Women's Health Book Collective, *Noi e il nostro corpo*, cit., p. 47.

[77] Franca, Turin, born in 1947. Interview conducted in May 2017 in Turin, in the studio of one of the interviewees.

[78] Vanna, Florence, born in 1950. Interview conducted in September 2017 in Turin, in the studio of one of the interviewees. Seven women who were once part of the Collettivo Femminista delle Cure were present.

[79] Toni, Milan, born in 1955.

[80] The figure is also confirmed by the results of Fabris and Davis' survey of 1978, which found that the average age of first sexual intercourse was 19 (regardless of gender). Giampaolo Fabris, Rowena Davis, *Il mito del sesso. Rapporto sul comportamento sessuale degli italiani*, Milan, Mondadori Editore, 1978.

the boys' own immaturity, made the first experiences of sexual intercourse demanding, painful and by no means pleasant. Let us again take Francesca's words as an example:

> In November '68 — so at the very end of that year — I had 'full' sex for the first time, as they used to say. In [the] occupied physics [department]. It was after the demonstration for Avola: we did the demonstration, then we went to physics, which was occupied, and at a certain point R. took me by the hand and we went to the dean's office. […] We got on the floor and I had penetrative sex for the first time — not very pleasant, to be sure. Not very pleasant. I learnt after [some time] that it had been his first time too, but he never told me — he told me a long time after. So: the hurry, the darkness… Then I absolutely wanted to wash myself, because I was afraid [of getting pregnant], so I went… Where are the toilets? I went [to the toilet] and then I couldn't find him any more: I couldn't find the way back, because it was so dark. So I went down to where the light was, where the assembly was, and I didn't see R. any more: he had probably stayed up there waiting for me. But it was getting late, I had to go back because my parents were not so liberal about these things, so there was a guy who lived near me, he gave me a lift and I left. In pain, really, it hurt… With the fear of getting pregnant.

This testimony merits an in-depth analysis as it contains several important elements. The narrative moves on two levels: the political environment of 1968 and the intimate, almost fairy-tale-like sphere of sexual intercourse. The first level is solar, open and luminous (in the strict sense of the word: 'I went down to where the light was, where the assembly was'). The presence of the comrades, the community and the occupation, and the choice of the dean's office act as a further reflection of the insult to the institutions. Interestingly, though, the two temporal indications do not correspond: the demonstration in support of the victims of Avola took place after 2 December 1968,[81] hence not 'in November', as the interviewee says at the beginning. This minor error could be the result of a need to anticipate her first time (confirmed by the aside 'so at the very end of that year'), or perhaps she wanted to identify a more "deserving" context, namely a demonstration worthy of her sexual initiation.[82] This political level is juxtaposed with the personal level, marked by fear. Here the discourse becomes broken while suggestive, fairy-tale-ish images recur: the darkness, the lost 'path', the anguished questions and, finally, the homecoming that separates her from her beloved. The contrast between light and darkness, collectivity and solitude perfectly represents the dichotomy between the "duty" to make love in the spirit of 1968 and the girls' resistance, difficulties and fears.

But how to find pleasure in sex after losing one's virginity? Starting in 1964, "Confidenze" published a column by a 'Dr Morgante', who reassured

[81] On 2 December 1968, the police fired on a peasant demonstration near Avola, killing two people and injuring several others. In the following days and weeks, mainly students and workers — in contrast to the trade unions — participated in various solidarity demonstrations.

[82] Alessandro Portelli proposed this paradigm for the incongruity he found in the case of the killing of Luigi Trastulli. A. Portelli, *Storie orali,* cit., chapter I.

readers that there was no link between frigidity and infertility, talked about female anatomy and dispelled certain taboos about the menstrual period. The following year, Gabriella Parca attributed men's unwillingness to take women's needs into account to the habit of visiting prostitutes, and this led to accusations and self-accusations of frigidity.[83]

Yet, despite attempts to tear the veil on an intellectual level, the "myth" of frigidity continued to haunt young women, who were accused by their husbands of not being able to enjoy sex. In consciousness-raising sessions, frigidity was one of the first issues to be analysed on a personal level; on a political level, it was seen as a form of 'passive resistance' to 'predatory' male sexuality, in which female erotic urges could not find room for expression and were destined to be repressed — often even unconsciously, without being named.[84] Feminism interpreted frigidity in terms of its functional role in maintaining male power: not only as a limitation of female sexuality, which was not explored at the level of couple dynamics but under the threat of frigidity as a fault, but also as an expression of desired female passivity. With the slogan 'neither whores nor madonnas, just women', feminists reappropriated the search for a sexual dimension of their own, not modelled on the male dichotomy that separated erotic potential from the virtues of a good wife. Brunella Gasperini introduced the topic to the general public in the pages of *Annabella*, where she finally explained (we are now in 1970) how to overcome — most of the time — that "frigidity" that torments women:

> More than frigidity it is, in my opinion, a kind of sexual misunderstanding due to the lack of complete confidence, mutual fear of hurting each other [and] reluctance (frequent among spouses) to talk about 'certain things'. […] Many women who consider themselves frigid (and are considered as such by their man) are, in reality, women who are not understood: and they are not understood precisely because they keep silent and pretend. Physical understanding is not always easy nor always immediate: most of the time, it is a conquest that requires time, attention, imagination, tenderness, but above all mutual trust.[85]

Sexual liberation

The consciousness-raising sessions — and the various self-published documents that resulted from these — marked the transition from sexual revolution to sexual 'liberation', as it was called at the time, especially in the United States and Western Europe. The term was first used in the title of a workshop held in 1967 in Newark (US), organised by the female members of the Students

[83] Gabriella Parca, *I sultani. Mentalità e comportamento del maschio italiano*, Milan, Rizzoli, 1965, p. 62.

[84] Ada Ribero, *Una questione di libertà. Il femminismo degli anni Settanta*, Turin, Rosenberg&Sellier, 1999, p. 216.

[85] B. Gasperini, *Più botte che risposte*, cit., p. 245.

for a Democratic Society, but the concept was deemed too radical. And yet, the most well-attended workshop at the national conference commemorating the first congress for women's rights in the United States, the following year, was a meeting on sexuality organised by Anna Koedt and Ti-Grace Atkinson; the exchange of intimacies and fantasies (even those outside the norm, like sado-masochistic or lesbian ones) continued throughout the night and provoked deep reflection. In Italy, feminist sexual liberation came slightly later but was driven by the same problems as those faced across the Atlantic, enhanced by the burden of a society struggling to adapt to the innovations brought about by young people, not just women. The critique of the family institution, which David Cooper decreed as the 'death of the family' in 1972,[86] was elaborated in Italy as a difficult network of compromises and small personal revolutions, in which free sexuality was more a consequence than a cause of rebellion.

Sexuality was a dominant theme in the consciousness-raising sessions. Its political and psychoanalytic interpretation made it the best terrain on which to confront each other, starting with one's doubts and weaknesses. Paradoxically, talking about sexuality was "easy": sexual repression had already been questioned for years (even by mainstream culture); repressive education was common ground for all; and the "enemy" was not difficult to identify — though not so easy to defeat. With the exception of a few critics of this 'sexocentric' approach,[87] the discourse on sex opened the door to a mutual trust that allowed women to gradually analyse emerging dynamics, problems and personal anxieties. Furthermore, sexuality embodied feminist slogans and ideals: the 'personal-political', the recovery of a denied identity, the centrality of the body and women's right to physicality outside the domestic space. Group consciousness-raising was the main tool to achieve this further liberation, that is, the creation of new parameters of sexuality, with the search for a "widespread sexuality" that was not strictly coital: this idea was taken up by Shulamith Firestone, who in "The Dialectic of Sex" incorporated Marcusian concepts and the notion that sexual liberation meant freeing oneself first and foremost from the 'tyranny of the genitals'.[88] As suggested by the anthropologist Margaret Mead, whose studies became an important intellectual reference for 1970s feminism, for a woman to achieve full sexual satisfaction it is necessary that she lives in a society that recognises and values her desire, that she can understand the mechanisms underlying her sexual anatomy and that her culture provides for the teaching of sexual techniques that can bring her

[86] David Cooper, *La morte della famiglia*, Turin, Einaudi, 1972.

[87] Typewritten document by Agnese Piccirillo, "Autocoscienza", 1977 in Archivio delle Donne del Piemonte, Fondo Agnese Piccirillo, AP 1.

[88] Shulamith Firestone, *La dialettica dei sessi. Autoritarismo maschile e società tardo-capitalista*, Rimini-Florence, Guaraldi, 1976, p. 7.

to orgasm.[89] Clearly, none of these factors were present in 1960s Italy: feminism tried to give answers in this direction and, at the same time, to offer a horizon of meaning to the many who felt inadequate to both the current "free" model and the repressive one proposed by the previous generation. Reclaiming a female form of sexuality meant subverting the masculine symbolic and structural order, as well as reasserting one's femininity (i.e. one's right to difference) outside the stereotypical canons of the dichotomous "saint or whore" model. The most fundamental step was confrontation: the discovery that one's private distress (at the time only women's magazines provided a hint of comfort) was actually a collective problem — even a political one, as would happen later.

During the consciousness-raising sessions, the symbolic, individual and political levels of the discourse on sexuality overlapped, creating a narrative that moved seamlessly from the difficulty of reaching orgasm to the rejection of seeing the female body reduced to a reproductive apparatus, from the value of sex in a patriarchal society to personal experiences with men. In this way, a 'collective heritage' was formed,[90] namely a common base against which to compare oneself in order to distance oneself *personally* from the perception of subalternity in relationships (especially physical ones) with men, and *socially* from the phallocentric conception of sexuality and from the reification of women's bodies. The fact that women came together to talk about sexuality triggered a "naming" process that also concerned sexual pleasure, as with all issues raised during consciousness-raising sessions. For feminists, it meant getting a grip on reality, an affirmation of the self in the couple's relationship and on a public level that women had never felt before, and which led to greater confidence even in sexual terms, as Piera from Genoa (23 years old at the time) explained:

> You were perfectly happy to demand pleasure if you didn't feel it. […] It's like when Pennac said that we were allowed to not finish books. You say, 'Didn't you know that?' Well yes, but… And the same with the idea of clitoral pleasure: it was so established that we felt entitled to demand it if we didn't achieve it. So from that point of view I got a lot out of it, because I felt very confident in a relationship.

The feminist political demand was for a sexuality free from the productive and productivist rhythms that capitalism imposed not only in the workplace but also in private life, in moments of leisure and in relationships, as summarised in a 1974 document by the Collettivo Femminista Genovese.

> How do we break the reproductivist mode in which love is understood (reaching coitus or, at least, "coming" one, two, three times) when productivity is taken as the general criterion

[89] Margaret Mead, *Male and Female. A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World*, USA, Morrow, 1975, p. 294.

[90] A. Ribero, *Una questione di libertà*, cit., p. 213.

of capitalist social organisation? How can we surrender to the time needed for pleasure to expand when our everyday life is punctuated by tight schedules, [when it] is a sequence of time cards to be punched? […] The kind of sexuality that emerges from our needs as women […] is revolutionary precisely because it violently shocks [and] denies, [because] it has a logic that is profoundly different from that of the system, and only we women can concretely push it forward to the extent that it prefigures different human relationships.[91]

The discourse on the rediscovery of female pleasure cannot be separated from the two key texts of the time: Anna Koedt's "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" (1968, published in Italy in 1970) and Carla Lonzi's "La donna clitoridea e la donna vaginale", first published in 1971.[92] As much as we can criticise both these texts for their rigid approach to the distinction between a 'free' orgasm (clitoral) and one rehearsed for the 'pleasure of the patriarch' (vaginal),[93] at the time, they were launching pads for the all-feminist concept of a 'diffuse', non-genital and non-coital form of sexuality, which could break out of the crumbling logic of male sexuality and the capitalist system.

In the reconsideration of the modalities of making love and giving pleasure, the phallus was the main target, understood as a symbolic and factual element of male dominance in the sexual domain. The battle was ideological — with a radical and subversive interpretation of Freudian paradigms — but also practical, as women rejected coitus in favour of a more playful and less genital sexuality. Lesbian women, among others, emphasised this.[94] The homosexuals of FUORI! DONNA 'see contemporary society as one that practises sexual terrorism in order to transform sexuality from a joyful and open potential into something trapped in procreative and heterosexual sexuality; one that deprives sex of the magnificent plurality of expressions to which lesbians nowadays look, and to which non-lesbians can look […]'.[95] Feminism turned the body, the primary agent of sexuality, into a political body. The awareness of the reification and commodification of the female body was one of the first commonalities between feminist groups, who often came together to organise exhibitions and design posters against sexist advertising, or who reviewed periodicals, illustrated magazines and even "La Settimana Enigmistica" to refine their

[91] Collettivo Femminista Genovese, "La nostra sessualità", 1974 in Archivio dei Movimenti di Genova, Fondo Elvira Boselli.

[92] There is no certainty about Carla Lonzi's contacts with overseas feminist writings. The Italian translation of Koedt's document was circulated by Anabasi in 1972, but it is possible that Lonzi had read it during her visit to the United States. However, there are no explicit references to the text in any of her writings (see Maria Luisa Boccia, *L'io in rivolta. Vissuto e pensiero di Carla Lonzi*, Milan, La Tartaruga, 1990).

[93] Carla Lonzi, *Donna clitoridea e donna vaginale*, Milan, Scritti di Rivolta Femminile, 1971, p. 7.

[94] See Elena Biagini, *L'emersione imprevista. Il movimento delle lesbiche in Italia negli anni '70 e '80*, Pisa, Edizioni ETS, 2018.

[95] "Documento del gruppo Fuori! e del Fuori! Donna di Torino per il II Congresso del MLD a Roma", April 1975 in Fondazione Sandro Penna, Archivio del FUORI!, fascicolo 193.

critique of the female model that appeared in the articles and jokes of these publications.

The denial of the female body (and of the comparison with the male body) can be traced back to childhood, when games are censored by the watchful parental eye that allows neither the vision nor the sharing of one's physicality, both with adults and between children. The following words by Francesca reveal how the participants of a childish game ('when I was a young child') turn into older subjects ('there was a boy') when maternal censorship intervenes, semantically symbolising the awareness that the body concerns adulthood.

> I have two brothers and I had a father. They walked around in their underwear, if anything, but my mother didn't want it. She would say: 'Go get dressed!' — to my father, especially — "*gh'è a figetta!*," can't you see the little girl is here.' So I didn't get a chance to see […]. I remember, when I was a young child, playing doctors in the country — we built a kind of tent in the garden with some friends. And there was a boy who examined my belly. My mother came — she gave us hell!

The rediscovery of the body was a collective act that took place during self-visit sessions, or a private one, when the stimuli of consciousness-raising led women to want to know more about themselves. At the same time, the male body was rediscovered, no longer seen as virile and indestructible but as a tender, welcoming materiality. In the 1970s, the visual language also changed in this direction, and men's bodies became (also) the bodies of fathers, actively seeking physical contact with their children.[96] This would have been unthinkable only a few years before.

In addition to the body, feminists discovered that they had sexual fantasies. Already in "Our Bodies, Ourselves", the Boston Women's Health Book Collective opened the door to erotic 'fantasies', emphasising that they could be far removed from feminist 'political correctness':

> Learning from our fantasies instead of repressing them can be liberating and help us to take the initiative in sexual intercourse, even to accept feeling attracted to a person of the same sex, knowing that we can choose whether or not to act on our fantasies. Learning to accept our fantasies has been so exhilarating that we want to describe some of them. Their variety shows how complex our sexuality is, and we are pleased to begin exploring this complexity.[97]

And yet, Brunella Gasperini replied — in the aforementioned publication in *Annabella* — to a woman complaining that her partner was not 'satisfied' with her 'conjugal duty' and demanded more from her, that 'there is nothing that can "humiliate" a wife if it is done with love and for love'.[98] Censorship

[96] N. Lodato, *Il caso Duepiù*, cit., p. 80.
[97] The Boston Women's Health Book Collective, *Noi e il nostro corpo*, cit., p. 49.
[98] B. Gasperini, *Più botte che risposte*, cit., p. 246.

of sexual practices that go beyond coitus resulted in women (but, to a lesser extent, also men) not having collective parameters with which to compare their fantasies or their partner's demands, and hence not knowing how to behave.

Apart from allowing a basic confrontation with what was frequent or infrequent, "normal" or "perverse", consciousness-raising ultimately led to an attempt to gain an awareness of the psychic dynamics underlying sexual fantasies: an awareness that did not disregard a certain degree of ideology, but which was undoubtedly functional to a path of acceptance of one's inner world. At least, this is what was hoped and theorised; in practice, confidence within consciousness-raising groups suffered severe blows when the collective did not consider some sexual fantasies or practices "politically" acceptable, or rejected them — from homosexuality to pornography, via fantasies of domination that "returned" to man the symbolic power he had been deprived of in the political sphere. In this sense, Francesca touched upon one of the cornerstones of emotional communities: the sharing of 'moral emotions'.[99]

I really felt guilty using porn. I could talk to my female friends about what I was doing, even a bit out of bounds, […] with the man. But to say that [I used porn]… I think I would have provoked a negative reaction: "Ah, me, porn…!" There were a lot of people who said, "Ah, I can't even watch those things!"

Conclusion

Sexuality acted as a testing ground for the consciousness-raising technique, highlighting its merits and limitations, strengths and weaknesses. The discourse on sex is the clearest example of how new modes of self-narrative and the political analysis of experience led to a different everyday practice, which deconstructed interpersonal relationships and categories of interpreting reality. Consciousness-raising is the feminine, or feminist, strategy of reappropriating — at least in part — the discourse on sex: that 'endless grinding of the word' that Foucault later identified as the main characteristic of sexuality in the Christian Western world,[100] but which had until then remained the prerogative of a masculine and male-centred language. By replacing censorship with a hitherto unheard nonchalance of the body and speech, including dances, gestures and slogans, feminists reappropriated an expressive, even vulgar, dimension of great disruptive value. This operation took place on both a relational and a personal level, owing to the young age of most of the participants in the consciousness-raising sessions — and in the feminist movement in general — but also to the constant attention that society reserved (and still

[99] J. M. Jaspers, *Emotions and Social movements*, cit., p. 295.
[100] Michel Foucault, *La volontà di sapere*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2013, p. 43.

reserves) to the sexual sphere: from a "class" perspective (not new to the feminist movement, which had many points of contact with the New Left, especially in Italy), this was one of the terrains on which to fight the bourgeoisie, which had made sexuality a central point of its identity.[101]

The sexual relationship, as a primary instinctive experience, is the terrain where emotional communities clash most: personal unease about the proposal of a new model of sexuality — free, uninhibited and revolutionary on paper, but systemic and masculine in practice — was soon transformed into a collective revolt against a world seen as the exclusive prerogative of masculinity, incapable of accommodating female needs, necessities and pleasure. For feminism, finding the words to say it and, immediately afterwards, the gestures to do it meant going on to construct a (self-)conscious sexuality, no longer imposed or suffered but pursued with curiosity. It is also through words that the proposal of a new emotional standard is shaped, endowed with a specific, generational vocabulary — one that young women lacked, especially in the field of sexuality, as the letters to the magazines show. It is no surprise, then, that the theories of the time were imbued with a rigidity that did not sit well with the concept of free sexuality; this not only reflected the ideological imprint of those years, but the difficult process of appropriating a new emotional standard also brought along a certain radicality — at least in words. The denial of pleasure in the coital sexual experience, which recurs in numerous testimonies and even more so in the writings of the time, was not necessarily the result of a personal experience, but rather the discovery and claiming of new and different pleasures that called for a rejection of previous practices in order to assert themselves and gain legitimacy.

Nevertheless, this process was neither simple nor immediate, and consciousness-raising failed to undermine the deepest part of the self, leaving it to experience — bodily experience — alone to serve as an example, as a 'historical sign' against which to fight.[102] For consciousness-raising feminism, the inability to change the psychic world and transform it into political discourse meant becoming aware of the impossibility of affecting the deepest structures of the self and reality. Whether it was a question of self-preservation, self-protection, a sin of youth or a genuine political will, this failure prevented consciousness-raising from asserting itself outside the unique experience of 1970s feminism.

Consciousness-raising has opened new paths and changed lives, allowing women to position themselves outside a relationship with a man, to value themselves in a political and active dimension, and to find ways of asserting them-

[101] In addition to Foucault's theories, for a historical examination of the link between sexuality and the bourgeoisie, see D. Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe*, cit., and Hera Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution. English Women, Sex, and Contraception, 1800-1975*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005.

[102] M. Foucault, *La volontà di sapere*, cit., p. 35.

selves in almost every area, public and private. However, each of these discoveries has been an opening rather than a conclusion, and too many denials and too many unspoken words (particularly regarding power and leadership) have undermined the completeness of the discourse. In the following decades, women's groups have tried to understand the shortcomings of 1970s feminism, often by claiming that consciousness-raising failed to address the transcendent level: the unconscious, female "naturalness" and motherhood.

What remains of consciousness-raising is a new methodological proposal, *partire da sé* [starting from oneself], with the potential to change the political discourse and open up trajectories that the feminists of the past were not always able to fully cross, but which paved the way for future generations. The new perspective on sexuality is one of these trajectories: a projection into the future rather than an achievement to be attributed to activists, who often struggled to manage the clash between theory and reality, between discoveries and inhibitions, between the desire to explore and the education they received. The path to identifying female pleasure involved not only bodily, almost anatomical discoveries (surprisingly simple, even if shocking) but also the difficult task of finding a mental and physical space that had not been shaped by male, mainstream sexuality. For feminists, this meant confronting internalised models, figuring out if and how to make them their own, sometimes accepting the arousal derived from male forms of sexuality (e.g. pornography) or "politically incorrect" sexual fantasies (e.g. sadomasochism), sometimes deconstructing them and giving them a new ideological value.[103] This task has been carried out on several levels, from the personal — even psychoanalytical — to the political, especially in the homosexual milieu, but historically it has manifested itself more as a subtle trace than as a real revolution.

Translated by Andrea Hajek

[103] For Pat Califia, a lesbian sadomasochist feminist and founder of a sadomasochist society on the West Coast, sadomasochism has an ideological function. It is a way of using sex to demonstrate real sexual power, in this case, a female one: 'Sadomasochism is power, not pain' (B. Ehrenreich et al., *Remaking love*, cit., p. 130).

A choice for Europe, a choice for growth? The Bank of Italy, the Pandolfi Plan and the European Monetary System, 1977-1979

Giandomenico Piluso*

Tra il 1977 e il 1979 la creazione del Sistema monetario europeo (SME) introdusse, per l'Italia, un elemento che sarebbe divenuto centrale nella strategia di aggiustamento agli shock macroeconomici degli anni Settanta, il "vincolo esterno", uno strumento politico di matrice tecnocratica cui si affidava il risanamento della finanza pubblica e il rilancio della competitività dell'economia del paese. Le riforme dell'ambizioso programma concepito da un economista della Banca d'Italia, Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, nell'estate del 1978 per consentire all'economia italiana di recuperare competitività, noto come "Piano Pandolfi", delinearono i tratti essenziali dell'ingresso della lira nello SME esattamente quale "vincolo esterno", sulla scorta di indicazioni del direttore generale della Banca d'Italia, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, nonostante le obiezioni di merito manifestate dal governatore Paolo Baffi. In quei frangenti la Banca d'Italia assunse consapevolmente quel ruolo di supplenza che ne avrebbe caratterizzato l'azione nel decennio seguente, motivando e orientando le scelte politiche del paese a favore di una sempre più stringente integrazione economica e monetaria dell'Europa, in quella direzione che si sarebbe infine precisata con il Trattato di Maastricht. Il vincolo esterno delineato da Padoa-Schioppa con il Piano Pandolfi, coerentemente con l'impianto dello SME, si spostava ai vincoli di cambio connessi alla finanza pubblica e ai fenomeni di fiscal dominance che ancora caratterizzavano la politica monetaria in Italia, si trasformava cioè in un vincolo di politica fiscale che il cosiddetto divorzio tra Banca d'Italia e Tesoro del luglio 1981 avrebbe formalmente riconosciuto. Il classico vincolo esterno di conti e cambi con l'estero sarebbe rimasto verso il resto del mondo come tale, ossia di natura economica e non "giuridica", per usare la categoria impiegata da Guido Carli nei primi anni Novanta.
Parole chiave: Sistema monetario europeo (SME), Integrazione europea, Banche centrali, Banca d'Italia, politiche economiche e monetarie

The creation of the European Monetary System (EMS) between 1977 and 1979 introduced an element that would become central to Italy's strategy of adjustment to the macroeconomic shocks of the 1970s: the 'external constraint', a political device — albeit with a technocratic matrix — designed to reduce public debt and enhance the country's economic competitiveness. Conceived by an economist at the Bank of Italy, Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, in 1978,

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the reforms of the ambitious programme known as the Pandolfi Plan were designed to restore the competitiveness of the Italian economy. The plan described the main features of the lira's entry into the EMS as an external constraint, based on indications from the Bank of Italy's Director General Carlo Azeglio Ciampi and despite objections from Governor Paolo Baffi. At that juncture, the Bank of Italy consciously assumed the role of substitute that would characterise its action in the following decade, motivating and orienting the country's political choices in favour of an ever more urgent economic and monetary integration of Europe, towards what would finally be formalised with the Maastricht Treaty. Consistently with the structure of the EMS, the external constraint outlined in the Pandolfi Plan moved towards exchange rate constraints related to public finances and to the phenomena of fiscal dominance typical of monetary policy in Italy; it was essentially transformed into a fiscal policy constraint formally recognised in July 1981, with the so-called divorce between the Bank of Italy and the Treasury. The classic external constraint related to the balance of payments accounts and foreign exchange rates remained unchanged towards the rest of the world, meaning that it had an economic and not a "legal" nature, as defined by Guido Carli in the early 1990s.
Key words: European Monetary System (EMS), European integration, central banking, Bank of Italy, economic and monetary policies

Introduction

In recent years, the difficulties faced by the Italian economy after a decade of stagflation have been the subject of increasing attention, following an initial period of radically pessimistic forecasts,[1] and more cautious analyses later on.[2] The Italian divergence, considered as part of a greater divergence, namely a European divergence,[3] has been gradually specified according to analytical perspectives that highlight two factors of Italy's relative decline measured in terms of income, productivity and innovative capacity: i) the inadequacy of the political institutions and the strategic errors of the country's ruling class as a whole; ii) the relevance of the constraints imposed by the decisions of the 1970s and 1980s on subsequent economic policies, in particular those relating to public debt management and Italy's participation in the process of European economic and monetary integration.[4]

[1] I am referring to the now classic text by Luciano Gallino, *La scomparsa dell'Italia industriale*, Turin, Einaudi, 2003, which was counterpointed by Giuseppe Berta, *Metamorfosi. L'industria italiana tra declino e trasformazione*, Milan, Egea, 2004.

[2] See Pierluigi Ciocca, *Ricchi per sempre? Una storia economica d'Italia (1796-2005)*, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 2007.

[3] See Olivier Blanchard's interpretation of the divergence between Europe and the US, centred on cultural differences in preferences for leisure and income, in *The Economic Future of Europe*, "Journal of Economic Perspectives", 18 (2004), 4, pp. 3-26. Alberto Alesina and Francesco Giavazzi expressed a similar view in *The Future of Europe: Reform or Decline*, Cambridge (Mass.), MIT Press, 2006.

[4] As noted, for example, in Giuliano Amato and Andrea Graziosi, *Grandi illusioni. Ragionando sull'Italia*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2013. Comparable analyses, albeit with different tones and disciplinary backgrounds, and written at different times, can be found in Michele Salvati, *Le occasioni mancate. Economia e politica in Italia dagli anni '60 a oggi*, Rome-

The relative decline of the Italian economy over the last 30 years, known as the 'second divergence' of post-unification Italy,[5] appears to be almost mutually dependent on the insufficient consistency of the adjustment strategies defined in the 1970s in the face of the major macroeconomic shocks that affected the Western industrialised economies, despite the differences in their respective levels of development, technological capabilities and response to changes in the international context.[6] In the face of the market changes connected to globalisation and the instability of technological regimes, the adjustment strategies of the Italian economy failed to keep the country on the convergence trajectory towards higher income and productivity economies, nor were they pursued with the consistency needed to avoid the risks of decline.[7] In fact, the last phase of convergence of per capita income in the 1980s coincided with a rapid and dramatic deterioration of public finance, culminating in the debt and exchange rate crisis that forced Italy to leave the European Monetary System (hereafter EMS) in September 1992.[8]

The responses to the shock of globalisation in Europe entailed an adjustement strategy not only by individual nation-states but by the European institutions as a whole, risking potential friction at the national and transnational levels. On the one hand, the first adjustment policies imposed on Italy by its entry into the EMS and the demanding reforms — privatisation and liberalisation — required by the Maastricht Treaty led to the dismantling of the mixed economy,[9]

Bari, Laterza, 2000; Giangiacomo Nardozzi, *Miracolo e declino. L'Italia tra concorrenza e protezione*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2004; Piero Craveri, *L'arte del non governo. L'inarrestabile declino della Repubblica italiana*, Venice, Marsilio, 2016. An important role is also attributed to institutions in *Ricchi per caso. La parabola dello sviluppo economico italiano*, edited by Paolo Di Martino and Michelangelo Vasta, Bologna, il Mulino, 2017.

[5] See Carlo Bastasin and Gianni Toniolo, *La strada smarrita. Breve storia dell'economia italiana*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2020, p. 82.

[6] Gianni Toniolo pays attention to this aspect in his explanation of Italian performance in the second globalisation wave, *La crescita economica italiana, 1861-2011*, in *L'Italia e l'economia mondiale dall'Unità a oggi*, edited by Gianni Toniolo, Venice, Marsilio, 2013, p. 45 (Italian version of Gianni Toniolo (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of the Italian Economy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013).

[7] For an analysis of the interaction between economics and politics in those decades, between the late 1970s and early 1990s, see the essays collected in the Annale della Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, *L'approdo mancato. Economia, politica e società in Italia dopo il miracolo economico*, edited by Franco Amatori, Milan, Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 2017, and the publication by Francesco Silva and Augusto Ninni, *Un miracolo non basta. Alle origini della crisi italiana tra economia e politica*, Rome, Donzelli, 2019.

[8] See Emanuele Felice, *Ascesa e declino. Storia economica d'Italia*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2015, pp. 301-303. Despite the exchange rate crisis and the exit from the EMS, this experience made it possible to design a monetary regime that was more stable and anchored to the containment of inflation. See Franco Passacantando, *Building an Institutional Framework for Monetary Stability: the Case of Italy (1979-1994)*, "BNL Quarterly Review", 1996, 196, pp. 83-132.

[9] See Barbara Curli, *The 'vincolo europeo', Italian Privatization and the European Commission in the 1990s*, "Journal of European Integration History", 18 (2012), 2, pp. 285-301.

on which the development phases of the previous decades had been based and which could explain the country's disappointing economic performance from the mid-1990s to the present.[10] On the other hand, from the end of the 1970s, the European Economic Community (hereafter EEC), in principle hinged on the Franco-German axis, gained increasing importance in the definition of responses to the macroeconomic shocks of that decade and to those of globalisation, which tended to be more of a threat than an opportunity for the continent's economies.[11]

Before the agreements that led to the Maastricht Treaty marked a phase of even more intense economic and monetary integration in Europe,[12] between 1978 and 1979, the establishment of a European monetary system, which Italy joined despite some internal disagreement, explicitly introduced an element that was to become central to the strategy — marked by a substantial pessimism of policymakers towards intrinsic national capabilities — of Italy's adherence to the forms of fiscal discipline associated with the creation of a single currency: the 'external constraint', as a political device — albeit with a technocratic matrix — designed to reduce public debt.[13] The reforms of the ambitious programme devised in the summer of 1978 by a brilliant economist

[10] This has been convincingly argued by Giuseppe Berta, *Che fine ha fatto il capitalismo italiano?*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2016, pp. 74-82.

[11] In addition to *The Shock of the Global. The 1970s in Perspective*, edited by Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela and Daniel J. Sargent, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 2010, see also the more recent publication by Laurent Warlouzet, *Governing Europe in a Globalizing World. Neoliberalism and its Alternatives following the 1973 Oil Crisis*, London-New York, Routledge, 2018.

[12] See Kenneth Dyson and Kevin Featherstone, *The Road to Maastricht: Negotiating Economic and Monetary Union*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999. See also Paolo Tedeschi, *Una moneta comune in Europa? Dal Piano Werner all'Euro: un'integrazione incompiuta e quindi pericolosa*, "Rivista di storia economica", 29 (2013), 3, pp. 319-341.

[13] As argued by the then Treasury Minister Guido Carli in his "personal account", written between 1992 and 1993. There, he referred to the 'international legal constraint' as a tool for the 'restoration of sound public finance, believing, pessimistically, that without this obligation it would be difficult for our political class to change direction' (Guido Carli, *Cinquant'anni di vita italiana*, in collaborazione con Paolo Peluffo, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1993, p. 406). The external discipline mechanism to which the fate of the Italian economy and finance was basically entrusted had been "theorised", a few years earlier, in Francesco Giavazzi e Marco Pagano, *The Advantage of Tying One's Hands: EMS discipline and Central Bank Credibility*, "European Economic Review", 24 (1988), 5, pp. 1055-1082. A balanced contextualisation of the European constraint as one of the external economic and political constraints that the Italian ruling class has had to take into account, or even consciously used, can be found in Roberto Gualtieri, *L'Europa come vincolo esterno*, in *L'Italia nella costruzione europea. Un bilancio storico (1957-2007)*, edited by Piero Craveri and Antonio Varsori, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2009, pp. 313-331. A highly critical analysis of the technocratic matrix of the European constraint and the associated political functions is Kevin Featherstone's *The Political Dynamics of the Vincolo Esterno: the Emergence of EMU and the Challenge to the European Social Model*, Queen's Papers on Europeanisation, 2001, 6. Obviously, the European constraint had consequences not only for Italy, as Tony Judt has observed in *Postwar Europe. A History of Europe Since 1945*, London, Heinemann, 2005 (London, Vintage, 2010, p. 461).

at the Bank of Italy, Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, to restore competitiveness and growth, known as the Pandolfi Plan, defined the essential features of joining the EMS as a response to an 'external constraint' that was different from that of the balance of payments, to which an open and resource-poor economy such as the Italian one is by definition subject; they redefined its features in the form of a quasi-legal constraint, incorporated in the relevant agreements, in which inflation control and public debt took on central importance.[14] In those circumstances, between June and August 1978, the economists of the Bank of Italy consciously took on a substitute function that would characterise their actions in the following decade,[15] motivating and guiding the country's political decisions in favour of an ever more urgent economic and monetary integration of Europe, in a direction that would eventually be formalised — thanks to the impetus given by the Delors Report — with the Maastricht Treaty.[16]

The 'infernal triangle' and Italy's credibility

The Pandolfi Plan, significantly presented as 'A proposal for growth, a choice for Europe', was written by Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, then at the Bank of Italy, and its last version was published on 31 August 1978.[17] From the point of

[14] In this sense, the plan differs from the recognition of an external constraint ascribable to the balance of payments and to the dual Atlanticist *and* Europeanist option acknowledged by Governor Donato Menichella in his *Considerazioni finali* of May 1954, highlighted in Gualtieri, *L'Europa come vincolo esterno*, cit., pp. 315-320, and Daniele Pasquinucci, *The Historical Origins of Italian Euroscepticism*, "Journal of European Integration History", 22 (2016), 2, pp. 300-301. A similar reading differs from that which sees adhesion to the EMS as an 'eminently political' choice, proposed by Mauro Campus in *Il governo del "vincolo esterno": interazione, compatibilità e limiti del sistema economico italiano nella crisi degli anni Settanta*, in *Nuove questioni di storia delle relazioni internazionali*, edited by Bruna Bagnato, Massimiliano Guderzo and Leopoldo Nuti, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2015, p. 269.

[15] See Leandro Conte, *L'azione della Banca d'Italia (1948-93)*, in *Storia d'Italia*, *Annali*, 23, *La Banca*, edited by Alberto Cova, Salvatore La Francesca, Angelo Moioli and Claudio Bermond, Turin, Einaudi, 2008, pp. 682-683. More recently, a similar — but not identical — interpretation of the role of the Bank of Italy has been extended by explaining the loss of competitiveness of Italian companies in terms of the asymmetric effect of monetary stabilisation on European economies; from this perspective, deflation would have entailed, in the Italian case, an increase in public debt as compensation for the derived employment imbalances (Francesco Petrini, *"La politica antinflazionistica è la politica europeistica e viceversa". L'adesione italiana al Sistema monetario europeo*, in *Integrazione europea e trasformazioni socio-economiche*, edited by Lorenzo Mechi and Daniele Pasquinucci, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2017, pp. 53-68).

[16] See Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, *A Europe Made of Money. The Emergence of the European Monetary System*, Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press, 2012. On the relevance of EMS membership in Italian political history, see Antonio Varsori, *La Cenerentola d'Europa. L'Italia e l'integrazione europea dal 1947 a oggi*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2010, pp. 314-330.

