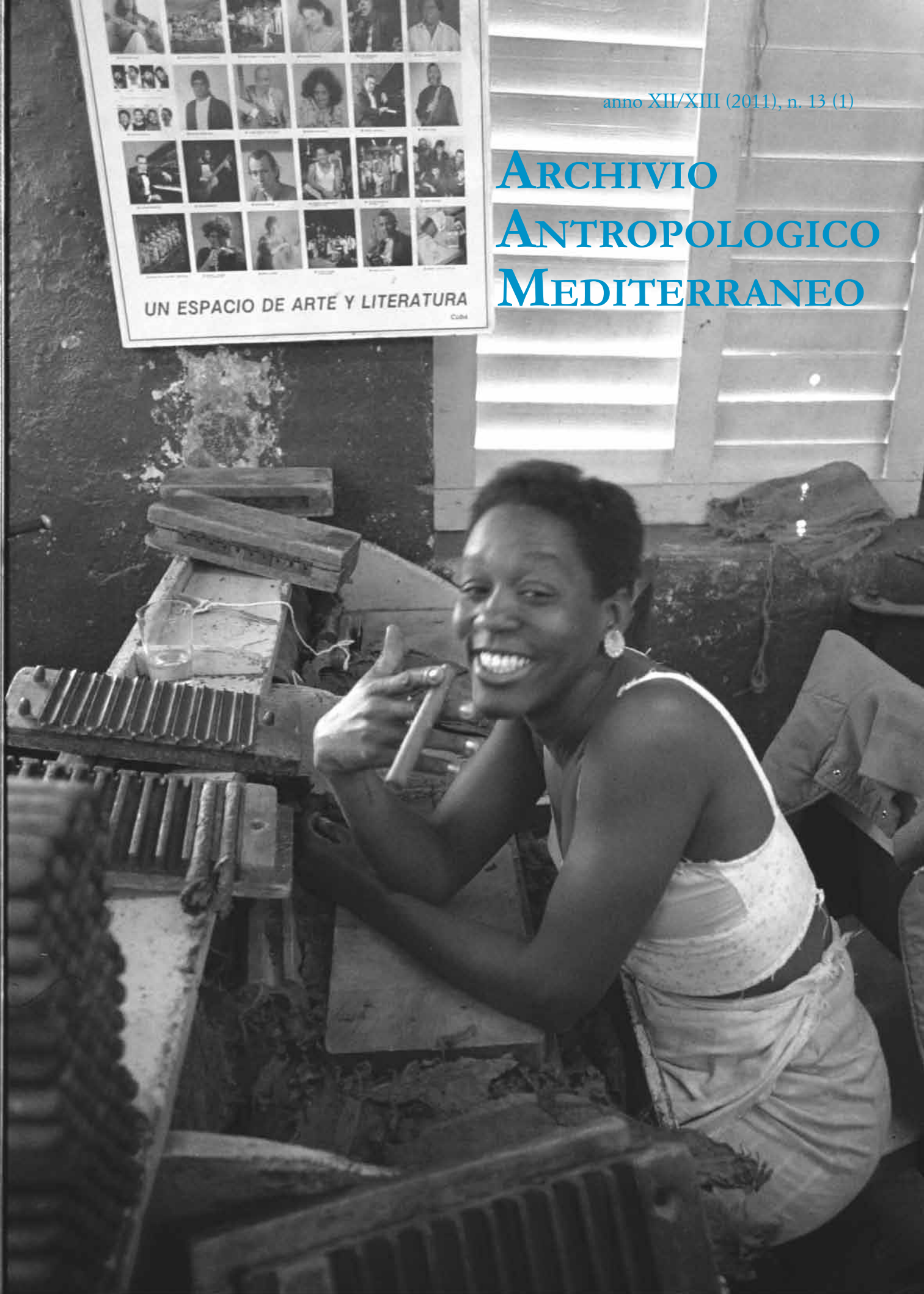


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In copertina: Foto di Nino Russo (Vinales Cuba, 1993)

Paolo Favero

Blessed be the Good Soldier: Cinema, Media and the Manufacturing of Nationhood in Post 9/11 Italy

1. *The Prologue*

This year Italy celebrates its first 150 years of life. The 17th of March, date in which (in 1861) King Vittorio Emanuele II solemnly proclaimed the creation of the kingdom of Italy, has been declared by the Parliament a new (one-off) national holiday. Unleashing a wide series of public events starting already several months before the official festivity, this holiday celebrates Italy's (newly found) sense of nationhood and unity, something that, according to popular knowledge, has always been missing in the country. This decision found indeed its pockets of resistance (among members of separatist party Lega Nord as well as among some German-speaking minorities of South-Tirol, etc.). Yet overall, right and left agreed upon the importance of formally celebrating this event, adding in this way yet another important tail in the contemporary process of national identity making. Overall, Italy's citizens responded well to this invitation. Reaching Italy a few weeks after the celebrations of the 17th of March I saw a country decorated by national flags. So were the streets of Rome, and so were those of Naples and Turin and so were also those of my small hometown in the northwest of Italy. Up there, in my own family, my eight-year-old nephew had convinced his grandfather (who having lived through WWII was immune to any nationalistic feelings) to hang out of the balcony a big national flag. Proudly, this little boy one night also recited to me some words of the national anthem telling me that he had learnt them in school.

I must admit that, as an insider/outsider (cf. Merton 1972), such patriotic feelings appeared indeed fairly peculiar (and also picturesque) to me. Growing up in Italy during the 1970s and 1980s (I left the country in year 1991) this sense of national identity under the tricoloured flag was nothing that my friends and me shared. We all knew we were "Italians", but we would not celebrate that belonging or its symbols. Only exceptions were the raising of national flags during football cups or, for some of us, on the celebration of April 25th, the day of

liberation from fascism. For the rest, such strong belief in the nation was, in our imagination, something belonging mostly to nostalgic Mussolini supporters. Yet, this was all evidently changing now. What I was witnessing to now was indeed an important step in the so far successful attempt at, paraphrasing Hobsbawm and Ranger (1992), inventing a tradition and through that at "manufacturing" (I adopt consciously the term used by Herman and Chomsky 1994) a sense of nationhood. This newly found sense of pride in the nation was in fact the result of a slow yet capillary process that had lasted for the last decade or so and that finally seemed to have found its way into the homes of the Italians. Involving various actors ranging from the media, to the school system, etc. such process funded itself on the incorporation into popular culture of a series of pivotal figures capable of instilling faith and respect in the nation, the state and its representatives. In an epoch characterized by Italy's participation to the "coalition of the willing" and hence by its involvement in war missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the soldier would (in a repetition of history) emerge as a precious pillar for generating a sense of national pride. The flags raised and the speeches (often bringing God and Homeland in unity) delivered in particular in occasion of the death of some of the Italian soldiers in foreign missions have proved intense moments of national unification.

This paper, which is part of a wider exploration of the cultural politics of nationhood in contemporary Italy, analyses the representation of the soldier in a dialogue between various contexts. Suggesting its centrality in the contemporary construction of nationhood, I will explore the continuities and discontinuities in the representations of soldiers in Italian popular culture focussing primarily on post-war cinema and on contemporary media reports on Italy's involvement in foreign missions of "peace". Offering glimpses also into the history of such representation (hence looking briefly into the work of the writer Edmondo de Amicis and into some schoolbooks dating from fascist era) I will suggest how Italian popular culture has been able to keep

alive a fairly coherent idea of the Italian soldiers as a Good Soldier. He is driven by love and altruism. Perhaps a little egoistic, opportunist and lazy he is however incapable of hurting anyone. He is in any case detached from any historical responsibility. Such representation, I suggest, is widely informed by the self-representation of the Good Italian, an image born to justify Italy's first (failing) colonial enterprise. Elsewhere (cf. Favero 2010) I have showed how this self-representation has historically functioned (and still functions) in Italy as a kind of laundry for reformulating and then setting aside disquieting moments of national shame and how it has been central to the construction of a modern Italian identity. Offering a sense of continuity with the past and allowing for the generation of a sense of nationhood, this representation has been brought again to popular attention in particular in the recent years functioning as a way to explain Italy's participation at wars in foreign territories and to justify the growing wave of racist and homophobic attacks taking place in the country (cf. also Favero 2009).

Material for this article was primarily gathered during fieldwork conducted in Rome between 2005 and 2007¹ among the South Asian community that resides in the central neighbourhood of *Esquilino*. Located near Rome's central station and known for its large presence of migrants, this area, known primarily through its main square called *Piazza Vittorio*, has been, in the recent years, the object of a strong debating and also of direct political interventions. With statistics reporting only thirty-three per cent of the population being mother tongue Italian speakers and with its proximity to the station (in Italy a marker of low status) *Piazza Vittorio* has received a bad reputation as an area of crime and danger, an area losing its "Italian character". While I was working with the local South Asian community, I got attracted by such debates as well as by the ever-growing amount of explicitly xenophobic and homophobic messages exposed in public. I also got exposed to the protests of neighbourhood organization declaring their intent to "clean up" the area. I noticed how these attacks were moving hand in hand also with an overall re-writing of history finalized to the incorporation of fascism as an acceptable political position (something which Italian Constitution prohibits through a specific law called *Legge Scelba*). Finding myself buried in this complex context I progressively shifted my attention towards an analysis of Italian popular culture and to its politics abandoning my focus upon the South Asian community. This is how the work behind the paper was born. The ethnographic material specifically informing this pa-

per is hence a mixture of face-to-face interactions with artists, filmmakers and intellectuals involved in debating/representing questions regarding national identity in contemporary Italy and visual and written material collected from cinema, television, newspapers and the Internet. This material is however also brought in dialogue with a self- or auto-ethnography (cf. Okely and Callaway 1992 and Khosravi 2010), i.e. with my own rethinking of my own memories of the country that I left many years ago. Beginning with a brief contextualization of the historical background for the debate on national identity in Italy, this paper will then proceed to analyze the history of the image of the Good Soldier and then proceed to look into its representation in post-war cinema. I will then conclude showing how the contemporary description of the role of Italian soldier in Iraq and Afghanistan make sense against such a specific background.

2. *The Problematic Making of Nationhood*

Scholars and lovers of Italy alike know very well that in the country national identity has always been a problematic issue. Already at the very birth of the nation, in the 19th century, Massimo d'Azeglio, one of the founding fathers of the unified country, wrote «we have made Italy, now we have to make the Italians». Becoming one of the most famous ways for defining Italianness i.e. paradoxically through its very absence, this sentence gives a sense of how nationhood has historically been experienced in the country, i.e. as a problem to be solved. Nurturing primarily small-scale identifications (the extended family, the city, the region, the political party, the football team) the "Italians" have always been considered to have a critical relationship to the nation-state and its symbols and to never have really united under a sense of national belonging (cf. Ginsborg 1998, Carandini 1995, Casano 1998). Attempts at changing this have indeed taken place and among them Mussolini's stands indeed out as the most conscious one. Aiming at (forcibly) boosting nationalist feelings among "his" people the *Duce* set in motion a proper factory of national identification. He inserted Roman symbols and the national flag in public culture, abolished the use of foreign words, "produced" national heroes, and also signed (in 1926) the Concordat with the Catholic Church, sanctioning its role as a "religion of state".

Despite its vigour, this impressive machine failed in its intent. There are good reasons to believe that, because of its overall failure, fascism ended up contributing to the post-war disenchant-

ment with patriotic symbols, which, appearing in the experiences of the citizens to be too close to the memory of fascism, ended up being toned down in public contexts. We basically had to wait for the new millennium to witness a new attempt at creating a sense of cultural unity, and the celebrations with which I opened this paper are indeed a window onto the so far successful consequences of this endeavour. Jumping to the recent past the figure of Mr. Azeglio Ciampi, President of the country between 1999 and 2006, stands out as a key symbol of this attempt and one allowing us also to locate, somewhat precisely, the time schedule of this process of creation of a new sense of nationhood. In 1999 during his New Year speech to the nation Mr. Ciampi spoke about the importance of cherishing the «proud and conscious profile of our own roots and of national identity»² and about the need to re-think our history in order to strengthen the feeling of national unity. In the following years Ciampi worked very actively for the re-insertion in Italian popular culture of a series of symbols that had been abandoned or forgotten. He ordered, for instance, in year 2000 the re-opening of the *Vittoriano* (the monument also known by foreigners as the “Wedding Cake”, see below) to the visitors, he supported the realization of a military parade to be held yearly on June 2nd, i.e. on Republic day, sanctioning this day’s status as a national holiday, etc. It was hence during the years coinciding with Ciampi’s mandate, that feelings of national unity really started gaining momentum again. And this was indeed a process shared among most Italian political actors. Let us not forget that, while mostly supported by the Left, Mr. Ciampi was actually a “technocrat” and not a professional politician and that besides a participation in the liberal anti-fascist party called *Partito d’Azione* during the end of WWII he had never been involved with any particular political organization. However, this whole process of manufacturing and re-thinking nationhood turned indeed particularly popular among the various rightist parties of the country. For varied reasons be them the desire to “re-patriate” all migrants, xenophobia, populism, anti-communism or simple belief in old fashioned fascist ideals, a whole constellation of parties orchestrated by the Berlusconi-led governments succeeded in cavalcading this wave of nationalism and through that in re-fashioning some, until then, shared accounts of national history (allowing as a side-effect to re-incorporate fascism as an acceptable political position). Debating the re-definitions of the historical meaning of Italian colonialism historian Labanca (in Del Boca 2009:150) wrote the following:

In the last fifteen year, we have faced the return – happening hand in hand with the consolidation of the Berlusconi led centre-right governments – of clues, signs and demonstrations of political culture still tied to old myths and passwords...this is a proper “return to the past”.

I will not go into any further depth with this issue here. Rather I would like to point out how during this process the Army and a set of military symbols have been re-inserted into popular culture functioning as proper pillars for this newly found “Italianness”. Facilitated by the ongoing wave of fear for terrorist attacks and by the creation of a “coalition of the willing” aimed at defeating “Islamic terrorism”, the Italian soldiers have emerged, through their public sanctification in particular in occasion of their own deaths³, as important social figures pivotal to the creation of a sense of nationhood and national unity. Since 2002 we have, in fact, witnessed to the return of popularity of martyrs and national heroes of war and the sacrifice of these men has been functional also in silencing the pacifist movement, in isolating the protest against Italy’s participation in foreign missions of war and any other forms of protest against the ruling government. After all, who can be disrespectful towards a young soldier having sacrificed his life in the struggle against terror?

3. *The Making of the Good Soldier*

In 1921, in the aftermath of WWI and one year before Mussolini’s march on Rome, in a solemn ceremony in the Cathedral of Aquileia the young mother of a soldier who had disappeared on the front, was given the privilege/duty of selecting a corpse among many that had to become the symbol of all those young men who had gone missing during the war. Transported then on an open train wagon moving at walking speed from this north-eastern city of Italy all the way to Rome (so that as many citizens as possible could see it and bring their tribute to it) this corpse was at the end of this ritual travel placed inside the *Vittoriano* (re-Christened from that moment as the “Altar to the Homeland”) and honoured with the golden medal of value (highest among the insignia of the Italian state) with the following motivation:

Worthy son of a brave race and of a millenary civilization, he endured in the most contested trenches, fought with all his courage in the most bloody battles and fell fighting without hoping in anything else but the victory and greatness of the motherland.

This image of the heroic soldier, that was to fully bloom in a few years with the emergence of Fascism, had been, however, the result of a long process of myth making that can be detected in many different fields. In literature, for instance, one of the leading loci for the production of such representations is to be found in 19th century writer's Edmondo de Amicis stories and novels. Described by Umberto Eco as an example of «petty bourgeois pedagogy, class-conscious, paternalistic and sadistic» (cf. Eco 1973:24) De Amicis' tried to instil a blind sense of faith in the young generations in the state, the army etc. institutions that he brought into intimacy with the reader particularly through the recurrent use of the figure of the mother. In «*La Vita Militare*» (1868) de Amicis writes: «That soldier, once in the field, will let someone kill him with no fear and he will die with the name of his mother on his lips» and further, «homeland is hundred thousand mothers and families like his» (quoted in Del Boca 2005). Mitigated by the figure of the mother, the soldier depicted here fist nicely with historian Gianni Oliva's (2006:6) description of the Italian soldier as «fundamentally good, firmly anchored to the values of the family, and perhaps a little *mammone*⁴». Basically this representation was from its very birth influenced by (and incorporated into) the myth of the Good Italian, that all-pervasive image that, as we saw, postulating the intrinsic sense of goodness of the Italians, had served the country for justifying the failures of colonialism as well as, later on, the cruelty and contradictions through which WWII ended.