[17] This is how it is preserved in the Bank of Italy's historical archive, Archivio storico della Banca d'Italia, Rome (hereafter AS BI), Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder

view of Padoa-Schioppa and the top management of the Bank of Italy, in particular that of Director General Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, the Pandolfi Plan played an essential role — an awareness that was largely in line with the revision of the expansive monetary policy undertaken by Paolo Baffi, who had many and considerable differences with Governor Carli, also at a personal level.[18] After he succeeded Carli as governor of the Bank of Italy, Baffi expressed the conviction that the Italian economy should adopt serious and coherent policies to contain inflation and stabilise exchange rates with foreign countries, a line publicly expressed as early as 31 May 1976, in the *Considerazioni finali* pronounced by Baffi in which he observed that 'our country suffers […], today especially, from an objective alliance that promotes and sustains inflation, squeezed between political and social forces: those that define the content of the budget and those that define the content of labour contracts'.[19] The macroeconomic shocks of the beginning of the decade had, in fact, been amplified by public finance decisions that had given rise to the rapid growth of debt through the expansion of monetary aggregates, producing serious distortions in the allocation of resources due to the reduced functionality of market mechanisms, with the first negative effects on productivity and income growth.[20]

"Tommaso Padoa Schioppa", "Una proposta per lo sviluppo, una scelta per l'Europa", 31 August 1978 (the Pandolfi Plan was published in the *Corriere della sera* on 1 September 1978). The same subfolder contains an earlier, and in many ways similar, document: "Un confronto tra due decenni", note for the Treasury Minister Filippo Maria Pandolfi, 22 July 1978. On Padoa-Schioppa, then at the Research department of the Bank of Italy directed by Ciampi (Ufficio mercato monetario), see Francesco Papadia, *Tommaso Padoa Schioppa*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, vol. 80, 2014, p. 185. Papadia calls Padoa-Schioppa's participation a mere 'collaboration' with Minister Pandolfi. The documents attributable to Padoa-Schioppa cited here were taken from the Bank of Italy's historical archive, which holds documentation relating to the years in which he held positions in Via Nazionale. The Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa collection, held by the Historical Archives of the European Union at the European University Institute in Florence, essentially contains documentation — limited to the years under consideration — relative to the notes for and on the *Considerazioni finali* of the Governor of the Bank of Italy.

[18] As Carli himself admitted in his 'personal memory of Paolo Baffi' (Carli, *Cinquant'anni di vita italiana*, cit., pp. 353-358). In private, Baffi was rather sarcastic about Carli, as becomes clear from a letter he sent to Francesco Cingano, then managing director of the Banca Commerciale Italiana: 'I have been quite unimpressed — in terms of the form, the inaccurate historical references, the lack of attention to internal consistency, the temporal coincidence of the author being hired by the top management structures of a large private industrial group — with the interventions of my predecessor, too eager to always embrace anything that was new' (AS BI, Banca d'Italia, Carte Baffi, Governatore Onorario, file 12, folder 25, letter to Francesco Cingano, 28 November 1986).

[19] Banca d'Italia, *Considerazioni finali*, Rome, Banca d'Italia, 1976, p. 43. See also Conte, *L'azione della Banca d'Italia*, cit., pp. 675-678.

[20] On the deterioration of public finance see, among others, Salvatore Rossi, *La politica economica italiana, 1968-2007*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2007. On the growth of the public debt, whose ratio to GDP rose from around 35 to 60 percentage points from the beginning to the end of the 1970s, see the new estimates by Fabrizio Balassone, Maura Francese and Angelo Pace,

In the 'proposal for growth' prepared by Padoa-Schioppa for Treasury Minister Filippo Maria Pandolfi, Italy's return to growth was entrusted to a strategic choice, namely the willingness to participate in the European monetary integration projects, and he justified the reforms with the constraint of macroeconomic convergence that was implicit in such a Europeanist 'option'.[21] The 'main way', of which Padoa-Schioppa had written the year before with Franco Modigliani,[22] of restoring labour productivity to the level of 'countries with comparable industrial equipment and intrinsic qualities of the labour force', was presented as 'the fairest and most rational' way, but required behaviour that coherently moved 'in the opposite direction to the tendency that has prevailed in Italy in recent years towards provisions, practices and behaviour that reduce[d] productivity'.[23] The 'main way' of a return to productivity growth therefore required a significant correction in the behaviour of political authorities ('the content of the budget') and economic actors ('the content of labour contracts'), first of all in decisions on price regulation and the labour market, given that income, inflation and employment expectations were at the root of the loss of productivity of Italian firms owing to the automatic mechanisms of wage adjustment to inflation introduced by the index-linked wage-price mechanism as it had been defined by the January 1975 agreements.[24] The losses caused by this wage-price adjustment mechanism were partly compensated by the increase in public spending and by the periodic devaluations that supported the competitiveness of Italian products on international markets, but these two policies would negatively affect both productivity and future invest-

Debito pubblico e crescita economica, in *L'Italia e l'economia mondiale dall'Unità a oggi*, cit., pp. 712-716.

[21] As we will see, the decision to participate in the EMS had been presented to Pandolfi as an 'option' a few weeks earlier by the Director General of the Bank of Italy, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. On the Europeanism of the author of the Pandolfi Plan, see Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, *Europa forza gentile*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2001, but above all Ciampi's account. According to Ciampi, for Padoa-Schioppa "Europe [was] the strongest ideal, the powerful engine of Tommaso's actions, but I would say the existential figure' (Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, *In ricordo di Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa*, in "Moneta e credito", vol. 64 (2011), 253, p. 7).

[22] See Franco Modigliani and Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, *La politica economica in una economia con salari indicizzati al 100 o più*, "Moneta e credito", 30 (1977), 117, pp. 3-53. Padoa-Schioppa had studied with Modigliani — a consultant of the Research department of the Bank of Italy since 1966 — in the early 1970s, during his visit to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston as a 'special student', thanks to the Bonaldo Stringher grant awarded to him by the Bank of Italy in 1968. In 1970, he discussed there his Master's thesis on "Portfolio preferences of the public and the effectiveness of monetary policy" (Papadia, *Tommaso Padoa Schioppa*, cit., p. 185). On the essay by Modigliani and Padoa-Schioppa, see Fabio Masini, *SMEmorie della lira. Gli economisti italiani e l'adesione al Sistema monetario europeo*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2004, pp. 33-34.

[23] Modigliani and Padoa-Schioppa, *La politica economica in una economia con salari indicizzati al 100 o più*, cit., p. 46.

[24] See Salvati, *Le occasioni mancate*, cit., pp. 47-62; Patrizia Battilani and Francesca Fauri, *Mezzo secolo di economia italiana, 1945-2008*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2008, pp. 171-179.

ments. Although Modigliani and Padoa-Schioppa's analysis did not explicitly consider the dynamics of public finances, it highlighted the existence of an 'infernal' cycle in which the Italian economy had been trapped for some years and which, if not corrected, would have prevented Italy from returning to a stable path of productivity growth: high inflation (stemming from high real wages), high unemployment (linked to high contractual wages) and the current account deficits from which the periodic currency depreciations originated (by which the constant loss of competitiveness of Italian products on foreign markets was mitigated, albeit temporarily). For the trade unions, it was observed, the 'infernal triangle' posed a dilemma between the pursuit of high real wages for the employed and the maintenance of a (higher) desired level of employment, or rather a 'trilemma' between real wages, employment and price stability, which was aggravated — in terms of fairness — when one considered the different net financial position of 'workers', who were 'on average creditors', as opposed to the 'entrepreneurs', who were instead 'largely debtors'.[25]

The trilemma between wages, employment and inflation highlighted by Modigliani and Padoa-Schioppa placed growing pressure on the economic and monetary policymakers at least since the early 1970s,[26] that is, since the implosion of the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates,[27] a pressure that the Bank of Italy itself had felt with increasing pain in the last five years of Carli as governor, whose decisions had tried in vain to mediate between public accounts and corporate liquidity, between price stability and economic growth.[28] In May 1974, in his "Considerazioni finali", Governor Carli explained

[25] Modigliani and Padoa-Schioppa, *La politica economica in una economia con salari indicizzati al 100 o più*, cit., pp. 46-48. Governor Carli himself had acknowledged the trilemma a few years earlier: '[O]ne cannot ignore the weak transmission capacity of monetary growth and public spending in the forms in which they have been presented up to now with regard to the domestic product in real terms; the expansionary effect of the swelling of monetary demand tends to meet the balance of payments constraint and that of inflation, even before giving rise to a substantial increase in employment. It is necessary to avoid the short-term need for new, costly adjustments to unconsolidated employment growth' (Banca d'Italia, *Considerazioni finali*, Rome, Banca d'Italia, 1974, p. 40).

[26] 'Creeping inflation', caused by various factors but initially mainly by inflation imported from the United States, became a concern for European central bankers in the late 1960s and early 1970s, even before it turned into the 'great inflation' of that decade (see Singleton, *Central Banking in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 184-203; Catherine R. Schenk, *International economic relations since 1945*, New York-London, Routledge, 2011, pp. 50-54). Carli put inflation 'at the heart' of 'current problems' in his final considerations delivered on 30 May 1973 (Banca d'Italia, *Considerazioni finali*, Rome, Banca d'Italia, 1973, p. 29).

[27] Even the end of Bretton Woods depended on the irreconcilability of the three choices available to economic policymakers identified in the open economy trilemma: capital mobility, monetary policy autonomy and fixed exchange rates (see Maurice Obstfeld and Alan M. Taylor, *Global Capital Markets. Integration, Crisis, and Growth*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[28] The Bank of Italy, in Carli's own words, therefore took on a different role from the one commonly assigned to a central bank: '[T]he Bank, by channelling resources to the Treasury

the rationale behind the Bank of Italy's accommodating monetary policies in the face of a rapidly growing public debt:

> We asked ourselves and are asking ourselves whether the Bank of Italy could have refused or could refuse to finance the public deficit […]. A refusal […] would come across as an act of monetary policy; it would essentially be a seditious act, which would lead to the paralysis of the institutions. The continuity of the state must be ensured, even if the economy were to fall into stagnation.[29]

Nonetheless, the Bank of Italy's decisions under Carli had uneven effects on the competitiveness of Italian companies, not least because of the increase in state shareholdings following the bailouts of private companies in crisis. In 1975, Carli himself noted the progressive deterioration of the financial structure of Italian companies, with the gradual reduction of risk capital and the expansion of debt, a trend reinforced by the Bank of Italy's support for the bond market since the end of the previous decade.[30] The 'infernal triangle' in which the Italian economy was trapped was the product of an institutional failure whereby the allocative distortions that depressed the competitive capacities of Italian companies translated into balance of payment deficits, constant inflationary impulses and the correlated growth of public debt. By 1974, it was clear that Italy's international position had seriously deteriorated, leaving Carli — as a central banker — in a 'condition of solitude', faced with the risks of 'the bankruptcy of our economy; the international and national press did not question whether it would happen, but only speculated as to when it would happen'.[31]

Indeed, Italy's international position had been made fragile by the gradual deterioration of the balance of payments since the end of the 1960s, exacerbated by the first oil crisis of 1973. The balance of payment deficits were particularly marked in 1974 and between 1975 and 1976, despite ephemeral and partial corrections, negatively affecting the foreign exchange rate: from the beginning of 1976, the dollar's exchange rate depreciated by about twenty-

and to the sectors indicated by the political system, played a role that was typical of the fiscal system but which the latter could not play: it could therefore only be one of the constituent elements of Power' (Guido Carli, *Intervista sul capitalismo italiano*, edited by Eugenio Scalfari, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1977, p. 42).

[29] Banca d'Italia, *Considerazioni finali*, Rome, Banca d'Italia, 1974, p. 32. In this regard, see the contextualisation offered by Alfredo Gigliobianco, *Guido Carli: finanziare gli investimenti*, "Bancaria", vol. 75 (2019), 1, pp. 81-89.

[30] Drawing on data collected by its own services, the Bank of Italy itself noted that the impact on the companies, 'largely debtors', had been asymmetrical between the public and private components: it was found that between 1962 and 1973, in the first case, risk capital fell from 44 to 19 per cent and debt rose from 51 to 73 per cent; in the second case, risk capital fell from 56 to 33 per cent and debt rose from 37 to 52 per cent (Banca d'Italia, *Considerazioni finali*, Rome, Banca d'Italia, 1975, pp. 37-38).

[31] Banca d'Italia, *Considerazioni finali*, Rome, Banca d'Italia, 1975, p. 18.

five per cent, from 684 to 900 lire.[32] Since May 1974, given a substantial deficit in the balance of payments and the impossibility of accessing the international financial markets, Italy had drawn heavily on funds made available by the International Monetary Fund for almost 900 million dollars, obtained a short-term credit from the Bundesbank for 500 million dollars and used the entire short-term credit line granted by the European Community.[33] In 1977, the Italian economy appeared to be in a "precarious" condition and the OECD and the Monetary Fund called for a stabilisation programme.[34]

By the end of the decade, it was becoming increasingly evident that Italy could not be considered a reliable partner by the major European governments and central bankers, owing to the loss of business competitiveness, high inflation, the repeated depreciation of the lira, the growing imbalances in public finance, the high unemployment rate and the intense and constant social conflict.[35] In the new, intensified phase of European integration, inaugurated in October 1977 by the then President of the European Commission Roy Jenkins, Italy was therefore in the difficult position of having to prove its credibility in order to participate fully in a monetary integration project that required convergence of economic and monetary policies.[36]

The EMS, the Bank of Italy and the choice for Europe

The prospect of creating a European monetary system, formulated by Helmut Schmidt and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in the early months of 1978,[37] put Italy

[32] OECD, *Economic Surveys*, *Italy*, Paris, OECD, 1977, pp. 21-25. In its 1976 survey, the OECD described the Italian balance of payments position as 'fragile', since the brilliant rebalancing act of 1975 had been based on a contraction in exports rather than an adjustment to export growth, a sign of the declining competitiveness of Italian companies (OECD, *Economic Surveys*, *Italy*, Paris, OECD, 1976, p. 36).

[33] Banca d'Italia, *Considerazioni finali*, Rome, Banca d'Italia, 1975, p. 18; IMF, *Annual Report*, Washington, 1975, p. 36.

[34] See Francesco Giavazzi and Luigi Spaventa, *Italy: the real effects of inflation and disinflation*, "Economic Policy", 4 (1989), 8, p. 142.

[35] As we can deduce, for instance, from the inaccurate reconstruction — but probably faithful in its retrospective assessment — of the Italian divergence 'from the 1970s onwards' by Markus K. Brunnermaier, Harold James and Jean-Pierre Landau, *The Euro and the Battle of Ideas*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2016, pp. 240-241.

[36] See Peter Ludlow, *The Making of the European Monetary System*, London, Butterworth, 1982, pp. 37-55; Piers N. Ludlow, *Roy Jenkins and the European Commission Presidency, 1976-1980*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 113-139.

[37] Eichengreen reads the proposal as a response to the growing rigidity that emerged during the decade and the void left by the end of the Bretton Woods system (Barry Eichengreen, *The European Economy Since 1945*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2007, pp. 282-286). A detailed reconstruction of the relations between France, Germany and Italy during Giscard d'Estaing's seven-year term can be found in Georges-Henri Soutou, *L'Italie et le "couple" franco allemand*, in *L'Italia nella costruzione europea*, cit., p. 57; more generally, Id., *L'alliance incertaine: les rapports politico-stratégiques franco-allemands, 1954-1996*, Paris, Fayard, 1996.

in the difficult position of having to develop a comprehensive convergence strategy that would be credible and free it from the "loneliness" in which Carli had found himself a few years earlier. Baffi's appointment had deeply changed the objectives and methods that the Bank of Italy was defining for itself as a central monetary authority, in particular with a view to restoring allocative efficiency to the credit market so as to make Italian companies competitive again and thus create the conditions for a non-episodic adjustment of the balance of payments and consistent stabilisation of the exchange rate.[38] However, the Bank of Italy's commitment was insufficient to restore the necessary credibility to Italy and the international commitments made by its political class that a more binding monetary integration would have imposed. It was not certain whether Italy could actually be included among the EEC members that would have formed the currency pool initially envisaged by the German Chancellor Schmidt, in the first version of which Italy was not explicitly listed.[39] Although speculative attacks also put pressure on the French franc and the British sterling, the deceleration of growth, the balance of payment deficits and the depreciation of the lira led to the assumption that Italy had entered, after the abandonment of the monetary snake in February 1973, a phase of 'slowing down of the process of integration of our economy into that of the Community'.[40]

[38] As Baffi wrote in an article published in English in *The Banker* in December 1975, and in Italian on 14 January 1976 in *la Repubblica*, titled *L'angusto sentiero dell'Italia*: '[T]he boundaries of the options that are available to politicians are narrower than in the past […] we cannot recreate the current account deficits. Nor can we pursue the balance between imports and exports through changes in the exchange rate […]. We can therefore not avoid the conclusion that the creation of liquidity by the public sector will have to be contained within limits compatible with the equilibrium condition of the balance of payments' (now in Paolo Baffi, *Economista e banchiere centrale*, edited by Federico Pascucci, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2019, p. 99). See also Alfredo Gigliobianco, *Via Nazionale. Banca d'Italia e classe dirigente*, Rome, Donzelli, 2006, pp. 323-333; Federico Barbiellini Amidei, *Paolo Baffi, una lezione civile*, in Paolo Baffi, *Economista e banchiere centrale*, cit., pp. XXVII-XXX.

[39] Chancellor Schmidt presented the idea to British Prime Minister James Callaghan, who described it as 'an exotic idea', at a meeting in Bonn on 12 March 1978, where the Federal Republic of Germany, France and the United Kingdom were undoubtedly present. One of the effects Schmidt expected was that of 'weaken[ing] the German mark' (Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 10 Downing Street, FOI release 248745, G7 Bonn Summit, KRS [Kenneth Ronald Stowe, Prime Minister principal private secretary], "Note of Schmidt-Callaghan private dinner – EMS", 13 March 1978). Schmidt discussed this with Giscard d'Estaing and Jenkins in two meetings in February (Amaury de Saint Périer, *La France, l'Allemagne et l'Europe monétaire de 1974 à 1981*, Paris, Sciences Po Presses, 2013, pp. 148-149).

[40] This is what Carli said in May of that year: 'Italy's failure to participate in the common fluctuation of European currencies does not seem to be the cause of Italy's detachment from Europe; if anything, the opposite is true: the shadows of international and internal behaviour have suddenly been reflected on the monetary yardstick […]; the result was a slowdown in the process of integrating our economy into that of the Community' (Banca d'Italia, *Considerazioni finali*, Rome, Banca d'Italia, 1973, pp. 19-20).

The evaluation of the 'new monetary arrangements for Europe' proposed by Schmidt focused on the real exchange rate effects they would have on the currencies of the countries that were to participate in them and the related asymmetrical effects on the competitiveness of their economies. The agreement between Giscard and Schmidt initially met with resistance from Britain, whose Treasury saw it as a projection of German power.[41] The British assessment of the proposal highlighted the expected effects of the weakening of the mark on European economies, making the proposal 'not attractive' because 'we would be less competitive', while fearing that it might appear 'like ganging up with the Germans against the United States'. For Gordon Richardson, the governor of the Bank of England, 'it was not clear what would happen to the currency of the other members of the Nine, and especially to Italy; he might have it in mind to leave Italy out of any arrangement'.[42]

As is known, the EMS began to take shape and became structured during three European Council meetings,[43] held between April and July 1978: in Copenhagen on 7 and 8 April, in Bremen on 6 and 7 July, and in Bonn on 16 and 17 July. Here, the features of the new structure of European monetary cooperation and integration were clarified, and Italy managed to change its position by being considered as a country capable of participating in the agreements that had the task of providing monetary and currency stability while at the same time strengthening the growth capacities of the EEC economies in terms of progressive integration.[44] At the Copenhagen summit, the idea promoted by Giscard and Schmidt had not yet taken full shape, but at that time it did not include the lira. In Schmidt's words, closer monetary cooper-

[41] See Harold James, *Making a central bank without a state*, in *Les banques centrales à l'échelle du monde*, edited by Olivier Feiertag and Michel Margairaz, Paris, Sciences-Po Presses, 2012, p. 211. Schmidt and Giscard had different reasons, as we have seen, and their assessments differed between industry and monetary authorities in both Germany and France. The risk that large German companies in more capital-intensive sectors would lose their competitiveness as a result of the strong mark was obvious, as was the choice of France — and also Italy — to "trade" growth for stability (Marcello De Cecco, *Il Sistema monetario europeo e gli interessi nazionali*, in *L'economia politica dell'integrazione europea: stati, mercati e istituzioni*, edited by Paolo Guerrieri and Pier Carlo Padoan, Bologna, il Mulino, 1988, pp. 153-155).

[42] Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 10 Downing Street, FOI release 248745, "Note of a meeting held in the Cabinet Room at 18.45 on Tuesday 4 April 1978", siglata N.L.W., 5 aprile 1978. The fact that Giscard and Schmidt wanted to limit themselves to a consultation with Callaghan can be deducted from a conversation that the British prime minister and the French president had that morning about 'the European monetary organisation' (*ibidem*).

[43] On the importance of the new level of international and regional governance associated with the meetings of the political and monetary authorities of the major economies since the early 1970s, as a response to the financial instability triggered by the end of the Bretton Woods system, and the European Council, see *International Summitry and Global Governance. The Rise of the G7 and the European Council, 1974-1991*, edited by Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol and Federico Romero, London-New York, Routledge, 2014.

[44] See Ludlow, *The Making of the European Monetary System*, cit., pp. 88-158; Mourlon-Druol, *A Europe Made of Money*, cit., pp. 164-168.

ation would be necessary to succeed in 'turning the tide'.[45] In the following weeks, the proposal was essentially interpreted as the creation of a monetary stability zone in Europe. During a meeting held at Chequers Court on 23 April, following the Copenhagen summit, Schmidt explained to Callaghan, the Chancellor of the Exchequer Denis Healey and Governor Richardson the features of the system of 'monetary relationships in Europe' in terms of a system of semi-fixed exchange rates, 'with or without Britain'. In this context, Schmidt also considered the possible participation of Italy in what was essentially a political role: '[H]e is ready to take on the risk of Italy as a burden under this scheme because he was passionately determined to do all that he could to avoid Communist governments in Italy and France.'[46]

According to Schmidt, Italy's participation in the project was therefore based on political considerations, in line with the Cold War system of international relations. Before the Bremen summit, top representatives from Britain, France and Germany conducted confidential consultations in Paris, which led to an agreement on the necessity to achieve convergence in monetary policies among the countries that would participate in the stabilisation scheme. However, the assessments of the suitability and risks of the individual economies were rather cautious,[47] in the knowledge that — as Callaghan observed — Schmidt's outline would lead to a more favourable real exchange rate for the German mark as a result of the participation of France, Britain and Italy: '[T]his would simply make the German economy even more competitive.'[48]

[45] UK NA, Kew, PREM 16/1615, "The Case for More Intra-European Monetary Cooperation. Summary of Comments made [by Schmidt] in Copenhagen on April 7, 1978", p. 7. For a reconstruction, see Ludlow, *The Making of the European Monetary System*, cit., pp. 88-94; Mourlon-Druol, *A Europe Made of Money*, cit., pp. 168-177.

[46] In any case, no one in Italy had been made aware of the scheme; at that time, it was known only to the participants in the meeting (in addition to those mentioned above, these included — on the British side — Harold Lever, Second Permanent Secretary for Overseas Finance K.E. Couzens and Stowe, and on the German side, the President of the Bundesbank Otmar Emminger, Minister of Finance Hans Matthöfer and H. Heick), the French President Giscard, the Governor of the Banque de France Bernard Clappier, Graff Lambsdorff and Schulmann The quotations can be found, respectively, in The National Archive, Kew (UK NA) and Chequers, Prime Minister's (PREM), 16/1655, Note for the record, "Prime Minister's Meeting with Chancellor Schmidt at Chequers on Sunday 23 April 1978 at 19.45", pp. 13 and 16.

[47] UK NA, Kew, HM Treasury, PREM 16/1634 "European currency arrangement. Discussions in Paris on 14 and 15 June 1978", Secret, 15 June 1978, p. 4. The need for convergence criteria in monetary policies was made explicit in a draft presented by Clappier during confidential talks with the British (*ibidem*, "Outline of a scheme by M. Clappier", point 4). The last part of the note, described as 'confidential', reports the convergence of assessment between Chancellor Healey and Monory regarding the German position: '[T]here was a danger that the Germans were using the monetary discussions to distract attention from commitments to growth.'

[48] UK NA, Kew, 10 Downing Street, PREM 16/1634, "Note for the record", "Bremen European Council Meeting record of conversation", "After dinner meeting", 6 July 1978. Callaghan's concern was consistent with the analyses that the International Monetary Fund had

A few days after the Paris talks, on 17 and 19 June, the draft was presented — at least along general lines — to Andreotti by Clappier, in Rome, and by Schmidt himself, in Hamburg, and finally to Treasury Minister Pandolfi at the meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (hereafter ECOFIN) in Luxembourg.[49] On his way back from the ECOFIN summit, Ciampi spoke with Pandolfi about Italy's options in the face of greater European integration; back in Italy, a number of documents containing analyses and proposals were quickly prepared at the Bank of Italy.[50] The first document concerned 'the credit system and the recapitalisation of companies' and was sent to the minister on 20 June; the second focused on 'the recovery from inflation' and was transmitted on 26 June; the third, sent the following day, described the 'European option as a moment of the Italian challenge'. The first document sent to Pandolfi was the likely result of an analysis carried out before the ECOFIN summit; it specified what function should be attributed to the consortia among credit intermediaries in order to facilitate the solution of the many industrial crises underway and the recapitalisation of companies, preventing their high indebtedness from putting the banks themselves at risk.[51] The second, edited by Padoa-Schioppa, was again the result of an analysis begun before the ECOFIN summit in Luxembourg and concerned total domestic credit and monetary aggregates in relation to inflation. It presented itself as an intervention in the policies deemed necessary to bring high inflation under control during the period 1979-1981.[52]

put forward in those years: the United Kingdom had often been associated with Italy because of its balance of payments deficits and reserve shortages (IMF, *Annual Report*, 1975, Washington, 1975, pp. 14 e 23), but also because of the better recovery — compared to Germany — of income in 1977-1979, despite the greater exchange rate instability (IMF, *Annual Report*, 1979, Washington, 1979, pp. 20 and 34).

[49] It is difficult to establish exactly when the stabilisation scheme was presented to the Italian government; we may assume that it happened in early June, since a relative comment was published in the *Corriere della sera* on 7 June 1978, when Schmidt and Giscard's scheme was still confidential. A general outline of the scheme was presented — in some form — to Andreotti first by Clappier during a special trip to Rome and then by Schmidt on 17 June at a meeting with Andreotti in Hamburg (Ludlow, *The Making of the European Monetary System*, cit., pp. 114-115).

[50] On 27 June, Ciampi wrote a short note to Pandolfi: 'I take the liberty of sending you a note written by Dr Masera on a subject discussed with Your Excellency during the recent trip back from Luxembourg' (AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder 32, letter from Ciampi to Pandolfi, Rome, 27 June 1978).

[51] The purpose of the note was emphasised in the last part: '[R]e-establishing the conditions for an autonomous development of productive activity constitutes the goal to which the action of the credit institutions must be aimed' (AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder 32, "Sistema creditizio e ricapitalizzazione delle imprese. Appunto inviato al Ministro del Tesoro dr. Pandolfi", 20 June 1978, p. 2).

[52] AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder 32, "Il 'rientro' dall'inflazione e gli indicatori monetari e creditizi. Appunto redatto dal dott. Padoa-Schioppa, consegnato dal Governatore Ministro Pandolfi", 26 June 1978, 7 pp. and a table.

By contrast, the third document was, as Ciampi pointed out, a direct expression of the Director General's assessments of the — albeit general — currency stabilisation proposals that had emerged from the ECOFIN meeting in Luxembourg, to which Pandolfi and Ossola had initially reacted by expressing doubts about Italy's ability to keep the lira within narrow fluctuation margins (1.25), a sense of caution shared by Governor Baffi himself. The document was drafted by Rainer Masera, then head of the Research department, and in fact had a dual content: economic and political.[53] Masera's memorandum analysed the conditions of imbalance in the Italian economy and defined growth targets 'in order to achieve the full employment of factors', hence in a Keynesian analytical framework. The memorandum described the 'revival of the accumulation process, not only in physical capital, but also in the degree of preparation and capacity of workers and entrepreneurs' as a chance for the country's economy to 'adapt the production base to changes in international commodity prices'. It depicted the Italian economy as being held 'in the narrow space between the Scylla of inflation and the Charybdis of stagnation: the public sector deficit and labour costs'. If the internal constraints on growth were caused by the public debt — which increasingly consisted of current expenditure rather than investment — and the high cost of labour and related inflationary pressures, the adjustment to international market prices represented the 'external constraint' on development, measured by the balance of payments deficits and the pressure on foreign exchange rates caused by the economy's declining 'international competitiveness'. Highlighting the redistributive effects of inflationary phenomena, Masera recalled the risks of crowding out of private sector investment that the expansion of public debt entailed and the interaction between internal inflation factors and currency depreciation, whose competitive benefits were generally temporary. Finally, the memorandum described the 'strategy for a healthy and sustainable recovery', which was based on income policy ('wage increases consistent with a labour cost dynamic in line with that of the main competitor countries in international markets') and associated with an 'awareness' in the 'social body […] of the compatibility of the system'. From this perspective, 'the challenge that everyone must accept requires the chains that prevent us from moving towards conditions of accumulation, disinflationary development and reabsorption of unemployment to be broken […] it seems appropriate to propose, as the moment of the challenge, our willingness to move closer to Europe'. The interaction between domestic prices and the foreign exchange rate, which the Bank of Italy had attributed to negative dynamics in previous years, required interventions on macroeconomic variables that were largely considered 'overlapping'; in this sense, therefore, 'it

[53] Rainer Masera, who had completed a doctorate at Oxford under the supervision of John Hicks, was one of Ciampi's closest collaborators, along with Padoa-Schioppa and Pierluigi Ciocca (Gigliobianco, *Via Nazionale*, cit., p. 351).

became possible and appropriate to explicitly approach a European dimension of the global challenge'. After all, Masera's assessments were based on two facts: the marked and close interdependence of the Italian economy with those of the other members of the European Community and the importance of intra-European trade from, which the country could expect both the financial resources generated by the demand associated with exports and 'important support and assistance in the process of recovering from inflation and relaunching production'.[54]

The 'European option' described by Masera presented the progress of European integration, 'in a context of mutual reinforcement of support and commitments', as an unmissable opportunity for the stable restoration of the country's macroeconomic equilibrium; after all, if adequate choices were not implemented, even only because of the inability to make 'explicit decisions', 'behaviours and choices […] that would make it impossible for us to pursue a path of rapprochement would in themselves leave our system in a vulnerable and uncertain condition — with repercussions that could transcend merely economic values'. Masera's memorandum, then, presented the option as a "rapprochement" with Europe after almost a decade of deviation — at least macroeconomically — from the development trajectories of the core of the EEC and, in explicit terms, highlighted the political relevance of the pro-European choice, to guarantee the country's social and institutional stability. It was a matter of obtaining 'active participation' in the definition of economic and financial 'cooperation' schemes and mechanisms, to the extent that they could be corrected if they did not ensure 'satisfactory symmetry in the convergence process'. The 'global perspective' therefore required Italy to participate in the exchange rate agreements that would probably be proposed at the Bremen summit and put on the table — agreements that were expected to be able, given that initial 'scenario', to 'progressively evolve in the 1980s towards the ultimate, ambitious, but eventually necessary goal of European economic and monetary unification'. In Masera's memorandum, the aims of macroeconomic stabilisation and "rapprochement" with Europe did not end with a return to growth for the Italian economy. In this sense, the 'European option' was a 'corollary' to the 'global challenge' that nevertheless imposed unavoidable decisions and presented 'the relaunch of Italy and Europe' as events that would have to reinforce each other in a much broader political dimension, that within which

> [t]he credibility and affirmation of socially qualifying models of democracy and participation find their true expression in the ability to generate an economic system capable of devel-

[54] AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder 32, two versions of a note entitled "La opzione europea come momento della sfida italiana", edited by Rainer Masera, dated 23 and 26 June 1978 respectively (I am citing the longer version of 26 June).

oping and opening up, thus presenting itself as a model, and certainly not in locking itself up in solutions of stagnation and autarky.[55]

Despite the governor's reservations, the Bank of Italy was the only institutional entity that could define and motivate a strategy in the face of an economic and monetary integration plan that exposed Italy to a variety of risks, among which a balance had to be sought that would allow its effective "rapprochement" with the more solid economies of the EEC. If the adoption of rigid macroeconomic adjustment mechanisms to compensate for the loss of competitiveness suffered in the last decade entailed the risk of further instability (exchange rates) and inefficiency (production), not taking part in the monetary stabilisation project would certainly have marked the country's "marginalisation" from Europe as a set of institutions, markets and production, that is, from its political and economic articulation, favouring an even greater divergence from the areas with higher income and productivity. Although it is difficult to believe that Ciampi entrusted the economists of the Research department closest to him with the delicate task of preparing an in-depth analysis, evaluation and strategic proposal in contrast to Baffi, we can nevertheless assume that Ciampi acted with relative autonomy vis-à-vis the governor, as can be deduced from his direct relationship with Minister Pandolfi.[56]

Schmidt and Giscard's plan became clearer at the Bremen summit, and a phase of negotiations began that required an even more intense and demanding analysis and formulation of technical proposals in which the 'European option' supported by Ciampi, described as a 'courageous choice responding to sentiments that evoked the Risorgimento tradition',[57] could — at least in part —

[55] The document is divided into two sections, one containing the economic analysis and the other the political proposal, as we can deduce from the exercise of theorising the proposals that could emerge in Bremen shortly before its conclusion: 'The verification of the renewed will for renewal at the European level, guaranteeing respect for a satisfactory symmetry in the convergence process, should emerge from the forthcoming Bremen summit. In concrete terms, it should first of all manifest adherence to the principles of a concerted and gradual revival of economic activity at the European level, laying the foundations for the reabsorption of unemployment, reducing uncertainties about the development of demand, thus in itself stimulating investment and avoiding the emergence of new deficits in the current balance of payments accounts' (AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder 32, two versions of a note entitled "La opzione europea come momento della sfida italiana", cit., p. 8).

[56] In the documents preserved in the Archivio della Banca d'Italia, Baffi does not seem to have commented on or even only viewed and initialled (with the stamp 'Visto [Seen] Dr Baffi') Masera's note, whereas Ciampi himself forwarded it to Minister Pandolfi with the above-mentioned accompanying letter.

[57] Ciampi's reference to the *Risorgimento* can be found in his *Considerazioni finali* for 1980, appropriately evoked in Gigliobianco, *Via Nazionale*, cit., p. 349. On his Europeanism in the years of his governorship, Ciampi himself dwells, *en passant*, in his "conversation" with Arrigo Levi: '[M]y handling of relations with foreign countries was characterised, I think I can say, by a great Europeanist drive, but also by constant attention to the global picture' (Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, *Da Livorno al Quirinale. Storia di un italiano*, conversazione con Arrigo Levi, Bologna, il Mulino, 2010, p. 134).

be reconciled with the governor's scepticism about (if not disapproval of) the method, aims and analytical perspective adopted: the Keynesian perspective of full employment of factors, the principle that the Europeanist option had to be tempered by the correction of schemes that were not compatible with the Italian economy, as Baffi would have achieved with a wider fluctuation of the lira, and the assessment that Italy would have had to make similar stabilisation and rebalancing commitments even if the country had not joined a European monetary system.[58]

The Pandolfi Plan: a strategy against the 'joilting line of decline'

At the Bremen summit, Schmidt and Giscard's plan, this time presented — albeit informally, *au coin du feu*, during an evening meeting — in more or less clear and comprehensive terms beyond the circle that had taken part in the Paris talks (the Schulmann-Clappier-Couzens group), could also be discussed outside the restricted group of heads of state or prime ministers. It was noted that in the final discussion, Schmidt assumed full leadership and emphasised that the currency stabilisation scheme was intended as a political choice for Europe as a whole, in contrast to the option of creating two currency areas within the continent:

> le nouveau système envisagé a, sur le plan politique, une double finalité. Il s'agit, d'une part, de créer […] des meilleures conditions de stabilité monétaire, lesquelles sont essentielles pour surmonter la crise économique mondiale […]. Il s'agit, d'autre part, non seulement d'aboutir à un renforcement important et réel de la Communauté mais encore d'éviter que celle-ci se devise définitivement en deux zones monétaires et en deux zones différentes au regard du bien-être des populations.[59]

After the summit, the Bank of Italy — ignoring Governor Baffi's reservations — did not hesitate to draw up a strategy document in which, leaving aside monetary reasons, it wanted to specify the underlying reasons that should have motivated Italy's pro-European choice, since Andreotti was slow to decide on the merits despite being convinced that it was fundamental for the country to confirm this choice.[60] Ever since the ECOFIN meeting in April, Governor

[58] The general Keynesian perspective does not imply that Baffi was — by training or preference — a Keynesian economist in the full sense of the word (Gigliobianco, *Via Nazionale*, cit., pp. 318-333).