The Good Soldier would remain a pillar on which to construct patriotism for Mussolini too. Yet, during his rule, this representation got accompanied by the attempt at constructing also a more belligerent sense of nationhood and hence by a set of stronger, harsher and more militant representations. Convinced, in tune with the image of the Good Italian, that his countrymen lacked both stamina and a sense of unity, Mussolini saw the Italians as a «race of sheep» characterized by an intrinsic «moral weakness», (cf. Gallo 1967:249) and declared his intent to awake them from their slumber. The schoolbooks of the epoch offer us precious insights into the rhetoric of this attempt. The history chapter of an elementary schoolbook printed in 1937 and aimed, as the preface declares, at offering an «imperial education» though the evocation of figures capable of instilling «political greatness and military potency» (p. 3) displays, in a paragraph devoted to the «Fascist Martyrs», the following description of Mussolini's mission:

After having united the Italian land from the Alps to Sicily it was necessary to shape the Italians who, in

the years of the after war, from 1919 and 1922, had lost sense of duty and any feeling of patriotism. Benito Mussolini took on the serious task of putting back on a straight path the Italian people founding the *Fasci di Combattimento*⁵ on the 23rd of March 1919 in Milan (Acuto 1937:93)

It was hence the duty of a special corps of fighters (the *Fasci di combattimento*) to bring, through the use of violence, the Italian «sheep» back upon the «righteous path» and teach them what proper «Italianness» meant.⁶

The militant image promoted by Mussolini was however respectful of motherhood and religion too and hence capable of co-existing with the consolatory self-representation of the Good Italian. This is visible, for instance, in one of the descriptions that Mussolini himself offered regarding the mission of the fascist soldier:

The fascist soldier must serve Italy in purity with a spirit filled of profound mysticism, held up by an unshakeable faith, dominated by an inflexible will, disdainful of opportunity and prudence, as of cowardice, prone to sacrifice and to his faith, convinced about the apostolate to save the great common mother and give her strength and purity (Mussolini quoted in Del Boca 2005: 43).

Schoolbooks are a key arena for understanding this particular blend of militantism and goodness too. In *L'Italia degli Italiani* (Rossi and Monti 1942) we are, for instance, offered side by side with each other a description of the gestures of heroism displayed by Italian soldiers during the battle of Adua (1896) and a celebration of the generosity of Italian voluntarism abroad. Regarding Adua we read:

I have never seen, neither during the unfair, bloody battle nor during the long and painful withdrawal one single gesture of timidity, a single manifestation of relaxation in discipline. What was this if not high military spirit and burning love for the homeland? (1942: 142)

And regarding voluntarism:

Voluntarism is the clear manifestation of that generous and chivalrous spirit that constitutes one of the noblest and most precious qualities of our race. No other race succeeds as the Italian one to lavish its blood in favour of other people and for the liberty and independence of other nations. (*ibidem*: 198-199)

Schoolbooks were hence pivotal to the shaping of an image of the soldier as at once heroic and proud but also as a «bearer of humanity» (Oliva

2006: 8) involved, in the imperial mission only for the purpose of «spreading, with severe costs and sacrifice, the public works needed for civilization: road, railways, canals, civilian constructions, industrial plants, schools» (Rossi and Monti 1942:180). Merging militant heroism with respect for motherhood, love for the other and overall goodness, this Good Soldier was hence a figure that could easily be inserted into the lives of the Italian families.

With the end of the war and the failure of fascism, the desire for a belligerent race faded however out of popular culture while the image of the Good Italian remained a solid pillar in the national imagination of the soldier. The end of WWII with its atrocities, its spread of hatred and its desperation and exhaustion was indeed a moment needing the presence of such an auto-consolatory myth, one that could grant, through its embedded sense of Catholic Piety, a whole nation forgiveness for their sins.⁷ Differently from what happened, for instance, in Germany, where, as Sebald (2004) has described, the bombings of the country were experienced by many as a fair punishment for the crimes committed by Nazism, Italians were by the end of the war eager and quick in setting the memory of those crimes aside and behind. Del Boca sums up this passage in the following way:

From June 1940 to September 1943 Italians fought the same war of aggression as Nazi Germany but, immediately after that, wanted to forget it and have it removed from national consciousness [...] a political manoeuvre shared by the whole antifascist class, to exculpate the country from any responsibilities and to give back to it a sort of moral virginity (2005: 5).

The representation of the Good Italian helped deleting from public consciousness all traces regarding Italy's crimes of war, of its aggressive colonial campaigns, all the intestine atrocities committed after 1943, etc. In this context the Italian soldier got back to being exclusively the Good Samaritan intent in helping the others, a representation that would prove to be enduring in Italian popular culture and that would have its greatest and most evident expression in cinema.

4. *The Naïve, the Coward and the Opportunist: the Good Soldier in Cinema*

Post-war cinema was pivotal in re-producing a softened, familiarized representation of the soldier, one which proved fundamental to his removal from the space of belligerent Fascist patriotism and to his re-insertion into the (at times ironic) space of

everyday family life. In this section I will discuss these cinematographic representations focussing on three films, i.e. *Tutti a Casa* ("Everybody go home", by Luigi Comencini, 1960), *La Grande Guerra* ("The Great War" by Mario Monicelli 1959) and *Mediterraneo* (by Gabriele Salvatores, 1991). Each one a success in terms of audience and critics too, these three films, I suggest, offer iconic representations of the soldier that, dialoguing with the above described historical set of representations, left important traces in popular culture. Common to all the three films is the presentation of the soldier as a fun-loving, simple and fairly naïve character. The central characters in each film are portrayed as being fairly unaware of what is happening around them and hence largely detached (and de-responsabilized) from history. They also share a proximity and love to the local people they encounter in their missions and a devotion to women and to the figure of the mother too. While being at times also depicted as individualist, hypocritical, opportunist and egoist they appear nonetheless to be intrinsically good people whose only real wish is to go back home and live peacefully with their beloved ones. Most commonly unable to act, they are hence incapable of hurting anyone. I will now present the three films selecting a few specific aspects for each of them.

Tutti a Casa displays comedian Alberto Sordi (a key figure in Italian post-war cinema) in the role of Alberto Innocenzi a second lieutenant caught by coincidence outside his casern together with his troops on September the 8th 1943, i.e. at the precise moment in which General Badoglio declares the Armistice sanctioning Italy's change of side (hence being an allied of the British and Americans and an enemy of the Germans). Ending up in a confused crossfire between the invading allied troops (the former enemies now allied) and the Nazi troops (the former allied now enemies) Alberto and his shaking battalion manage to escape. Loosing one soldier at a time (each one egoistically escaping against the order of their Lieutenant) Alberto, unable to understand what is happening around him, finds himself at the end journeying in the company of a Neapolitan soldier suffering from ulcer. In many scenes of this film Alberto embodies the naïveté that I mentioned above. During their escape, for instance, Alberto and his partner find refuge at a peasant's farmhouse where they meet an ex-Captain of the Italian army who had already deposited his uniform. The two have an argument. As the Captain informs him that the Germans would deport anyone caught with the Italian uniform on, Alberto, still proudly wearing his uniform, replies that it is not correct to abandon it. At this point the

Captain asks him why and wonders whether this war did any good to anyone. Sensing the Captain's divergent opinions, Alberto now abandons his militant pride and changes expression: «I did not declare this war, Sir, I never believed in it, I never wanted to take part at it». At this point the general says «Yes, but who was there singing *Nizza Savoia*⁸ on the streets, you were a student weren't you?». And Alberto replies: «Sir, the only patriotic hymn I know is "Mom, soon I will be back to our little home"... I have always been of divergent opinions, mr. Captain».

In this exchange Alberto, in a blend of naïveté and piety (and hypocrisy), is evidently repositioning himself from being a loyal soldier to someone who never really supported Mussolini's regime. He embodies hence the opportunism that has been typical for the end of WWII and that General Badoglio summed up with the sentence «*né sentito né accettato*» («neither heard of, nor accepted») and that made possible the public representation of fascism as a parenthesis of Italian history (and not one of its constitutive traits). Basically, Alberto appears here as morally detached from the events of the war and hence also from his responsibility in them. The film spectator can therefore easily detach him from Mussolini's vision of the cruel soldier able to stand up to comparison with the Germans and, through this re-insertion into the representation of the Good Italian, accept him into family life. The apparent coward, egoistic, ignorant and disorganized character of Alberto's army too, while apparently giving a derogatory image of the Italian battalion, is functional to this "cleaning" of the public image of the soldier. Reproducing the idea that «the Italian soldier is commonly incapable of cold and calculated brutality» (Salvemini quoted in Oliva 2006: 6) this army (composed by individuals from all over Italy) is unable, also because of their sheer individualism, to act and hence to hurt anyone.