[59] Historical Archives of the European Union, European University Institute, Florence, PE1-23987, "Procès-verbal de la session du Conseil Européen tenue à Brême les 6 et 7 juillet 1978", Brussels, 24 July 1978, p. 31.

[60] See Ludlow, *The Making of the European Monetary System*, cit., pp. 256-259; Daniela Preda, *Il ruolo di Giulio Andreotti nella nascita del Sistema Monetario Europeo*, in *Giulio Andreotti e l'Europa*, edited by Francesco Lefebvre d'Ovidio and Luca Micheletta, Rome,

Baffi, Treasury Minister Pandolfi and Foreign Trade Minister Rinaldo Ossola had expressed reservations about Italy's possibility of joining a fixed exchange rate system,[61] although Pandolfi had somewhat reversed his views in June. Baffi publicly reiterated the reasons for his reservations and the choices made in negotiating the agreements in his final considerations, read out on 31 May 1979. 'The establishment of the European Monetary System,' Baffi said, 'was conceived at the Bremen summit as a fundamental element of a renewed impetus for European economic and financial integration.' The macroeconomic stability thus pursued (prices and exchange rates) was understood as 'part of a common action to accelerate growth' and 'to strengthen the less prosperous economies of the Community'. From this perspective, 'the Italian position in multilateral fora and bilateral meetings […] remained more than others [probably referring to the Bundesbank] consistent with the objective of building a system capable of accommodating *all* member countries and reducing not only inflationary but also deflationary risks'.[62]

Baffi seemed to be aware of the risks implicit in the creation of a European monetary system whose features had been defined in the previous months.[63] Baffi's position was motivated by the adjustment function he assigned to the exchange rate, rather than considering it as a measure of macroeconomic discipline.[64] In Via Nazionale, the Bank of Italy's headquarters in Rome, Baffi's reservations were at least tempered by the initiatives that Director

Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2017, pp. 214-219. According to Pandolfi, 'Andreotti ended up leaving the heart of the negotiation, public or confidential as it may have been, with Chancellor Schmidt to me' (*Pandolfi racconta la Germania: i miei anni con Schmidt e Kohl*, 'Eco di Bergamo', 23 September 2013). The bilateral meeting between Pandolfi, Baffi and Masera (for Italy) and Monory and Clappier on 8 September 1978 could confirm Pandolfi's version (AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder 62, "Incontro Ministro Pandolfi con Ministro Economia francese Monory (Villa Suardi, Bergamo, 8/9/78").

[61] Before his ministerial appointment, Ossola had frequently been involved in the creation of the post-war European payments system, in the development of the Special Drawing Rights of the International Monetary Fund and he had been, with Baffi, Director General of the Bank of Italy, from August 1975 to July 1976 (Alfredo Gigliobianco, *Rinaldo Ossola*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2013, vol. 97).

[62] Banca d'Italia, *Considerazioni finali*, Rome, Banca d'Italia, 1979, p. 8.

[63] In the *Considerazioni finali* read on 31 May 1979, he stated: '[I]t was emphasised that reciprocal exchange rate commitments, based on an effective symmetry of economic adjustments, had to be accompanied both by financial support, to counter speculative attacks, and by substantial aid to the weaker countries, to halt and thus overturn the perverse effects of the current redistribution of resources through the Community budget' (p. 8). The governor also explained his positions in an essay: Paolo Baffi, *Il sistema monetario europeo e la partecipazione dell'Italia*, "Thema", 1978, 2, pp. 7-19. Rinaldo Ossola expressed a similar view in *L'Italia e lo SME*, "Bancaria", 34 (1978), 8, pp. 133-143. See Fabio Masini, *A History of the Theories on Optimum Currency Areas*, "The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought", 21 (2014), 6, pp. 1025-1027.

[64] See Ivo Maes and Lucia Quaglia, *Germany and Italy: conflicting policy paradigms towards European monetary integration?*, in "Constitutional Political Economy", 17 (2006), 3, p. 195.

General Ciampi took after the Bremen summit. Ciampi's initiative, which began with the strategy document edited by Masera, fell along a peculiar fault line in Italy's state and institutional structure — that between foreign policymakers and economic policymakers — and anticipated the move towards a monetary paradigm different from the one that had guided Governor Baffi in the exchange rate issue and in joining the EMS: the monetarist paradigm.[65] The prime minister thus repaired the rift between foreign policymakers and economic policymakers, which had emerged during the negotiations that allowed Italy to join the EMS by obtaining a more flexible condition for the lira's fluctuation around parity (six per cent against 2.25 per cent for the other currencies in the system), within the foreign policy framework defined by the Cold War and by the Bank of Italy; he did so by reconciling the governor's vision of a 'symmetry of duties' between strong currencies, such as the mark, and weak currencies, such as the lira,[66] with the very first unit of that monetarist paradigm that would be partly followed by Via Nazionale in the following decade, with Ciampi as governor.[67]

Joining the EMS meant adopting convergence policies that would make Italy's European commitments credible. Between July and August, Padoa-

[65] See Paolo Baffi, *Il negoziato sullo SME*, "Bancaria", 45 (1989), 1, pp. 67-70. The reconstruction proposed here would be partly in line with the "technocratic" interpretation of the definition of the 'external constraint' proposed by Featherstone, *The Political Dynamics of the Vincolo Esterno*, cit., pp. 3-4.

[66] As Baffi argued in May 1979: 'The changes in real exchange rates that have been achieved over the last six years show how the exchange rate can play a non-negligible role in structural adjustment even in open and highly index-linked economies. The most industrialised economic systems, whose controls can be used only partially and in some cases are even blocked, need the central point represented by a degree of flexibility in the relationship between currencies. An exchange rate mechanism unable to adjust to changes in real costs would risk shifting the adjustment to the degree of economic openness of borders, especially with regard to capital flows, hence in a reductive sense of integration between economies; this must be supported by regional development policies and measured essentially in terms of freedom of transactions and only instrumentally on the basis of exchange rate certainty. Convergence is also necessary because the establishment of a regional area may damage the formation of blocs, which is especially relevant for Europe from a historical perspective. This risk would not be worth facing if the regional area did not achieve its own effective and operative internal cohesion' (Banca d'Italia, *Considerazioni finali*, Rome, Banca d'Italia, 1979, pp. 7-9). See also Luigi Spaventa, *Italy joins the EMS. A Political History*, Research Institute, Johns Hopkins University Bologna Center, Occasional Paper, June 1980, 32.

[67] The change of paradigm was indeed more subtle during Baffi's governorship, as emerges from a text prepared by Ciampi for the hearing in the Senate, Finance and Treasury Commission, scheduled for 25 October 1978 and held the following day in the absence of Ciampi himself, who was in Brussels that day. The text contains some considerations on the importance of convergence between European economies and of the fight against both inflation and deflation that anticipate Baffi's considerations of May 1979 (AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 205, folder 1, subfolder 4). The distinction between foreign policymakers and economic policymakers echoes the scheme proposed by Maes and Quaglia, *Germany and Italy: conflicting policy paradigms towards European monetary integration?*, cit., pp. 202-203.

Schioppa tried his hand at a long and detailed 'note' called 'A proposal for growth, a choice for Europe', which would eventually be presented as being 'elaborated' by Pandolfi.[68] The Pandolfi Plan, as it came to be known, picked up some of the ideas contained in the essay Padoa-Schioppa had written with Modigliani the previous year and placed them in a broader framework of economic policy proposals, inaugurating a "new" style for Italian policymakers as it defined a 'general strategy of economic policy with the precise indication of quantitative targets and operational indications on the public finance manoeuvre'.[69] The document drafted by Padoa-Schioppa had a 'strategic' target (increase in employment), a method of achievement (high and stable growth rate) and described the specific actions to be taken in the reduction of the inflation rate, in the reduction of labour costs and public finance requirements as factors of instability, in 'investments, public and private, the engine of growth'.

Padoa-Schioppa's economic policy document, which set out a strategy for adjusting to the imbalances that Italy had accumulated in the 1970s, at least since 1973, and which placed the country in an international context, aimed at creating not only a political but also — more broadly — a 'social' consensus on the objectives and the path of adjustment and growth outlined. The macroeconomic objectives for correcting the 'structural conditions' of the Italian economy, hence not just in the short term, were development, employment and stability. It was argued that the path of 'jolting line of decline' that the Italian economy had followed in the previous decade called for coherent policies that could help to correct the conditions that marked its instability 'in the technical sense of the term'; the reason given was that high inflation and high labour costs contrasted with the surplus in the current account of the balance of payments and the stable exchange rate, in a context of growing public sector debt and low growth in domestic demand, especially in the investment component. This macroeconomic framework, which was different from that of the industrialised countries with higher income to which Italy could be compared, could only be unstable, since the coexistence of such contradictory fundamentals would have resulted in a deviation, a shift towards either 'spontaneous'

[68] In the version of 22 July prepared by Padoa-Schioppa, the document was entitled 'A comparison between two decades' (AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder "Tommaso Padoa Schioppa", "Un confronto tra due decenni. Appunto per il Ministro Pandolfi redatto dal dr. Padoa Schioppa", 22 July 1978). The final 28-page document, complete with a statistical apparatus of 10 tables and related notes, differed in several points from the one initially prepared by Padoa-Schioppa, first of all — in formal terms — by the presence of 90 'short points corresponding to an idea'. Minister Pandolfi distributed it to the parties supporting the government on 31 August and it was published in the main newspapers the following day.

[69] In procedural terms, the document was meant 'to provide a basis for an organic and precise discussion *before* the presentation to Parliament' of the documents with which the economic policy for the following year would be defined in legislative terms. For a reconstruction of the political discussion of the Pandolfi Plan, in addition to Gualtieri's essay, see Masini, *SMEmorie della lira*, cit., pp. 35-40.

instability or a stability sought and pursued through appropriate correction policies. In recent years, the first case had repeatedly occurred in Italy in the form of a balance of payments crisis or depreciation of the lira, with a significant erosion of the competitiveness of its companies on international markets, for which currency adjustment had not proved sufficient compensation, and a correlated drop in income, employment, demand and investments. According to Padoa-Schioppa, there were two main factors of 'structural' instability on which to intervene: public finance and the high cost of labour.[70]

The first 'destabilising' factor was the deep change in public finances over the past decade, with the increase in debt and expenditure in the 'enlarged public sector': public finance contributed 'structurally' — and would have done so even more without corrective measures — to high inflation, but was not such (in terms of extent and quality) as to support, if not weakly, demand and above all investment ('very little'). Expenditure and debt increased more than the revenues, owing to the change of the original expenditure mechanism in the Treasury and the introduction of the concept of 'total requirements', which was used to manage the debts arising from the increased and multiplied transfers and from financial assets in a strict sense (typically corresponding to the commitments made by the state to government stakeholders and special credit institutions through contributions to endowment funds). The public finance scenario seemed to have been altered both by the accumulation of commitments (through the dubious practice of postponing transfers) and by the peculiar composition of expenditure, which included the share of investment (3.5 per cent in 1977 and 3.7 in 1979) as well as a higher budget deficit (4.8 per cent in 1977, 8.9 per cent in 1979).[71] The imbalance between the two components of public expenditure (current and capital) was seen as the 'primary factor of degradation of the system' and a real 'social deception' given the expected negative effects on the future provision of services. This public finance framework clashed with the financial compatibility between expected inflation, in relation to the monetisation of deficits, credit to the private sector and public needs arising from commitments made by the state and 'decentralised authorities'. In other words, a choice had to be made between the increase in inflation, a reduction in credit to the private sector and a decrease in public spending,

[70] AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder "Tommaso Padoa Schioppa", "Una proposta per lo sviluppo, una scelta per l'Europa", cit., points 1-8. Padoa-Schioppa's assessment was based on data presented in a table, reproduced here in the appendix: 'Comparison at a distance of ten years, 1966-1968 and 1976-1978.'

[71] It was noted that the 'hidden component' of debts in the public sector, largely determined by 'slippages' in transfers from the central state to the 'decentralised spending authorities', basically subtracted from the public budget liabilities that would later re-emerge and that as such were still qualified, albeit in the form of debts to the banking system by peripheral bodies, the national health system or state shareholdings (AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder "Tommaso Padoa Schioppa", "Una proposta per lo sviluppo, una scelta per l'Europa", cit., pp. 7-8).

given that public finances were generally quite inefficient because, structurally, they did not allow for a positive contribution to capital formation; cyclically, through the mechanism induced by the indexation of wages and pensions, it tended to amplify the fluctuation in prices and incomes to a more than proportional extent.[72]

The other main factor of 'structural' instability for the Italian economy was the cost of labour, the indexation of which put pressure on inflation together with the enlarged public spending. Again comparing the situation with that of a decade earlier, Padoa-Schioppa noted an increase in wages — under conditions of growth that were, however, attenuated — and a redistribution of income in favour of full-time workers in the formal sector, resulting in a 'new social order' whose preferences in terms of wage policy tended to benefit the employed at the expense of the unemployed and underemployed. High labour costs in an open economy led to a 'non-transitory' loss of competitiveness that manifested itself in a sharp decline in the balance of payments and foreign exchange, phenomena that further strengthened domestic inflationary pressures. The index-linked wage-price mechanism as a means of automatically adjusting to inflation tended to 'fix its level and propagate its impulses' without truly protecting savings and financial wealth. High labour costs thus became incompatible with investment and employment growth, protecting the workers' wages but not their financial wealth (i.e. savings), consequently reducing the productivity dynamics (and also the efficient use of existing plants). The loss of competitiveness of companies and low investment were limiting the realignment of labour costs to productivity. Hence the need for a 'course correction' of the Italian economy, policies that would change it from 'an economy of transfers to an economy of growth'. The transfer economy that the Italian economy had become was essentially a 'static' one, focused on distribution rather than economic growth. The gradual corrective actions that were proposed were a "necessary" exercise in governing the economy to promote the country's 'economic and civil growth', and the period 1979-1980 was identified as a timeframe in which to modify its evolutionary dynamics, with relevant interventions in public finance, wage policies and labour policies that would allow its flexible use. The new path to be followed was presented 'also as a choice for Europe', to which the European Council at the Bremen summit had provided an 'accelerated impetus' towards closer integration between the countries of the EEC and towards greater monetary discipline.[73]

Reducing the inflation and labour cost differential between Italy and the other EEC countries was necessary to 'stay in Europe'; it was a condition for

[72] See points 21-31 of Padoa-Schioppa's document. In the 1970s, fiscal dominance (i.e. the dependence of monetary policy on fiscal policies) was indeed accentuated (Roberto Ricciuti, *The Quest for a Fiscal Rule*, "Cliometrica", 2 (2008), 3, pp. 259-274).

[73] AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder "Tommaso Padoa Schioppa", "Una proposta per lo sviluppo, una scelta per l'Europa", cit., pp. 11-18.

'remaining in a new [monetary] system', where a flexible exchange rate would not have offered reliable guarantees and there was no alternative to rejecting a 'special monetary status' because of the economic and political implications: '[I]f we failed, the damage of inflation and unemployment would be enhanced by the economic, political and cultural damage of a relationship with Europe that would be precarious to the point of relegation. But if we succeed, our situation will be strengthened and secured.'[74] The political nature of the "proposal" was perfectly clear to Padoa-Schioppa, as he wrote in the concluding remarks, locating its 'condition of feasibility in the social consensus' that would be obtained from the 'credibility and acceptability of the project offered to the country'; following an analytical framework that was close to the typically Keynesian theory of full employment, he mentioned 'greater social equity' as the aim of a 'major collective commitment', in the option between 'chosen sacrifices and imposed sacrifices' in order to have a 'more evolved, more just, more self-confident society'.[75]

EMS membership and the call for 'symmetrical mechanisms' of adjustment

In the following months, the Bank of Italy's participation in the technical fora (Monetary Committee, Committee of Governors and Economic Policy Committee) continued, as did the analyses and evaluations by the Research department in accordance with the framework set out by the governor, but under the coordination and impetus of Ciampi.[76] At the beginning of October, Reiner Masera and Salvatore Zecchini prepared a new note for Minister Pandolfi on the 'European monetary system', in which they stated, first of all, that Italy's theoretical membership was the result of an assessment of the 'net benefits' derived from the prospects of greater integration of intra-EU markets and a larger market for Italian companies, and from the creation of 'extensive financing mechanisms' capable of saving the lira from recurrent speculative

[74] See paragraph 61, quoted here almost in full (AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder "Tommaso Padoa Schioppa", "Una proposta per lo sviluppo, una scelta per l'Europa", cit., p. 19).

[75] AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder "Tommaso Padoa Schioppa", "Una proposta per lo sviluppo, una scelta per l'Europa", cit., p. 26, points 81-83. One of the main critics of the proposal elaborated by Padoa-Schioppa was Federico Caffè, with whom he had a bitter correspondence (Alberto Baffigi, *L'integrazione europea come questione di social choice nel pensiero di Federico Caffè*, in "Ricerche di storia economica e sociale", II (2016), 1-2, pp. 183-208).

[76] See, first of all, the note preserved in AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder 49, "Alcune considerazioni sul prossimo triennio. Appunto inviato al Ministro del Tesoro on. Pandolfi", 1 August 1978 (also on tax policies and labour costs). Ciampi's role emerges — even only indirectly — from the concentration of documents in the Direttorio Ciampi archive of the AS BI rather than in the Baffi papers.

attacks that — with the depreciation of the currency — reinforced domestic inflationary tensions. However, both the authors of the note and the Bank of Italy were aware that the EMS would impose short- and long-term 'constraints' on the country's economy. During the negotiations, the Italian representatives therefore adopted a non-monetarist approach that insisted on certain principles in the construction of the new system: i) it had to be configured as 'realistic' and 'durable', unlike the monetary snake, taking into account the differences between the nine economies of the EEC, at the cost of provoking foreseeable effects of instability on the entire international monetary system, on the prospects for further integration in Europe and on individual European economies; ii) "all" the currencies of the EEC had to be included in order not to accentuate the differences between the various economies; iii) there should be no targets for competition with other currency areas (the implicit reference was to the dollar); (iv) adjustment burdens had to be distributed equally between deficit countries (Italy and France) and surplus countries (Germany) in the event of a deviation from parity; (v) a substantial flexibility in the fluctuation margins had to be maintained; and (vi) the system should rely on broad 'financial arrangements' with a view to the establishment of a European monetary fund.

A compromise solution was found, as often happened as a result of the multilevel structure of the EU governance system; the latter envisaged fluctuation margins on a bilateral basis, with reference to a European Currency Unit (hereafter ECU) as a basket of the currencies of the nine member countries (currency pool), and adjustment procedures (yet to be defined) in the case of a currency deviating from the ECU, which would in any case have affected the economic and monetary policies of the member states.[77] The Italian objective was essentially to create a system that would not be exposed to speculative attacks as a result of asymmetries arising from the participation in the adjustment of the exchange rates of individual currencies to the monetary centre of gravity, the ECU, asymmetries between economies with significant disparities in their respective external positions and domestic inflation rates. Along the lines indicated by Baffi, the technical solutions should have 'ensured concrete symmetry and convergence in the adjustment processes of the economies of the Community countries'. In this sense, the 'external constraint' could realistically be accepted, as it would allow for sufficiently wide margins of deviation so as not to deprive Italy, but also Ireland and Great Britain, of the possibility of using the exchange rate as an adjustment.[78] If inflation was Baffi's main concern, there was an awareness that the monetary system would also have

[77] The competing hypothesis suggested that the ECU was the European Unit of Account.

[78] This explains the 'harmonious cooperation now established between Italy and the United Kingdom over ECC questions' (UK NA, Kew, FCO 33/4046 f3, Alan Campbell, HM Ambassador at Rome, "Italy: Annual Review for 1978", confidential, 15 January 1979, p. 7).

to predict the opposite phenomena; for example, in the event of adjustment, it would have to 'prevent […] the system from leading to a deflationary trend'. In other words, although the Bank of Italy was inclined to accept a monetary arrangement involving measures to realign prices and labour costs to the levels of the Mark currency areas, it insisted on the need to adopt equally important measures to encourage the convergence of income and productivity in the 'less prosperous' economies: a 'greater homogeneity in the levels of development of the national economies' would be the most certain condition for the duration of the EMS.[79]

Zecchini and Masera's note of October 1978 was perhaps a clarification of Padoa-Schioppa's 'proposal for growth'; to some observers, the latter actually suggested a compression of demand that placed the pro-European choice in a growth and convergence perspective,[80] given that the policies to recover from inflation were to be associated — with 'no less effort', for surplus countries like Germany — to policies supporting domestic demand and external capital flows that would move the 'savings surpluses' of the 'more prosperous' economies towards the less wealthy economies (i.e. those with lower per capita income) through transfer policies, with the EEC's regional and social funds and European Investment Bank loans. Padoa-Schioppa's recovery programme as described in the Pandolfi Plan was therefore explicitly linked, in the 'not easy negotiations', to the creation of symmetrical mechanisms of economic policy (transfers and demand stimulus in higher income countries, which would favour the exports of lower-income countries and their convergence) and monetary policy (equal opposition to inflation *and* deflation).[81]

During the negotiations, the Italian position insisted on the symmetry of economic and monetary policies and the need for transfers to support real convergence as a condition for a stable and lasting European monetary system.[82]

[79] AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 205, folder 1, subfolder 20, Zecchini and Masera, "Sistema monetario europeo. Appunto inviato al Ministro del Tesoro dr. Pandolfi", 9 October 1978, *passim*. Zecchini and Masera's note was clearly in line with Baffi's assessments of the resilience of a European monetary system that would rely on the convergence of real economies rather than on monetary variables (Gigliobianco, *Via Nazionale*, cit., pp. 324-326).

[80] This was the case with the influential economist Federico Caffè, who criticised Padoa-Schioppa's document in various interviews (Baffigi, *L'integrazione europea come questione di social choice nel pensiero di Federico Caffè*, cit., pp. 185-194).

[81] AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 205, folder 1, subfolder 20, Zecchini and Masera, "Sistema monetario europeo", cit., pp. 12-13. Ciampi wrote to Pandolfi about the difficulties in the negotiations and the division between the two groups of countries, sending him a note on 9 November about the meeting of the EC's Economic Policy Committee on 6 November (AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 205, folder 1, subfolder 20, letter from Ciampi to Pandolfi, 9 November 1978; "Resoconto dei lavori condotti in seno al Comitato di Politica Economica della CEE in merito ai 'concurrent studies' nell'ambito del negoziato per il nuovo sistema monetario europeo", 8 November 1978).

[82] AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 205, folder 1, subfolder 20, "Memorandum italiano presentato al Comitato di Politica Economica, 2 November 1978; *ibidem*, subfolder 16, "Misure

However, the Italian position, as it was presented by the Bank of Italy, was essentially that of Governor Baffi and Minister Pandolfi, who were aware of the rigidity of the Italian economy resulting from the high public debt and the wage indexation system. Prime Minister Andreotti, aware of the political dimension of Schmidt's proposal, was nevertheless cautious at the bilateral meeting in Siena in early November. According to Renato Ruggiero, Andreotti's diplomatic adviser at the time, Schmidt was particularly skilful in 'concentrating his own political onslaught' on the Italian prime minister and dismissing, 'almost contemptuously, the technical arguments' of Baffi and Pandolfi. According to Schmidt, monetary stability was a precondition for greater investment and trade within the European market and, in the absence of a stabilisation mechanism, all EEC member states would have suffered from external and internal imbalances by 1985, while Baffi's and Pandolfi's reservations were not such as to justify the lower growth expected for the economies of the European Community as a whole. Schmidt's persuasive strategy was essentially centred on the downgrade risks that Italy would face: 'Those who rejected the EMS would sink to a second rank within the Community. If Italy rejected it, she should become like Greece or Turkey.' Andreotti confirmed to Schmidt that Italy, as a founding country, continued to view the creation of Europe as a 'top priority, but wanted an EMS that strengthened and did not split the Community', a risk that was indeed latent in a scheme that reduced the margins of adjustment through the exchange rate and did not contemplate transfers of resources to the less wealthy countries, according to the concerns expressed by Baffi and Pandolfi, which was also why they insisted on British participation.[83] While Schmidt did not rule out, along with Andreotti, the possibility of resource transfers between the EMS countries,[84] the commitments that the German monetary authorities effectively made to this end were nevertheless understood to be non-binding, as the Chancellor agreed with the Bundesbank's president, Otmar Emminger, a few weeks after the meeting in Siena; the Bundesbank's intervention in the foreign exchange market through credit lines to support currencies in difficulty — as far as provided for in the

economiche parallele", notes sent by Governor Baffi and the Bank's Director General to Minister Pandolfi, 6 December 1978.

[83] The reconstruction Ruggiero gave the British ambassador in Italy in strict confidence ('not playing any of it back to non-British (including Italian) officials. Other wise [*sic*] his own position will be damaged gravely') is preserved in UK NA, Kew, PREM, 16/1637, telegram from the British Embassy in Rome, 2 November 1978.

[84] Schmidt had accepted the principle that the monetary reform scheme was 'associated with growth and a transfer of resources' in Bremen, during confidential talks with Giscard and Callaghan. Schmidt 'said that the relationship between monetary reform and resource transfer would be similar to that between the IMF and the World Bank' (UK NA, Kew, 10 Downing Street, PREM 16/1634, KRS [towe], "Note of a conversation between the Prime Minister, President Giscard and Chancellor Schmidt on the monetary reform in the Rathaus, Bremen, on 6 July 1978 at 18.20", Confidential, p. 1).

agreements — would in reality be non-binding and left to the central bank's discretion even if the government was unable to formalise an intention that was openly at odds with international commitments.[85]

Italian resistance was eventually overcome, not only by the introduction of a wider fluctuation band for the lira,[86] but also because of the moral suasion by Padoa-Schioppa and Modigliani, who softened the reservations nurtured in Via Nazionale.[87] From the outset, the strategic choice to participate in the EMS was motivated by two strong arguments: firstly, Andreotti's government intended to make decisions that were consistent with the strengthening of European integration processes, within the system of alliances defined in the 1950s; secondly, Andreotti and Pandolfi were aware that by joining the EMS, hence 'with the solidarity of the community', Italy could have been more successful in pursuing its objectives of fighting inflation, stimulating economic growth and reducing unemployment.[88]

However, in May 1980, the new Governor Ciampi highlighted the difficulties that had emerged during the first year of the EMS, in particular the fact that 'disagreements about the role of the Community budget and the implementation of reforms agreed in principle had not been settled', with unsatisfactory effects on the hoped-for convergence between the EEC economies. While the exchange rahospites had held up well, despite the lira's wide fluctuations within the bandwidth, Ciampi claimed that the original 'intention of leading the [EEC's] budget in a direction more attentive to reducing income gaps between

[85] This is the reassurance Schmidt gave the Bundesbank leadership: 'I must say to you openly that I have quite severe misgivings about a written specification of this sort, a written specification of the possibility of an at least temporary release from the intervention. Let us first of all assume that it appeared tomorrow in a French or Italian newspaper. What accusations would the newspapers then make in editorials against their own Government who got themselves mixed up with such a dodgy promise with the Germans. A Government which promised them to intervene in the framework of certain rules of the game, but internally put in writing its intention to be able to do otherwise if need be. In the matter itself I agree with you, gentlemen, but I deem it out of the question to write that down. In the matter it is yet the case that there has been a beautiful saying the world for two thousand years: *ultra posse nemo obligatur*' (Bundesbank Historical Archive, Frankfurt, N2/267, Council meeting with Chancellor Schmidt, 30 November 1978). English translation by the Margaret Thatcher Foundation.

[86] See Mourlon-Druol, *A Europe Made of Money*, cit., pp. 246-250. On the Italian involvement in European integration, see Francesca Fauri, *L'Italia e l'integrazione economica europea*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2001, pp. 171 and onwards.

[87] Modigliani in particular attached great importance to the article, written but not signed — for reasons of expediency — with Padoa-Schioppa, *I pro e i contro per l'Italia*, "Corriere della Sera", 1 December 1978 (Franco Modigliani, *Avventure di un economista*, edited by Paolo Peluffo, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1999, pp. 245-248).

[88] See Preda, *Il ruolo di Giulio Andreotti*, cit., pp. 223-229. On the necessity of joining the EMS to achieve the inflation target, see Barry Eichengreen and Andrea Boltho, *The economic impact of European integration*, in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Europe*, edited by Stephen Broadberry and Kevin O'Rourke, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, vol. 2, pp. 284-285.

regions, more incisive in influencing production potential and ultimately more appropriate for providing support for lasting monetary stabilisation' had not been put into practice.[89]

Conclusion

European monetary integration, as Mourlon-Druol has pointed out, is a complex process that depends on the plurality of dimensions — political, economic and cultural, national and transnational, governmental and non-governmental — in which the actors who were, and nowadays are, involved in it operated.[90] The creation of the EMS and the seed of the future common currency, the ECU, was the outcome of a particularly complex process of learning and interaction between institutional and non-institutional actors, between governments and transnational bodies, between economic interests, political projects and cultures (and not only the technical projects of economists and central bankers). In that process, Italy — having been excluded from the early stages of launching and defining the project — first of all had to reaffirm its credibility as a candidate and could only enter the negotiating phases after an initial draft of a European monetary system had been outlined on the initiative of Giscard and Schmidt. The Bank of Italy's Director General Ciampi, and some of the economists close to him, especially Masera and Padoa-Schioppa, played a crucial role in building the country's credibility and the strategic decision to join the EMS. This group was part of interconnected transnational epistemic communities (i.e. central bankers, economists),[91] which redefined the post-Keynesian economic paradigms with which the systemic shocks of the stagflation years were dealt with and from which the fiscal and monetary policy lines emerged that guided the choices of the following decade.[92]

[89] Banca d'Italia, *Considerazioni finali*, Rome, Banca d'Italia, 1981, pp. 15-16. The problems of the incompleteness of the EMS fully emerged when, in the early 1990s, European integration gave rise to what Padoa-Schioppa called the 'irreconcilable quartet': free trade, fixed but adjustable rates, unrestricted capital mobility and (relative) autonomy of monetary policy (Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, *Lo SME: una visione di lungo periodo*, in *Il Sistema monetario europeo*, edited by Francesco Giavazzi, Stefano Micossi and Marcus H. Miller, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1993, pp. 371-387).

[90] See Mourlon-Druol, *A Europe Made of Money*, cit., pp. 3-11.

[91] See John Singleton, *Central Banking in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 191-221; Frédéric Clavert and Olivier Feiertag, *Les banquiers centraux et la construction européenne*, "Histoire, Économie et Société", 30 (2011), 4, pp. 3-9.

[92] In Padoa-Schioppa's case, that experience opened the door to an appointment at the DRII of the European Commission in Brussels, between 1979 and 1983, a position he interpreted from a Europeanist as well as a professional and political perspective, as he wrote in a note when he returned to the Bank of Italy: "[J]e considère que dans les matières qui intéressent la DGII, ces traits se ramènent a deux concepts: nécessité d'une construction progressive de l'Europe; valeur centrale de la professionnalité" (quoted in Papadia, *Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa*,

The definition of an initial, albeit unfulfilled, coherent policy to fight inflation, rebalance public finances and boost productivity through the Pandolfi Plan allowed Italy to regain credibility in the central and final stages of the negotiations for the creation of the EMS. In this way, despite the considerable differences between Carli and Baffi, an attempt was made to realign the investment-maximising paradigm on which monetary and fiscal policies had hitherto been based with the emerging neo-monetarist paradigm that had motivated Schmidt's anti-Keynesian currency stabilisation proposal.[93] Between June and October 1978, Baffi's justified reservations about the lira's entry into the EMS — an option essentially dictated by political reasons, according to Prime Minister Andreotti — caused an invisible crack in Via Nazionale: a difference of assessment, and perhaps vision, between Governor Baffi and Director General Ciampi and the economists who defined and technically argued for the pro-European choice also in terms of an external constraint based on a new meaning for Italy as an open economy.[94] The emphasis was now placed on the quasi-legal nature of the European constraint in terms of membership and with respect to the inflation and public finance targets contained in the agreements of the EMS, and not simply on the policies and mechanisms for correcting balance of payment deficits, as had been understood until then.[95]

Reconstructing the strategic choice and the context in which the Pandolfi Plan was developed allows us to specify the genesis, the rationale behind and the economic objectives of the 'European option' exercised by Italy in a frame-

cit., p. 186). In a functionalist logic, à la Jean Monnet, Padoa-Schioppa would later work alongside Jacques Delors, as secretary of the Committee he chaired, in the development of the euro (Fabio Masini, *Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa: EMU as the Anchor Stone for Building a Federal Europe*, in *Architects of the Euro*, edited by Kenneth Dyson and Ivo Maes, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 193-211).

[93] Schmidt's intolerance of Keynesian policies is well-known (see, among others, Matthias Waechter, *Helmut Schmidt und Valéry Giscard d'Estaing: Auf der Suche nach Stabilitat in der Krise de 70er Jahre*, Bremen, Temmen, 2011).

[94] This difference can add to the reading offered by Franco Spinelli and Michele Fratianni, *Storia monetaria d'Italia*, Milano, Mondadori, 1991, pp. 687-689. Baffi's opposition to joining the EMS is also documented in Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, *A new monetary system in a changing polity. Central banks, the ECC and the creation of the European Monetary System*, in *Les Banques centrales et l'État-nation*, edited by Olivier Feiertag and Michel Margairaz, Paris, Sciences-Po Les Presses, 2016, pp. 568-569.

[95] The balance of payments and foreign exchange rates constituted, as noted above, an external constraint that was well-known to central bankers and economic policymakers. The external constraint outlined by Padoa-Schioppa in the Pandolfi Plan, consistently with the structure of the EMS, moved towards exchange rate constraints related to public finance and to the fiscal dominance phenomena that still characterised monetary policy in Italy; in other words, it was transformed into a fiscal policy constraint that the so-called divorce between the Bank of Italy and the Treasury in July 1981 would formally recognise. The classic external constraint related to the balance of payments accounts and foreign exchange rates remained unchanged towards the rest of the world, meaning that it had an economic and not a "legal" nature, as defined by Guido Carli in the early 1990s.

work of powers divided between foreign policymakers and economic policymakers, and to better understand the specific value of the 'external constraint', used for the first time to justify the 'European option' as an intellectual *and* political product of the Via Nazionale technocracy in its original formulation. In the specific definition given by Masera, and soon also — albeit more generally — by Padoa-Schioppa, the 'external constraint' would have existed even if Italy had remained outside the EMS, as a 'global challenge' and a balance of payments constraint that conditioned the growth prospects of the country's economy.[96] However, if from that perspective the external constraint acted at least in part independently of the Bundesbank's monetary policy decisions, the external constraint — redefined in this way — would have acted as a "quasi-legal" treaty constraint, albeit in asymmetrical terms, as Schmidt admitted in order to absorb Emminger's reserves, a constraint hinged on inflation targets in relation to public finance.[97] A reduction of the adjustment margins through the exchange rate — which Baffi still believed could be achieved — would necessarily have involved compensating for the effects of adjustment policies without devaluation by increasing public debt, to the point of running the risk of a fiscal crisis, which led to Italy's exit from the EMS in 1992.[98]

Translated by Andrea Hajek

[96] This consideration was expressed in Modigliani and Padoa-Schioppa, *I pro e i contro per l'Italia* (Modigliani, *Avventure di un economista*, cit., pp. 246-247).

[97] Perhaps the links between interest rates and fiscal policy can explain the subsequent disagreement between Modigliani and Padoa-Schioppa on the economic policy to be adopted: loosening budget constraints and rebalancing balance of payments accounts, for the former, or the sharp correction of public debt, for the latter (see the letters the two economists wrote in 1993, published in *Franco Modigliani. L'impegno civile di un economista*, edited by Pier Francesco Asso, Siena, Fondazione Monte dei Paschi di Siena, 2007, pp. 183-185).

[98] This could also explain the divergence in the 1980s between inflation and public debt as described in Giavazzi and Spaventa, *Italy: the real effects of inflation and disinflation*, cit., pp. 133-171.

Appendix
Comparison at a distance of ten years, 1966-1968 and 1976-1978

Table 1 - Average of data for the two three-year periods in question; figures in italics are average for the 1976-1977 period. (1): Annual rates of increase; (2): GDP deflator; (3): In industry excluding construction; (4): At constant prices; (5): Consistency at the end of December of the balance of the external position of the Bank of Italy-UIC and credit companies

		1966-1968	*1976-1978*
Growth (1)	of GDP in quantity	6,4	3,3
	of GDP in prices (2)	3,2	16,9
	of the cost per employee	8,46	18,65
Unemployment	listed in unemployment register	1,1 mln	*1,5 mln*
	hours of unemployment benefits	87,73 mln	*263,5 mln*
Distribution	share of employee income	56,7	*70,4*
Accumulation	fixed investment: GDP (3)	20,6	16,9
	investment in machinery and equipment: GDP	7	7,4
Foreign Trade	imports: resources (4)	12,5	16,8
	exports: resources (4)	13,3	20,2
Assets	external position (5)	811 bn	*–7,7977 bn*
	public debt	15,986 bn	*92,584 bn*

Source: AS BI, Direttorio Ciampi, file 204, folder 1, subfolder "Tommaso Padoa Schioppa", "Una proposta per lo sviluppo, una scelta per l'Europa", cit., p. 29.