The last line in the exchange between Alberto and the Captain quoted above, however, also delicately introduces the theme of the mother displaying the intrinsic soft nature of the soldier and his only desire, i.e. to go back home to his mother. Such sweetness and desire for love is also the ground motivation behind the only heroic act being committed by an Italian soldier in the film. A young man of the battalion will end up, in fact, getting shot down by Nazi troopers in his attempt to protect a young Jewish woman (with whom he had fallen in love) from being caught during a control.

Monicelli's *La Grande Guerra*, one of the most well know blends of Neorealism and Italian comedy (winner of a Golden Lion at the Venice film festival and of a nomination as best foreign film at

the Academy Awards), was exposed in the 1960s to censorship for promoting an idea of the Italian soldier detached from the heroism that has characterized fascist cinema (Zagarrio 2004). Staged in the Italian North-Eastern front in 1916, the film promotes, in tune with most Italian war films (cf. Comencini's film above but also De Sanctis' *Italiani Brava Gente* and Salvatores' *Mediterraneo*, see below) a sense of unity between soldiers coming from different regions (hence speaking different dialects) and different social classes hence promoting an idea of unity in diversity. The film is centred around two main characters each one embodying one particular aspect of the national spirit. One (once again Alberto Sordi) is Oreste Jacovacci, a coward and foolish yet highly patriotic young man from Rome while the other (played by a magnificent Vittorio Gassman) is the charming, individualistic and clever Giovanni Bisacca from Milan, a man with no faith in the war or in the homeland at all. As in *Tutti a casa* in this film too we are offered a representation of the Italian soldier as someone totally detached from the events happening around him. This detachment is simplified, on the one hand, by Oreste's foolishness, cowardice and political unconsciousness (in one tragic-comic scene for instance, he mistakes a group of fellow soldiers reaching the camp for foreign prisoners of war and welcomes them with insults) and on the other hand by Bisacca's egoism and opportunism. These two together try to escape from all potentially dangerous situations and will end up, during one of these escapes, getting caught and then executed by the Austrians. I will get back to their killing later on, for the moment let us instead observe how the naïveté and intrinsic goodness of the Italians is constructed in the film by describing one particular scene that begins with our two heroes lying on the back on a mountain slope listening to the singing of the birds. Suddenly Bisacca senses that one of the songs (that Oreste mistook for the voice of a blackbird) is coming from a human voice. They turn around and spot an Austrian soldier who is intent in preparing a coffee in front of an old farmhouse. Knowing that their duty is to shoot the man down, they get prepared, lying down each one aiming at the enemy with their rifle. No one shoots however. Interrogating each other, Oreste uses the excuse that he is short-sighted while Bisacca says that he is against the war. Quarrelling about who should shoot, they suddenly stare into each other's eyes and say «Let's let him at least have his coffee first, no?»». At that point they witness to the killing of the Austrian by the hands of some fellow Italian soldiers who, coming from behind them, insult them for their incapacity to act. *Tutti a casa* too therefore contributes in presenting

an Italian soldier incapable of hurting anyone and hence de-responsabilized from the tragic events of the war.

This warm characterization is obtained however also through the depiction of the Italian soldier's cowardice and the Austrian's cruelty. Towards the end of the film the two men get executed because they do not or cannot hand over any information regarding their battalion and silently die as humble heroes (no one but the camera witnesses to their act of heroism). While Bisacca dies after having insulted the Austrian Captain, Oreste dies instead shouting «I do not know anything, it is true, I am a coward, everyone knows that!». Oreste's cowardice, despite being derogatory, succeeds in humanizing the soldier and hence in capturing our sympathy vis-à-vis the cruel and harsh behaviour of the Austrians. Not only more convinced about their mission and intrinsically more aggressive than the Italians, the Austrians appear also as lacking in respect for their enemies. During the interrogation Oreste and Bisacca get in fact insulted by the commander in chief who tells his assistant «Italians have no liver [in Italian synonymous to courage], they only know it as something to be cooked with onions!».⁹ As in *La Grande Guerra*, in *Tutti a casa* too the bad foreigners are the cruel and truce necessary counterparts allowing for the Italian soldier to stand out as Good.

A similar set of representations is fundamental also to the portrayal of the soldiers in Italian Academy Award winning feature film from 1991 *Mediterraneo* by Gabriele Salvatores. Here we meet a small entertaining battalion composed of a handful of soldiers coming, once again, from all regions of Italy that have been stranded on a Greek island in the middle of WWII. Deciding to take control of the island and to use it as an outpost for controlling this area of the Aegean, they will, however, end up spending three years there. Totally forgotten from their homeland, their lives will get inextricably linked to those of the local women, kids and elders left behind because of the war on this little paradise. The funny and paradoxical destiny of this army, as well as the good inclinations of its members, are evident already in the first scene of the film. Preparing a proper mini-invasion, this bizarre army is met, right upon landing, by the total absence of human life. Afraid of an ambush they slowly advance towards the inland ending up eventually in the centre of a village where they still cannot detect any signs of life. Fear and preoccupation start spreading in the group. Suddenly, while in the central square, we hear a shootout. Farina, one of the youngest soldiers, has exploded a shot in the air in reaction to a chicken that had jumped onto

his head from a nearby wall. Impulsively, the other soldiers turn around and shoot in his direction. The Lieutenant of the army rushes back and Sergeant Lorusso (played by comedian Diego Abatantuono) intervenes explaining the events. «Mr Lieutenant, Farina was attacked by a chicken and promptly reacted, quite rightly in my own view, and the troop reacted too... Sir, we have been attacked by Greek chicken!». This exchange is just the apotheosis of a series of puns and jokes that characterize this film one where the soldiers are also portrayed as being close to the local population. After the three years spent there they will have gotten accustomed to the local habits (to Greek coffee too!) and basically turned islanders. Farina will go as far as hiding, with the complicity of the Lieutenant, at the moment of departure and hence stay on to live with a local woman (a prostitute) he had fallen in love with. Lorusso, who throughout the film seems to be the one most strongly connected to the homeland and to the desire for fighting the war, will go back to the island after a few years, in disillusionment with Italy, a country that in his view did not allow anything to change. As in the other films described above here the goodness, softness and sympathy of the Italian soldier is constructed also vis-à-vis the foreigners that we get introduced to, i.e. vis-à-vis the formal and rigid British Navy officers who towards the end of the film come to rescue them, the Turkish drug dealer who under the motto «Italians Turks, one face one race» rips them off from all their weapons and belonging and from the Greek men who upon return to the island appear to be much more macho than the Italians are.

Summing up, these three films share a capacity to promote an image of the Italian soldier as intrinsically detached from all responsibilities of the war. Appearing as a nice character, close to the local population, enamoured with mothers, families and women, he seems as someone preoccupied with his life beyond the war more than with war itself. The depiction of the Italian soldier as egoistic, coward, inactive, and opportunist, while apparently being derogatory, seems to actually remove him even further from the realities of the war and into an everyday life that the spectator can easily mirror herself into. In other words, paradoxically enough, being a lazy, coward and opportunist stands out here as a guarantee for intrinsic goodness.

5. *Good Soldiers and Martyrs and Today's Italianness*

It is against this background hence that in the recent years the soldiers have been re-introduced in Italian popular culture and that, in the aftermath of

9/11 and the Iraqi war, national heroes and martyrs, have made their impressive entrance into the lives of Italian families becoming fundamental instruments in the creation of national unity. The attack on Nassiriya in 2003 was indeed the most crucial event in these regards and one deserving of attention. The car-bomb attack on the Italian Army base in this Iraqi city cost in total the life of 28 people (out of which 17 were Italian soldiers) and moved the whole nation. As a reaction, media and public institutions strongly called for national unity. The day of the funerals of the victims the city of Rome got clad with national flags and, in the Basilica of Saint Paul, so did also the coffins of the newly declared “martyrs of Nassiriya”.¹⁰ During the ceremony Cardinal Ruini (at the epoch the President of the Italian Episcopal Conference) proclaimed:

May a sense of gratitude and solidarity for the deceased, the wounded and their families come from the hearth of our people and express its profound unity and its awareness of a shared destiny [...] With this Mass we turn to God, our creator and father, omnipotent and merciful, and to Him we entrust, one by one, the deceased and their families, each one of the wounded, all the Italians, civilians and soldiers, who are in Iraq for accomplishing a great and noble mission. And with them we entrust Him also this beloved homeland of ours, the peace in the world and the respect of human life. May God bless and protect our people and our soldiers.¹¹

Offering a sense of devotion to the Homeland that had not been seen in Italy in the last half-century (and indeed also a unification of the Homeland with God, cf. Favero 2007) Ruini’s words presented to us a Good Soldier intent in protecting both his homeland and peace in the world. Such image came to dominate media reports of the event and took several different rhetorical shapes. A special reportage on national television news TG1 chose to comment the images of the funeral with the voice of an elementary school boy saying:

Dear heroes, we elementary school kids are so sorry that you died, but you made a great gesture of love. You have done so much good to the kids of Iraq and I hope that you are feeling well now in the company of the small angels and that when I die I will be with you for ever.

The image of the nature of the work done by “our soldiers” was hence presented as to fit the representation of the Good Italian. Rather than belligerent macho men intent in shooting down bearded Al-Qaeda terrorists these military heroes

were presented as soft, loving, unselfish, family-oriented men. Such aspects are particularly visible in the words pronounced by Mr. Marcello Pera, then President of the Senate, who in the 2004 commemoration of the Martyrs of Nassiriya, stated:

The men we are today remembering and honouring [...] knew why they were in Nassiriya. They knew that Italy had responded to the call of a population that is trying to free itself from the consequences of a devastating dictatorship. They knew that Italy is there for bringing help, safety and reconstruction. [...] They did know this and died because they believed in it. Our battalion contributes daily with a hundred interventions in the fields of safety, public order, health, school education, civilian and military infrastructure and hydroelectric plants. It intervenes in the cleaning and refurbishment of the roads. It offers assistance to the local hospitals, it cures the population, collaborates in paying retirement fees, protects archaeological heritage and distributes food relief.¹²

In likelihood with the description offered by the old fascist schoolbooks described above (remember Italy being described as intent in «spreading, with severe costs and sacrifice, the public works needed for civilization: road, railways, canals, civilian constructions, industrial plants, schools», Rossi and Monti 1942: 180) the Italian soldiers are here depicted as being intent in another act of voluntarism, nothing more. Why would or could anyone want to kill a whole army of people helping the locals in cleaning the streets, taking care of the elderly and the children? Why would anyone want to kill such peace loving people?

And the images from a photographic book on Nassiriya produced by Italian television RAI in collaboration with the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Santi 2004) exemplify this even better. In this book we see an alternation of portraits of smiling locals apparently always happy to see the Italian soldiers arriving (in one photograph they also wave their hands when they spot an Italian armoured van) and visions of the city from the god-like perspective of the soldiers (hiding on roofs, behind windows etc.) with the banal message that such smiles are made possible by the overlooking protection of these very special Italians guardian angels (Santi 2004: picture 1).

Indeed the choice of highlighting this “peaceful” aspect of Italy’s participation to the war on terror and hiding the most properly belligerent one was, as suggested by some debates following the event, necessary in order to tone down a fundamental ambivalence regarding the formal terms of Italy’s participation to the mission in Iraq. During one interview, Aureliano Amadei, a young film-maker

who survived the attack and who recently has authored a film of this experience entitled “20 Cigarettes” told me that the major issue at stake was that of defending the status of the mission as a mission of peace and not of war. Aureliano’s story is quite interesting. He was in Nassirya for assisting a film director (who died in the blast) in the realization of a fiction film (notice not a documentary) shot on location. The film, that had received the blessings and funding of the Ministry of Culture and of Defence was according to him one of the many proofs that the government needed in order to prove that Italy was in Iraq without taking part at the war. If they could shoot a feature film down there then it needed be a peaceful place, right? «Nassiriya was a mission of peace and the government was ready to do whatever to justify that», said Aureliano. Supporting Aureliano’s thesis are the reports of some of the survivors, who suggested that the base was not designed for the eventuality of a car bomb (as much as the soldiers were not equipped with bullet proof vans and helicopters). Most of the soldiers in Nassiriya in fact did not die because of the blast of the explosive loaded van but because of the “friendly” bullets being shot in all directions by the explosion of the ammunition deposit that has been placed (against all rules) at ground floor. The events in Nassiriya became eventually also the subject also of a television film putting forth the government’s position. Yet Nassiriya became far from an isolated event. More attacks on Italian troops would follow and each time a new wave of nationalism would take place. In November 2007, for instance, the death of Daniele Paladini, a 35 year old Marshal of the Italian Army on another so-called peace mission in Afghanistan got commented by morning program *Uno Mattina*, a populist show catering for the wide masses of housewives, with a five minutes long documentary displaying images of kids in Afghanistan and soldiers in Iraq and with the commentators saying «when they wake up tomorrow, these kids won’t have their friend to play with». And in the case of the attack against two armoured trucks belonging to the regiment Folgore involved in the ISAF force operations in 2009 the same program would offer its own tribute to the newly named “heroes of war” (under the title “Blessed be the peace builders”) with James Blunt singing “Goodbye my lover, goodbye my friend” on top of images displaying portraits of the soldiers who died as well as other images of smiling Italian troopers playing with local kids and talking to local elderly and ending with a close up on a large hand painted sign displayed during the funeral outside the church saying: «May the angels of the Lord smile to you as they escort you to the lights of Paradise. Long Live Italy!».¹³

6. Conclusions

Some years ago during my uncle’s funeral an old man wearing the uniform of the Alpine battalion stepped onto the altar. Carrying a red flag he greets the memory of my uncle and starts reciting out loud a prayer in dialect called “*La Madonna dell’Alpino*” which evokes the moments in which the soldiers lying under the stars in the cold of the mountains find their only refuge in the figure of the divine mother who will protect them from up there. This scene contains in appearance nothing particularly strange. Yet, when looked upon in detail it discloses most of the ambivalences regarding the role of the soldier in contemporary Italian popular culture (as well as explaining some of the paradoxes that characterized the end of WWII). In the first place I must point out in that occasion my uncle was celebrated by his brothers in arms because of his activities as a partisan and not as a regular soldier. After the Armistice of 1943 he, with his friends, had in fact chosen to fight against the Army they had earlier on represented and had joined the partisan movement that was organizing its activities in the mountains of our area. No one in the audience saw anything contradictory, however, in the fact that his friend, he too a partisan, would celebrate this piece of partisan history wearing the uniform of the Royal Alpine Army. Nor would anyone comment upon the fact that while wearing that uniform this man had carried onto the altar the flag of the partisan group. This flag in itself then contained its own paradoxes. It was red yet had no insignia of the communist movement (which had been a fundamental source of inspiration and funding for the partisans). In a scenario largely dominated by two forces, i.e. the communists and the Catholics, my uncle belonged in fact to a grouping that was anti-Bolshevik and anti-Catholic. So, while being red, no symbols of communism appeared on their flag. Finally, paradoxically enough despite their anti-Catholicism and secularism, my uncle’s friend recited a prayer to the Madonna. Yet, in the audience, no one experienced any particular contradiction in this either.

This event therefore exemplifies the way in which the soldier is a figure that has absorbed and condensed many of the contradictions that have characterized Italian history starting from Italy’s failed imperial plan, to the painful end of WWII and to today’s ambivalent role in the war on terror. An ambivalent character, the soldier, is one of the many embodiments of the self-representation of the Good Italian, and has been presented throughout Italian history as intrinsically good. Driven by love and altruism the Good Soldier may perhaps be a little egoistic, opportunist and lazy too. Yet,

the condensation of such apparently contradictory qualities turn him into a tame character incapable of hurting anyone. Firmly detached from any responsibility in the events of history the Good Soldier still functions as a solid pillar on which to construct a sense of Italian nationhood and patriotism.



Santi 2004: picture 1

Note

* Note: all translations from Italian are by the author of the article.

¹ Funding for this research was granted by the Swedish Research Council.

² <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2000/12/29/identita-nazionale-riforme-nel-messaggio-di-ciampi.html>

³ So far approximately seventy soldiers have passed away in the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

⁴ I kept the term in Italian given its strong connotative power in that language. Yet, if translated, the term could mean “mommy-dependent”.