Immigration in Italy before Jerry Masslo: the social profile of the immigrant in 1980s research

Donato Di Sanzo*

Attraverso la consultazione di fonti d'archivio e dei lavori di ricerca scientifica prodotti nel periodo di riferimento, l'articolo ricostruisce la rappresentazione pubblica dell'immigrazione in Italia tra la fine degli anni Settanta e la fine degli anni Ottanta. Incentrato principalmente sul ruolo della comunità scientifica nel considerare la complessità dell'immigrazione, l'articolo ripercorre l'evoluzione della figura dell'immigrato fino all'assassinio di Jerry Essan Masslo (1989), lo spartiacque per la storia dell'immigrazione in Italia.
Parole chiave: storia dell'immigrazione, ricerca scientifica, Jerry Essan Masslo

This article reconstructs the public representation of immigration in Italy from the late 1970s until the late 1980s. Using archival sources and research produced during the period under consideration, with a special focus on the role of the scientific community in considering the complexity of immigration, the article traces the evolution of the immigrant's social profile up to the assassination of Jerry Essan Masslo in 1989, a turning point in the history of immigration in Italy.
Key words: history of immigration, scientific research, Jerry Essan Masslo

Scholars who have studied the evolution of immigration in Italy have observed that the phenomenon entered the public sphere in the 1980s. The assassination of the young South African immigrant Jerry Essan Masslo in the countryside of Caserta, in the summer of 1989, marked a turning point in the history of immigration in Italy, attracting media and political attention and legitimising the first great Italian anti-racist movement.[1] However, even before the inci-

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[1] On this point, see Michele Colucci, *Storia dell'immigrazione straniera in Italia. Dal 1945 ai nostri giorni*, Rome, Carocci, 2018, p. 73. For a narrative account of Jerry Essan Masslo's assassination, see also Giulio Di Luzio, *A un passo dal sogno. Gli avvenimenti che hanno cambiato la storia dell'immigrazione in Italia*, Nardò (LE), Besa Editrice, 2016.

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dent, there had been a growing public awareness of the scale and characteristics of the complex and evolving phenomenon of immigration. One of the first to study the presence of foreigners in the peninsula was the sociologist Enrico Pugliese, who spoke explicitly of the 'discovery of immigration'; he noted how in the early 1980s, 'the novelty of the existence of immigrants' added to 'the traditional migratory movements that had affected Italy in the past'.[2] Legal experts such as Paolo Morozzo della Rocca have focused on the perception of immigration in public space, arguing that it was already 'a problem in the 1980s, when migratory flows, far from being impressive', were nevertheless becoming 'visible'.[3] Some of the historians who have written important works on Republican Italy have placed the 'discovery of immigrants' in the second half of the 1980s, claiming that even then 'the eruption of the phenomenon' was accompanied by 'an explosion of fears, be they sincere or not'.[4] Luca Einaudi, who analysed the evolution of Italian policies in the period 1986-1990, observed that 'immigration was beginning to be visible',[5] whereas Paola Corti and Matteo Sanfilippo, who have traced the historical evolution of human mobility along the Italian peninsula, demonstrate that 'starting from 1981 […] the numerical quantity and above all the media perception of the immigration phenomenon' increased 'from year to year, sometimes undergoing real upsurges'.[6] Finally, Michele Colucci — author of the first history of foreign immigration in Republican Italy — wrote that in the same period, the presence of foreigners seemed able to 'penetrate mass culture'.[7]

This broad consensus on the identification of the 1980s as the moment when the theme of immigration permanently entered the Italian public sphere, expressed at different times and by scholars from different disciplines, was justified both by statistical data — representative of a real numerical increase in the number of foreigners in Italy — and by the occurrence of episodes and

[2] Enrico Pugliese, *L'Italia tra migrazioni internazionali e migrazioni interne*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2002, pp. 72-73. Historian Valerio De Cesaris has also recently referred to the interpretative category of "discovery"; referring to the period between the late 1980s and early 1990s and the massive arrival of Albanian immigrants in Italy on the merchant ship Vlora in July 1991, De Cesaris defined the period 1989-1991 as the 'three years of the discovery of immigration'. Valerio De Cesaris, *Il grande sbarco. L'Italia e la scoperta dell'immigrazione*, Milan, Guerini e Associati, 2018, pp. 7-8.

[3] Paolo Morozzo della Rocca, *Gli immigrati e i dilemmi della nuova cittadinanza*, in Enrica Asquer, Emanuele Bernardi, Carlo Fumian (eds.), *L'Italia contemporanea dagli anni Ottanta a oggi*, vol. II, *Il mutamento sociale*, Rome, Carocci, 2014, p. 155.

[4] Guido Crainz, *Il paese reale. Dall'assassinio di Moro all'Italia di oggi*, Rome, Donzelli, 2002, p. 267. See also Piero Craveri, *La repubblica dal 1958 al 1992*, Turin, Utet, 1995, pp. 1008-1023.

[5] Luca Einaudi, *Le politiche dell'immigrazione in Italia dall'Unità a oggi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2007, p. 134.

[6] Paola Corti, Matteo Sanfilippo, *L'Italia e le migrazioni*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2012, pp. 158-159.

[7] M. Colucci, *Storia dell'immigrazione straniera in Italia*., cit., p. 73.

incidents that reflected an objective qualitative evolution of the phenomenon. From a quantitative point of view, although the collection and analysis of population data tackled the problem 'of reorienting a statistical system organised to capture outflows that were by then declining and, by necessity, unprepared to account for incoming flows',[8] signs of a significant growth in the number of immigrants on Italian territory began to be appear as early as the early 1980s. The 1981 population census, for example, estimated the presence of '211,000' legally resident foreigners, to which '110,000 temporarily present' were to be 'added',[9] with 'an increase of 45.4 per cent' between 1979 and 1980.[10] From a qualitative point of view, as early as the second half of the 1970s, there was a real proliferation of surveys and scientific research — particularly of a demographic, economic and sociological nature — on the living and working conditions of immigrants, which further developed the public representation of foreigners in Italy. In addition to these in-depth studies, the main national newspapers published discussions between experts and scholars that revealed the fear — expressed by some of the most eminent Italian economists — of a damaging 'replacement effect' of Italian labour by foreign labour in an already precarious labour market.[11] In terms of the wider public debate, a profile of immigrants began to take shape in the early 1980s — sometimes also subject to simplifications and stereotypical narratives — in a growing number of journalistic investigations, which were conducted in response to both news events and the first overt episodes of racism and xenophobia.

The immigrant in Italian research in the late 1970s and early 1980s

Scholars from different academic disciplines were among the first to assess the quantitative dimension and deepen their qualitative knowledge of the foreign presence in Italy between the 1970s and 1980s. Demographers, economists, sociologists and anthropologists launched research projects and surveys from their respective points of observation and with different instruments, depending on their disciplinary backgrounds. In the second half of the 1970s, there was no shortage of studies aimed at developing more detailed knowledge of the first

[8] Corrado Bonifazi, *L'immigrazione straniera in Italia*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2007, p. 107.

[9] These numbers are also mentioned in C. Bonifazi, *L'immigrazione straniera in Italia*, cit., p. 130.

[10] P. Corti, M. Sanfilippo, *L'Italia e le migrazioni*, cit., p. 157. The increase in the number of presences after 1980 is also due to a new counting method by the Ministry of the Interior, which, starting that year, began to record foreigners who were issued a residence permit lasting less than three months, previously excluded from the count.

[11] For an account of the interventions of several Italian economists, including Giorgio Foà and Romano Prodi, all of whom essentially agree in objecting to the arrival of foreign labour in local and national labour markets, see M. Colucci, *Storia dell'immigrazione straniera in Italia*, cit., pp. 60-61.

concrete examples of labour migration and the innovative scope of the entry of immigrant labour in certain territorial contexts and specific segments of the Italian labour market. In 1976, the anthropologist Antonino Cusumano published a volume entitled *Il ritorno infelice*,[12] in which he analysed the stories of Tunisians who were initially employed as deck-hands on Italian fishing boats operative in the Mediterranean, to later enter the agricultural labour market in western Sicily, not without controversy and fibrillation.[13] The profile that emerged from the Sicilian scholar's work was that of an almost exclusively male form of proximity immigration, within which, however, the choice of clothing — other than being an element of recognisability — also reflected a generational gap, especially between the elderly, who were reluctant to abandon traditional clothing, and the young, more inclined to assimilate the customs and traditions of the place of arrival. With regard to the Tunisians of Mazara del Vallo, Cusumano wrote the following:

> They can be recognised by their darker faces, their black, frizzy hair and their dry, somewhat lanky figures. Their way of dressing includes some typical Arab clothing in the now common European look. In fact, in Tunisia, several still wear the famous 'kaftans', jackets and those hooded cloaks called 'burnous'. There are also quite some immigrants who leave their brides wrapped in the characteristic and traditional veil, the 'sefsari'. However, However, for obvious reasons of practicality, no one carries the traditional costumes of their country of origin with them in their suitcases. The elderly, who out of objective necessity are less sensitive to Western clothing trends, usually wear short, loose jackets over shirts that are wide open at the collar. The younger immigrants, instead, tend to conform their way of dressing to that of the local youth, and therefore take care to buy new shirts with a modern cut and bright colours. Many wear sandals — not just for the summer season; their fine and elegant workmanship testifies to the Arab craftsmanship. Sometimes one can spot older Tunisian immigrants wearing the typical 'chechia' on their head. This typically red, brimless headgear adheres perfectly to the head in its concave part and differs from that most commonly used in Morocco, the 'fez', which has the form of a truncated cone, with a silk tassel falling from the centre.[14]

In the same period, the founder of the Api-Colf association, Father Erminio Crippa, coordinated a study on the employment of foreign women in the home care sector,[15] published in 1976 under the title "Lavoro amaro: le estere in Italia".[16] The text described a situation of articulated immigration, covering a

[12] Antonino Cusumano, *Il ritorno infelice: i tunisini in Sicilia*, Palermo, Sellerio, 1976.

[13] On the story of Tunisian workers in Sicily between the 1960s and 1970s, see M. Colucci, *Storia dell'immigrazione straniera in Italia*, cit., pp. 39-43. For a more in-depth study, see Giuliano Beniamino Fleri's paper *Fili invisibili. Il caso di Tunisia e Sicilia tra anni '60 e '70*, presented the conference *Immigrazioni. Migrazioni internazionali e lavoro dagli anni Settanta a oggi. Una prospettiva storica*, held in Salerno and Naples on 22-23 May 2019.

[14] A. Cusumano, *Il ritorno infelice*, cit., p. 31.

[15] For a historical reconstruction of the arrival of foreign women workers in the home care sector in Italy, see Alessandra Gissi, «Le *estere*». *Immigrazione femminile e lavoro domestico in Italia (1960-1980)*, "Meridiana", 2018, n. 91, pp. 37-56.

[16] Erminio Crippa, *Lavoro amaro: le estere in Italia*, Rome, Api-Colf, 1976.

wide range of nationalities and a great variety of profiles, within which it was nevertheless possible — even if 'each foreigner [had] a story that was almost always linked to some drama' — to find very common representative characteristics in the universe of the first 'foreign domestic helpers in Italy'.[17] These include, for example, a medium-high education level: '[T]hree indications are clear to us, namely that there is a category of illiterate women; a consistent proportion of primary school girls; [and] a thick layer of domestic helpers with a middle school certificate and, among Filipino and Ceylonyese women, university or high school graduates, analysts and teachers.'[18]

These were mostly case studies, which enhanced knowledge of specific territorial contexts of the peninsula that hosted the first immigrant workers or of dynamics linked to the strong presence of foreign labour in specific sectors of the labour market. It was not until the publication, in 1979, of a study conducted by CENSIS on behalf of the Interministerial committee for emigration that the image of the foreigner evolved thanks to this first attempt to quantitatively analyse foreign immigration in Italy as a whole.[19] The work already anticipated in its title, "I lavoratori stranieri in Italia",[20] a representation of immigration centred on the figure of the guest worker, a person solely identified with their function in the national labour market and destined, in a short or long period, to return home, as had happened and continued to happen to many Italian emigrants abroad.[21] This portrayal of the immigrant was supported by the CENSIS researchers even though they were aware of the 'spectacular contradiction' between 'the importation of foreign labour and the presence in Italy of about 1.5 million unemployed people'.[22] Confronted with quantitative estimates that estimated the overall phenomenon at figures oscillating between '280,000 and 400,000 people — of which 70/100,000 workers in the domestic sector, 40/60,000 Maghribi (Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria), 20/30,000 Yugoslavians and 30/40,000 Egyptians',[23] the research offered a description of the foreign worker in a condition of social marginality and exposed to the risk of discrimination, also at the level of public opinion:

> Since foreign workers are concentrated, out of necessity and not by choice, in the poorest areas of the large cities, leading a very secluded, almost hidden and isolated life, it is very

[17] E. Crippa, *Lavoro amaro*, cit., p. 28.

[18] E. Crippa, *Lavoro amaro*, cit., p. 29.

[19] L. Einaudi, *Le politiche dell'immigrazione*, cit., pp. 75-76.

[20] CENSIS, *I lavoratori stranieri in Italia. Studio elaborato dal CENSIS nel 1978*, Rome, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1979, in Centro Studi Emigrazione Roma (hereafter CSER), BA 17.02.C36.

[21] For a historical framework of the regulatory model of incoming migration flows based on the figure of the guest worker, see Michele Colucci, Matteo Sanfilippo, *Le migrazioni. Un'introduzione storica*, Rome, Carocci, 2009, pp. 79-83.

[22] CENSIS, *I lavoratori stranieri in Italia*, cit., p. 123, loc. cit. note 20.

[23] CENSIS, *I lavoratori stranieri in Italia*, cit., p. 63, loc. cit. note 20.

easy for public opinion to see in them elements that feed these marginalised areas of the city, if not an actual danger to public health.[24]

Finally, the research sought to understand the reasons behind the new flows to Italy by making a distinction between the arrival of immigrants and 'our migrations that occurred in the early 1900s, particularly those heading towards overseas destinations'.[25]

Emilio Reyneri's volume "La catena migratoria" (1979) followed precisely in the footsteps of the models that had guided studies on Italian emigration abroad.[26] The Milanese sociologist interpreted the new immigration that was affecting southern Europe and Italy as a process to be explained, above all, in relation to the 'import or export of labour, in order to understand the functioning mechanisms and contradictions of the labour market and productive structure' of the countries of arrival.[27] Not without exposing itself to criticism of a mainly methodological nature,[28] this "labourist" approach was visibly oriented to universalise the study of migration by referring to the economic balance between labour demand and supply, and hence to interpret the functioning of flows according to models that could be applied to mobility in different historical periods. Inspired also by a large body of international literature on the "economicist" study of migrations to Europe and the West, which had met with approval starting with the works of Roger W. Böhning,[29] this approach left only limited space for the definition of a specific profile of immigrants in Italy, described as people who arrived 'illegally with tourist passports or without a work contract', eventually finding precarious employment 'in the tourist and hotel sector (bartenders, shop assistants, dishwashers, labourers) and in personal services (maids, cleaning companies)', but also 'on Sicilian fishing boats, at petrol stations, in the Piedmontese mines (Poles), among street vendors and on building sites in almost all large cities'.[30]

[24] CENSIS, *I lavoratori stranieri in Italia*, cit., p. 123, loc. cit. note 20.

[25] CENSIS, *I lavoratori stranieri in Italia*, cit., p. 125, loc. cit. note 20.

[26] Emilio Reyneri, *La catena migratoria. Il ruolo dell'emigrazione nel mercato del lavoro di arrivo e di esodo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1979.

[27] E. Reyneri, *La catena migratoria*, cit., p. 7.

[28] One of the most critical objections to Reyneri's work came from Corrado Bonifazi, who wrote that 'the work still moves too much within the conceptual schemes and interpretative paradigms that are typical of the just-ended European migration experience, failing to grasp, also because of the objective difficulty of highlighting the new features of the phenomenon at the international level and of identifying all its consequences, the transformation taking place and the transition from *demand-oriented* to *supply-oriented* flows, more yielding than the previous ones and capable of expanding even in environmental situations that are not very favourable to their development'. C. Bonifazi, *L'immigrazione straniera in Italia*, cit., p. 89.

[29] I am referring, in particular, to Roger W. Böhning's *The Migration of Workers in the Kingdom and the European Community*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1972. Böhning would later pick up his arguments in *Studies in International Labour Migration*, London, McMillan, 1984.

[30] E. Reyneri, *La catena migratoria*, cit., pp. 117-118.

Apart from the investigations conducted by research institutes or public universities already at the end of the 1970s, trade unions and certain exponents of the lay and Christian associative universe began to express an interest in the production of a constant 'documentation of the migration phenomenon', a sign that private organisations were assuming a leading role also 'at the level of the representation' of the foreign presence in Italy.[31] An example of this tendency was the work promoted, again in 1979, by ECAP-CGIL in collaboration with the chair of sociology at the University of Rome. Still based on a "workerist" approach to the interpretation of migration flows to Italy, the research produced several outputs, including a summary and two separate texts that were published in advance. The first was a review of the sources used to study the foreign presence in Lazio, published in 1979,[32] which went so far as to mention different categories of immigrants, juxtaposing the profiles of 'Tunisian fishermen employed on Sicilian fishing boats' and 'female domestic helpers of African and Asian origin', by now assumed to be widely representative of the foreign presence, to the figures of 'refugees and students'.[33] On the other hand, the innovative scope of the publication consisted in the intention — even if only indirectly mentioned — to understand the perception of immigration in society and 'to also encourage a documented response to all those instrumental interpretations that [had] already appeared on the subject'.[34] The caustic criticism of the ECAP-CGIL researchers was motivated by the observation that the vast majority of references in the press to the condition of foreigners in Italy should 'be considered as "crime news"' and, in any case, ended up offering a partial and reductive representation:

> From the articles, it is possible to draw a 'typology' of foreign workers (or potential foreign workers): illegal immigrants, refugees, students, COLF, border workers, seasonal workers, precarious workers; a typology that certainly characterises this presence but which is also more articulate: in fact, hardly any mention is made of technical and administrative managers, interns, etc.[35]

The observations contained in the research promoted by ECAP-CGIL in 1979 were included in a second in-depth study that preceded the publication of the

[31] M. Colucci, *Storia dell'immigrazione straniera in Italia*, cit., pp. 70-71.

[32] ECAP-CGIL, Cattedra di sociologia 2b, Università di Roma, *Documentazione di base per una indagine su: i lavoratori stranieri in Italia*, Rome, 1979, in CSER, BA 17.E2.

[33] ECAP-CGIL, Cattedra di sociologia 2b, Università di Roma, *Documentazione di base*, cit., pp. 11-13, loc. cit. note 32.

[34] ECAP-CGIL, Cattedra di sociologia 2b, Università di Roma, *Documentazione di base*, cit., p. 34, loc. cit. note 32.

[35] ECAP-CGIL, Cattedra di sociologia 2b, Università di Roma, *Documentazione di base*, cit., p. 35, loc. cit. note 32. The ECAP-CGIL researchers were even more dismissive in defining how the press outlined the journalistic representation of immigration in Italy: 'In any case, not many articles give correct information about this new reality that is the result of careful and objective observation and analysis.'

summary, which the trade union's training body in Corso Italia launched in 1980 in collaboration with the Lazio region.[36] Largely referring to the condition of immigrants in Rome and the Lazio region, ECAP's new in-depth study also focused on three specific foreign communities where interviews had been conducted: Cape Verdean domestic helpers, Eritreans living in the capital and a group of Middle Eastern students. With regard to the first group, the publication denounced above all 'the humiliating treatment by the families in which' they were 'housed (insufficient food, uncomfortable night lodgings)' in exchange for 'a salary of between 200 and 280 thousand lire a month for working up to 15 hours a day'. On the presence of the Eritreans in Rome, by contrast, the ECAP researchers highlighted the postcolonial nature of the migration flow and mainly considered how 'the causes of emigration from Ethiopia' were 'often of political origin'.[37] As for the Middle Eastern students, who were gathered in an association active within the La Sapienza University of Rome, the research also grasped an important qualitative aspect concerning the role of foreign university students: the frequent link between migration to Italy officially for study and the flight from the motherland for political reasons.[38] Finally, the study emphatically described precisely the importance of public engagement for the intercommunity socialisation of the Middle Eastern students, mostly Palestinians, considering that their main 'contacts with the outside world' took place 'in relation to the political aims' of their student association.[39]

The two publications edited by the CGIL trade union formed the basis of the publication, in December 1980, of the actual research produced by ECAP and the Centro Studi Emigrazione Em.Im., entitled "L'immigrazione straniera nel Lazio. Quadro di riferimento e condizioni".[40] Divided into detailed studies on specific topics, the work brought together the information and elaborations contained in the two preceding publications; in particular, part four — enti-

[36] ECAP-CGIL, Regione Lazio, *Considerazioni sul problema dei lavoratori stranieri nella Regione Lazio*, Rome, 1980, in CSER, BA 17.24.E3.

[37] ECAP-CGIL, Regione Lazio, *Considerazioni sul problema dei lavoratori stranieri*, cit., pp. 19-20, loc. cit. note 36.

[38] The "political" role of the presence of foreign students in Italy had already been the subject of journalistic attention in the 1960s. On this subject, see Carlo Benedetti, *Studenti stranieri: quanti sono e cosa chiedono*, "L'Unità", 22 December 1964, p. 8: 'There is, then, a political commitment that is developing among various foreign students living in Italy. A political commitment that is being carried out in a sometimes hostile environment, amidst a thousand difficulties, in a country not yet equipped to recruit a mass of foreign students'.

[39] ECAP-CGIL, Regione Lazio, *Considerazioni sul problema dei lavoratori stranieri*, cit., p. 22, loc. cit. note 36.

[40] ECAP-CGIL, Em.Im., *L'immigrazione straniera nel Lazio. Quadro di riferimento e condizioni*, Rome, December 1980, in Archivio personale di Francesco Carchedi (hereafter Arch. F. Carchedi). I sincerely thank the Carchedi archive for giving me the possibility to consult research and publications, including in original editions.

tled "La condizione di vita e di lavoro degli stranieri nel Lazio. L'indagine di campo" — described the foreign presence in Lazio in a way that could lay the foundations for an accurate representation of immigration, based on the origin, age, gender and education levels of its protagonists. The profile of the immigrant that emerged from the study was based on a 'heterogeneity of the countries of origin', on 'an almost equal gender distribution between males and females', on 'an age structure shifted to medium levels, albeit still within the working-age range' and on 'a majority with medium-high education […] with accountants, nurses, schoolteachers doing domestic work and graduates doing unqualified work in restaurants or garages'.[41] This configuration of the foreigner's profile was innovative compared to existing interpretations, as it was able to question — starting from the collection of data and information — some of the most widespread assumptions concerning the definition of the characteristics of first immigration waves: being too focused on an "economicist" approach, these assumptions portrayed first-generation immigrants as predominantly male with a low average age, or automatically extended the interpretations used to study Italian emigration to the new phenomenon in Italy.[42]

> The differences we found with respect to this scheme [i.e. that contained in Reyneri] are related to gender (presence of a high female component), age (within the range that scholars consider to have the 'highest propensity to emigrate', but at levels not too markedly youthful) […] These discrepancies help to highlight some of the limits of the model [developed by Reyneri]. In particular, we noted that in characterising the flows, the model takes the coincidence between 'first immigration' and 'first emigration' for granted; secondly, characteristics such as masculinity, which can be (and are) relative to emigration flows and a certain type of labour demand in the country of immigration, are considered to be dominant. Finally, this classification fails to take into account the possible political component of emigration, which is not exclusive to certain national components with a high number of refugees.[43]

The surveys carried out by the CGIL at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s were part of the internationally renowned research conducted by Samir Amin, which started with *Modern Migration in Western Africa* (1974),[44] and contained the most important new elements in the consideration of additional characteristics (i.e. in addition to those related to job placement) of the foreign presence in Italy. While giving priority to the economic analysis of migration flows and the immigrants' placement in the job market, the ECAP's studies also sought to identify — albeit only through short references — their social position, public visibility and ability to interact with the cities and contexts of settlement.

[41] ECAP-CGIL, Em.Im., *L'immigrazione straniera nel Lazio*, cit., pp. 18-38.
[42] The polemical reference is mainly addressed to Emilio Reyneri's *La catena migratoria*.
[43] ECAP-CGIL, Em.Im., *L'immigrazione straniera nel Lazio*, cit., pp. 65-66.
[44] Samir Amin, *Modern Migration in Western Africa*, London, Routledge, 1974.

The research published in 1983 by the Milanese architect Paolo Caputo, "Il ghetto diffuso", went in a similar direction.[45] Based on a reconnaissance conducted between the end of the 1970s and 1981, while also borrowing from American research on migration and space,[46] it analysed the condition of foreigners in relation to the processes of urban transformation and social change taking place in Milan. In particular, it described the process by which immigrants, during the "migration" of the Lombard capital's population from the centre to the suburbs and to make room for 'services, business and commercial activities', did not 'occupy vacant housing, almost always transformed into offices, but precarious, degraded and leftover spaces, not approved for residential use (attics, basements)'.[47] Although it described the dynamics of ghettoisation and social exclusion, for the first time, scientific research placed the foreign presence in a system of relations with the urban context and the social fabric that did not limit its attention exclusively to the immigrants' job placement.

Between the end of 1982 and the early months of 1983, two publications by the Istituto Fernando Santi came out, which both focused on international cooperation policies aimed at planning immigrants' returns to their homeland, thus embracing the idea of transitory or temporary immigration. The first report, titled "Immigrazione straniera in Italia. Possibilità di intervento per un rientro programmato dei lavoratori stranieri nei loro paesi, nel quadro di una politica di cooperazione socio-economica",[48] considered four objects of investigation — Algerians in Lombardy, Egyptians in Emilia Romagna, Moroccans in Lazio and Tunisians in Sicily — but also contained, in some extracts, a general definition of the immigrant's profile and public image. The research highlighted the 'young age of Arab emigrants from the four countries taken into consideration', who ended up being the protagonists of an uncertain migratory experience in a phase of their lives 'where they had already acquired a certain maturity'. With regard to the education level of immigrants in Italy, the research did not seem to subscribe to the increasingly widespread idea of a medium-high level of education in foreign communities: 'Culturally and socially, who are the young people who are leaving their countries? In truth, the survey and interviews on this are not very clear. It goes without saying that in principle, a capable young person does not need to find work elsewhere.'[49]

[45] Paolo Caputo, *Il ghetto diffuso. L'immigrazione straniera a Milano*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1983.

[46] Richard Basham, David De Groot, *Current Approaches to the Anthropology of Urban and Complex Societies*, "American Anthropologist", 1977, n. 79, pp. 414-440.

[47] P. Caputo, *Il ghetto diffuso*, cit., p. 18.

[48] Istituto Fernando Santi, *Immigrazione straniera in Italia. Possibilità di intervento per un rientro programmato dei lavoratori stranieri nei loro paesi, nel quadro di una politica di cooperazione socio-economica*, Rome, 1989, in Arch. F. Carchedi.

[49] Istituto Fernando Santi, *Immigrazione straniera in Italia*, cit., p. 12.

The second report, "Immigrazione straniera in Italia. Politiche di Cooperazione con i Paesi Emergenti",[50] was even less successful in considering immigration as a phenomenon to be tackled through international cooperation with the countries of origin and, therefore, based on the idea of considering the immigrant as a person destined — albeit through incentives — to return home. While it was still focused on the four national communities considered in the first report, the work nevertheless contained an in-depth study of the 'general characteristics of foreign immigration in Italy'.[51] In particular, the image of the immigrant that emerged from it was characterized by an 'almost exclusively male composition of the migration flow', with some 'partial exceptions constituted by the family groups of Egyptians and Tunisians', by a strong focus on 'youth and middle age groups' and by a 'much more composite' picture related to 'professionalism and working conditions prior to immigration'.[52]

Although the two reports by the Istituto Fernando Santi were based on a survey that covered a well-defined part of the foreign presence in Italy, they tended to present an immigration phenomenon with different and articulated characteristics, but in any case animated by foreigners who had good reasons to see their migratory experience as a tiring and difficult passage before an easier — and economically stable — return to their homeland. This characteristic, which is repeatedly mentioned in the texts, portrayed the immigrant as someone unable to emancipate themselves from a "hard" bond with their community and country of origin, which could also limit the success of integration processes: 'In all the different contexts where surveys have been conducted,' the authors of the study argue, 'the vast majority of immigrants seem to be oriented towards a future return to their country […] It should be noted that for [them] the link with their country of origin is still deep and that they have hardly been able to rebuild satisfactory relations in our country.'[53]

Another text published in those years, "Il mondo a Roma. Le etnie diverse nella città",[54] was more imaginative. This collection of photographs by Adriano Mordenti and Mimmo Frassineti traces a "non-Roman" presence in the capital since the foundation of the Eternal City. The pictures in the last part of the volume, which records the faces of foreign immigrants, testify to the remarkable vitality of the communities present in Rome; scenes of everyday and family life, immortalised in the immigrants' homes and thus conveying a certain rootedness of foreign families in the city, alternate with photographs of foreigners at work but also with the political prominence of certain groups —

[50] Istituto Fernando Santi, *Immigrazione straniera in Italia. Politiche di Cooperazione con i Paesi Emergenti*, Rome 1983, in Arch. F. Carchedi.

[51] Istituto Fernando Santi, *Immigrazione straniera in Italia*, cit., p. 25.

[52] Istituto Fernando Santi, *Immigrazione straniera in Italia*, cit., pp. 28-30.

[53] Istituto Fernando Santi, *Immigrazione straniera in Italia*, cit., pp. 31-33.

[54] *Il mondo a Roma. Le etnie diverse nella città*, Rome, Edizioni AGF srl – Imago coop, 1983, in Arch. F. Carchedi.

in terms of legitimising national issues in the Italian public debate, as in the case of the Polish supporters of the Solidarnosc movement — or moments of leisure, free time and religious practice. Overall, a non-stereotypical image of immigration in Italy emerged from the work, which avoided focusing exclusively on the theme of immigrants' job placement.[55] Alongside the photographic review, it also contained a commentary by one of the main representatives of Rome's Jewish community, Rabbi Riccardo di Segni; confirming the interpretative approach already adopted by the authors of the photographs, he urged against giving overly rigid representations of the foreign presence in the capital.

> On the part of the majority, there is a general tendency to homogenise the analysis; in reality, each group's situation is quite different both in terms of the type of economic reason that drives them to arrive in Italy and the problems of social and cultural adaptation they encounter in the city. For example, it is wrong and simplistic to speak of 'North Africans'; the various groups that should be included in this single definition (Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians, etc.) are quite distinct.[56]

In 1983, one of the first attempts was made to describe the "state of the art" of research on immigration in Italy, on the initiative of demographers who took up the task in an innovative way. On 22 March, they held a conference in Rome with the objective of 'deepening knowledge of the phenomenon', and also to take up 'a sort of challenge on various concrete fields of knowledge and intervention'.[57] One of the scholars' prerogatives was undoubtedly the need to fix the discrepancies between the data disseminated by different agencies on the quantitative consistency of immigration in Italy, so much so that one of the main conference organizers, Marcello Natale, had appealed 'to the various agencies that, for various purposes, conducted data collection' to work 'in close contact by exchanging their experiences'.[58] However, Nora Federici — another conference promoter — had expressed an intention to provide a picture of the 'physiognomy of the migrant mass' alongside quantitative information on the immigrants' employment situation, investigating 'the demographic structure (gender, age classes, marital status)' but also 'the social structure (level of education, religion, spoken languages)' and 'the non-occupational condition (students, housewives, other conditions)'.[59] In fact, other than numerous talks

[55] *Il mondo a Roma*, cit., pp. 52-68.

[56] *Il mondo a Roma*, cit., p. 73.

[57] Eugenio Sonnino, *Apertura*, *L'immigrazione straniera in Italia* conference proceedings, 22 March 1983, "Studi Emigrazione", 1983, n. 71, pp. 259-264, here p. 260.

[58] Marcello Natale, *Fonti e metodi di rilevazione della popolazione straniera in Italia*, *L'immigrazione straniera in Italia* conference proceedings, 22 March 1983, "Studi Emigrazione", 1983, n. 71, pp. 265-296, here p. 295.

[59] Nora Federici, *Le caratteristiche della presenza straniera in Italia e i problemi che ne derivano*, *L'immigrazione straniera in Italia* conference proceedings, 22 March 1983, "Studi Emigrazione", 1983, n. 71, pp. 297-305, here p. 298.

presenting a statistical analysis of data on residence permits and the presence of foreigners in the labour market, the conference also included discussions of the qualitative aspects of immigration in Italy. Roberto Bertucci and Fabio Gemelli, for example, gave a presentation on immigrants' access to public health, arguing, among other things, that the health sector was one of the main grounds for cultural confrontation and mediation: 'The customs, living habits and behaviour of foreigners from underdeveloped countries often differ from the European ones. Awareness of the right to health, along with knowledge of public health services and information on rules of good conduct, are often absent.'[60]

On the other hand, the representative of the Centro Studi Emigrazione Roma, Gianfausto Rosoli, talked about focusing on a sociological classification of immigration in Italy:

> Foreign immigration in Italy could be roughly divided into two blocks, quite similar in weight but very different in quality, composition, lifestyle and organisation: skilled immigration and Third World immigration. The former […] is generally statistically measurable, more visibly organised and settled in the industrial areas of the country, with the exception of Rome. The latter, a more unskilled form of immigration, is located on the margins of Italian society; hence its characteristics of 'low visibility', its difficulty of statistical measurement and its concentration in the low tertiary sector.[61]

All in all, the demographers' conference provided the first systematic review of contributions on immigration in Italy, at the same time when the Senate approved a bill on the job placement of immigrant workers, drafted by the then Minister of Labour and Social Security Michele di Giesi and never debated in the other chamber of Parliament following the end of the legislature in August 1983.[62] Signs of a general increase in attention to the foreign presence were also visible in the numerical growth of studies and scientific research: between 1983 and 1985, various works were published that managed to represent the condition of immigrants in specific contexts and from different disciplinary points of observation.[63]

[60] Roberto Bertucci, Fabio Gemelli, *Riflessi sanitari dell'immigrazione in Italia*, *L'immigrazione straniera in Italia*, conference proceedings, 22 March 1983, "Studi Emigrazione", 1983, n. 71, pp. 432-445, here p. 434.

[61] Gianfausto Rosoli, *Aspetti dell'organizzazione comunitaria degli immigrati in Italia*, *L'immigrazione straniera in Italia* conference proceedings, 22 March 1983, "Studi Emigrazione", 1983, n. 71, pp. 427-430, here pp. 428-429.

[62] I have reconstructed the parliamentary process of the Di Giesi bill in an earlier publication: *Braccia e persone. Storia dell'immigrazione in Italia ai tempi di Jerry Masslo (1980-1990)*, Turin, Claudiana, 2020, pp. 61-63. In the early 1980s, the legislative process had begun to follow up on the 1975 convention of the Organizzazione Internazionale del Lavoro (OIL) on the equal treatment of migrant workers, ratified by the Italian Parliament in 1981, which called for the adoption of laws on the placement of foreign workers in adhering countries.

[63] Some examples include: Francesco Calvanese, *Gli immigrati stranieri in Campania*, Rome, Filef, 1983; Giorgio Gaja and Adelina Adinolfi, *I lavoratori stranieri in Italia: prob-*

The immigrant in Italian research in the second half of the 1980s: interpretative clarifications and established models

With the growth of research on immigration in the mid-1980s, some scholars delved into particular aspects of the phenomenon. In particular, following a now consolidated international (especially American) scientific interest in ethnic diversity in urban contexts,[64] the condition of immigrants in cities — and, in particular, in metropolitan areas — became one of the issues that was most investigated in scientific terms, also because it contained evidence of a growing foreign presence in those contexts where it was more articulate and visible.

The Milanese context was, for example, the focus of research conducted by a group of sociologists, published in 1985 in a volume entitled "La nuova immigrazione a Milano", edited by Umberto Melotti.[65] Rich in qualitative references to the social condition of immigrants living in the Lombard capital, the study presented the results of a number of surveys carried out on a sample of foreign citizens, trying to confirm or contradict certain stereotypical interpretations that were already thickening in the public representation of immigration. The immigrants' presumed rural origins, for example, were not confirmed by the data, which showed that '73.2% of those interviewed' came from 'large or medium-sized cities', while the image of immigrants with a medium-high level of schooling — supported by statistical research on qualifications — turned out to be true: 48% had a high school diploma and 11.6% a university degree'.[66] One of the most original outcomes of the research concerned the immigrants' religious affiliations, which scholars had until then hardly taken into account. The results of the survey conducted on the sample described a situation of considerable religious pluralism in the foreign community present in Milan and attributed an essential role to immigration in the evolution of the city's confessional panorama:

lemi giuridici dell'assunzione, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1984; Duccio Demetrio (ed.), *Immigrazione straniera e interventi formativi. Bisogni, programmazione locale, esperienze*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 1984; Enrico Pugliese, *Quale lavoro per gli stranieri in Italia?*, "Politica ed Economia", 1985, n. 9, pp. 69-76.

[64] In particular, American studies conducted in the 1950s are taken as references: for example, Stewart G. Cole, Mildred Wiese Cole, *Minorities and the American Promise. The Conflict of Principle and Practice*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1954 and Charles Wagley, Marvin Harris, *Minorities in the New World: Six Case Studies*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1958.

[65] Umberto Melotti (ed.), *La nuova immigrazione a Milano. Primi dati di una ricerca*, Milan, Mazzotta, 1985.

[66] Umberto Melotti, Antonio Aimi, Leila Ziglio, *Integrazione sociale e identità culturale degli immigrati del Terzo Mondo a Milano: un'indagine campionaria*, in U. Melotti (ed.), *La nuova immigrazione a Milano*, cit., pp. 51-52.

The most widespread religion among the foreigners we interviewed is Catholicism, professed by 40.6% of the sample (Filipinos, Latin America). Another Christian religion, Coptic, is practised by 14.3% of the respondents (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Egypt). Islam is the second largest religion with 26.2% (North Africa, Middle East). Buddhism is declared by 4.2% (Sinhalese and Chinese) and Hinduism by 1.2% (Indians and Sri Lankan Tamils). The fact that about a third of respondents do not practise their religion, at least publicly, is partly due to the lack or inadequacy and remoteness of places of worship for non-Christian religions.[67]

With regard to Rome, two studies promoted by the capital's diocesan Caritas and municipality, conducted between 1986 and 1988, focused on the condition of immigrants in Rome.[68] Both were coordinated by the sociologist Franco Ferrarotti who, from the very first pages, evoked a precarious and marginal image of immigration:

The foreigner is black, […] a typical marginalised man. He has left his culture of origin, often violently, but has no guarantee of being accepted by the new culture to which he turns for hospitality. He is a human caught between a culture that, for the most diverse reasons, he has decided to reject and a culture from which he does not yet know whether he will be accepted.[69]

The first of the two studies proposed a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the users of the two reception centres for foreigners run by the Caritas in Via delle Zoccolette and Via Magenta on the initiative of historical figures known for their charitable commitment, such as Luigi di Liegro. The profile of the "marginal" immigrant as identified by the researchers varied from that referring to 'young or very young subjects, with a higher education or university education, mostly men but with a consistent female presence (Ethiopia)' to that coinciding with 'immigrants from Islamic Arab states, with high levels of education and widespread knowledge of European languages'.[70] The second study had a broader scope, also presenting data and information on a less vulnerable foreign population, which was taken as a representative sample. The profile that emerged was that of a form of immigration that was 'young (84.9% of those interviewed under 35 years old)', mostly male '(only 28.6% of women)', mainly employed in the sectors of 'domestic help, services and the tertiary', 'illegal in terms of residence permits' and able to produce cultural variety in a cosmopolitan city.[71]

[67] U. Melotti, A. Aimi, L. Ziglio, *Integrazione sociale e identità culturale degli immigrati*, cit., pp. 66-67.

[68] Caritas Diocesana di Roma, *Stranieri a Roma. Immagine degli immigrati dall'Africa e dall'Asia attraverso le schede di rilevamento della Caritas diocesana*, Rome, Siares, 1986 and Comune di Roma, *Roma: immigrazione dai paesi del Terzo Mondo*, Rome, Uspe, 1988. I am grateful to Prof. Maria Immacolata Macioti who gave me the opportunity to consult both texts.

[69] Caritas Diocesana di Roma, *Stranieri a Roma*, cit., p. 5.

[70] Caritas Diocesana di Roma, *Stranieri a Roma*, cit., p. 57.

[71] Comune di Roma, *Roma: immigrazione*, cit., pp. 74-127.

The two studies promoted by the Caritas were published at a time when the first law on the job placement of foreigners was being approved and applied, as part of a process of reform of immigration laws that had already affected countries such as Spain and France. The Foschi Law came into force in 1987, intending to introduce a new system for recruiting workers from abroad and granting an amnesty to illegal immigrants, who were assumed to make up the majority of the immigrant population.[72] The debate about the law and the effects of the amnesty would strongly influence research on immigration after 1987, even though it was precisely in that year that the results of two surveys were published and a new important conference was held. On the initiative of the CISL trade union, a volume edited by Nino Sergi was printed, entitled "L'immigrazione straniera in Italia".[73] Although it was conceived in trade union circles, the research showed more openness compared to the "labourist" model of investigation that had dominated until then. The foreign presence, described as 'young and predominantly single or unmarried', with communities characterized by 'medium-high levels of acculturation (Filipinos, Egyptians, Nigerians, Indians)' and a 'consistent Catholic-Christian religious affiliation (Muslims are also important)', found its raison d'être not only in the employment of immigrants in the labour market:

> In addition to economic reasons, there were also specifically political and what we might call socio-cultural reasons for arriving, especially for certain communities. For example, the desire to break away from closed social environments. In general, then, it seems fairly clear that economic, political and socio-cultural factors all play a role in the decision to migrate, but in different degrees; each of these factors can be more or less decisive.[74]

In 1987, the results of another study were published, this time commissioned by the president of the Council of Ministers.[75] The work devoted a lot of space to the qualitative definition of foreign immigration in Italy and, in particular, discussed the perception of the phenomenon that was most widespread in society and mainstream media using polemical tones:

[72] On the content of the Foschi Law, see, in particular: L. Einaudi, *Le politiche dell'immigrazione in Italia*, cit., pp. 129-132. For a reconstruction of the political and cultural climate in which the law was passed, see my previous publication *Braccia e persone*, cit., pp. 68-73.

[73] Nino Sergi (ed.), *L'immigrazione straniera in Italia*, Rome, Edizioni Lavoro, 1987.

[74] Francesco Carchedi, Giovanni Battista Ranuzzi, *Tra collocazione nel mercato del lavoro secondario ed esclusione sociale dal sistema della cittadinanza*, in N. Sergi (ed.), *L'immigrazione straniera in Italia*, cit., pp. 36-47. The authors of the research also seemed to explicitly question the guest-worker model: '[T]he highly changeable factors affecting immigrants make it problematic for them not only to stay in Italy, but also to return first, and then permanently, to their country of origin.'

[75] ISPES, *La condizione dei lavoratori extracomunitari in Italia. Riflessioni sulla legge n. 943 del 21.1.86*, in Archivio Storico della Camera dei Deputati (hereafter ASCD), Fondo I Commissione – Indagine conoscitiva, fasc. 1, f.15.

Consider, for example, the journalistic language used to describe the problem […] We apply categories and weights of rights and duties to the African or Asian worker that are completely alien to their mentality and often also to their reasons for emigrating […] One of the most obvious aspects of what we are saying is the tendency to generalise the category of non-EU workers, not to mention the differences that exist, for example, between a Cape Verdean and a Filipino woman, or between an Eritrean refugee and a Ghanaian worker. They are all the same: at most, Africans are distinguished from Asians on the basis of their skin colour. They rename our squares, and we keep talking about Africans, when not 'blacks' tout court.[76]

Towards the end of the year, a conference promoted by the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, "La presenza straniera in Italia", was held in Rome. At the centre of the meeting was the request to align the survey sources regarding the consistency of a phenomenon that ISTAT, for example, estimated at '327,037 residents', while INPS — drawing on registrations in the social security system — attested it at '96,338 people'. In any case, the shared idea emerged that these figures were not really representative of an undeclared phenomenon such as illegal immigration, which was estimated to be higher than the official figures.[77] Relevant qualitative data concerned the countries of origin of the immigrants who had benefited from the amnesty provided for by the Foschi Law: with 16,130 regularisations, Moroccans became a permanent feature of immigrant presence in Italy and Moroccan nationality, among other things, the most frequent foreign nationality.[78] The figure of the refugee also entered the discussion, albeit to a limited degree; a representative of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, who had been invited to the conference, polemically recalled how the status of beneficiary of international protection in Italy was reserved for foreigners of European origin by virtue of the geographical reservation, the restrictive clause with which the Italian government had decided to sign the Geneva Convention.[79] In definitional terms, though, the most interesting insights into the public representation of immigration and the description of a common image of the immigrant emerged during the concluding debate. Pugliese's speech is particularly noteworthy: the sociologist grasped the difficulties of applying the new Foschi Law to the profile of foreigners, who had

[76] ISPES, *La condizione dei lavoratori extracomunitari in Italia,* cit., f. 16, loc. cit. note 75.

[77] See Guido Manese, *La presenza straniera in Italia alla luce della recente rilevazione anagrafica*, pp. 326-334, here p. 333 and Anna Maria Berardo, *La presenza straniera in Italia*, pp. 335-343, here p. 340, "Studi Emigrazione", 1988, n. 91-92.

[78] Raimondo Cagiano de Azevedo, *La presenza non comunitaria in Italia: prospettive di studio*, "Studi Emigrazione", 1988, n. 91-92, pp. 531-543, here p. 540.

[79] Laura Garugno, *L'attività dell'ACNUR ed i rifugiati in Italia*, "Studi Emigrazione", 1988, n. 91-92, pp. 618-621, here p. 620, where the author also claims that 'some exceptions were made to this rule and the Italian government accepted the following under the Geneva Convention: 1) Chileans who, at the time of the coup, had taken refuge at the Italian embassy in Santiago; 2) Indochinese picked up by Italian ships; 3) a small group of Afghans stopped at Fiumicino airport; 4) 106 Chaldean Iraqis; 5) an Eritrean family. This is all'. For a discussion of the performance of the geographical reserve over time, see Nadan Petrović, *Rifugiati, profughi, sfollati. Breve storia del diritto d'asilo in Italia*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2016, pp. 26-28.

been considered — in the legislative formulation — representative of a much more complex presence and, above all, one that could not be reconstructed through the stereotype of the guest worker:

> The immigrant was assumed to be an industrial worker, or at least an employee, generally employed on a permanent basis. It was with this image of the immigrant — which was certainly valid for Germany 15 years ago — in mind that the relevant legislation was drawn up. Therefore, the law passed by our country ends up applying poorly to the vast majority of new immigrants.[80]

Pugliese's position reflected the gradual evolution of scientific research on immigration in Italy towards a consideration also of the immigrant's social dimension, which was, among other things, a significant criticism of the legislative interventions that had just come into force. Such progress in the development of an organic analysis of the foreign presence in the peninsula already emerged from another study promoted by the Istituto Fernando Santi, on behalf of the Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro (hereafter CNEL), between 1988 and 1989, whose results were published in "L'immigrazione in Italia: comunità straniere a confront".[81] From the very first pages, the authors noted the need to move beyond a "labourist" approach to the phenomenon, instead developing a vision that would grasp its diversity and articulations:

> It is certain, though, that when we speak of immigrants we cannot speak only of foreign workers, but [we must] also [speak] of the foreign population, that is, we cannot speak only of individuals but [must speak] of family units and, more extensively, relatives. In fact, within foreign communities, alongside workers, there are students, refugees and political refugees, most of whom are forced to go underground because, as we know, Italy only grants refugee status to those coming from Eastern Europe. Problems more directly related to the labour market are thus flanked by issues that concern both our educational institutions and the political asylum sector.[82]

In general, the authors of the study adopted an organicist approach to the analysis of the foreign presence in Italy, assuming that the immigrants would eventually return to their country of origin. In this regard, the novelty of the study lies, if anything, in its criticism of a 'vision of the problem that was entirely projected onto the country of arrival', developed by scholars and experts, and in the call for 'a comprehensive approach, capable of considering the migratory chain in all its phases (departure, stay, return) in the broader context of development problems, and hence of relations between countries of origin and countries of arrival'.[83] Another innovative element is, above all, the explicit

[80] Enrico Pugliese, *Dibattito*, "Studi Emigrazione", 1988, n. 91-92, p. 637.

[81] CNEL, *L'immigrazione in Italia: comunità straniere a confronto*, Rome, CNEL – Quaderni di documentazione, 1989, in Arch. F. Carchedi.

[82] CNEL, *L'immigrazione in Italia*, cit., p. 12.

[83] CNEL, *L'immigrazione in Italia*, cit., p. 50.

invitation not to dogmatise the — hitherto prevalent — representation of a form of 'young immigration, with people aged between 20 and 35, unmarried, with a medium-high level of education and a significant professional experience obtained before leaving'; according to the authors, this is contradicted by a measured variety of motivations behind migratory projects that leaves no room for the "labourist" exclusivism with which migration to Italy has been interpreted.[84]

The fact that scientific research on immigration developed in the late 1980s is also reflected in the detailed examination of issues that had not previously been considered. Between 1987 and 1989, for example, the first surveys on the foreign presence that was taking root in Italian society appeared, which proves that the phenomenon had by then become the subject of discussion in a wider public space than the one presided over by scientific research. The statistical research institute Doxa conducted a survey entitled "Gli stranieri in Italia",[85] asking a large sample of interviewees a series of basic questions on immigration. The picture that emerged from the survey was that of a not-very-detailed public consideration of the widespread foreign presence in society, testifying to the fact that the phenomenon had only recently entered the public debate. In the context of very partial knowledge of immigration, '49% of Italians reported only or mainly inconveniences', while 13 per cent identified 'only or mainly advantages'.[86] The general mistrust of the phenomenon was attributed to 'concerns about unemployment, as a threat to both newcomers and Italians, especially young people', who saw themselves 'compete with immigrants for the already few jobs available'.[87] Trade unions, which had always promoted scientific studies on immigration, also prepared a study of the perception of the foreign presence in Italian society. Thus, on the occasion of the Festa nazionale dell'Unità of 1988 in Florence, the Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Commercio Turismo e Servizi (hereafter FILCAMS) of the CGIL addressed a number of questions on the condition of immigrants in Italy to the patrons of the traditional event promoted by the Italian Communist Party, also trying to capture the views and intercept the knowledge of a population that it presumed to be more sensitive to and supportive of foreign citizens, given its membership of the political left. However, the snapshot taken by the union's researchers showed how, even among people with varying communist affiliations, 'a figure of the immigrant [emerged] with very clear and defined contours, a stereotyped

[84] CNEL, *L'immigrazione in Italia*, cit., p. 51. The researchers speak of far more consistent reasons — of a 'political (i.e. wars, strong social tensions, authoritarian regimes) and cultural (study, training, long visits, etc.) nature' — than those described by scientific research on the presence of foreigners in Italy until then.

[85] Doxa, *Gli stranieri in Italia. Risultati di tre sondaggi: del maggio '91, del novembre '89 e del luglio '87*, "Bollettino Doxa", 1991, n. 11, in Arch. F. Carchedi.

[86] Doxa, *Gli stranieri in Italia*, cit., p. 24.

[87] Doxa, *Gli stranieri in Italia*, cit., p. 31.

image, built on the univocal idea of the social outcast, the poor, coming from Third World countries'.[88] Among the interviewees, respectively 55% and 27% 'indicated black Africa [and] Arab countries' as the immigrants' main territories of origin, while 'almost no one thought of Europe (2.5%) or America (0.6%)'.[89] The prevalence of the "Third World" profile that emerged from the sample was also confirmed by the fact that '82% pointed to unemployment and poverty' as the main reasons for migration to Italy and, above all, by references to the immigrants' presumed material and working conditions in the peninsula. Commenting on the data collected in the survey, the FILCAMS researchers argued that

> [t]he answers given in terms of the housing situation of the immigrants are also consistent with the picture outlined so far: they are imagined to be homeless (33%), or [living] in rented rooms (21%) or in beds/lodgings in flats and institutes (20%). As for the jobs they do, the most visible and characteristic is the figure of the street vendor, indicated by 81.5% of the sample (the total exceeds 100% because three answers could be given to this question), followed by domestic helpers (56%), unskilled workers (52.5%) and day labourers (36%).[90]

Research on the public perception of immigration in Italy proved, among other things, that Italian society generally considered it a new phenomenon; in reality, some of its characteristics had already testified to its rootedness in the 1980s. One of these was undoubtedly the productiveness of immigrant associations, which became the subject of a study in 1989 that also elaborated some innovative representations of the foreign presence in the peninsula. In terms of classification, the study differentiated 'foreign workers available for integration based on personal reasons, type of activity, length of stay in the country, quality of friendship, relational and parental networks in Italy' from 'unstable foreign workers, because they are scarcely or not at all available for a stabilisation process, because they are employed in seasonal activities […] because they lack sufficient structural and relational roots, because they are interested in short stays in Italy for study, health, family or tourism reasons'.[91] However, the data and considerations on associations revealed a profile of the immigrant that was in line with the idea of immigrants already being widely present and rooted in Italian society. The research delimited a sample of 91 associations that were founded, led and animated by foreigners, which were depicted as people dedicated to volunteering, with 'managerial and non-managerial staff, employed in the various, almost exclusively voluntary organisations' amounting

[88] The results of the survey are contained in C. Treves (ed.), *Sindacato dei diritti e società multietnica. Oltre il razzismo, iniziative per i lavoratori extracomunitari*, Rome, Ediesse, 1989, pp. 49-51, which I consulted at the CGIL's archive of the Basilicata region.

[89] C. Treves (ed.), *Sindacato dei diritti e società multietnica*, cit., p. 49.

[90] C. Treves (ed.), *Sindacato dei diritti e società multietnica*, cit., p. 50.

[91] Labos, *La presenza straniera in Italia. Primo rapporto*, Rome, Edizioni TER, 1990, p. 21, in Arch. F. Carchedi.

to 'a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 13 [members] for each association',[92] and as highly educated men and women in positions of responsibility in the various associations.[93]

Overall, the research produced up to the second half of the 1980s was one of the first clear signs of public awareness of a complex and constantly evolving phenomenon. The studies conducted between the end of the 1970s and 1989, which — compared to the Foschi Law passed at the end of 1986 — were more careful in defining the immigrant's profile beyond their position in the labour market, produced a public representation of the foreign presence that was dominated by a rigid methodological approach, initially trapped by the temptation to use the same instruments to study Italian emigration abroad and gradually refined to divide data and information into sectors. Nevertheless, the contribution of research to the definition of immigration in the years of the phenomenon's 'discovery' managed to develop a social profile of the immigrant that would accompany the descriptions given by the press and media, often in a less rigorous and more imprecise way.

Conclusion

In a period considered to be the moment immigration was "discovered", its public representation through scientific research produced an image of the immigrant that was burdened by not always adequate interpretative frameworks and sometimes even by the use of stereotypical categories, despite a certain ability to grasp — improving over time — the progressive changes in the actual working and living conditions of thousands of foreigners in Italy. The model of the guest worker that emerges from most of the studies carried out between the end of the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s was a reworked version of an instrument widely used in the study of Italian emigration abroad and now used to interpret a new phenomenon. The emphasis on the presence of "labour" migrants, in line with an interpretative approach typical of research conducted in other countries in previous decades, often failed to escape the patterns of a representation — much more applicable to the presences recorded between the end of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s — that focused excessively on the 'domestic helps employed (and usually living) with Italian families' of Cape Verdean, Filipino or Latin American nationality, and on the profile of 'casual day labourers, mainly Tunisians'.[94] This

[92] Labos, *La presenza straniera in Italia*, cit., p. 24.

[93] Labos, *La presenza straniera in Italia*, cit. p. 26, which points out that, of the total of 91 immigrant association presidents who were interviewed, 39 had a high school diploma and 41 a university degree.

[94] G. Mottura, *L'arcipelago immigrazione*, cit., p. 19.

interpretative approach was unable to see that immigration, already in the early 1980s and despite consisting mostly of 'labour force', nevertheless had 'complex underlying drives and motivations that' could not be 'attributed solely to the search for work'.[95] Among the reasons for migration to Italy, for example, study or political reasons — which affected a foreign population with a strong presence on the peninsula — were not sufficiently taken into account. Additionally, a qualitative investigation into what Michele Colucci has called the 'original characteristics' of immigration in Italy, such as 'the plurality of provenances' and 'the propensity to move far and wide across Italy', also remained hidden.[96] Aspects related to the existential condition of immigrants, such as religious affiliation or access to education and services, which would have testified to the reality of a presence not confined to the interpretative model of the guest worker, were rarely explored.

On the contrary, the cultural and educational level of foreign workers in Italy in the early 1980s — generally considered to be medium-high — is one of the traits of immigration that has been studied most closely. The portrayal of a highly qualified immigrant forced to experience underemployment in Italy, which in many cases reflected reality, entered strongly into the narrative of the phenomenon, often clashing with the image of a poor, marginalised and vulnerable foreigner. A much more varied and articulated presence moved between these two extremes. Caught between images of "immigrant graduates" and "marginalised immigrants", the history of certain national communities, present in the Italian social fabric since at least the early 1970s, was excluded — apart from a few exceptions — from the scientific portrayal of immigration.

The figure of the *vu cumpra*, widely adopted by the press and television, exalted a narrative that succumbed to the simplification of the phenomenon, to the tendency to use simple labels in the public debate, precisely when episodes of xenophobic discrimination and racism were emerging. At the same time, as expressions of solidarity with the immigrants' difficult living conditions were developing in society and public opinion, Italian research struggled to legitimise — in the public sphere — an objective representation of immigration as a complex phenomenon based on empirical evidence, data and theoretical elaborations.

In a country that was experiencing economic growth and where 'the wind of the 1980s blew with greater force than elsewhere',[97] despite the fact that it was heading towards an exponential increase in public debt,[98] a generally sympa-

[95] Maria Immacolata Macioti, Enrico Pugliese, *Gli immigrati in Italia*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1991, p. 30.

[96] M. Colucci. *Storia dell'immigrazione in Italia*, cit., pp. 66-67.

[97] Marco Gervasoni, *Storia d'Italia degli anni ottanta. Quando eravamo moderni*, Venice, Marsilio, 2010, p. 11.

[98] Francesco Barbagallo, *L'Italia repubblicana. Dallo sviluppo alle riforme mancate*, Rome, Carocci, 2009, p. 190.

thetic attitude towards immigrants reflected a precise idea: the foreign presence, the existence of a workforce imported from abroad, was functional for galloping development and widespread prosperity. The Masslo assassination in August 1989 would come to represent a turning point also for the public representation of immigration in Italy. As the events of the early 1990s interrupted the dream of the previous decade,[99] the new attention given to a rapidly growing phenomenon and the emergence of a political question around the foreign presence contributed not only to an increase in speculation on immigration issues, but also to the evolution of the profile of the immigrant in scientific research and to a partial overcoming of the model of the guest worker in which it had been trapped.

Translated by Andrea Hajek

[99] G. Crainz, *Il paese reale*, cit., pp. 195-212.

Italian history, Mediterranean history: New perspectives on an imperial and colonial past

Andreas Guidi*

Negli ultimi anni, il legame fra Italia e Mediterraneo ha attirato un'attenzione da parte della storiografia. Questo legame viene ormai studiato tenendo conto del dibattito su nuove categorie spaziali fra le scale nazionale, regionale, e globale con un interesse crescente per la categoria di impero. Il presente saggio discute lo stato attuale della ricerca e possibili orizzonti. Uno sguardo d'insieme su quattro monografie in lingua inglese permette di considerare il Mediterraneo come spazio adatto a ripensare la storia italiana mettendo l'accento sul suo carattere imperiale, compresa la decolonizzazione e i suoi echi fino ad oggi. A partire da questi spunti, il saggio propone un dialogo con altre "aree" geo-storiche del bacino, la ricerca su fonti in varie lingue, e una maggiore attenzione per le realtà locali nel periodo precedente alla dominazione italiana.
Parole chiave: Italia, Mediterraneo, impero, colonialismo, spazio

In recent years, historiographical research has increasingly focused on the link between Italy and the Mediterranean, taking into account the debate on new spatial categories in national, regional and global history, and showing a growing interest in imperial history. This article discusses the status quo and future research perspectives. Focusing on four recent English-language publications, it approaches the Mediterranean as a space that challenges mainstream Italian history by highlighting its imperial nature, including decolonisation processes and their legacies in the present. Based on these premises, the article engages in a dialogue with other geohistorical "areas" of the Mediterranean, examining sources written in different languages and paying particular attention to local experiences prior to the Italian occupation.
Key words: Italy, Mediterranean, empire, colonialism, space

Over the last three decades, new spatial categories have emerged in the international historiographical debate. According to Karl Schlögel, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, historiography elaborated a 'spatial turn' inspired by other disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology and economics. No longer a

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static and univocal space, scholars have approached a plural spatiality that was subject to change, adding a critical perspective to the existing revisions of categories like temporality and discursiveness.[1] The point of convergence within this debate is the creation of alternatives to national history, understood as a narrative inherent in the institutions of the nation-state, which in turn is understood as a product of European and Western history. A greater focus on geohistorical "areas" and the transnational aspects of the studied phenomena allows us to rethink the "history of the fatherland" by linking spaces that do not correspond to territorial borders — an approach that increasingly involves the Italian context.[2] The fact that some processes of contemporary Italian history such as emigration, the world wars, as well as European and Atlantic integration took shape in an international context leaves little room for doubt. What is more interesting is the change of perspective on the *Risorgimento* and Fascism, the two phenomena of contemporary Italian history most studied abroad. Long considered exclusively Italian products, which has not prevented scholars from studying their exportation to other contexts, the construction of a unified state and the Fascist *ventennio* have recently been the subject of transnational and global studies.[3]

Regardless of the historiographical approach chosen in terms of the scale of observation, we need to clarify which spaces are best suited to exploring aspects of Italian history that have received little attention to date. A response that looks to the Mediterranean is gaining ground, particularly among academics abroad; thus, the Association for the Study of Modern Italy chose "Italian Mediterraneans 1800-2000" as the title of one of its most recent conferences.[4] The event opened with a roundtable discussion bringing together history, anthropology and cultural studies; Maurizio Isabella, Konstantina Zanou, Barbara Curli and Naor Ben-Yehoyada talked about the relationship between Italy and the Mediterranean, focusing respectively on the constitutionalist uprisings of 1820-1821, the intersections of patriotic sentiments in the Ionian region in the late Venetian and Napoleonic periods, Italy's role in the history of the Suez Canal and the links between Sicily and North Africa resulting from mobility in the central Mediterranean. These examples reflect

[1] Karl Schlögel, *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit. Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik*, Munich, Carl Hanser, 2003, pp. 60-71.

[2] Matthias Middell, Katja Naumann, *Global History and the Spatial Turn: From the Impact of Area Studies to the Study of Critical Junctures of Globalization*, "Journal of Global History", 2010, n. 5-1, pp. 149-170.

[3] See, for example: Maurizio Isabella, *Risorgimento in Exile. Italian Emigres and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era*, Oxford. Oxford University Press, 2009; Arnd Bauerkämper, Grzegorz Rossolinski, (eds.), *Fascism without borders. Transnational connections and cooperation between movements and regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945*, New York, Berghahn, 2017.

[4] See: https://iiclondra.esteri.it/iic_londra/it/gli_eventi/calendario/maps-borders-territories-a-webinar.html (last accessed 4 January 2022).

a tendency to redefine the axis of Italian history according to the gravitational pull of the Mediterranean.

In this article, I will discuss a number of existing publications, but also unexplored issues, to examine the main aspects of this tendency. By rethinking the relationship between Italy and the Mediterranean, we can adopt the critique formulated by the global history of Eurocentric perspectives and the primacy of the nation-state. Starting with the volume edited by Patrick Boucheron, "Histoire mondiale de la France", Andrea Giardina — a specialist in Ancient Roman history — coordinated a collective work that laid the foundations for a global history of Italy.[5] Without questioning the originality and value of these contributions, it cannot be denied — as Arthur Asseraf observed in his review of Boucheron's text — that they risk emphasising the gap between the 'national' and the 'global', rather than critically reflecting on it.[6] Instead, the present article argues that the regional scale of the Mediterranean can enable us to concretise and assess the spatial dimension of global history, which reads far-reaching transformations through notions such as 'connection', 'mobility' or 'flows'.[7] In addition, it reflects on a necessary condition to reach this turning point: the potential of historiography to detach itself, through its tools, from the idea of the "Mediterranean" as an imaginary product elaborated in the peninsula. In other words, it is not simply a matter of restoring an invented, forgotten, and then rediscovered Mediterranean to expand a "pre-packaged" national history of Italy.

International historiography on the Mediterranean is still dominated by the masterful work of Fernand Braudel, who made this region — despite its diversity — not only a coherent object of study but also an engine capable of generating theoretical tools to be applied to other contexts. Published in the aftermath of the Second World War, "La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II" presented an innovative historiographical temporality by delving into the depths of the *longue durée* (the slow and almost imperceptible pace of geoclimatic change and the relationship between populations and the environment), the *histoire conjoncturelle* (large-scale social, political and economic changes that are measurable in specific epochs) and, finally, the *histoire événementielle* (the rapid pace of change linked to wars, revolutions and catastrophes).[8] More recently, other studies have taken up the challenge of narrating the Mediterranean on a large scale and over several centuries;

[5] Patrick Boucheron (ed.), *Histoire mondiale de la France*, Paris, Seuil, 2017; Andrea Giardina (ed.), *Storia Mondiale dell'Italia*, Laterza, Bari, 2017.

[6] Arthur Asseraf, *Le monde comme adjectif: Retour sur l'Histoire mondiale de la France*, "Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine", 2021, n. 68/1, pp. 151-162.

[7] Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2016, pp. 64-67.

[8] Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1949.

here, Italy as a geographical category plays an important role. These include Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell's "The Corrupting Sea", which focuses on the period from Late Antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages and adopts a model that reinterprets (and redefines) Mediterranean unity by emphasising the connectivity of its micro-regions.[9] In *The Great Sea*, David Abulafia continues the debate launched by Mediterranean history that focuses on the maritime dimension and the migration flows and human interaction that this 'liquidity' entails.[10]

On the other hand, recent research conducted in both France and Germany reveals a more critical attitude towards the Mediterranean, investigated beyond a coherent historiographical object defined a priori. Especially with regard to the contemporary period, the study of national and colonial categories has stressed the asymmetrical contacts between the region's shores. As the title of a recent volume edited by Claudia Moatti reminds us, the Mediterranean is destined to remain *introuvable* if we continue to search for it without challenging the epistemological categories that once defined this space.[11] Following this advice, I argue that it is a matter of equipping ourselves with new tools offered by the history of the contemporary Mediterranean region to redefine chronologies, perimeters, ideas, institutions and historical actors capable of inserting Italy into a polycentric, polyphonic and polyrhythmic narrative.

Looking at research on Italian history and culture, the boom in interest in the Mediterranean is neither a new phenomenon nor a prerogative of historians. As early as 2003, the Italianist Roberto Dainotto noticed an exponential increase in publications with the word 'Mediterranean' in the title. The term's inflation subsequently obstructed a critical discussion of the Mediterranean as an analytical category.[12] In a special issue of "California Italian Studies" in 2010, which brought together studies from different disciplines, editors Claudio Fogu and Lucia Re wanted to offer a 'critical rethinking of both the Mediterranean imaginary, which is in dire need of intellectual decolonization, and the equivalence established between Italian-ness and Mediterranean-ness in the global market of ideas'.[13] Nearly a decade later, Nicola Labanca warned historians not to leave the field of Mediterranean studies to other disciplines,

[9] Peregrine Horden, Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2000.

[10] David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011.

[11] Claudia Moatti (ed.), *La Méditerranee Introuvable. Relectures et Propositions*, Paris, Karthala, 2020. See also: Manuel Borutta, Mediterraneum, "Europäische Geschichte Online", 2020, http://ieg-ego.eu/de/threads/crossroads/grenzregionen/manuel-borutta-mediterraneum (last accessed 4 January 2022).

[12] Dainotto, Roberto, *Asimmetrie mediterranee: Etica e mare nostrum*, "NAE. Trimestrale di Cultura", 2003, n. 5, pp. 3-8.

[13] Claudio Fogu, Lucia Re, *Italy in the Mediterranean today. A new Critical Topography*, "California Italian Studies", 2010, n. 1, pp. 1-9, here p. 1.

lamenting the 'scarce' number of Italian studies on this region.[14] In short, the debate on how to put these proposals into practice remains open, and if Italian historiography is struggling with this discussion, important ideas are coming from the English-speaking world.

In a recent monograph, Claudio Fogu focused on the 'Mediterranean form of the Italian imaginary' to redefine the relationship between 'south' and 'north' in the formation of an Italian identity that oscillates between the Mediterranean and Europe.[15] There is no need to stress the importance of such an approach at the time of writing, that is, when the Mediterranean is at the centre of migratory flows, military tensions and illegal trafficking, as well as suffering from the consequences of climate change. Whether it is the nefarious border control operation Mare Nostrum, the role of the Italian Navy in the Libyan civil war, or the seizure of tonnes of Captagon — a synthetic drug — from Syria (inaccurately dubbed the 'ISIS drug' in the press) in the port of Salerno, it is increasingly evident that Italy is linked to the changes and exchanges taking place in the Mediterranean and that the latter is a space in which the whole of continental Europe interacts through phenomena that involve the Middle East and Africa.[16] By using the Mediterranean as a substitute for an unstable Italianness, Fogu has the undoubted merit of suggesting continuity where historiography tends to establish periodisation boundaries and identify points of rupture. Of particular interest is the idea of a continuous oscillation between *imperium* and *emporion* in the relationship between Italy and the Mediterranean, that is, the coexistence of centripetal, hierarchical and territorial forces, on the one hand, and centrifugal, syncretic forces that escape the logic of the territoriality of the sovereign state, on the other hand.[17] At the same time, the author acknowledges that this Mediterranean has been fixed in a national imaginary that reflects both an imperial and a regional Italy, respectively through its expansionist ambitions and through the perceived immovable differences that make the very notion of national identity ephemeral.

Following Fogu, two directions emerge that can certainly not be reduced to an either/or, but which must be kept apart. In the first case, Italy and the Mediterranean could be further examined as two objects in perpetual interaction, influencing each other while remaining major players on the scene. In

[14] Nicola Labanca, *La storia contemporanea del Mediterraneo. Per una discussione*, "Il mestiere di storico. Rivista della Società italiana per lo studio della storia contemporanea", 2019, n. 11-2, pp. 5-49.

[15] Claudio Fogu, *The fishing net and the spider web: Mediterranean imaginaries and the making of Italians*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, p. 7.

16 On the Captagon incident see: https://rep.repubblica.it/pwa/generale/2020/07/10/news/la_droga_dell_isis_non_era_dell_isis_quelle_14_tonnellate_di_anfetamine_sequestrate_in_italia_e_il_legame_con_la_siria_di-261584585 (last accessed 4 January 2022).

[17] Fogu, *The fishing net and the spider web: Mediterranean imaginaries and the making of Italians*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, pp. 6-7.

this case, Mediterranean Italy, or the Italian Mediterranean, would act as a lens through which to highlight another — more complex and contradictory — history (but still with Italy as the main character) or an unusual and unexpected voice (but still that of Italy as a *solo* actor). In the second case, while acknowledging the asymmetry resulting from the fact that the Mediterranean imaginary has appeared above all on the northern, Christian and white shores of this sea, we could challenge the idea that the Mediterranean is no more than the fruit of "Mediterraneanist" discourse, on a par with, for example, the East studied by Edward Said, the Balkans by Maria Todorova or Eastern Europe by Larry Wolff.[18]

In this sense, it would not be a matter of essentialising or characterising a region but of privileging it as a spatial lens, trying to emphasise its fragmentary nature and its exposure to the outside world, as well as the connections and interweaving that make it so dense. Quoting Eugenio Montale, the Mediterranean would be 'vast, diverse and fixed at the same time'.[19] Placing Italian history in this dimension would have three consequences: an opening up to other equally important historico-geographical areas in the Mediterranean; a greater inclusion of sources written in the languages of the region; and, finally, a new periodisation capable of transcending established canons such as pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial, or the liberal era vs the Fascist *ventennio* vs the Republican post-war period.

It is in the space between these two paths that I will discuss the intertwining of Italian history and the Mediterranean dimension in four recent monographs by Stephanie Malia Hom, Pamela Ballinger, Valerie McGuire and Dominique Reill. Both a joint book review and a discussion note, my article offers neither an in-depth analysis nor a general assessment of the works under consideration. Rather, it seeks to approach these studies as a whole, as a window on the current research landscape and the horizons that can be opened up by drawing on these works. This brings us to another premise, namely the fact that the monographs are difficult to compare because the authors all have different backgrounds and approaches: the methodology used by Stephanie Malia Hom and Pamela Ballinger combines archival research and ethnographic investigation; Valerie McGuire fits into the anglophone strand of Italian studies that focuses on cultural phenomena and media representations, also drawing on oral history and archival research; Dominique Reill, lastly, devotes particular attention to the link between the history of wide-ranging imperial transformations

[18] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York, Pantheon, 1978; Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997; Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1994.

[19] From the poem "Mediterraneo". Eugenio Montale, *Tutte le poesie*, Milano, Mondadori, 1984, p. 54.

and personal or commonplace events inspired by the history of everyday life. Rather than developing a comparative discussion, I will highlight the potential that such methodological diversity holds for future research.