⁵ The “Fasci di Combattimento” was Mussolini’s own army constructed for spreading, with the use of violence, the message of fascism.

⁶ Cherishing this militant character of his soldiers, in 1938, after the cruel bombing of Barcelona, Mussolini expressed his happiness regarding the fact that Italians could generate “horror for their aggressiveness rather than enjoyment as mandolin-players” (quoted in Del Boca 2005:46).

⁷ As has been pointed out by several historians (cf. Del Boca 2005, 2008 and 1991, Oliva 2006 and 2007, Rochat 2005) Italy did commit sever crimes of war across Libya, Ethiopia, Somalia, Greece, the Balcans etc.

⁸ “Nizza Savoia” are the opening words of a patriotic song celebrating the fascist occupation of the Mediterranean.

⁹ This depiction of the coward Italian soldier would later on also be used in another film, *Captain Corelli’s mandolin*, where a tough Penelope Cruz at the beginning of the film says: «An Italian with courage is a joke of nature!».

¹⁰ After this a lot of streets and square in Italy would be called “Martyrs of Nassiriya”.

¹¹ <http://www.grillonews.it/index.php?module=Error&type=admin&op=noexist&modname=&modfile=>

¹² <http://www.senato.it/presidente14leg/21572/21572/40104/composizioneattopresidente.htm>

¹³ Indeed no mention was ever made to the fact that the same battalion, the Folgore, was at the centre of a (quickly silenced) scandal regarding rapes committed at the expenses of local women during the “peace” mission in Somalia between 1992 and 1994.

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Abstracts

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Le scienze umane e sociali. Uno sguardo retrospettivo

L'autore ripercorre il proprio rapporto con le scienze umane e sociali durante un cinquantennio (1960-2010). Richiamando il lavoro di Claude Lévi-Strauss e il suo modello teorico che assimila le scienze umane alle scienze esatte, eliminando ogni traccia di soggettività, l'articolo pone a confronto il contributo di Germaine Tillion che, negli stessi anni, affermava l'impossibilità di eliminare l'esperienza personale dello studioso dai risultati del proprio lavoro. Un approccio pluralista alle discipline umanistiche è la raccomandazione che l'Autore ci consegna nelle conclusioni.

Parole chiave: Oggettività; Soggettività; Conoscenza letteraria; Scienze Umane/Scienze naturali; Pluralismo metodologico

Human and Social Sciences. A retrospection

The author describes his contacts with the social and human sciences during the last 50 years (1960-2010). His first major encounter is with the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who recommended the assimilation of the humanities to the exact sciences and the elimination of all traces of subjectivity. This attitude is compared with the contribution of Germaine Tillion who defends the impossibility to eliminate the personal experience of the scholar from the results of his work. In conclusion, the author recommends a pluralistic approach to the humanities and the social sciences.

Key words: Objectivity; Subjectivity; Literary knowledge; Human and Natural Sciences; Methodological Pluralism

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Operation Outreach: Anthropology and the Public in a World of Information Crowding

Fairly recently there was a story in newsmedia in Sweden about some young *nouveaux riches* who displayed their wealth by ostentatiously pouring out champagne in the sink. At about the same time, another item described a public occasion where a feminist politician, well-known since her past as leader of the country's main postcommunist party, had set fire to 100000 kronor (some 10000 euro) in bills, to make some point dramatically. This drew widespread comment, although it may be that while few could remember exactly what the point was, the suspicion was confirmed that this was not a person to be trusted with public funds.

Anyway, both the champagne pouring and the money on fire undoubtedly drew some added attention in the media because they occurred during the summer, when good stories tend to be hard to come by. One journalist contacted me after he had heard from someone that there were North American Indians who also had public rituals of destruction, something called "potlatch". And so he asked if I would care to offer an anthropological perspective on their new occurrence in Sweden. I suggested that if he wanted to know more about potlatch he could take a look at the Wikipedia article, but apart from that I declined the invitation to comment on the Swedish politician going Kwakiutl.

If we wonder about the part of anthropology in contemporary public life and public knowledge, we may find that it is sometimes, in fact rather frequently, like that. People who have no close acquaintance with the discipline expect the anthropologists to be in control of exotic tidbits from around the world, and thus able to offer possibly entertaining, although otherwise probably rather useless, parallels, comparisons, or overviews. Perhaps some of us will then indeed try to search the global ethnographic inventory for something to say, out of a sense of public duty or seduced by the possibility of fifteen seconds of fame. Again, in this instance, I was not tempted.

Key words: Branding; Commentary; Journalism; Politics; Multilingualism

Eccessi di azione: il ruolo pubblico dell'antropologia in un mondo sommerso dalle notizie

Di recente è circolata nei media svedesi la storia di alcuni giovani arricchiti che fanno mostra della loro ricchezza gettando champagne nel lavandino. Più o meno nello stesso periodo un'altra voce descriveva un'occasione pubblica durante la quale una femminista, nota per il suo passato come leader del principale partito postcomunista della nazione, aveva dato fuoco a 100.000 corone (circa 10.000 euro) in contanti, per rendere spettacolari alcuni punti del suo discorso. Ciò ha prodotto una vasta eco, sebbene alla fine abbia trovato comunque conferma il sospetto che non si trattasse di una persona affidabile per la gestione di fondi pubblici.

In ogni caso, sia lo spreco di champagne sia il denaro bruciato, senza dubbio ottennero una particolare attenzione da parte dei media perché entrambi i fatti capitano in estate, quando le buone storie da raccontare scarseggiano. Un giornalista mi contattò dopo che aveva sentito da qualcuno che c'erano degli Indiani nordamericani che praticavano anch'essi dei rituali pubblici di distruzione, qualcosa chiamato "potlach". E quindi mi chiese se mi interessasse fornire una prospettiva antropologica sulla nuova comparsa di questi rituali in Svezia. Suggesti che avrebbe potuto sapere qualcosa in più sul potlach, nel caso avesse questo desiderio, dando una semplice occhiata all'articolo di Wikipedia, e a parte questo declinai l'invito a commentare i politici svedesi mutanti Kwakiutl.

Se ci interrogassimo sul ruolo dell'antropologia nella vita pubblica contemporanea, potremmo scoprire che consiste a volte, di fatto direi piuttosto frequentemente, in qualcosa del genere. Gente che non ha familiarità con la disciplina si aspetta che gli antropologi padroneggino "bocconcini" esotici un po' di tutto il mondo, e per questo siano in grado di offrire una possibilità di intrattenimento, probabilmente non molto utile, magari qualche parallelismo, qualche confronto, o una visione d'insieme. Forse alcuni di noi tenteranno allora di esplorare l'inventario etnografico globale per avere qualcosa da dire, in risposta a un senso del dovere pubblico o sedotti dalla possibilità di quindici secondi di gloria. Per quanto mi riguarda, almeno in quel caso, non mi venne la tentazione.

Parole chiave: marchio; commento; giornalismo; politica; multilinguismo

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Cultural Journalism and Anthropology: A Tale of two Translations

Already Evans-Pritchard identified anthropology in terms of cultural translation, a notion which has been influential in the discipline, as well as debated. The debate has generated insights into issues of interpretation, understanding and authenticity. When I study the transnational dance world, or the world of contemporary Irish writers, I translate these settings with their concerns into academic conceptualizations. This is what I was trained to do. But during my fieldwork in the dance world, one dancer after another kept asking me "So you're a writer – why don't you write about us in the paper?" The people I was studying seemed to suggest that I should make myself useful by writing about them in the newspaper, and also, they told me, in dance magazines, international and Swedish ones. In order to give something back to the people that had allowed me access to the closed world of ballet, I thus set out on my first piece of cultural journalism for Svenska Dagbladet, a Swedish daily. This entailed a different type of translation. Now I had to make my anthropological findings not only accessible but also attractive to a wider readership familiar with the arts, but not necessarily with anthropology. The purpose of this article is to explore the process of writing cultural journalism drawing on anthropological research.