Finally, it is worth noting the variety of topics covered by the authors. In "Empire's Moebius Strip. Historical Echoes in Italy's Crisis of Migration and Detention" (2019), Stephanie Malia Hom discusses what could be described as a background noise linking Italian and especially Fascist colonialism to the present: a knot between empire and mobility, reflected both in the repression of undesirable forms of mobility stigmatised as 'nomadism' and in the coercion of mobility in the form of settlement, repatriation, or detention.[20] Pamela Ballinger's "The World Refugees Made. Decolonization and the Foundations of Postwar Italy" (2020) analyses the migration flows of various categories of refugees to Italy, focusing on the period between the Second World War to the immediate post-war era. Not limiting herself to the "repatriation" of the former colonists, the author reconstructs the processes of inclusion and exclusion of post-Fascist citizenship that developed through this mobility depending on local, national and international dynamics.[21] Valerie McGuire is the only author who explicitly refers to the Mediterranean in "Italy's Sea: Nation and Empire in the Mediterranean, 1895-1945" (2020). This study of colonialism in the Dodecanese (1912-1945) is based on a broader chronology that includes the literary and racial imaginaries of the Mediterranean in *belle époque* Italy up to the question of the memory of Italian colonial rule in the Dodecanese today.[22] Finally, Dominique Reill has chosen the case of Fiume — a corner of the northern Mediterranean and commercial outlet of the Habsburg Empire — in the years following the First World War to move beyond the narratives that present D'Annunzio's *impresa* and its paramilitary and scenic violence as the genesis of or prelude to Fascism. "The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire" (2020) reinserts Fiume into the *Finis Austriae* to study the civilian experience amidst economic problems, changing bureaucratic categories and coexisting notions such as imperial heritage, urban belonging, and pro-Italian nationalist mobilisation.[23]

The four monographs cover different periods and contexts, and the Mediterranean emerges sometimes implicitly, sometimes as a discursive or analytical category. Nevertheless, they show that even when a history *of* the Mediterranean is not explicitly evoked, but history is written *in* the

[20] Stephanie Malia Hom, *Empire's Mobius Strip. Historical Echoes in Italy's Crisis of Migration and Detention*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2019.

[21] Pamela Ballinger, *The World Refugees Made. Decolonization and the Foundations of Postwar Italy*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2020.

[22] Valerie McGuire, *Italy's Sea. Empire and Nation in the Mediterranean, 1895-1945*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2020.

[23] Dominique Kirchner Reill, *The Fiume crisis. Life in the wake of the Habsburg Empire*, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press, 2020.

Mediterranean, this region can reveal new keys to interpreting national history.[24] The historiographical dialogue between the authors covers themes such as imperialism, nationalism and Fascism, which are intertwined with notions of belonging, mobility and violence. All four works share this tangle, which calls for a reflection on questions of spatiality, perspective and temporality — three elements that constitute the core sections of this article.

Italy in a "vast" Mediterranean

By studying Italian history as Mediterranean history, we can expand the scope of research beyond the current borders of the *Bel Paese*. International historiography has long paid attention to the dispersion of Italian-speaking communities and institutions linked to the Italian state in the Mediterranean.[25] Thanks to their spatial approach, the four authors manage to decentralise traditional points of view in an original and productive way, both empirically and conceptually.

Starting from places such as Lampedusa, the Cyrenaica plateau and the province of Rome, Hom reconstructs the persistent 'imperial formations' (p. 1) of these places, where the distinction between centre and periphery seems to dissolve into a perpetual link between people on the move and state interventions. Inspired by postcolonial studies, Hom uses the metaphor of the Möbius strip to define the exclusion and stigmatisation of mobility in its relationship with territorialisation in the period between the early twentieth-century empire and the third-millennium nation-state. Thus, the book offers an intertwined reading of the internment of anti-colonial rebels during the long Libyan War on the same Italian islands that have been affected by the arrival of migrants in recent years, and of the construction of detention camps for Bedouin rebels and then for today's migrants, who have to await deportation after crossing the Mediterranean. From the point of view of spatiality, Hom's analysis has the merit of starting from specific sites that are discussed together — leaning on Giorgio Agamben — as archetypes of contemporary history and modernity. Focusing on islands, camps and villages, the author invites us to rethink the space that connects Italy to the Mediterranean beyond the migratory routes and protagonists of historiography from north to south and vice versa.

[24] On the distinction between "history in" and "history of the Mediterranean": Horden, Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2000, pp. 2-5.

[25] Daniel J. Grange, *L'Italie et la Méditerranée (1896-1911). Les fondements d'une politique étrangère*, Rome, Ecole Française de Rome, 1994; Julia Ann Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans. North Africa, Europe, and the Ottoman Empire in an Age of Migration, c. 1800-1900*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2012; Marcella Aglietti, Mathieu Grenet, and Fabrice Jesné (eds.), *Consoli e consolati italiani dagli stati preunitari al fascismo (1802-1945)*, Rome, École française de Rome, 2020.

What emerges is a sharp critique of the state's imposition of immobility on unwanted subjects. Hom interprets detention as the opposite of promoting mobility among subjects who are privileged by the same authority, like the famous *Ventimila*, the agricultural settlers sent by the Duce to colonise the Libyan countryside or — more recently — the international tourists who continue to visit Lampedusa. "Empire's Moebius Strip" is a geographical, historical and anthropological study that sees mobility as a form of capital that separates the "damned of the earth" from the privileged class. The work therefore lends itself to a discussion of different Mediterranean contexts: think of other "islands" that were once places of exile and now places of "temporary residence", such as Ottoman and then Greek Mytilene; other "camps" like those of Goli Otok in Tito's Yugoslavia and the Centros de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes in present-day Ceuta and Melilla; and the "villages" built by the Ottoman authorities to house Cretan Muslim refugees (*muhacirler*) in Rhodes or Beirut in the early twentieth century or, in contrast, the touristic and environmentally damaging "villages" in popular locations such as Djerba or Cyprus.

Hom's analysis of the mobility of repatriates after the fall of Fascism intersects with Pamela Ballinger's narrative in "The World Refugees Made". From a spatial point of view, Ballinger's work has the great merit of providing an overview of the territories that were part of the Italian empire at the height of Mussolini's reign. From the Dodecanese to Libya, from Eritrea to Albania, from Ethiopia to Istria, the author reconstructs an imperial space that is in itself diverse and fragmented from an economic and social perspective, but also in terms of the legal and racial policies applied during and after the end of Fascism. Within this vast framework, the Mediterranean takes centre stage. Yet, it does not come across as an ordered space but as a crumbling empire that leads its subjects and citizens to seek new lives through mobility. Borrowing from an emigration research centre called Altreitalie, Ballinger introduces the notion of *oltreitalie* to deconstruct a narrative of migratory phenomena that affect Italy in terms of the reverberation and expansion abroad of a "standard" concept of Italianness. By highlighting the diverse and unordered movements during Italian decolonisation, the term *oltreitalie* aims 'not merely to pluralize an understanding of Italy but also destabilize and decenter it, just as the figure of the refugee decenters histories of the post-war period in Europe and beyond' (p. 31).

The Mediterranean, then, is a post-imperial space in which national identity remains undefined, but also a non-sovereign space in which different forces faced the post-war problem of refugees arriving from the former empire. The merit of Ballinger's spatial analysis is precisely to show that the Mare Nostrum myth evaporated, burdening local, national and intergovernmental authorities with fragmented and sometimes conflicting responsibilities. From Rhodes to Tirana, from Tripoli to Pula, aid agencies appeared that were founded by

the local communities themselves, as well as bodies linked to the temporary administration of the Allied occupation, charitable bodies such as the Red Cross, the Vatican, the Italian ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Interior, up to the newly founded United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, the International Refugee Organization and the still existing United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. These institutions dealt — far from unanimously — with the assistance, transportation and resettlement of refugees, while at the same time determining their limits of citizenship and membership in the post-conflict national community. In subsequent decades, they eventually made way for the associative galaxy that was by now rooted in Italy, such as the Associazione Nazionale Venezia Giulia e Dalmazia, the Associazione Nazionale Cittadini Italiani e Familiari Rimpatriati dall'Albania or the Associazione Italiana Rimpatriati dalla Libia. It is through its cultural and political activities that this galaxy links Italy to its colonial and imperial heritage. In sum, Ballinger reminds us that, beyond the idea of a *mare nostrum* or a *mare aliorum*, the Mediterranean represents a concatenation of scales of observation: the fulcrum of the empire but not its exclusive container, the centre of local and international negotiations, and the background of distant trajectories that can converge towards focal points — the same fields and villages illustrated by Hom in "Empire's Moebius Strip".

Italy in a "diverse" Mediterranean

Both Hom and Ballinger draw attention to the correlation between space and belonging in processes of imperial formation and disintegration. In a similar vein, McGuire focuses on a Mediterranean colonial territory where the Italian occupiers elaborated specific criteria of citizenship and administration based on religious diversity. Beyond the governmental dimension, the Dodecanese — and, in a broader sense, the surrounding Aegean Sea — fascinated Italian scholars and politicians and, at the same time, posed a challenge to the definition of Italianness. McGuire insightfully covers the period before the occupation of the territory in 1912 and, building on D'Annunzio's diaries and Giuseppe Sergi's pseudoscientific theories on the 'Mediterranean race', demonstrates that the Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea represented a response to the 'crisis of origins' (p. 37) that emerged in Italian culture during Decadentism and social Darwinism. The Aegean became almost a synecdoche for the Mediterranean. The sense that Italian culture was rooted in this space was based on the Graeco-Roman glory of antiquity, but also on the Venetian and Genoese past of many of the area's eastern territories, up to the point where there was no longer any doubt that Italian was still one of the lingua francas spoken on its various shores.

The fusion of Mediterraneanness and Italianness merged with the expansionist ambitions of the Kingdom of Italy. In this sense, Italy contributed to making the Mediterranean of the contemporary age the 'colonial sea' described by Manuel Borutta and Sakis Gekas.[26] As McGuire points out, this fed 'the fantasy that the Italian state would achieve its full potential as a nation-state once it achieved an empire in the Mediterranean' (p. 4). At the same time, this fusion clashed with the presence in the Aegean not only of orthodox Greeks but especially Muslims and Jews. For four centuries, Rhodes had been part of a province that the Ottomans called the 'islands of the White Sea' (*Cezayir-i Bahr-i Sefid*).[27] The author discusses the cultural implications of Italian colonial rule in this corner of the Mediterranean, from tourism via citizenship to the impact of Fascism. If the impressive scenic and archaeological beauty of Rhodes made it a popular tourist destination, the descriptions of the Italian Touring Club and the Istituto LUCE newsreels created a visual and media bridge between the metropolis and the colony. In both cases, the multi-faith character of Rhodes allowed propaganda to remain balanced between Orientalist exoticism and Mediterranean-Levantine familiarity. The search for a legal balance was more complicated. The Dodecanese occupied a special place in the Italian empire, and the official term "Possedimento delle Isole Italiane dell'Egeo" created a gap between the notions of colony and province within the Italian state. Furthermore, the concept of a 'Mediterranean race' divided the Aegeans from the African population in terms of a presumed higher degree of "civilisation" and similarity to the Italians, which also led to a large number of mixed marriages between Italian colonists and Dodecanesian women of other religions. It is no coincidence that Nicola Labanca has called the Dodecanese a 'white colony', the history of which is more similar to that of the Ionian Islands or Cyprus under British rule than to that of the African territories of the Fascist empire.[28]

McGuire describes the paradoxes of Fascist colonialism's concept of race between mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. On the one hand, "Italy's Sea" recounts the example of Aegean citizenship bestowed on the Dodecanese of all creeds, perhaps overestimating the idea of a Mediterranean, colonial *communitas* in a situation where references to an "Aegean subordination" persisted without undoing the difference between Italian citizenship and the status of

[26] Manuel Borutta, Sakis Gekas, *A Colonial Sea. The Mediterranean, 1798-1956*, "European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire", 2012, n. 19-1, pp. 1-13.

[27] In Ottoman sources, the toponym "White Sea" refers specifically, but not exclusively, to the Aegean Sea. Modern Turkish, by contrast, uses the equivalent *Akdeniz* for the Mediterranean in general.

[28] Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare: Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2002, p. 181; Sakis Gekas, *Xenocracy: State, Class and Colonialism in the Ionian Islands, 1815-1864*, New York, Berghahn, 2017; Alexis Rappas, *Cyprus in the 1930s: British Colonial Rule and the Roots of the Cyprus Conflict*, London, I. B. Tauris, 2014.

the majority of the local population. On the other hand, McGuire builds on the oral history previously explored by Nicholas Doumanis to insist not only on the ambivalence of Fascist colonialism towards the definition of its Aegean territory and population, but also on the latter's perception of Italian rule.[29] The paradox of the Fascist myth that combines Romanness, Italianness and Mediterraneanness lies in the fact that many Dodecanesians developed a simultaneous feeling of esteem for and hostility to the occupiers. Especially in later accounts, these two opposites developed into a generally positive view of "Italians" and a negative view of "Fascists". McGuire interprets this ambiguity not as a dualism inherent in colonial rule, but as a strategy of local subalterns. The more intimate dimension of personal relations with Italians posed less relevant problems compared to relations with the state, which was more easily associated with Fascism. Likewise, infrastructural changes tend to be remembered as "Italian" achievements while the experience of the Second World War is recalled as the harshest moment of Fascist occupation. In this sense, it should be stressed that the Aegean was the scene of the almost total deportation of the local Jewish community, which makes Rhodes (and Kos) part of that same genocidal Mediterranean to which Hom refers in the case of the Bedouins of Cyrenaica, and which is also gaining increasing attention from historians abroad. The Mediterranean thus becomes a privileged lens to examine the extent to which the persecutions, genocides and war crimes of Italian Fascism were intertwined with the double discrimination against Jews and various African populations.[30] Focusing on the cultural aspects of the occupation, McGuire presents a Mediterranean that, rather than concretising the idea of a "Italy's sea", turns out to be a 'mirage of both national and colonial possibility' (p. 25); in doing so, she extends the interconnected reading of empire and nation during Fascism that Roberta Pergher introduced in a recent study.[31]

If there is one Mediterranean city where this "mirage" of nationalism changed the history of the peninsula, it is undoubtedly Fiume (now Rijeka, in Croatia). The period after the First World War in this corner of the Mediterranean is the focus of Dominique Reill's study, *The Fiume Crisis*.

[29] Nicholas Doumanis, *Myth and memory in the Mediterranean: Remembering fascism's empire*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1997.

[30] Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, *D'une persécution l'autre: Racisme colonial et antisémitisme dans l'Italie fasciste*, "Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine", 2008, n. 55-3, pp. 116-137; Patrick Bernhard, *Behind the Battle Lines. Italian Atrocities and the Persecution of Arabs, Berbers, and Jews in North Africa during World War II*, "Holocaust and Genocide Studies", 2012, no. 26-3, pp. 425-446; Anthony McElligott, *The Deportation of the Jews of Rhodes, 1944. An Integrated History*, in Giorgios Antoniou, A. Dirk Moses (eds.), *The Holocaust in Greece*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 58-86.

[31] Roberta Pergher, *Mussolini's Nation-Empire. Sovereignty and Settlement in Italy's Borderlands, 1922-1943*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Reill has the great merit of detaching the events of Fiume from the paradigm of "proto-fascism" — and D'Annunzio's excesses in general — that still dominates Italian historiography.[32] Opening with a splendid description of city life on the eve of the Bloody Christmas of 1920, the author pays homage to Fiume's multicultural substrate from the very first pages, underlining how the nationalist outburst of D'Annunzio and his legionaries 'interrupted a world but did not transform it' (p. 13). Hence, Fiume rightly belongs to a diverse Mediterranean, one that confronted Italian nationalism and imperialism without being reduced to a mere stage for phenomena born on the peninsula. Far from being a lascivious backdrop for the legionnaires' exaggerations and experiments, Reill's Fiume was first and foremost the main port of the Transleithanian territory (the part of the Habsburg monarchy controlled from Budapest), characterised by multilingualism and difficult to manage because of its autonomous status as a *corpus separatum* and a network of mobility that linked the city to its hinterland as well as to Mediterranean and transatlantic migratory flows. Reill focuses on these aspects of the Mediterranean's imperial diversity to study its gradual decline, thus overcoming the idea that it ended suddenly and violently. Even during the occupation of D'Annunzio's forces (September 1919-December 1920) and after the Treaty of Rapallo, which sanctioned the creation of the Free State of Fiume, the city maintained a vitality that allowed it to accept Italianisation by adapting it to its Habsburg heritage.

The city did not remain indifferent to the idea that D'Annunzio's occupation represented the promise of a new Italy. Fiume was a political centre that was also geographically outside the peninsula, where revolutionary and authoritarian aspects ended up giving rise to a Fascist putsch as early as March 1922, thus anticipating the Fascists' nationwide seizure of power. Nonetheless, Fiume represented 'a move to continue empire under the aegis of nation' (p. 17), a process of which Reill investigates various aspects by linking the trajectories of the city's inhabitants to the material aspects of their everyday life, from the issue of currency exchange to the transformations of the concept of sovereignty, from the definition of citizenship to Italian nationalist propaganda in the streets and schools. In terms of imperial continuity, one could mention the legal notion of 'pertinence' (German *Heimatrecht*, Croatian *zavičajnost*). Reserved for Hungarian citizens until 1918 (thus excluding Habsburg subjects from Cisleithania, which was governed by Vienna), 'pertinence' conferred legal and fiscal rights by sanctioning full membership of the Fiume community as opposed to mere residence. In a period marked by the growth of the urban population, the 'pertinent' inhabitants of Fiume shared everyday experiences with the residents who lacked these privileges, making the city a site of legal inequality. What happened when the Italian National Council began to govern

[32] See Marco Mondini, *Fiume 1919. Una guerra civile italiana*, Rome, Salerno, 2019.

Fiume in December 1918? Reill describes the transformation of 'pertinence' into citizenship not as a rupture or abrupt Italianisation, but as a phenomenon dictated by pragmatism. By relaxing the criteria for obtaining 'pertinence', but forcing applicants to renounce their other nationalities (pp. 149-50), the pro-Italian authorities bet on a rapid annexation by the Kingdom of Italy and changed the population's legal and administrative ties; they thus blocked the rise of Hungary (whose territory had, in the meantime, shrunk by almost three quarters) and absorbed thousands of Fiuman citizens who had not not enjoyed full rights before the fall of the Habsburg Empire into the local domain.

The tension between nation and empire is, then, a common thread that links the works of Hom, Ballinger, McGuire and Reill. The latter offers a particularly original contribution, not limiting herself to projects of governmentality dictated by Rome but adopting the point of view of a new territory with its own past in which this tension was already at work before the advent of the legionnaires and Fascism. In a delicate but dynamic historical moment, between the end of the Habsburg Empire and the construction of the Fascist one, the experience of Fiume reminds us that cultural and demographic diversity was an important element in the bond between Italy and the Mediterranean. This diversity gave rise — as in the case of the Aegean Possedimento — to administrative projects that were difficult to classify on the basis of a dichotomy between imperialism and nationalism. In one of the many interesting anecdotes that can be found in "The Fiume Crisis", Reill mentions an exchange of telegrams in 1919 between Fiume and San Marino. Reill argues that the representatives of the city in the Kvarner Gulf drew inspiration from the formula that bound the Apennine republic to Rome, in which the maintenance of sovereignty did not exclude privileged, if not exclusive, ties to organs of the Italian state (pp. 131-2). In other words, in the twentieth-century Mediterranean, the *corpus separatum* of a defunct empire could continue to imagine its autonomy by combining it with a pragmatic connection to Italy: hence, this was not a transition from empire to nation, but the persistence from one empire to another made possible by the appropriation of the discourse on Adriatic and Mediterranean Italianness.

A "fixed" Mediterranean?

Looking at the four monographs together, the Mediterranean appears as a constant factor in Italian history from the late nineteenth century to the present day, acting as a geographical point of focus and — albeit with varying intensity — as a concept linked to the perception of national and imperial identity. But how do we deal with this continuity if we take the political and social transformations of Italian history into consideration? The authors answer this question in different ways.

Reill chooses a narrow periodisation to dismantle a much wider paradigm of Italian history. Daily life during the "funeral wake" of the Habsburg Empire reminds us that 'nation-states in the mid-twentieth century were fraught enterprises whose inherent contradictions (…) triggered so many of the frustrations that led to much of the world we know' (p. 234). We should, then, treat the Italian empire as a post-Habsburg Empire if we are to restore its substrate to what historiography has, since the 1990s, called 'border Fascism'.[33] Thanks to the solid equipment that distinguishes a historian of the Adriatic, Reill introduces a new imperial conjunction — concerning the "imperialist" autonomism of a local community — that contributes to the study of nationalist irredentism.

Conversely, McGuire examines Italian colonial history in the Dodecanese by combining cultural production, media representation and interactions between state and population. The author thus breaks away from an approach centred on Fascism and its 'new Mediterranean order'.[34] The focus of McGuire's analysis is not so much the administrative policies of a colony, but rather the deeper discourse on Mediterraneanness and, especially, the ambivalence of ethnic and racial classifications. The author argues that 'debates among state nationalists during the interwar period are prescient of the ways in which hierarchies of race linked to the Italian colonial past have impacted the reception of immigrants in more recent years' (p. 11). In her introduction and conclusion, McGuire thus moves beyond the perspective centred on Italian sovereignty over the islands to suggest that, in the 'selective memory' of the local Greek population, the experience of colonial rule continues to define the intersections — and contradictions — between 'Europe's southern question' of recent years and Greece's Mediterraneanness, for instance in the case of the economic crisis and the migration crisis (pp. 1, 251).

In this sense, "Italy's Sea" engages in an interesting dialogue with "The World Refugees Made" and "Empire's Moebius Strip". The temporality chosen by Ballinger is only apparently focused on the years of the disintegration of the Fascist empire and decolonisation (1941-1960). The author starts with a detailed analysis of decolonisation, of which she questions the 'quick, easy, or early' nature, arguing instead that 'reperiodizing Italy's contraction not as precocious but rather as a "long decolonization"' allows for the reconstruction of the vicissitudes of the people whose mobility depended on the end of Fascism, but also of the sources of the colonial period after the empire's territories were lost. Rather than repeating the paradigm of amnesia concerning the colonial past, Ballinger takes an ethnographic approach to the dispersal of archives and

[33] Raoul Pupo, *Il fascismo di confine. Una chiave interpretativa per un approccio comparativo*, "Storia e regione", 2011, no. 20-1, pp. 11-9.

[34] This narrative owes much to the important study of the same name: Davide Rodogno, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo. Le politiche di occupazione dell'Italia fascista in Europa*, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 2003.

places that contain the still visible traces of this mobility to add 'greater nuance than that of mere forgetting / enforced forgetting' (pp. 18-9, 21). Describing a kind of short-circuit between the history and memory of post-Fascist decolonisation, Ballinger ascribes to the Mediterranean a founding role for contemporary Italy.

"The World Refugees Made" criticises a perception that, even in the media, creates superficial parallels between an "us" represented by the Italian emigrants who left the peninsula at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to settle overseas, and a "them" represented by the immigrants who have arrived in Italy by crossing the Mediterranean in more recent times. Ballinger rightly points out that, since the Second World War, Italy has been the more or less temporary destination of thousands of "immigrants" crossing the Mediterranean. By separating national refugees from 'foreign refugees', often coming from the same places, the state 'closed the door on large-scale naturalization', and the consequences of this process persist to this day (p. 30). Another short-circuit concerns the rhetoric of neo-fascist groups used in murals and posters that try to revive slogans from the *Ventennio*, especially to recruit militants in schools, are not new in Rome or anywhere else; Ballinger cites the example of a neo-fascist poster she spotted in the Monteverde neighbourhood in 2011, with the slogan 'Ritorneremo!' and a grandfather in uniform holding a child, both scanning the horizon. The event in question, called a 'Commemoration of the martyrs of the foibe and of Istrian and Dalmatian exiles', was held on the occasion of the Giorno del Ricordo. As Ballinger points out, this date commemorates the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty in 1947, which sanctioned the end of the Italian empire by failing to establish an eastern border, leading to the exodus of Istrians and Dalmatians. The same poster calling for a "return" is none other than the reproduction of a poster produced by the Fascist regime in 1943, shortly before the Armistice of Cassibile. Invoking the 'African sickness' of 'millions and millions of Italians', the regime promised a return to the colonies that — like all wartime propaganda promises — did not come true (pp. 56, 213). "The World Refugees Made" therefore teaches us that the Mediterranean is not just a space of exclusion where Italy refused and continues to refuse mechanisms that can facilitate naturalisation. Likewise, a certain "Mediterraneanism" remains a hotbed of nationalist and irredentist sentiments nurtured by extreme right-wing groups. A reading of the Mediterranean that can decentralise certain paradigms on the history of the nation-state must, at the same time, face the heavy legacy of Fascism and the pitfalls of revisionism. Mussolini himself described Fascism, in an interview shortly before his capture in April 1945, as the 'most Mediterranean and European of all ideas'.[35]

[35] Elia Rosati, *CasaPound Italia. Fascisti del terzo millennio*, Milano, Mimesis, 2018, pp. 112-113.

The fixity of the Mediterranean in Italian history, then, does not mean that it never changes, but that it is in continuous refraction, a trace that runs along the Möbius strip described by Hom. If this trace is continuous, will it last forever? "Empire's Moebius Strip" implies that the union of territoriality and biopolitics that binds contemporary Italy to the legacy of its colonial empire has now taken on a European dimension. Recalling the example of Fiume in which — according to Reill — the official end of an empire facilitated the establishment of a new imperial logic, the aporias of Italian decolonisation could thus be read from a broader perspective. Considering that each European country carries an imperial legacy and that many of these countries are the successors not of a province, but of the metropolis of an empire, one could connect Hom's (and McGuire's) cue to an observation by Timothy Snyder, according to whom the European Union is a 'soft landing after empire'.[36] If we turn our attention from the unitary and continental aspect to the border and maritime aspect of European integration, we see that the Mediterranean could destabilise the idea that post-war Europe was born 'after empires'. Instead, the EU would appear to be a further 'imperial formation' next to those described by the four authors, in which Italy and its history continue to play an important, though no longer exclusive, role.

From the *imperium* of history to the historiographical *emporion*

The four monographs examined here testify to a growing and highly original historiographical interest in Italy and the Mediterranean within the English-speaking world. All works share a particular focus on the concept of empire, in line with the so-called new imperial history that has proved capable of mediating between area studies and global history. It is precisely from this observation that we can identify a number of research avenues that, in addition to the aforementioned imperial continuities in the construction of Europe after 1945 (and even more so after 1989), may open up new avenues of investigation. In this regard, we can take Montale's triad — the Mediterranean as a space that is 'vast, diverse and fixed at the same time' — as a point of reference and assess the extent to which it is absent from the four books. Taking up Fogu's categories of *imperium* and *emporion*, we can thus identify some elements capable of reconciling attention to Italy's imperial past with research practices that recall the region's syncretic and plural character.

Firstly, if the spatiality of the Mediterranean has made it possible to read contemporary Italian history from new vantage-points, the borders where this history intersects with that of other countries and regions remain to

[36] Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom. Russia, Europe, America*, New York, Penguin, 2018, p. 72.

be explored. This dialogue with "other" historiographies is most evident in Ballinger's and Reill's works, which are characterised by an interest in the Adriatic region and therefore in (post-)Habsburg, Balkan, and Central European history. By contrast, an encounter with the history of the Middle East and North Africa — that is, with Ottoman and post-Ottoman history, in the era in question — is largely absent in current scholarship.[37] It is not a matter of questioning the contributions of Italian studies abroad, but of acknowledging that the development in the Mediterranean area of other regional disciplines (area studies) now enables and encourages these to engage with Italian history in the training of young researchers. If, in the future, an Italianist-Mediterraneanist profile takes shape, it can only benefit from a deeper eclecticism with regard to the contemporary histories of the other countries and regions of the Mediterranean basin. This polycentrism could also enhance the historiographical value of the Mediterranean in terms of global history, not only through edited collections — as already demonstrated by some recent contributions — but also through monographs.[38]

Secondly, the diversity of the Mediterranean would be even more productive if historians had access to sources in different languages, which are available in Italian and other countries' archives. It would, then, be necessary to further integrate the acquisition of Mediterranean languages — especially those of the southern and eastern shores — into the study and specialisation programmes dedicated to this region. In this sense, the recent launch of a three-year course in Società e Culture del Mediterraneo at the University of Bologna's Ravenna branch, which has a strong historiographical component but is open to interdisciplinarity and foreign language learning, is a promising initiative; in general, progress in exchange programmes between universities in Italy and elsewhere in the Mediterranean region at all levels of education and research would be beneficial.[39] Italian colonial rule in particular, but also irredentism and military occupations up to the most recent migration flows, can be reinterpreted by supplementing the sources of the Italian state with those of the polyphonic (and polyglot) galaxy of institutions and actors that interacted with it, leaving traces in different languages in schools, courts, prisons and police records, as well as newspapers, not to mention diaries, autobiographical memories, oral testimo-

[37] In this sense, the recent publications by Arturo Marzano and Giampaolo Conte are only two possible examples of how a Mediterranean approach can be as useful for Italian history as for that of other countries in the same region. Arturo Marzano, *Onde Fasciste. La propaganda araba di Radio Bari (1934-43)*, Rome, Carocci, 2015; Giampaolo Conte, *Il tesoro del sultano. l'Italia, le grandi potenze e le finanze ottomane: 1881-1914*, L'Aquila, Textus, 2018.

[38] Maurizio Isabella, Konstantina Zanou (eds.), *Mediterranean diasporas: Politics and ideas in the long 19th century*, London, Bloomsbury, 2015; The Black Mediterranean Collective (ed.), *The Black Mediterranean. Bodies, Borders and Citizenship*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

[39] See: https://corsi.unibo.it/laurea/CultureMediterraneo/il-corso (last accessed 4 January 2022).

nies and artistic creations. This will give us a higher-resolution image of the Mediterranean region and of the confrontation of contemporary Italian history with other realities.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning the temporality of the Mediterranean. While the strength of the books by Hom, Ballinger and McGuire — more or less explicitly inspired by a postcolonial approach — lies in the extension of the Mediterranean's historical dimension beyond the end of Italian sovereignty, Reill's specific contribution is to shed light on the period before the Italian annexation of Fiume. The least explored theme is precisely that of the *pre*colonial (or pre-annexation) history of the Mediterranean. Especially North African history is moving rapidly towards an approach that re-evaluates the intertwining of local realities, links with the Ottoman Empire and subsequent colonial transformations from a strongly Mediterranean perspective.[40] There is still a lack of studies on Italian and Fascist imperialism that interpret the political and social situation of the territories that fell under Italian rule not as a mere prelude, but as an integral part of the narrative.[41] In this way, a Mediterranean approach can add value to the polyrhythmic character of history, understood as various speeds of change, persistence over time and the co-presence of different perceptions regarding the "end" and "beginning" of new epochs.

Although Italian administrations often claimed, for propaganda purposes, that the new territories were characterised by backwardness, immobility, inertia and isolation, the complex worlds of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica or the Ottoman Dodecanese, as well as the Adriatic littoral in the Habsburg Empire, had in reality kept pace with the changes and connectivity of the Mediterranean region before the Italian armed forces arrived. The Bedouins of the Senussi Sufi order, who were involved in arms smuggling during the Scramble for Africa, the networks of Dalmatian and Istrian migrants who linked the Habsburg Empire to the overseas world, the Dodecanese sponge divers who exported this practice to America, or the many Ottoman political prisoners who were held precisely in Rhodes or Tripoli in accordance with the *sürgün* banishment practice: these are just a few examples of a precolonial Mediterranean that was open to the world and to economic and social change. By focusing on these phenomena, we can overcome the suspension of history that results from the repeated emphasis on imperial formations interpreted as exclusively Italian, as when Fascist rhetoric appropriated the Imperium Romanum or the rule of the Venetian *Serenissima*. It was this heterogeneous

[40] Adam Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism. The Ideology and Culture of Power in Late Ottoman Egypt*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2017; M'hamed Oualdi, *A Slave between Empires. A Transimperial History of North Africa*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2020.

[41] This "imperial consequence" is one of the objectives of my monograph: Andreas Guidi, *Generations of Empire. Youth from Ottoman to Italian Rule in the Mediterranean*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2022.

context that created challenges and opportunities for Italian imperialism once it established itself in these territories as a sovereign force. Keeping the brackets of imperial history open, not only to the most recent events but above all to the earlier ones, is the most interesting challenge for a historiographical investigation that is committed to relocating the trajectory of Italian history in its indissoluble, and therefore intricate, link with Mediterranean history.

Translated by Andrea Hajek

Invisible landscapes. Historical research and groundwater

Antonio Bonatesta*

Le acque sotterranee rappresentano una componente fondamentale delle riserve idriche del pianeta. Nel corso dell'età contemporanea, questa risorsa è divenuta sempre più rilevante nel determinare i modi di produzione, i processi di modernizzazione e le forme di insediamento urbano, assumendo spesso connotati contradditori: a volte fattore complementare, altre volte risorsa del tutto alternativa rispetto ai progetti di infrastrutturazione idrica a larga scala promossi dallo Stato e dalle tecnocrazie idrauliche. Nonostante questi elementi, la storiografia italiana e quella internazionale hanno finora dedicato scarsa attenzione alle acque sotterranee come distinto oggetto di studio. Ciò impone, sotto l'aspetto metodologico, un dialogo serrato con altri comparti scientifico-disciplinari, in direzione di categorie come Antropocene, ciclo idrosociale e *shadow waters*, e un'attenzione alla storiografia internazionale, in particolare a quei contesti nazionali o subcontinentali che si sono confrontati con la presenza di grandi acquiferi sotterranei.
Parole chiave: acque sotterranee, Antropocene, ciclo idrosociale, shadow waters, Stato idraulico, tecnocrazie idriche, storiografia

Groundwater is an essential part of the planet's water reserves. In modern times, this resource has become increasingly important in determining production methods, modernisation processes and urban settlement patterns, often with contradictory connotations: sometimes a complementary factor, other times a completely alternative resource to the large-scale water infrastructure projects promoted by the state and hydraulic technocracies. Yet, Italian and international historiography has so far paid little attention to groundwater as an object of study in its own right. From a methodological point of view, this requires a close dialogue with other scientific disciplines, involving categories such as the Anthropocene, the hydrosocial cycle and shadow waters, as well as a focus on international historiography, looking in particular at the national or subcontinental contexts that have had to deal with the presence of large underground aquifers.
Key words: groundwater, the Anthropocene, hydrosocial cycle, shadow waters, hydraulic state, hydrocracies, historiography

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Groundwater as an object of historiographical research

Groundwater is the invisible part of the hydrological cycle and an essential part of the planet's water reserves. Stored in so-called aquifers, bodies of water enclosed in the rocky layers of the subsoil,[1] its quantity is about twenty-five times greater than that of surface water.[2] In modern times, this specific resource has become increasingly relevant in sustaining and determining production methods, rural modernisation processes and urban settlement patterns. Yet, Italian and international historiography — with some notable exceptions — has so far paid little attention to groundwater as an object of study in its own right, focusing instead on the relationship between human societies and surface water resources, especially the arrangement and exploitation of river courses.[3]

In the last decades of the twentieth century, a number of Italian historical studies have attached great importance to the role of water in the rural development of modern and contemporary society, considering irrigation and land reclamation as vectors of socio-economic transformation and the productive restructuring of the territory.[4] Attention has also been given to the use of water as an energy resource, looking at the progressive ideologies and technocracies that, between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, saw hydroelectric and industrial transformation as a necessary condition for the country's economic

[1] As is known, these are layers of sand, gravel and limestone that can absorb rain and surface water that penetrate, flow and are deposited there by gravity, depending on the composition, inclination and articulation of the rocks.

[2] Bjørn Kløve et al., *Groundwater dependent ecosystems. Part I: hydroecological status and trends*, "Environmental Science & Policy", 2011, n. 14, pp. 770-781. While there is uncertainty about the data, we know that more than three-fifths of the world's fresh water is stored in glaciers and 13.5 per cent in groundwater aquifers. The remaining 0.5 per cent is contained in lakes, rivers, soil moisture and the atmosphere. See J.A.A. Jones, *Global Hydrology. Processes, Resources and Environmental Management*, Essex, Longman, 1997.

[3] There is a rich historiography on the exploitation and regimentation of rivers. International contributions include Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire. Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West*, New York-Oxford, Oxford University press, 1985; Christof Mauch, Thomas Zeller (eds.), *Rivers in History. Perspectives on Waterways in Europe and North America*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008; Sara B. Pritchard, *Confluence. The Nature of Technology and the Remaking of the Rhône*, London, Harvard University Press, 2011. On Italy, see Stefania Barca, *Enclosing Water. Nature and Political Economy in a Mediterranean Valley, 1796-1916*, Cambridge, White Horse Press, 2010; Giacomo Bonan, *Le acque agitate della patria. L'industrializzazione del Piave (1882-1966)*, Rome, Viella, 2020.

[4] See Teresa Isenburg, *Investimenti di capitale e organizzazione di classe nelle bonifiche ferraresi, 1872-1901*, Florence, La Nuova Italia 1971; Luciano Segre, *Agricoltura e costruzione di un sistema idraulico nella pianura piemontese: (1800-1880)*, Milano, Banca commerciale italiana 1983; Piero Bevilacqua, Manlio Rossi-Doria (eds.), *Le bonifiche in Italia dal '700 ad oggi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza 1984; P. Bevilacqua, *Le rivoluzioni dell'acqua. Irrigazioni e trasformazioni dell'agricoltura tra Sette e Novecento*, in Id. (ed.), *Storia dell'agricoltura italiana in età contemporanea*, vol. I, *Spazi e paesaggi*, Venice, Marsilio, 1989, pp. 255-278.

and productive modernisation.[5] Urban history and the history of territory, on the other hand, have insisted on the multiple dimensions of living, dead, natural, artificial, navigable and runoff water, paying particular attention to the dynamics of the so-called 'sanitary city': the construction of water networks, aqueducts and sewage systems, and the municipalisation of these services.[6] Finally, water has been at the centre of environmental history, which has questioned its dimension as a natural resource in relation to the emergence of urban forms of incorporation and metabolism, industrial pollution, catastrophes and the progressive decrease in the availability of drinking water.[7]

Of all these approaches, which have contaminated each other and whose boundaries are not always easy to distinguish, urban history has perhaps insisted most on groundwater, whereas others have focused mainly on river history and land reclamation. Moreover, a holistic approach to watershed management, aimed at analysing the relations between human societies and the hydrological cycle as a whole, has only recently gained ground in Italian and international historiography.[8] This would make it possible to overcome sectional approaches that are limited to *artificial spaces* — such as administrative boundaries — and *arbitrary timescales*, that is, the pre-eminence that many historians have given to the specific moment of surface water flow, to the detriment of other phases of the hydrological cycle, like the subterranean one.

The relationship between humans and groundwater has been decisive not only because it has enabled societies to meet the challenges posed by climate and hydrological conditions. It has also underpinned processes of rural and urban modernisation, the development of unique forms of culture and power, the explosion of social and political conflicts, the emergence of specific forms of administrative power and, finally, the dawn of a dramatic environmental and social crisis caused by the over-exploitation and pollution of groundwater aquifers, with very serious consequences for surface water and climate change as a whole.[9]

[5] See Giuseppe Barone, *Mezzogiorno e modernizzazione. Elettricità e bonifica nell'Italia contemporanea*, Turin, Einaudi, 1986; Piero Bevilacqua, *Environmental intervention and water resource management in the history of the Mezzogiorno*, "Modern Italy", 2000, n. 1, pp. 63-71.

[6] See Augusto Ciuffetti, *L'acqua nella storia*, "I frutti di Demetra", 2007, n. 14, pp. 37-46; Lucia Nuti, *Le alterne fortune dell'acqua nella storia del territorio*, "Storia urbana", 2009, n. 125, pp. 5-9.

[7] See Simone Neri Serneri, *Incorporare la natura: storie ambientali del Novecento*, Rome, Carocci, 2005; Ercole Sori, *Per una storia del metabolismo urbano*, "Storia urbana", 2007, n. 116, pp. 5-6; Gabriella Corona, S. Neri Serneri (eds.), *Storia e ambiente: città, risorse e territori nell'Italia contemporanea*, Rome, Carocci 2007; Federico Paolini, *Firenze 1946-2005. Una storia urbana e ambientale*, FrancoAngeli, Milan, 2014.

[8] See Giacomo Parrinello, *Per una storia ambientale della circolazione delle acque nel bacino del Po. Note su una ricerca in corso*, "Altronovecento", 2016, n. 28.

[9] See Esha Zaveri et al., *Invisible water, visible impact. Groundwater use and Indian agriculture under climate change*, "Environmental Research Letters", 2016, n. 8, pp. 1-13.

From a methodological point of view, the relative scarcity of historical reconstructions requires an in-depth dialogue with other scientific disciplines, starting with hydrogeology, historical geography and political ecology. The aim of this article is also to broaden the view to international historiography, in particular to those fields that have shown an interest in large underground aquifers: from the Ogallala or High Plains Aquifer in the United States via the Great Artesian Basin in Australia to India.[10] I will offer a first overview of the available methodological-analytical tools to understand their usefulness and relevance for the Italian case.

Groundwater: between hydrogeology and history

Our ability to tackle the shortage of surface water by using groundwater dates back to ancient times and developed in different regions of the world: from Europe to China, from Arabia to the Mediterranean basin. Various techniques were used to extract this water from the depths of the earth, also in relation to the specific types of aquifers, which can be divided into phreatic and artesian aquifers.

The former consist of 'unenclosed' aquifers — that is, not covered by impermeable upper layers — which subject these waters to the same pressure as the atmosphere at the surface. This prevents them from rising spontaneously to ground level if reached by a well or through drilling. Generally located in the more superficial parts of the subsoil, phreatic aquifers are more exposed to pollutants and infectious agents from the surface, often leading to unhealthy conditions. However, it is precisely because they are more easily accessible that this kind of water has been the subject of traditional constructions, such as simple wells, from which water was drawn by human or animal powered norias, fountains and the *qanāt*. The latter were widespread mainly in the Mediterranean and date back to Roman or Arab times. They consisted of short vertical tunnels, similar to wells, connected by a single horizontal underground channel and dug at a slight slope to collect the water flowing underground.[11]

[10] These three contexts obviously do not cover all territorial areas affected by large aquifers, but they seemed the most promising in terms of the historiographical production and circulation in international literature. See, respectively, John Opie et al., *Ogallala. Water for a Dry Land*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2018 (third edition); Joseph M. Powell, *Plains of promise, rivers of destiny: water management and the development of Queensland 1824-1990*, Brisbane, Boolarong Publications, 1991; Tushaar Shah, *Taming the Anarchy. Groundwater Governance in South Asia*, London, Routledge, 2009.

[11] See Andrew M. Watson, *The Arab Agricultural Revolution and Its Diffusion, 700-1100*, "The Journal of Economic History", 1974, n. 1, pp. 8-35; Ramón Martínez-Medina et al., *Research on qanats in Spain*, "Water History", 2018, n. 10, pp. 339-355 and Majid L. Khaneiki, *Qanat and territorial cooperation in Iran*, "Water History", 2018, n. 10, pp. 185-206.

By contrast, artesian aquifers are bodies of water that are usually deeper — hence healthier — than phreatic aquifers, in which water runs through an inclined plane between two impermeable rock layers and is consequently subject to strong hydrostatic pressure, as if it were flowing through a pipe. The peculiarity of this condition lies in the fact that, once a well is dug deep enough to reach the aquifer, the water rises spontaneously and its upward force can sometimes cause it to gush out even beyond the surface of the ground, thus avoiding the need for norias or expensive and fragile drainage pumps. This phenomenon, which describes the functioning of so-called 'salient waters', was typical of wells dug since the late Middle Ages in the Duchy of Modena and the Artois region in northern France — hence the term 'Modenese' or 'artesian' wells. The exploitation of artesian waters was 'rediscovered' in the first decades of the nineteenth century, mainly thanks to advances in drilling techniques — making it possible to reach and exceed depths of 500 metres — and hydrogeological knowledge in France and England, which spread with extraordinary rapidity to the rest of Europe and the United States.[12] In fact, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the search for new sources of water supply had become fundamental to the needs of a rapidly growing European population, to supply water to cities and support the progress of the industrial revolution.[13] Ultimately, we could say that a contemporary history of groundwater began with the European rediscovery of artesianism in the 1920s.

Finally, we must consider one last type of groundwater: 'fossil water'. These non-renewable water reserves were formed thousands or millions of years ago as a consequence of the normal hydrological cycle, only to be trapped and sealed underground by powerful telluric currents, without the possibility of being further 'recharged' from the surface. In international historiography, the best-known examples of the exploitation of this specific type of resource concern non-European aquifers, such as large portions of the above-mentioned Ogallala and the Great Artesian Basin in Australia.[14] Discovered at the end of the nineteenth century, these two huge fossil water reservoirs were subjected to very high rates of exploitation, especially in the

[12] I am referring to the works of the French Abdon Garnier, an engineer of the Corps des Mines, and Louis-Étienne Héricart de Thury, a member of the *Académie royale des sciences*, who were instrumental in the start of an 'artesian industry' in France and its dissemination in Europe. See A.-J.-F. Garnier, *L'art du fontainier sondeur et des puits artésiens*, Paris, Huzard, 1822; L.-É. Héricart de Thury, *Considérations géologiques et physiques sur la cause du jaillissement des eaux des puits fores ou fontaines artificielles*, Paris, Bachelier, 1829.

[13] See F.E. Bruce, *Approvvigionamento idrico*, in Charles Singer (ed.), *Storia della tecnologia*, vol. 5, *L'età dell'acciaio. Circa 1850-1900*, Turin, Boringhieri, ed. 1982, pp. 562-568.

[14] On the Ogallala, see J. Opie et al., *Ogallala. Water for a Dry Land*, cit.; William Ashworth, *Ogallala Blue. Water and Life on the High Plains*, New York, W.W. Norton and Co., 2006; Geoff Cunfer, *On the Great Plains. Agriculture and Environment*, College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 2005. On the Great Artesian Basin, see the aforementioned J.M. Powell, *Plains of promise, rivers of destiny*, cit.

middle decades of the twentieth century, so much so that they were brought to the brink of irreversible consumption.

The Anthropocene, the hydrosocial cycle and groundwater

An environmental history of groundwater should start with a discussion of the notion of the Anthropocene, its potential and its epistemological limits.[15] Over the last 20 years, the Anthropocene has developed into a theoretical space where scientific knowledge and humanistic disciplines have been able to compare their respective protocols and adopt shared languages, contributing to overcoming the nature-culture subdivision.[16] The analysis of the degrees of change in carbon dioxide emissions and their stratification in the soil and subsoil has led mankind to consider the human species as a climatic and geological force, especially in the wake of phenomena such as modern colonialism and the early stages of industrial revolutions. The claim that nature and its laws remain indifferent to human action has gradually been abandoned.

On the other hand, some scholars have challenged the idea that humans, as a species, have an unclear responsibility, drawing attention to the role that social and racial inequalities have played in triggering the climate and ecological crises. As a result, alternative concepts such as 'Capitalocene' or 'Wasteocene' have been proposed.[17] Gaining awareness of a specific geological and climatic role of humanity, but above all the due consideration that different class and social status conditions produce different ecological footprints, has offered a starting point for historicising the relationship between society and the hydrosphere, also with regard to the theme of water[18] In the last two decades,

[15] See Christophe Bonneuil, Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *La terra, la storia e noi. L'evento Antropocene*, Rome, Treccani, 2019 (original edition Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2013). For the historical debate on the topic, see Gabriella Corona*, Natura e società: una sfida per gli storici*, "Meridiana", 2021, n. 100, pp. 35-56; Salvatore Adorno, *Storia e Antropocene*, "Mestiere di Storico", 2020, n. 1, pp. 67-72; Giacomo Bonan, *Gli storici e l'Antropocene: narrazioni, periodizzazioni, dibattiti*, "Passato e presente", 2018, n. 104, pp. 129-143.

[16] See Helmuth Trischler, *The Anthropocene. A Challenge for the History of Science, Technology, and the Environment*, "Naturwissenschaften, technik und medizin", 2016, n. 24, pp. 309-335.

[17] See, among others, Jason W. Moore (ed.), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, history, and the crisis of capitalism*, Oakland, Pm press, 2016; S. Barca, *Forces of reproduction. Notes for a counter-hegemonic Anthropocene*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020; Marco Armiero, *Wasteocene. Stories from the global dump*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2021.

[18] See the study by Andrea Zinzani, *L'Ecologia politica come campo di riconcettualizzazione socio-ambientale: governance, conflitto e produzione di spazi politici*, "Geography Notebooks", 2020, n. 3, pp. 33-50. See also Tom Perreault et al., *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*, London-New York, Routledge, 2015; Erik Swyngedouw, *Social Power and the Urbanization of Water: Flows of Power*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004; David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, Wiley Blackwell, 1996.

English-language historiography has particularly insisted on the notion of the hydrosocial cycle or 'waterscape'; an intense exchange with political ecology, social geography, anthropology and sociology has considerably broadened the epistemological potential and multiplied the possible use of this notion. It consists mainly of understanding the connections between water flows and power relations, looking in particular at the mechanisms of water governance and their impact on social balances and ecological reproduction processes.[19] This connection has thus far been analysed from different perspectives: for example, by looking at the role that the market and capitalist production have played in shaping urban environments, or the emergence and consolidation of intellectual, ideological, economic and political patterns that have favoured unequal forms of appropriation and access to water.[20]

A part of English-language historiography has focused on two prevalent themes. The first has examined the role of hydraulic infrastructure policies and the bureaucratic-administrative governments that presided over them in constantly favouring specific social interests or mediating between private and publicist visions of water use.[21] A second aspect concerns the relationship between the water end uses and hydrological cultures, in urban as well as rural and colonial contexts. In this vein, a predominantly culturalist reading of modes of water appropriation has, for example, emphasised the socially constructed nature of concepts such as 'scarcity'. This does not mean denying the hydrological and climatic constraints that underlie droughts and famines, but rather understanding the extent to which and how the very concept of scarcity is historically derived from specific hierarchies between civil, irrigation and industrial uses. The construction of the concept of 'scarcity' would ultimately serve to legitimise forms of appropriation and discrimination in accessing water.[22]

When applied to groundwater, these indications have various methodological implications. It is not just a matter of highlighting the geological impact that drilling has had on underground aquifers, as the American hydrogeologist W. Todd Jarvis did when he asked what the real purpose is of policies to protect underground water resources, whether 'groundwater [is] stored and

[19] See Jamie Linton, Jessica Budds, *The hydrosocial cycle. Defining and mobilizing a relational-dialectical approach to water*, "Geoforum", 2014, n. 57, pp. 170-180; Jamie Linton, *What is Water? The History of a Modern Abstraction*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 2010; Karen J. Bakker, *A political ecology of water privatization*, "Studies in Political Economy", 2003, n. 70, pp. 35-58.

[20] See Jessica Budds, *Whose scarcity? The hydrosocial cycle and the changing waterscape of La Ligua river basin, Chile*, in Michael K. Goodman, Maxwell T. Boykoff, Kyle T. Evered (eds.), *Contentious Geographies: Environment, Meaning, Scale*, Ashgate, Aldershot, pp. 59-68.

[21] See Ruth A. Morgan, *The Anthropocene as Hydro-social Cycle. Histories of Water and Technology for the Age of Humans*, "Journal of the International Committee for the History of Technology", 2017, n. 23, pp. 36-53.

[22] Ruth A. Morgan, James L. Smith, *Premodern Streams of Thought in Twenty-First-Century Water Management*, "Radical History Review", 2013, n. 116, pp. 105-129, here p. 106.

captured by wells […] or the "container", the aquifer that stores groundwater'.[23] Above all, it is necessary to understand how — in modern times — an inextricable and ephemeral relationship has developed between the exploitation of surface water reserves and the use of groundwater, where the two elements have at times alternated, at other times integrated. The greater anthropic pressure on this or that stage of the hydrological cycle has depended on the type of response that very precise economic and social conditions have given to environmental and territorial constraints, starting with the existing power relations between different classes and groups. Other factors have followed from this: the emergence of hierarchies in the allocation of water flow rates in favour of civil, irrigation or industrial uses; the construction of cultural systems in which scarcity has become the regulating and legitimising criterion for access that is often unequal or inequitable; the role of public policies in supporting the dynamics of private appropriation or in correcting them to the benefit of mixed systems, directed at public principles of collective access. For example, some strands of urban history and the history of territory have studied groundwater from these perspectives, showing how, between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, landowners in the Palermo area made massive use of artesian wells to enhance citrus production, only to then reject both the hypotheses of consortium management of water resources and aqueduct projects; as a matter of fact, such measures would have weakened their control over groundwater and, therefore, over modernisation processes.[24]

Shadow water, the invisible resource: knowledge, techniques and beliefs

The culturalist strand of English-language historiography, especially Australian historiography, has developed the concept of 'shadow water' proposed by historical geography in the wake of Val Plumwood's reflections on so-called 'shadow places'. The Australian ecofeminist philosopher has insisted on the 'dematerialisation' of places, highlighting how contemporary cultures, practices, beliefs and traditions are increasingly detached from the material and environmental conditions that make life possible.[25] Losing track of this means fuelling social behaviour and expectations of consumption that are often unsustainable and unrealistic, and that consider neither the work done by other social groups nor the ecological limits of the biosphere itself. Eco-socialist

[23] W. Todd Jarvis, *Contesting Hidden Waters. Conflict resolution for groundwater and aquifers*, London-New York, Routledge, 2014, p. 18.

[24] See, for example, Francesco D'Amaro, *Il mercato dell'acqua. Politica, istituzioni e conflitti nel distretto agrumicolo di Bagheria (XX sec.)*, "Meridiana", 2011, nn. 71-72, pp. 271-291.

[25] See Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture. The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, London, Routledge, 2002.

and ecofeminist thought has taken this conflict on in terms of the opposition between the sphere of production and that of the reproduction of life, and the tendency for the latter to be subjected to the former.[26] From this perspective, the dematerialisation of political and production structures would cancel any idea of agency, of individual and collective responsibility but also of the role played by the biogeochemical sphere, ultimately pushing us 'to misunderstand our lives, and thus engender a false consciousness that justifies appropriation'.[27]

Building on Plumwood's insights, some sectors of historical geography and political ecology have interpreted the hydrosocial cycle through the concept of shadow water.[28] In other words, the attention has turned to the political, social and cultural processes that have led to the privileging of the use of certain types of water (e.g. river, lake, spring, phreatic or artesian water, etc.) at the expense of others, and to certain forms of appropriation at the expense of others, which have meanwhile become marginal. Shadow waters can be conceptualised in a 'vertical' way, considering that surface water has historically been exploited and regulated more than groundwater, but also in a 'horizontal' way, since certain forms of water resource use — a demonstration of the *genius loci* of local or indigenous communities (e.g. cisterns, fountains, wells, qanāt, etc.) — have gradually been abandoned to make way for policies implemented on a larger scale, from dams to aqueducts. A historical approach to the concept of shadow water can thus help to reconstruct the ways in which knowledge and technical innovations have emerged and become dominant, supporting particular power structures, technological and energy levels, and forms of control over water resources.

The implications for groundwater are obvious; these resources are, by their very nature, difficult to perceive. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this 'invisibility' not only posed technical and theoretical problems in understanding groundwater circulation, determining the location and depth of aquifers and measuring flow rates, but it also fuelled — for a long time — the perception that aquifers were supposedly perennial or infinite nature, a harbinger of serious ecological and climatic effects.[29]

The development, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of knowledge and technology aimed at mapping and exploiting aquifers seems to have played a dual, contradictory role: to better understand how water circulates underground but also to provide an incentive for their ever more intensive exploitation. From the first half of the nineteenth century, demographic, manufac-

[26] S. Barca, *Forces of reproduction*, cit.

[27] V. Plumwood, *Environmental Culture*, cit., p. 142.

[28] See Jessica McLean et al., *Shadow waters: making Australian water cultures visible*, "Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers", 2018, n. 43, pp. 615-629. On shadow places, see Val Plumwood, *Shadow places and the politics of dwelling*, "Australian Humanities Review", 2008, n. 44, pp. 139-150.

[29] For an analysis of the Indian case, see E. Zaveri et al., *Invisible water, visible impact*, cit.

turing and urban development, along with changes in habits and domestic consumption, required a considerable increase in the volumes of water needed to meet the growing and diversified needs of society, including civil, agricultural and industrial uses.[30] This gave a strong impetus to the advancement of hydrological techniques and knowledge, more refined and less tied to empirical and amateur practices, whose scientific development was also fuelled by the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century 'great flowering' season of geology.[31] Hydrogeology, the so-called science of groundwater, thus emerged, which developed in different ways across the country and responded to different stimuli and incentives from local and state authorities.[32] After all, action was required to respond to the serious problems of urban hygiene, which developments in bacteriology attributed to sewage and putrid water, especially with the spread of diseases such as typhus and cholera.[33]

London and Paris were among the first European cities to adopt an 'organicist' vision of water flows, building underground networks aimed at creating a circularity between white and black water, between water supply and disposal, capable not only of supplying water to homes but also of removing sources of infection from neighbourhoods through the discharge of water.[34] This is also why the intensive use of available springs close to the cities proved to be increasingly insufficient, not to mention unsafe, and it became necessary to add new flows from more distant sources by building urban aqueducts and digging deeper wells.[35] Consequently, major advances were made in hydraulic engineering throughout the nineteenth century, with the development of pumps, turbines and hydraulic rams.[36] The serialisation of these innovations and their international dissemination thanks to universal exhibitions and ministerial

[30] See Francesca Socrate, *Borghesie e stili di vita*, in Giovanni Sabbatucci, Vittorio Vidotto, *Storia d'Italia*, vol. 3, *Liberalismo e democrazia 1887-1914*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1995, pp. 362-442.

[31] See Martin Guntau, *The emergence of geology as a scientific discipline*, "History of Science", 1978, n. 4, pp. 280-290; François Ellenberger, *Histoire de la géologie*, t. 2, *La Grande Éclosion et ses prémices, 1660-1810*, Paris, Lavoisier, 1994.

[32] Until now, Italian historiography has been mainly interested in the development of hydrology as a science of hydrographic basins. See Giacomo Parrinello, *Charting the Flow: Water Science and State Hydrography in the Po Watershed, 1872-1917*, "Environment and History", 2017, n. 1, pp. 65-96. See Nicholas Howden, John Mather (eds.), *History of Hydrogeology*, New York, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.

[33] See Roger Schofield et al. (eds.), *The Decline of Mortality in Europe*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991.

[34] See Guido Zucconi, *La città contesa. Dagli ingegneri sanitari agli urbanisti (1885-1942)*, Milan, Jaca Book, 1989. On the British case (one of the most studied ones), see Carlo F. Antonelli, *Acque sporche. Londra e il "Metropolitan Board of Works". 1855-1865*, "Storia urbana", 1992, n. 61.

[35] See F.E. Bruce, *Approvvigionamento idrico*, in C. Singer, *Storia della tecnologia*, cit., pp. 562-568.

[36] J. Allen, *Ingegneria idraulica*, in C. Singer, *Storia della tecnologia*, cit., pp. 532-561.

competitions gradually changed how groundwater was drawn from the subsoil, while the expansion of geology and hydrogeology allowed for an increasingly accurate identification of aquifers.

These developments have fostered a better understanding of the interactions between the hydrological cycle and the geological arrangement of the subsoil, supporting the creation of professional bodies and water technocracies on a municipal or state basis, as has happened in recent decades. As a result, the popular knowledge and practices of the *pozzàri* and *fontanieri* — heirs to ancient techniques for building wells and fountains — soon became 'spectral' practices, marginalised or subjected to the new technologies.

It is true that some of these practices proved more resistant to processes of assimilation, most notably dowsing. In modern times, the conviction that some people — equipped with the so-called divining-rod — could sense the presence of water underground has at various stages been reconsidered and influenced by scientific suggestions and hypotheses such as 'mesmerism', the discovery of biological electricity, the belief that minerals and water emanated radiation that could be perceived by man and, last but not least, spiritualism and late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century idealism.[37] Although dowsing was mainly practised by the lower classes, in Italy its use was supported by prominent figures such as Bernardino Lotti and Paolo Vinassa de Regny, the doyens of Italian geology.[38] It permanently failed to establish itself as a scientific discipline close to the Second World War, following lively debates and international congresses throughout the 1930s.

There is one last aspect that obstructed the full development and vulgarisation of groundwater extraction processes. In fact, over the centuries, water became associated with a sacred symbolism that was often linked to sanctity and calendric rituals, through which societies and communities sought to discipline and explain a hostile nature, exorcising phenomena such as disease, scarcity, drought, aridity, overflows and floods.[39] For instance, water gushing out from the ground has long been associated with the miracles of saints, who allegedly made fresh and healthy springs gush water. Other times, popular folklore attributed an evil power to the water of rivers, springs and foun-

[37] Studies on dowsing have mainly focused on the link with discoveries in electromagnetism between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See Luca Ciancio, *La resistibile ascesa della rabdomanzia. Pierre Thouvenel e la "Guerra di Dieci Anni"*, "Intersezioni", 1992, n. 2, pp. 267-290; Lucia De Frenza, *I sonnambuli delle miniere. Amoretti, Fortis, Spallanzani e il dibattito sull'elettrometria organica e minerale in Italia (1790-1816)*, Florence, L.S. Olschki, 2005. On the link between dowsing, positivism, spiritualism and idealism, see Simona Cigliana, *Spiritismo e parapsicologia nell'età positivistica*, in *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, vol. 25, *Esoterismo*, Turin, Einaudi, 2010, pp. 521-546.

[38] See Donata Brianta, *Europa mineraria. Circolazione delle élites e trasferimento tecnologico, secoli XVIII-XIX*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2007.

[39] See Tonino Ceravolo, *Sacralità dell'acqua, possessione e culto dei santi*, in V. Teti (ed.), *Storia dell'acqua,* Rome, Donzelli, 2003, pp. 99-112.

tains, often guarded by beasts and spirits that constantly had to be killed or won over.[40] It is no surprise, then, that secularisation processes were linked to extraction processes, as emerges from the records, which reveal the fears of local populations in the face of the first drilling operations, which were looked upon with suspicion if not as a sacrilegious action.

'Knowledge that disinhibits'

We can better understand the reasons for this contradictory role of knowledge and technology if we consider the criticism of the notion of technical rationality and so-called reflexive thinking. According to Danilo Zolo, the development of scientific knowledge has made it possible to extend the range of possible experiences for *homo sapiens* but without increasing their certainty, because 'as theoretical knowledge expands and, accordingly, practical skills grow, new horizons open up, laden with unforeseen problems, which stimulate more risky attempts at explanation, less guaranteed by previous knowledge'.[41] This incremental process tends to increase, rather than decrease, the uncertainty and complexity in which human societies are immersed.

These types of considerations have helped to problematise the basic misunderstandings inherent in the paradigm of sustainable development and the idea that technical rationality itself — which is partially responsible for the current ecological crises — may not only restore compromised ecosystem balances but also push towards new horizons of development. Philosophers such as Jean-Baptiste Fressoz have highlighted how nineteenth-century positivism or twentieth-century productivism was by no means unaware of the limits and distortions of 'progress'. Nevertheless, nineteenth- and twentieth-century societies were supposedly incapable of implementing their reflexivity because of the multiple logics behind the 'normalisation' of risk, which was based on a complex apparatus of technical rules, procedures and narratives that ended up producing a 'knowledge that disinhibits', destined to make technological modernity acceptable.[42] It is in this sense that Fressoz and historians such as Stefania Barca have recently advanced positions that are critical of the linear visions and great diachronic oppositions suggested by Beck and Giddens's sociology of risk, according to which postmodern reflexivity would, instead, allow present-day societies — unlike those of the past — to limit and reabsorb the abnormal effects of scientific and technological development.

[40] See Paolo Sorcinelli, *Storia sociale dell'acqua. Riti e culture*, Milan, Bruno Mondadori, 1998.

[41] Danilo Zolo, *Il principato democratico. Per una teoria realistica della democrazia*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1992, pp. 30-31.

[42] See Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *L'apocalypse joyeuse. Une histoire du risque technologique*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2012.

Fossil energy, fossil water

As we have seen, the structuring of technical-scientific knowledge and the development of technological innovations have also encouraged the indiscriminate exploitation of groundwater resources, not only because of the easier and cheaper access to drilling and pumping machinery, especially since the 1950s and 1960s, but also as a result of the progressive implementation of rural electrification and the replacement of coal by oil as the main fossil energy source. Starting from the aforementioned case study of Ogallala, Green and Watson have thus highlighted the role of fossil energy sources in accelerating the extraction of water from underground aquifers.[43] Green pointed out that, between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, improvements in drilling techniques and the shift from windmills to the construction of fossil fuel pumps changed the very meaning of irrigation, seen increasingly 'as a means of increasing production rather than as a last resort against crop failure'.[44] Drawing on the 'social metabolism' paradigm, Watson also stressed that the shift from labour-intensive to fossil fuel-intensive irrigation in the United States allowed farmers to make extraordinary productivity gains as early as the mid-twentieth century, transforming the American central plains into a non-renewable landscape. Fossil fuel was used to exploit the fossil water of the Ogallala, which was extracted and converted, in turn, into a 'significantly larger energy assembly', that is, the biomass of crops and livestock.[45]

Yet, it cannot be said that the changes induced by the non-renewable torsion of the American High Plains did not emerge from the earliest stages of this profound transformation. We need only think of the so-called Dust Bowl, a series of sandstorms that struck this part of the United States in the 1930s, caused by a combination of over-exploitation of the soil due to cultivation transformations brought about by underground irrigation and periods of extraordinary drought, generating strong waves of migration.[46] Nor did the exhaustion of the High Plains' underground aquifers — which became clear as early as the mid-1970s — prompt all states affected by the presence of these fossil waters to take the same measures; instead, they responded to the same systemic problem with fragmented approaches and different policies.

[43] See Andrew M. Watson, *"The Single Most Important Factor". Fossil Fuel Energy, Groundwater, and Irrigation on the High Plains, 1955-1985*, "Agricultural History", 2020, n. 4, pp. 629-663; Donald E. Green, *Land of Underground Rain. Irrigation of the Texas High Plains, 1910-1970*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1973.

[44] D.E. Green, *Land of Underground Rain*, cit., p. 147.

[45] A.M. Watson, *"The Single Most Important Factor"*, cit., p. 630 onwards.

[46] Paul Bonnifield, *The Dust Bowl: Men, Dirt, and Depression*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1978.

Groundwater, property rights and the nation-state

The reflection developed so far requires an examination of the role of powerful actors, public policies and legal and administrative systems. During most of the nineteenth century, especially in countries like France and Italy, the influence of the Napoleonic civil law tradition categorically linked groundwater to the "surface right", on the basis of which ownership of the land extends to the subsoil. Adopted by the Italian Civil Code of 1865, this approach excluded underground aquifers from public forms of exploitation and protection, creating what has become known as the 'boundary dilemma'.[47] This refers to the discord between the highly mobile nature of a resource flowing underground and the fixed and artificial nature of land allotment or administrative and legal boundaries — an aspect that not only weakened aquifer protection systems but also made the exploitation practices of these resources conflicting.[48] For example, the multiplication of drilling projects in the same area has often led to the depletion, interruption or exhaustion of the flow rates of neighbouring wells that were previously drilled, and in some cases also to a reduction in the flow rates of rivers.

From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, especially in the Italian case, the emergence of the state as a regulator and builder of large-scale water systems, starting with the Apulian Aqueduct and the recourse to hydroelectric power, contributed to further changing the framework.[49] Public interventionism led to the emergence of a social and economic polarisation between surface and underground water extraction, formalised by the Bonomi decrees of 1916,[50] which provoked a conflict — sometimes overt, sometimes hidden — between solutions based on the strategy of large reservoirs and aqueduct transfers for electro-irrigation purposes, on the one hand, and those based mainly on the exploitation of local resources, including groundwater, on the other. In this sense, future research should seek to capture the different articulations between the modernisation attempts associated with large public water systems and those reflected in private and proprietary approaches.[51]

[47] W. Todd Jarvis, *Contesting Hidden Waters*, cit.

[48] On the Italian case, see Federico Caporale, *Acque pubbliche ed acque private tra Otto e Novecento*, in Massimo Galtarossa, Laura Genovese (eds.), *La città liquida. La città assetata. Storia di un rapporto di lunga durata*, Rome, Palombi, 2014, pp. 253-272.

[49] For a definition of 'hydraulic civilisation', see Karl A. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism. A Comparative Study of Total Power*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1957.

[50] See Carlo G. Lacaita (ed.), *Bonomi e Omodeo. Il governo delle acque tra scienza e politica*, Manduria, Lacaita, 2010.

[51] See Luigi Masella, *Acquedotto pugliese. Intervento pubblico e modernizzazione nel Mezzogiorno*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1995. See also my own study, *Il governo delle acque in Puglia. Dagli anni Settanta a oggi*, published in Anna Lucia Denitto, *Gli assi portanti. La Puglia. L'acqua*, Naples, Guida, 2012, pp. 101-161, which used the Apulian case to examine the attempt of the water technocracies involved in this extraordinary intervention to find a balance between the exploitation of surface water and that of groundwater.

In our case, the starting point is the debate that developed from Wittfogel's well-known theses on the characteristics of the 'hydraulic civilisation', according to which the construction and management of large water infrastructures in the past led to the centralisation of power, the emergence of influential technocratic bodies and, not least, the configuration of new territorial hierarchies between central, marginal and submarginal regions, centred on the division between water providers and receivers.[52] Moreover, international historiography has repeatedly highlighted how production systems based on the exploitation of groundwater have been associated with lower rates of regulation or with an explicit decision by public authorities to refrain from managing their dynamics; large 'appropriators', in particular, have benefited from this attitude, as in the cases of the Kings River Valley, South-East Asia and the Conca d'Oro in Sicily.[53] Indeed, after having made the necessary investments, well owners maintained arbitrary, continuous and free access to a precious resource, especially in arid regions, and often managed to discriminate against other users and control the productive uses of the water. Especially in the countryside, the shift from 'appropriators' to 'expropriators' gave well owners a conditioning power over other social classes, controlling and directing modernisation processes.[54] Drilling also enabled a kind of 'autonomous' and individual — or 'anarchic', according to Shah — irrigation, while the aqueduct strategy meant that farmers were subjected to the state or had to cooperate within collective bodies.

It is therefore understandable that the role of the public sector has been viewed with suspicion, both in its regulatory function and in that of promoting large infrastructures. The regulatory modalities applied in the past have, in fact, included the introduction of minimum distances when drilling wells, scheduling time frames for irrigation, setting quantitative limits on draining, paying incentives for efficient use and measures that, from time to time, denied new beneficiaries access to the resource or forced old drillers to share their wells.[55] On the other hand, partnerships, management bodies and water schemes involved increasing shares of collective control, as well as forms of fiscal and financial contributions.

[52] See Thierry Ruf, *Le façonnage des institutions d'irrigation au XXe siècle, selon les principes d'Elinor Ostrom, est-il encore pertinent en 2010?*, "Natures Sciences Sociétés", 2011, n. 4, pp. 395-404.

[53] See, respectively, Kate A. Berry, *Fleeting fame and groundwater. Isolation and water in Kings River Valley, Nevada*, "Water History", 2009, n. 1, pp. 59-74; T. Shah, *Taming the Anarchy*, cit.; F. D'Amaro, *Il mercato dell'acqua*, cit.

[54] In this regard, see the observations of Alfred G. Cuzán, *Appropriators versus Expropriators. The Political Economy of Water in the West*, in Terry L. Anderson (ed.), *Water Rights. Scarce Resource, Allocation, Bureaucracy, and the Environment*, San Francisco, Ballinger, 1983, pp. 13-43.

[55] Rebecca S. Roberts, *Groundwater Management Institutions*, in David E. Kromm, Stephen E. White, *Groundwater Exploitation on the High Plains*, Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2021 (first ed. 1992), pp. 88-109.

Hence, during the twentieth century and at various stages, a tension between bureaucratic centralisation and the political autonomy of peripheries developed with regard to aqueduct systems and local underground waters; this tension was also visible in the emergence of water management models based on geographical and purely water-related criteria and no longer just administrative ones. It has been emphasised, for example, how the adoption of the hydrographic basin led to the legitimisation of technical-scientific bodies in the state administration, the so-called water bureaucracies or "hydrocracies", often to the detriment of local representative institutions.[56]

In addition, state intervention in water management — especially when based on the construction of large aqueduct systems — also had the potential to transfigure traditional territorial hierarchies, reorganising national and regional space in an essentially dualistic scheme between tributary and beneficiary territories. If, as has been observed, the rise of models based on hydrographic scales, major infrastructure transformations and the role of technocracies has often led to the emergence of state and nation-building processes in the exploitation of rivers,[57] we could instead argue that the modes of exploitation and use centred on local and underground waters have, if anything, produced territorialised identities, closely correlated with localisms and narrative constructions of place, and with the suggestions of territorial 'primates' derived from archaeology, speleology and mining.[58]

A possible periodisation of the Italian case

It is possible to historicise groundwater, especially in the Italian case, if we combine at least four issues: the role of the state, technocracies and administrative bodies that have presided over hydraulic policies; the degree of technical-scientific development in relation to political choices; economic-productive dynamics and secularisation processes as prerequisites for social consensus on the appropriation of groundwater resources; and, finally, energy transformations and their impact on water harvesting techniques and the use of aquifers. These elements allow us to make a periodisation into at least three main phases, with inevitably porous caesuras and transitions, namely between the mid-nineteenth century and the present day, but which can be further distinguished — especially on a regional and territorial basis.