Keywords: Cultural journalism; Cultural translation; Creative writing; Travel; Transnational

Antropologia e giornalismo culturale. Storia di due traduzioni

Già Evans-Pritchard intese l'antropologia in termini di traduzione culturale, una nozione che ha esercitato molta influenza sulla disciplina e anche molto discussa. Il dibattito ha prodotto una particolare sensibilità per i temi dell'interpretazione, della comprensione e dell'autenticità. Nello studiare il mondo transnazionale della danza, o quello degli scrittori irlandesi contemporanei, traduco questi ambiti e le loro problematiche nei termini delle concettualizzazioni accademiche. È ciò che la mia formazione mi spinge a fare. Tuttavia, nel corso del mio lavoro di campo sul mondo della danza, molti iniziarono a chiedermi "dunque sei una scrittrice – perché allora non scrivi un bell'articolo su di noi?" Le persone che studiavo sembravano suggerirmi che avrei potuto rendermi utile scrivendo di loro sul giornale e anche, mi dissero, su riviste specializzate, internazionali e svedesi. Allora, per ricambiare le persone che mi avevano permesso di

entrare nel mondo chiuso del balletto, mi accinsi a scrivere il mio primo pezzo di “giornalismo culturale” per la *Svenska Dagbladet*, un quotidiano svedese. Questo mi impegnò in un tipo diverso di traduzione. Avevo il compito di rendere le mie scoperte antropologiche non solo accessibili ma anche attraenti per un più ampio pubblico di lettori dotato di una certa familiarità con l’arte, ma non necessariamente con l’antropologia. In questo articolo esamino il processo che a partire da una ricerca antropologica porta a fare del “giornalismo culturale”.

Parole chiave: Giornalismo culturale; Traduzione culturale; Scrittura creativa; Viaggio; Transnazionale

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Cultural Exclusion: Migrant Minorities and the Law in the UK

Study of the discrimination which affects migrants and their descendants in contemporary Europe has focused principally on social and economic exclusion and its consequences for integration. The concept of ‘cultural exclusion’, which refers to the way in which institutions and their personnel may fail to take into account the religion and ‘culture’ (in the anthropological sense) of migrants and their descendants when resources and rights are accessed and allocated, broadens the notion of social exclusion in a manner that speaks directly to the work of anthropologists. Building on the UNDP’s concept of ‘cultural liberty’, the paper explores immigrant and ethnic minority cultural and religious exclusion specifically in the context of encounters with the law and legal processes in the UK, and examines how far the law and those operating in its shadow could or should make room for, ‘other’ values, meanings and practices.

Key words: Cultural exclusion; Ethnic minorities; Religion; Law; UK

L’esclusione culturale: minoranze migratorie e Diritto nel Regno Unito

Lo studio della discriminazione che colpisce i migranti e i loro discendenti nell’Europa contemporanea si è concentrato soprattutto sull’esclusione economica e sociale e sulle sue conseguenze per l’integrazione. Il concetto di ‘esclusione culturale’, che si riferisce al modo in cui le istituzioni, e il loro personale, nel garantire accesso e nell’allocare risorse e diritti, possono non tenere in conto la religione e la ‘cultura’ (in senso antropologico) dei migranti e dei loro discendenti, allarga la nozione di esclusione sociale in una maniera che si rivolge direttamente al lavoro degli antropologi. Basandosi sul concetto di ‘libertà culturale’ adottato dall’UNDP, lo scritto esplora l’esclusione culturale e religiosa delle minoranze etniche costituite dagli immigrati nel contesto specifico dei rapporti con la legge e i procedimenti legali nel Regno Unito, ed esamina fino a che punto la legge e i funzionari pubblici incaricati di applicarla potrebbero o dovrebbero lasciar spazio a valori, significati e pratiche ‘altre’.

Parole chiave: esclusione culturale, minoranze etniche, religione, diritto, UK.

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Il desiderio del selvatico. La Wilderness come categoria antropologica dell'immaginario

Nel quadro della riflessione contemporanea sul paesaggio il concetto di *Wilderness* si configura come categoria antropologica originaria, come paradigma primario di pensiero che interseca gli strati biologici e culturali nella percezione e nella rappresentazione del rapporto uomo/ambiente. Il moderno interesse per il selvatico che trasversalmente coinvolge le nuove istanze dell'ecologia umana, dell'etnoecologia, dell'ecocritica, della letteratura e dell'arte, mette in discussione le dialettiche consolidate del modello culturale antropocentrico, esplorando il legame con l'alterità dell'elemento naturale nella costruzione della strategie di sopravvivenza ambientale, delle competenze ecologiche e della definizione sociale.

Parole chiave: *Wilderness*; Antropologia del paesaggio; Scrittura della natura; Ecologia umana; Anarchismo verde.

The Desire for the Wild. Wilderness as an Anthropological Category of Imagination

In the context of contemporary reflection on the landscape, the Wilderness concept takes the form of original anthropological category, as the primary paradigm of thought that crosses cultural and biological layers in the perception and representation of the relationship between man and environment. The modern interest for the wild what involve crosswise new instances of human ecology, ethnoecology, ecocriticism, literature and art, to rise a questions the consolidated dilectic of anthropocentric cultural model, exploring the connection with the otherness of the natural element in the construction of environmental survival strategies, ecological competences and social definition.

Key words: *Wilderness*; *Landscapes Anthropology*; *Nature writing*; *Human Ecology*; *Green Anarchy*.

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Blessed be the Good Soldier: Cinema, Media and the Manufacturing of Nationhood in Post 9/11 Italy

This article addresses the contemporary wave of nationalism in Italy looking upon one of its pivotal figures, i.e. the soldier. Focussing primarily on post-war cinema and contemporary media reports regarding Italian soldiers in foreign missions of war (but offering also glimpses on schoolbooks from the fascist era) the article will offer an exploration of the continuities and discontinuities in the representation of the Italian soldier across history in Italian popular culture suggesting how, in line with the self-representation of the Good Italian, the soldier has always been presented as a good human being, one inevitably detached from historical responsibilities.

Key words: *Cinema*; *Representation*; *Nationalism*; *Soldiers*; *Contemporary Italy*.

"I nostri (bravi) ragazzi". Cinema, media e costruzione del senso di appartenenza nazionale nell'Italia del 'dopo 11 settembre'.

Questo articolo analizza la rappresentazione del soldato nella cultura popolare italiana. Mettendone a fuoco la centralità nella costruzione contemporanea del senso di appartenenza nazionale, l'articolo evidenzia continuità e discontinuità nella rappresentazione del soldato in contesti diversi, con particolare attenzione al cinema del Dopoguerra e ai dibattiti mediatici a proposito del coinvolgimento italiano nelle missioni di "pace" all'estero. Attraverso l'analisi di alcuni passi tratti da libri scolastici dell'epoca fascista, l'articolo suggerisce inoltre come la cultura popolare italiana sia stata capace di tenere in vita un'immagine coerente del soldato italiano, rappresentandolo principalmente come un "soldato buono". Nonostante sia generalmente dipinto come un individuo mosso da amore e altruismo, talvolta gli si riconoscono tratti di egoismo, opportunismo e pigrizia. L'insieme di tutte queste caratteristiche, per quanto apparentemente incoerenti tra di loro, ottiene l'effetto di attenuare ogni forma di responsabilità storica.

Parole chiave: *Cinema*; *Rappresentazione*; *Nazionalismo*; *Soldati*; *Italia contemporanea*.

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Turismo e immaginari migratori. Esperienze dell'Altrove nel Senegal urbano

Le rappresentazioni dell'Altrove sono un'angolazione peculiare per capire le aspirazioni al viaggiare di molti africani; questo fattore assume un ruolo centrale nelle esperienze individuali e collettive, diventando un elemento significativo che apre spazi di definizione del sé. Finora, un interesse minore è stato rivolto verso le varie forme e gli ambiti, non solo geografici, in cui l'Altrove è rappresentato, assunto di solito come l'espressione di un universalismo occidentale, nutrito da immagini e modelli culturalmente globalizzati. Al contrario, questo contributo sottolinea come l'idea di Altrove si costruisce storicamente in un contesto locale, facendo luce su come alcuni aspetti culturali locali producono uno specifico senso di spazialità, favorendo la formazione della frontiera tra 'qui' e 'là'. Volgendo lo sguardo alle aree urbane di *M'bour-Saly*, si osserva il ruolo svolto dai processi turistici e in quale misura essi diano significato alle immagini, alle narrazioni e alle pratiche attraverso cui gli individui esprimono il loro 'desiderio dell'Altrove'. Si problematizza l'idea *naïf* di un'Europa collettivamente percepita come uno stereotipato ed omogeneo El Dorado: la sua percezione sembra piuttosto legata alle esperienze soggettive e locali dei singoli.