[56] Giacomo Bonan, *Riflessi sull'acqua. Ricerca storica e biografie fluviali*, "Contemporanea", 2019, n. 2, pp. 317-328, here p. 326; François Molle et al., *Hydraulic bureaucracies and the hydraulic mission. Flows of water, flows of power*, "Water Alternatives", 2009, n. 2, pp. 328-349.

[57] Tricia Cusack, *Riverscapes and National Identities*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2010; Dorothy Zeisler-Vralsted, *Rivers, Memory, and Nation-Building. A History of the Volga and Mississippi Rivers*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2014.

[58] See Angela Quattrucci, *Mondi sotterranei e mito: il fantastico e il magico nell'arte mineraria e metallurgica*, "Ricerche storiche", 2018, n. 3, pp. 15-38.

Between the mid-nineteenth century and the First World War, the construction of the sanitary city and the agricultural irrigation function represented the two main — albeit not exclusive — conditions for the exploitation of the artesian aquifers.[59] This phase is mainly characterised by the predominantly privatistic approach of the Civil Code of 1865 to the issue of subsoil rights, overlapped by administrative centralisation and the convergence of the agrarian crisis and modernisation, two phenomena that gradually strengthened the state's role in the water sector against a background of bureaucratisation processes aimed at identifying and classifying public waters.[60] Groundwater had to contribute to urban metabolism and irrigation, which was necessary for the productive modernisation of the countryside. Moreover, changes in the role of public authorities in the urban context came about when water services were municipalised and with municipal socialism itself, leading to the creation of urban aqueducts and sewers; the liberal state provided the impetus for the construction of extensive aqueduct systems such as the Acquedotto Pugliese.[61]

Yet, between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as industrial development took precedence, the water-energy binomial became increasingly dominant over the original needs of sanitation and irrigation.[62] First oil exploration and then the great hydroelectric transformation projects affected the cataloguing, regulation and use of national water resources, with specific impacts on the condition of groundwater. An important sign was the decision, in March 1911, to give public support to oil exploration on national territory, a protectionist regulation that sparked opposition from socialists and liberalists, in particular from Einaudi, who polemicised against the 'state drillers'.[63] The regulation of oil exploration not only accelerated the development of drilling and extraction techniques, which inevitably had an impact on hydrogeological techniques and knowledge but also anticipated a boom in the role of the state during the war and the consequent strengthening of the Italian industrial appa-

[59] S. Neri Serneri, *Storia dell'ambiente e città contemporanea*, cit.

[60] Guido Melis, *Storia dell'amministrazione italiana. 1861-1993*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1996, especially from p. 123 onwards; Alice Ingold, *Cartografare le acque come risorse «naturali» nell'Ottocento. La* Carta idrografica d'Italia *e gli ingegneri delle miniere*, "Contemporanea", 2010, n. 1, pp. 3-26.

[61] There is a large body of literature on the municipalisation of water services. Here, it is worth mentioning Giorgio Bigatti, *Strategie di approvvigionamento e gestione dei servizi idrici nell'Italia liberale*, "Ricerche storiche", 2000, n. 3, pp. 659-681.

[62] See Teresa Isenburg, *Acqua e Stato. Energia, bonifiche, irrigazione in Italia fra 1930 e 1950*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1981.

[63] Paolo Macini, Ezio Mesini, *La prima Legge petrolifera nazionale: Luigi Einaudi e i "Trivellatori di Stato" (1911)*, in *UNMIG 1957-2017, 60° dell'Ufficio Nazionale Minerario per gli Idrocarburi e le Georisorse*, 2017, pp. 52-53. On hydroelectric power, see Giacomo Parrinello, *Systems of Power: A Spatial Envirotechnical Approach to Water Power and Industrialization in the Po Valley of Italy, ca. 1880-1970*, "Technology and Culture", 2018, n. 3, pp. 652-688.

ratus.[64] In fact, water meant more and more electrical conversion, a new energy source that could free the country from coal imports. This trend was decreed in the Bonomi reform of 1916 that made the main national rivers — which could be used for hydroelectric purposes — public, while secondary tributaries, groundwater and spring sources remained private.[65]

The subjugation of water to the demands of energy and industrial development thus opened up a dualism between surface and underground water sources that would manifest itself with particular intensity from the 1920s and 1930s onwards, until the entire 30 years of the so-called "great acceleration" of the post-war era. Indeed, during this long period, land reclamation, colonisation and irrigation remained important elements of national water policies.[66] On the one hand, groundwater legislation was intensified, for example by Royal Decree No. 1972 of December 1921 on the granting of subsidies for drilling and the subsequent "Testo unico sulle acque" of December 1933. These measures were designed to make groundwater the main source of irrigation, initially to resolve the high level of social conflict and then with a more explicit focus on modernising the countryside in order to make the rural areas more competitive. Despite concerns about the 'depletion' of aquifers, which had already emerged at the end of the 1920s, this mixture of objectives would be picked up again after the Second World War, especially in southern Italy. On the other hand, surface water was subjected to the goal of energy transformation, mainly at the insistence of electrical industrialists, who managed to steer the state's main legislative measures in this direction.[67] This phase, which shows some continuity between the Fascist period and the post-war era, gradually came to an end during the 1960s and 1970s. This was initially a result of the gradual decline of the hydroelectric regime due to the availability of oil on the global

[64] See Francesco Gerali et al., *Historical study of geosciences and engineering in the oilfields of the Emilia-Romagna region in the socio-economic context of post-Unitarian Italy (1861-1914)*, "Geological Society", *History of the European Oil and Gas Industry*, 2018, n. 465, pp. 305-332.

[65] See Renato Giannetti, *La conquista della forza. Risorse, tecnologia ed economia nell'industria elettrica italiana (1883-1940)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1985; Giovanni Bruno, *Capitale straniero e industria elettrica nell'Italia meridionale (1895-1935)*, "Studi Storici", 1987, n. 4, pp. 943-984; *Storia dell'industria elettrica in Italia*, vol. 1, *Le origini: 1882-1914*, edited by Giorgio Mori, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1992.

[66] See Mauro Stampacchia, *Ruralizzare l'Italia! Agricoltura e bonifiche tra Mussolini e Serpieri (1928-1943)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2000; Rolf Petri, *Le campagne italiane nello sviluppo economico*, in Jordi Canal, Gilles Pécout, Maurizio Ridolfi (eds.), *Sociétés rurales du XX siècle. France, Italie et Spagne*, Rome, École française de Rome, 2004, pp. 75-104.

[67] See Bruno Bezza (ed.), *Energia e sviluppo. L'industria elettrica italiana e la Società Edison*, Turin, Einaudi, 1986; *Storia dell'industria elettrica in Italia*, vol. 2, *Il potenziamento tecnico e finanziario, 1914-1925*, edited by G. Mori, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1993; vol. 3, *Espansione e oligopolio: 1926-1945*, edited by Giuseppe Galasso, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1993; vol. 4, *Dal dopoguerra alla nazionalizzazione, 1945-1962*, edited by Valerio Castronovo, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1994.

market at decreasing prices, followed by the definitive end of the season of the "hydraulic state", builder of vast intersectoral water systems, especially in the South.

Over the past decades, the industrial/irrigation dichotomy between surface and underground water resources has gradually weakened, as water resources as a whole have been reduced to a tool for disposing of civil or industrial waste and for cooling production plants at very low prices, thus ensuring considerable savings in investment.[68] With the introduction of the concession, the state relinquished its role as arbiter, while high rates of exploitation and pollution have turned groundwater into an ecological problem.

Translated by Andrea Hajek

[68] Salvatore Adorno, Simone Neri Serneri (eds.), *Industria, ambiente e territorio: per una storia ambientale delle aree industriali in Italia*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2009.

Women and Italian history at the crossroads of new perspectives

Simona Troilo*

Il contributo si confronta con i saggi contenuti nel recente volume curato da Silvia Salvatici, "Storia delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea" (Roma, Carocci, 2022), facendo emergere l'originalità del patrimonio di studi accumulato sul tema negli ultimi decenni. Il testo si concentra sulla sfida metodologica proposta dal libro, che intreccia storia nazionale e storia globale e utilizza il genere come un prisma attraverso cui rinnovare la storia d'Italia dall'Unificazione ai decenni più vicini ai nostri.
Parole chiave: storia delle donne e di genere, storia dell'Italia contemporanea, global history

This article discusses the recent volume edited by Silvia Salvatici, "Storia delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea" (Rome, Carocci, 2022). It highlights the originality of studies published on the subject in recent decades and focuses on the methodological challenge of the book, which interweaves national and global history and uses a gender perspective to rewrite the history of Italy from the Unification to the present day.
Key words: women and gender history, contemporary Italian history, global history

Can we revisit the history of contemporary Italy from the perspective of women's and gender history? This question is at the heart of the ambitious project coordinated by Silvia Salvatici; presenting the views of nine female authors and one male author, it manages to broaden the analysis of a history that began in 1861 and continues to the present day.[1] *Storia delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea* does not aim to explore the patterns and behaviour of women, for example by linking these to the phenomenon of modernisation,[2] nor is it an attempt to trace collective biographies to understand transforma-

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[1] Silvia Salvatici, *Storia delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, Rome, Carocci, 2022.

[2] For a similar analysis, see Michela De Giorgio, *Le italiane dall'unità a oggi. Modelli culturali e comportamenti sociali*, Rome, Laterza, 1993.

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tions and caesuras in a defined chronological time frame.[3] Finally, it is not an assessment of the extent to which women contributed to the construction of a united Italy, or a reflection on how different generations experienced the intertwining of the individual and collective dimensions within the multiple dynamics of national belonging.[4] This *Storia* is something else: it summarises the most recent research on the Italian case, starting from women's and gender history and their interconnection with global history. This point of intersection is the result of the dialogue that Italian and foreign historians have cultivated over time and which, in each of the ten essays, restore the unique perspective of a long-delayed encounter.

Scholars have pointed out that this dialogue reformulated the concept of the nation-state, introducing new themes and questions.[5] Salvatici's volume thus starts from a very precise awareness: the need to adopt a transnational perspective to be able to read women history and the history of Italy through them. All contributions demonstrate that this perspective makes it possible to identify networks and links between subjects (women) who are located in different places but jointly engaged in an action that derives from common demands and motivations. Through this same perspective, it is possible to trace the times, modalities and effects of the circulation of knowledge that determines the lives of women — and not only — at a political, economic and legal level. Lastly, the transnational perspective enables a reconsideration of the spatial dimension, read through the interweaving of different scales that go from the supranational via the local to the domestic sphere — that microcosm in which global dynamics cross personal needs and desires, anticipating (or imposing) transformations that are sometimes unpredictable. Focusing on people, practices and places means widening our gaze to include the experiences of individuals and groups, rethinking times and processes and, above all, challenging — once and for all — the presumed separation between the public and private spheres by revealing their problematic nature.

If this type of analysis shortens the methodological distance between global history and women's history, the various perspectives contained in the book introduce other categories that, over time, have been invested by a gender perspective: for example, those common to social history and cultural history, capable of rethinking periodisations, grasping transformations, identifying representations, exposing hierarchies and power relationships. As a result, it is possible to trace continuities and ruptures in Italian history that would other-

[3] This was, instead, the aim of Perry Willson's *Italiane. Biografia del Novecento*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2011.

[4] See Maria Teresa Mori et al. (eds.), *Di generazione in generazione. Le italiane dall'Unità a oggi*, Rome, Viella, 2014.

[5] Elisabetta Bini, *Toward a Gendered World History? The Italian Case in Comparative Perspective*, in Teresa Bertilotti (ed.), *Women's History at the Cutting Edge*, Rome, Viella, 2020, pp. 79-95.

wise remain invisible, to identify control mechanisms that can be read differently and to follow perceptions and self-perceptions that change over time, even in unexpected ways.

Finally, as I have mentioned, the volume successfully engages in a dialogue with the present. Each essay starts from a historiographical question that concerns the present and, given its heuristic value, the processes that lead to the present and best illustrate it, whether they are related to emigration or nationalism, violence against women or the precariousness of work, gender identities or the definition of the political. The questions raised by these processes open the door to a variety of themes, which enrich the image of a national momentum that emerged in a context where nationalism was strong and imagined communities mobilised to create their own nation-states. As previous studies have shown, these communities — presenting themselves as homogeneous, exclusive and locked in their parental, heroic and sacrificial narratives — had a clearly gendered nature, being the result of a cultural construction also marked by a gender division.[6] The discursive space of the nation, its symbolic constellations and its value systems imposed behaviours and role models on men and women in the name of normative moralism, which saw female citizens exclusively as wives and mothers, procreators and educators capable of transmitting the word of the nation.

What the latter really meant for Italian women is explained in Catia Papa's contribution on their interpretation of homeland and patriotism. The sacredness of the "motherland", abnegation and sacrifice in the name of the nation-family, and maternal martyrdom as the main expression of patriotic duty had conveyed a sense of belonging to their imagined community ever since the *Risorgimento*, fuelling their legal inferiority after Unification when the new civil code subordinated civil liberties to the control of men — be they fathers or husbands. The author observes that the homeland soon became one of the signs of the patriarchal order for those who, like Anna Maria Mozzoni, fought for women's liberation from an apparently unchanged condition of subalternity and subordination. Moreover, the homeland had an even more oppressive connotation for those who denounced the violence of colonial expansionism and the reconsideration of Italianness from an imperialistic perspective. Recalling the links that connected the struggle for emancipation with pacifism at an international level and describing the difficult issue of feminist orientalism, Papa analyses the tensions and contradictions that the theme of civilisation introduced into the feminist universe, shedding light on generational, political and cultural ruptures that disrupted the women's front with the Libyan war first, and the global conflict later. The ideology of motherhood and the maternal culture —

[6] Alberto M. Banti, *L'onore della nazione. Identità sessuali e violenza nel nazionalismo europeo dal XVIII secolo alla Grande Guerra*, Turin, Einaudi, 2005; Idem, *La nazione del Risorgimento. Parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita*, Turin, Einaudi, 2000.

the foundations of the nation — now fixed women in a reproductive role, functional to a homeland that was a community of lineage and race and to a patriotism that preached national imperialism as the main route to state prestige.

This change in the meaning and role of motherhood is also at the heart of Vinzia Fiorino's essay, on the public space of women since 1848 when, arms in hand, they defended their membership of the nation that was being formed in the many places of conflict. Fiorino delves into the folds of post-Unification disappointment, highlighting the legal implications that trapped Italian women in the family institution and tracing the genesis of a movement aimed at claiming denied rights. The battle for the vote, the difficult relationship with political parties, the birth in 1881 of the Lega promotrice degli interessi femminili and the launch of a real movement, made up of associations rather than individuals, give a blurred image of a mobilisation that would gain relevance at the beginning of the new century, when different sensibilities and political paths focused on suffrage, at least for a while. It is, however, at the turn of the twentieth century that the role of motherhood emerges as a distinctive feature of a subject that is no longer — and not only — the guardian of the nation but indeed also of race. Fiorino explains how this change occurred at a time when the female body became the object of study for disciplines such as physiology and psychiatry, whose measurements gave substance to an inferiority described in terms of infantilism and minority. Furthermore, there was an overlap between women and the masses; one and the other were united by the excess that political institutions saw as an enemy to be defeated, or at least curbed. It is in this context that, at the beginning of the century and before being fragmented by the war, the movement reorganised itself. Regardless of the difficulties, ruptures and contradictions that accompanied the assertion of civil and political rights, Fiorino's analysis reveals the ability of women to give these rights a new meaning starting from a non-negotiable specificity: the female one. In other words, Italian feminist movements saw female subjectivity as 'non-negotiable',[7] while the maternal role was considered to be able to create a social citizenship based on solidarity and cooperation. They thus aimed at helping and supporting the oppressed and the disenfranchised, focusing first and foremost on the dignity of the person: elements that evoked another political community and another form of civil action.

One of the merits of Salvatici's volume is that it manages to capture continuity and discontinuity over a long period and to explore the actions and emotions of women throughout the whole of national history. It is no surprise, then, that the themes mentioned so far are covered for the entire twentieth century and the authors search for the red threads that break and are reconnected, weaving a dense and complex web. One of these red threads is precisely

[7] Vinzia Fiorino, *Lo spazio pubblico delle donne: suffragio, cittadinanza, diritti politici*, in S. Salvatici, *Storia delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, cit., p. 69.

feminism; the tensions that traverse it and the issues it addresses — from one century to another, from the nineteenth century to the present day — give it a plural dimension, while unforeseen events allow it to grow. This idea of unexpectedness and multiplicity enables Paola Stelliferi, on the one hand, to grasp the 'many insurgencies' that make up feminism and, on the other hand, to link women's history with history in general, giving it greater complexity.[8] As the author recalls, post-Unification Italian feminism had a multifaceted nature: egalitarian and intransigent in claiming the right to vote and to receive education, anti-militarist and pacifist in its commitment to building a culture of peace, and "practical" in taking on welfare and philanthropic activities. In any case, social motherhood represented fertile ground for discussion well beyond the liberal age, when it was fully exploited by the Fascist regime before being transmitted to Republican Italy. If women were confronted with the radical and totalitarian control of bodies and sexuality during the 'long journey through Fascism',[9] in the 1970s, they embarked on a path of dismantling existing hierarchies, aided by debates and theories that were often imported from abroad and incorporated into a new process of women's liberation. Perceiving itself as "different" from the feminisms of the past, the new feminism once again manifested itself in various forms and spaces; separatism and consciousness-raising, the "double militancy" in collectives and the groups of the extra-parliamentary Left, and the "politics of experience" constitute the various paths towards self-determination and freedom of the body. At this point, a process of 'denationalising Italian women'[10] began that was the result of a double break: with the legacy of Fascism, which controlled the body to safeguard the race, and with the Republican pact, which recognised equality in the public sphere but without going so far as to formalise women's individual rights in the family. This paradigm shift, in which the — fundamental — theme of difference inserted itself, also took place at the international level, as feminism influenced the political agendas of governments to the point of becoming central even to that of the United Nations, which focused on women for a decade from 1975. Stelliferi recalls how the movement — at both the global and the national level — was now able to promote decisive reforms that, although they caused fractures, opened up a new era: the one that has lasted until the present and still largely remains to be studied. The analysed events are, therefore, characterised by "waves" and a "backwash" that complicate the task of writing Italian history, starting from margins that are not such and placing essential subjects and issues at the centre.

One of these is discussed by Anna Scattigno and concerns the relationship between Christianity, feminism and militancy, a complex theme that includes

[8] Paola Stelliferi, *I femminismi dall'Unità a oggi*, in S. Salvatici, *Storia delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, cit., p. 82.

[9] Victoria De Grazia, *Le donne nel regime fascista*, Padua, Marsilio, 1993, p. 38.

[10] Liliana Ellena, *Frontiere della liberazione e snazionalizzazione delle italiane*, in M. T. Mori et al. (eds.), *Di generazione in generazione*, cit., p. 280.

other voices, paths and experiences in the broader analysis of the women's movement. Scattigno carefully examines the transitions and turning points in this relationship in order to identify new openings, growing challenges and setbacks along a path that is also marked by an exchange with contemporary international experiences. Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Christian feminism was shaped by a careful observation of the social changes that forced women from the Catholic, aristocratic and bourgeois elite to think about social solidarity, religious education, the cultural and intellectual promotion of women, freedom and progress. This attention is translated into different voices and positions that are at times censored, and at other times valorised, especially when they "convert" feminism to Christianity by forcing it back into the grasp of order and the family. Scattigno recalls some of the weapons used by the Church to stem the claims for political and social rights, like the journals and associations that animated the debate until the creation of the Unione fra le donne cattoliche d'Italia in 1909, an organisation set up 'in obedience to the hierarchy and the Church's guidelines',[11] which had to oppose the ideas and actions of emancipationists. Again, the First World War represented a turning point, epitomised by the birth of the Gioventù femminile cattolica italiana, entrusted by the pope with the task of re-Christianising not only women, but Italy as a whole. Scattigno's analysis highlights the confrontational attitude of Catholic women, first in the Resistance movement, then in the establishment of the Republic and subsequently in the period of reforms, when the youngest women in particular suffered from the restrictions on their bodies and sexuality. From the abandonment of the veil in church to the restlessness conveyed in letters sent to magazines, dissent created the basis for a different relationship with faith. Thus, a new story began for many of these women, one made up of militancy in trade unions, in the extra-parliamentary Left, in grassroots communities and in feminist groups and camps where practice and speech allowed for important contaminations, creating new identity paths and life trajectories. In this case, too, the links with different experiences and women from other countries reveal the extent of the change and show how more or less hidden connections operated in the depths, facilitating transformations that would otherwise have been unthinkable.

Inside and outside the domestic space

"Storia delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea" is a truly collective work; drawing on shared reflections and ideas, the essays talk to each other as they present issues, revisit old questions and develop analyses. This dialogue also

[11] Anna Scattigno, *Le forme della fede: cristianesimo, femminismi, militanza*, in S. Salvatici, *Storia delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, cit., p. 293.

emerges from the methodological choices made by the individual authors, who — in the continuous confrontation with the transactional dimension — question established notions by approaching different spaces and times from new angles.

Starting from the renewed interest in the gendered dimension of armed conflicts, in her own essay, Salvatici shows how women's experience of the two world wars profoundly changed the very notion of war. Rejecting the stereotypes and clichés that traditionally reserve heroism and the honour of arms for men, the author proposes an approach that seeks to overcome, on the one hand, the distinction between the battlefront and the home front and, on the other, the division between peacetime and wartime, in order to understand the upheaval of social structures, the redefinition of identities and the subjective and emotional experience of violence and uprooting from a gender perspective. In this regard, certain issues prove particularly relevant: the reconsideration of care work, which became a real profession as it was extended from the domestic sphere to the battlefield; the abandonment of one's home and land, which forced Italian women to enter into difficult contact with female refugees of other nationalities; experimenting a dramatic daily life in collective centres, factories and camps where hunger and poverty added to the harshness of the work; and the — often spontaneous — mobilisation in the name of peace and justice. If many (Italian but not only) women experienced these and other things during the First World War, after only a few decades they were confronted with yet other situations, when they were cast into an even more violent war. The massacres, deportations and mass rapes subjected women to new experiences that the author explores in their many facets, putting them in dialogue with women's protagonism in the Resistance, when they were once again forced into direct confrontation with violence. In this case, too, the long-term perspective allows us to delve into legacies and heritage in times of peace, both in the interwar period and in Republican Italy, when the Resistance experience — although "silenced" or neutralised as part of the restoration of traditional gender relations — allowed women to embark on new political paths.

Where the concept of war can be expanded thanks to the relational dimension in which gender is situated, other notions can be brought to the fore, starting from strategies, mediations and experiences that women lived or acted upon at different times and in different ways. One of these is mobility, which brings with it the possibility of interweaving scales of analysis, spaces of action and networks of relations capable of reconfiguring masculinity and femininity even in a context like Italy, which by its very position represents the intersection of European and global networks.[12] Women's migration is the focus of Alessandra Gissi's essay, which examines the local, national and supranational

[12] Cfr. Matteo Sanfilippo, Paola Corti (eds.), *Storia d'Italia. Annali 24. Migrazioni*, Turin, Einaudi, 2009.

connections and experiences of those who, from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, have moved to contexts other than their original ones. Transnational dynamics clearly emerge from Gissi's analysis; the networks and relationships that linked countries and continents reveal that women moved with the same freedom as men, a movement that reconfigured bodies, desires and knowledge and enabled them to embark on life projects that were never taken for granted. If migration is a constitutive element of Italian history, interpreting it through a gender lens allows us to introduce new elements into the analysis, such as women's protagonism, not only in creating their own migratory paths within vast geographical areas and the global labour market, but also in managing men's migratory projects (to which they often contributed economically, through dowries), their networks and money transfers, thanks to which they launched new economic activities. Whether they stayed or left, women affected by migration played a fundamental role, one very different from the passive and irrelevant role — compared to the vicissitudes of their male counterparts — that is generally ascribed to them. Gissi examines a range of migrant figures involved in forms of mobility of varying scope and duration: the *mondine* and embroiderers who, in the nineteenth century, travelled internally and not always permanently; the Venetian nannies, who after the opening of the Suez Canal moved to Alexandria to take up service there with families of technicians and civil servants; the home workers who, between 1880 and 1930, set up flourishing economic activities in the United States, fostering the creation and development of the Italian-American community; the female intellectuals fleeing anti-Semitic persecution, who clashed with the resistance of an essentially male academic world; the hotel maids and typists who, from the 1950s onwards, had to endure the harshness of a clandestine life in Switzerland, with the consequent impossibility of family reunification and poor integration; and finally, the women workers who left the South during the economic boom for urban centres in the North, where their state of isolation and subordination usually worsened.

The heterogeneous universe of these women allows us, on the one hand, to explore their impact on the transformation of emerging and declining societies and, on the other, to analyse more closely the nexus between public and private space that the migration experience inevitably highlights, not only from the point of view of agency but also from that of oppression. As Laura Schettini shows, violence against women in migration contexts is indeed very common; the domestic space reconstructed by families who have moved to the United States or from southern to northern Italy often turns into a place where external interventions that could block or sanction this violence fail to penetrate. If, in the first case, the need to safeguard the image of a universe (i.e. that of the Italian family) that was key to the redefinition of the emigrants' identity in the New World meant keeping quiet — then as well as later — about those abuses, in the second case, this silence stemmed from the full legitimisa-

tion of violence against women from a legal, social and cultural point of view. In discussing this topic, Schettini reconstructs the framework of this legitimisation by starting from the body/family/sexuality nexus, the junction of a form of violence that becomes gender violence as soon as it brings into play 'certain beliefs, expectations and claims — codified and deposited over time — relating to the roles of the two genders in society'.[13] These roles emerged fully in the nineteenth century, against the backdrop of a nation whose driving force was the family and where the honour of the homeland coincided with the middle-class man's honour and respectability, which were based on the control of women's sexuality and reproductive capacity. Within this ideological framework, legislative and regulatory devices were applied that "confiscated" female sexuality, entrusting it to the logic of the state and the family. Here, the *ius corrigendi* allowed men to violently exercise their control in an increasingly inaccessible domestic space, thanks also to the development of a specific culture of privacy, typical of bourgeois Europe. From this perspective, honour killing — like reparatory marriage — seems a useful tool to strengthen an unbalanced power relationship, in which asymmetries persisted at least until the last decades of the twentieth century. After all, if the Court of Cassation rejected the corrective power of husbands over their wives in 1956, a power never been sanctioned by law, it was only in 1996 that a law was passed equating sexual violence with a crime no longer against morality and decency but against the person. This measure was the result of long-term feminist struggles and debates, which in subsequent decades led to other legislative texts, like that of 2021 on sexual orientation discrimination, opening the door to new rights and forms of recognition. The fact is that, now as then, the body and sexuality remain at the centre of representations that affect not only the legal system but also social constructions and hierarchies as well as their transformation over time.

Emmanuel Betta dwells on this aspect in his analysis of the theme of sexuality in the context of the nation-state and the power of biopolitics to shape and discipline the body of the individual and the community. Focusing on some of the issues already mentioned by Fiorino, Betta studies the role of positivist science in naturalising the male/female difference, deriving functions and identities from the latter. The author warns that, in reality, the production of new knowledge about the female body also, and unexpectedly, promoted awareness among women; thanks to the new information, the latter could, for example, better control their fertility. Yet, sexuality long remained a terrain of regulation, capable of legitimising female subordination from a moral and legal point of view. In fact, the longest debated issue after Unification was prostitution, considered detrimental to the body of the nation, which was to be safe-

[13] Laura Schettini, *La violenza maschie contro le donne*, in S. Salvatici, *Storia delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, cit., p. 136.

guarded from any form of degeneration. In this sense, the Italian case offers a unique perspective in terms of transnational exchanges and relations, given the impact that Cesare Lombroso's theories on prostitutes had in European scientific circles of the time. Considered a sign of female atavism, prostitution allowed the criminalisation of women, who were judged inferior and "criminal" because of their incomplete evolution. Social behaviour was thus derived from biology, while nature became more generally the constraint and basis of individual and collective choices. The exclusively reproductive function of the female body found another prominent supporter in the Catholic Church, and the religious discourse soon overlapped with the secular one, reinforcing the deterministic approach and the idea of reproduction as a biological end. If we were again to read this theme in terms of the red thread that ties together different epochs, we could not avoid seeing the continuity of the conflict between female self-determination and the highest collective purpose. In the pronatalist policies of the Fascist regime, this meant exalting the maternal dimension, as with the inclusion of the crime of abortion in the Rocco Code in 1930, making it an offence against the integrity of the race. The same code introduced a ban on the sale and promotion of contraceptives, which the Republican system inherited and only abolished in 1971. As I have mentioned, the first ruptures on the sexual liberation front occurred at this stage, while it is only more recently that sexuality has been the object of further reconsiderations that, once again, affect gender, identity and their relationship with science.

The world of labour

A book that aims to read the political, social and cultural events of contemporary Italy from a new perspective would be incomplete without a discussion of the theme of work, both within and outside the domestic space and in its interaction with practices of care. The essays that focus on this theme again seek to redefine the relationship between public and private space and to read the relationship between the various spheres of collective and individual action in the interstices of the system. Here, too, the domestic space is central to understanding the peculiar dynamics of women's work, which in the context of the family can be fully explored from the point of view of consumption, a subject that is beginning to be considered as a specific historiographical field,[14] where gender can become a lens through which to read, for example, the separation between political economy and domestic economy, given that the latter is usually placed at the margins, in the unconditional realm

[14] As Jonathan Morris reminds us, in *Una via italiana al consumismo?*, "Italia contemporanea", 2022, n. 299, pp. 169-188.

of women. Focusing on Italy, Enrica Asquer analyses the literature that, starting from the Unification, sought to educate the mother-wife to conscious and informed consumption, as part of that pedagogy of the homeland that aimed at creating female citizens in a sphere in which they would subsequently be forced to emerge, in the dark times of war. In domestic work, consumption was primarily about satisfying the needs that were managed by women, who learnt to enhance their skills. It was no longer only competence and caution that characterised this practice in the Fascist *Ventennio*, when ambivalent gender roles emerged — from the prolific housewife to the emancipated woman — and women were projected into a modern urban and living space. Moreover, consumption models changed, marketing strategies were refined and the politicisation of the commercial sphere overlapped with the commercialisation of politics, reinforcing the paternalistic and conservative model of female consumption.[15] After the Second World War and in the years of the economic "miracle", the international context contributed greatly to this situation, redefining domestic space and the relationship between women and consumption. Asquer shows that the American model asserted itself even in Italy, changing the image of well-being by linking it to freedom of choice and the modernity of a practice centred on the housewife-consumer. At this moment in history, the latter acquired visibility, exalting the professional dimension of "family" work by representing it as interclass, modern and a generator of new values that actually served to control social anxieties and fill the dangerous empty time opened up for women thanks to the new commodities (i.e. household appliances). Even the reactions to this new model can be read from a global perspective; the feminists' contestation of a manipulative commercial culture stemmed precisely from the interweaving of analyses and debates developed in distant contexts but unanimously aimed at dismantling consolidated practices and representations. In this regard, a reading of domestic work as a 'fundamental, albeit invisible, prerequisite for the accumulation of capital'[16] also emerged in Italy, allowing some feminist groups to join the international network for the recognition of wages for housewives and to reinforce the supranational connections of the Italian women's movement.

This brings us to the theme of the invisibility of women's work, a constant feature and a paradigm capable of revealing how the pretence of women's absence in the labour market has served, over time, to fuel a more general devaluation of the dignity of work not only in relation to women but also to men. This nexus is addressed in Alessandra Pescarolo's essay, which picks

[15] Cfr. Bianca Gaudenzi, *Fascismi in vetrina. Pubblicità e modelli di consumo nel Ventennio e nel Terzo Reich*, Rome, Viella, 2023.

[16] Enrica Asquer, *Tra casa e mercato: genere, consumo e lavoro familiare*, in S. Salvatici, *Storia delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, cit., p. 208.

up issues that have already been investigated for the modern age.[17] Pescarolo raises a specific question concerning the gap between a 'strong commitment to work' and the 'disavowal of women's identity as workers'.[18] If the widespread tendency to replace the notion of 'lavoratrici' with the different term 'donne che lavorano' still shows a propensity to prioritise gender identity over women's working identity,[19] the latter seems to be constantly put under pressure by mechanisms that are also present in the Italian case. The author recalls the various reasons for women's exclusion from the world of work in the post-Unification era: in the first place, subjection to their husbands and the domestic space, but also positivist-inspired forms of protection that considered physical labour a limit to the reproductive function of "fragile" bodies. If this situation reinforced the model of the male breadwinner and, consequently, the ideal of the working man, free and aware of his prerogatives, processes of industrialisation and urbanisation made the picture more fragmented as they revealed the — diversified, depending primarily on the context and social class — presence of women in the labour market. Women workers and peasants, maids, teachers and nurses inhabited a heterogeneous universe within a patriarchal order that set limits and promoted well-defined models, and which belittled and devalued their commitment. Pescarolo describes the changes brought about by the First World War, when the deployment of men broke down many boundaries; she investigates the symbolic and material regression of working women under Fascism, when they also suffered a heavy setback in terms of remuneration; she explores the ambiguities and distortions of the Republican era, starting with the Constitution, which subordinated women's work to their 'essential family function'; finally, she recalls the social, political and legislative changes that have mitigated female discrimination over time but without achieving gender equality. As many have noted, the difficult transition from the male breadwinner model to that of the dual breadwinner continues to weigh heavily — a transition that would challenge entrenched imbalances and inequalities but also the maternalist paradigm in all its various ramifications.[20]

As will be clear by now, a large portion of the book is dedicated to the theme of maternalism, especially because of its centrality with regard to the relationship between women and the state and the development of a welfare state that finds its identity in the protection of maternity. Elisabetta Vezzosi focuses on this aspect, starting with an examination of the creation of the

[17] See, for example, Anna Bellavitis, *Il lavoro delle donne nelle città dell'Europa moderna*, Rome, Viella, 2016.

[18] Alessandra Pescarolo, *Lavoro e riconoscimento: un binomio mobile*, in S. Salvatici, *Storia delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, cit., pp. 165-166.

[19] Deborah Simonton, *Women workers. Working women*, in Idem (ed.), *The Routledge History Of Women in Europe since 1700*, London-New York, Routledge, 2006, pp. 134-175.

[20] Marian van der Klein et al. (eds), *Maternalism Reconsidered: Motherhood, Welfare and Social Policy in the Twentieth Century*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2012.

Cassa nazionale di maternità in 1910. Its establishment, which was (partially) the result of feminist mobilisation, followed a period of debates, exchanges of information and comparisons of ideas and projects involving emancipationist women in Italy and abroad, all committed to the struggle for the expansion of social rights. This network of connections, made possible by travel and publications, exposed the Italian movement to an international dimension with important repercussions, turning the protection of motherhood into a key issue of women's political action. Vezzosi demonstrates that the culture of maternal and child care that developed in this sphere was absorbed by the social policies of Fascism, which exploited its potential by bending it to its own ends. The birth in 1925 of the Opera nazionale per la protezione della maternità e dell'infanzia went in this direction, while various legislative decrees were passed to protect women workers, physically and morally, even if the regime tended to exclude them from the labour market. Despite many ambiguities, the attempt to rationalise the maternity assistance system was inherited by the Republic; the actions taken by the Case della madre e del bambino across the peninsula were irregular and not without contradictions. The author traces the development of legal interventions in the issue from the 1950s onwards, showing how other institutional subjects (the EU, first and foremost) entered the scene and put pressure on a process of transformation that, in many ways, is still ongoing. Vezzosi ends her analysis on the national/international level as she recalls recent welfare policies, the work-life balance issue, the relationship between reconciliation policies and the increase in female employment. In this new context, the crisis of the maternalist paradigm emerges clearly, 'inadequate' as it is to represent 'the key to interpreting a changing reality'.[21]

Conclusion

Twenty years have passed since Simonetta Soldani highlighted the 'undefined profile' of contemporary women's history, describing the 'permanent difficulty' of research on the female universe 'to interact positively with each other, to create a "force field" that enhances and circulates its potential and results'.[22] As the book edited by Salvatici shows, since then, the number of studies on this topic has increased, the approaches have become more cautious and the distances have shrunk, while the interactions, exchanges and areas for discussion and comparison have increased. This transformation is reflected in the essays gathered in Salvatici's volume, which testify to the solidity of the rese-

[21] Elisabetta Vezzosi, *La maternità: dall'assistenza al welfare*, in S. Salvatici, *Storia delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, cit., p. 234.

[22] Simonetta Soldani, *L'incerto profilo degli studi di storia contemporanea*, in Anna Rossi-Doria (ed.), *A che punto è la storia delle donne in Italia*, Rome, Viella, 2003, p. 69.

arch, on the one hand, and their place in a field of enquiry with extended boundaries, on the other hand. A similar development reveals two further aspects: the confidence with which the authors retrace — in their contributions — the outcome of their own reflections, and the potential contained in these trajectories, capable of generating new questions and paths. This is precisely what "Storia delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea" is: a ground on which various encounters have taken place and from which new stories can emerge.

Translated by Andrea Hajek

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