Parole chiave: Senegal; Turismo; Migrazione; Altrove; Immaginario.

Tourism and Migratory imaginaries. Experiences of Elsewhere in Urban Senegal

Representations of the 'Elsewhere' is as peculiar field to understand the aspirations to travel of many African people; this factor assumes a pivotal role in individual and collective experiences, becoming a meaningful device that opens up spaces of self-definition. So far, a minor interest is devoted to styles and arenas where the Elsewhere is represented, often assumed as the expression of culturally globalised images and models of a Western universalism. Conversely, this contribute underlines how the 'idea of Elsewhere' is constructed historically within a local context, shedding light on how some cultural local aspects produce a specific sense of spatiality, fostering the formation of the frontier between 'here' and 'there'. Looking at the urban areas of *M'bour-Saly*, I show the role played by the touristic processes and to what extent they give meaning to images, narrations and practices through which people express their 'desire of Elsewhere'. The work aims to problematise the naïf idea of Europe, collectively perceived as a stereotypical and homogeneous El Dorado: its perception seems rather to be linked to the subjective local experiences of individuals.

Key words: Senegal; Tourism; Migration; Elsewhere; Imaginary

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La cura dell'uchimvi. Nota sulla medicina tradizionale tra i Wabebe della Tanzania

In questo articolo collego i concetti dell'eziologia e della cura delle malattie tra i Wabehe, una popolazione della Tanzania centro-meridionale, alla loro cosmologia. In questo sistema medico tradizionale, il ruolo di terapeuta è svolto dai *waganga wa kienyeji* (letteralmente: "dottori del villaggio"). Dopo aver analizzato il rito di cura dell'*uchimvi* (lett. "malocchio"), nell'ultima parte descrivo come, negli ultimi anni, i sintomi dell'HIV/AIDS siano stati assimilati e trattati dai *waganga* come casi di *uchimvi*. Essi, con il rito di cura del *uchimvi*, aiutano i loro pazienti ad averne una prima conoscenza e, infine, a 'com-prendere' l'HIV/AIDS.

Parole chiave: Wabehe; Antropologia medica; Rituali terapeutici; Curatori tradizionali; HIV/AIDS e medicina tradizionale

The cure of uchimvi. A note on traditional medical system among Wabebe (Tanzania)

In this article I link concepts of health disorder's etiology and therapy among the Wabebe's, a people living in the south and central part of Tanzania, to their cosmology. In their traditional medical system, people affected by health disorder's are treated by the *waganga wa kienyeji*, "the village doctors". After focusing on the rite of treatment of *uchimvi* ("evil eye"), in the last pages I describe the way HIV/AIDS is conceived and treated by the *waganga* as occurrences of *uchimvi*. By this way of interpreting this disease, *waganga* so help their patients to have a former knowledge of it and, finally, to 'understand' the HIV/AIDS.

Key words: Wabebe; Medical anthropology; Therapeutic rituals; Traditional curers; HIV/AIDS and traditional medical systems.

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Concezioni dei luoghi e figure dell'alterità: il mare tra i Wayuu. Seconda parte.

Tra i Wayuu, una popolazione indigena sudamericana che ha adottato l'allevamento di bestiame nel secolo XVII, il mare ha valenze simboliche differenti, che oscillano tra due poli opposti. Nel primo, esso è rappresentato come un luogo destinato a restare sotto il dominio del 'mondo altro', associato con la morte e le malattie; nel secondo esso diventa un luogo addomesticabile e appropriabile. In questa seconda parte, esamino dapprima i modi in cui il mare compare nei miti cosmogonici, e del suo rapporto con l'immagine dei Bianchi; successivamente analizzo il legame tra la credenza secondo cui gli animali marini sono gli animali domestici di Pulowi, la signora del 'mondo altro', e quella che il bestiame abbia un'origine marina.

Parole chiave: Wayuu; indigeni sudamericani; dicotomia selvaggio/domestico; alterità; sistemi di classificazione.

Images of places and figures of Alterity: the sea among the Wayuu. Second part.

Among the Wayuu, a South-American indigenous people which adopted cattle-rearing since the XVIIth Century, the sea can assume different symbolic values, which sway between two opposite polarities. According to the first one, it is a place which will always be under the mastery of the 'otherworld', linked with death and sickness; according to the second one, it can become a place to be domesticated and appropriated. In the second part of this paper, I first describe the ways the sea appears in the cosmogonical myths and its relationship with the image of the Whitemen; afterwards, I study the link between the belief that sea animals are the cattle of Pulowi, the Master of the 'Otherworld', and the belief that cattle come from the sea.

Key words: Wayuu; South American Indians; wild/domesticated dichotomy; alterity; systems of classification.

Don Chisciotte innamorato

Il significato dell'opera di Cervantes non è ancora stato inteso nella sua pienezza. Non è la vicenda di un cavaliere ideale, come ha letto la critica romantica, neppure il rifiuto del mondo della cavalleria né una sua parodia. Il suo senso ultimo si sostanzia e si esprime nell'amore per Dulcinea che, sebbene figura centrale della narrazione, nella realtà non esiste. In questo suo non esserci, infatti, si occulta quanto Cervantes ha voluto dirci. Il disagio di Don Chisciotte non consiste nell'impossibilità di vivere come un vero cavaliere, ma nel fatto che la realtà nella quale si riconosce non esiste. Non diversamente da Dulcinea, è un parto della sua fantasia, del suo bisogno di inventarsi un mondo altro rispetto a quello che ha sperimentato e patito.

Parole chiave: Cervantes; Don Chisciotte; Cavaliere; Realtà/Fantasia; Follia

Don Quixote in love

The meaning of Cervantes' work has not been completely assessed in all its complexity. It is neither the story of an ideal knight, as the romantic critics would say, nor the denial of the cavalry world, nor even his parody. Its ultimate meaning is expressed in Don Quixote's love for Dulcinea. Although she is the central character of the narration, she does not exist in reality. The non-existence of Dulcinea points at Cervantes' hidden message. Don Quixote's unease does not consist in the impossibility to live as a real knight, but in the fact that his reality does not exist. Like Dulcinea, his reality is a product of his fantasy, of his need to invent another dimension different from that he has experimented and suffered.

Key words: Cervantes; Don Quixote; Knight; Reality/Fantasy; madness

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Stabat Mater di tradizione orale in Sicilia

I comportamenti musicali svolgono tuttora un ruolo fondamentale entro i contesti celebrativi della Settimana Santa in Sicilia. Suoni strumentali (inni e marce dei complessi bandistici, segnali prodotti con trombe, tamburi, crepitacoli ecc.) e soprattutto canti tradizionali – in siciliano, latino e italiano – marciano le azioni rituali connesse alla rievocazione della passione e morte del Cristo, con stili e modalità esecutive ampiamente variabili. Lo *Stabat Mater* è uno tra i canti che più frequentemente ricorre nei riti pasquali di numerosi centri dell'Isola. A causa della sua nota origine "letteraria", questo testo assume un valore emblematico come attestazione del legame tra ambienti popolari e ambienti colti nella formazione dei repertori musicali cosiddetti paraliturgici. Questo contributo offre una panoramica generale sulla presenza dello *Stabat Mater* nella tradizione etnomusicale siciliana, analizzando alcune esecuzioni del canto e delineando i contesti socio-culturali in cui da secoli se ne tramanda la pratica, spesso a opera di cantori associati a confraternite laicali o ad ambienti parrocchiali.

Parole chiave: Stabat Mater; Oralità; Settimana Santa; Paraliturgia; Sicilia

Stabat Mater of oral tradition in Sicily

Musical behaviours still provide an important role during Holy-Week Sicilian celebrations. Instrumental sounds (hymns and marches of band ensembles, signals performed by trumpets, drums, crepitacols, etc.) and traditional song – in the Sicilian dialect or in Latin and Italian – mark the ritual actions that traditionally evoke the passion and death of Jesus Christ. The Stabat Mater is often sung in Easter rites of several Sicilian villages. For its "literary" origin this text has an emblematic value to show the connection between "high" and folk contexts in the creation of paraliturgic repertoire. This contribution offers a general view of the presence of Stabat Mater in ethnomusical Sicilian tradition, analyzing some of the musical performances, and delineating the socio-cultural contexts in which for several centuries the practice has been transmitted, often by singers associated with laical Confraternities or with parishes.

Key words: Stabat Mater; Oral tradition; Holy-week; Paraliturgy; Sicily