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TELEVISIONISM

INTRODUCTION: TELEVISION AND THE FICTIONAL REWRITING OF HISTORY IN ITALY'S 'SECOND REPUBLIC'

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'Television [...] is an ideal observatory from which to study the ways in which Italians related to their history, and the limits and long-term implications of this relationship'.[1]

The media have become ever more dominant in the production of national and global memories. These are de facto increasingly mediated. Accordingly, scholarly debates have focused on the way history and memory — on a national as well as on a global scale — are shaped by the media, among which television has perhaps had the strongest impact on the construction of memories. Since the 1990s, history programming for television in Europe has increased, although research on the subject has long remained in the margins.[2] In fact, it was not until the 2000s that a number of publications set out to tackle the issue of historical and narrative production on television, establishing cross-European and transnational comparisons, and investigating the plurality of actors involved in history production on television, the construction of public memory, and the rewriting of national identity.[3]

In these international studies, the specific case of Italy has been largely overlooked.[4] Yet, television has had a very strong impact on the production, diffusion, and reception of national histories and memories in Italy, especially since the collapse of the domestic film industry in the 1980s.[5] Due to the influence of Italian political parties on television programming,[6] the role of television in shaping people's ideas about the past, present, and future has indeed become a crucial feature of Italian culture and politics. The rewriting of national history through television programmes can thus be said to be a specific feature of Italy's transition to the Second Republic, in the early 1990s.[7]

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In addition, while scholars have explored the ways in which Italian public history has been constructed through historical television programmes,[8] the role of fiction, however, remains under-researched. In this special section of *The Italianist* we will therefore focus on the fictional rewritings of Italian history on television in the period of the Second Republic, paying particular attention to the format of the *miniserie*, usually a three-hour (two-episode) long series which in Italy is associated with prestige, high production values and craftsmanship, making history not only attractive for the beholder, but also a commercial success. We will not, however, exclude longer formats, as in the case of *La meglio gioventù* (four episodes) and *Raccontami* (a series of fifty-two episodes, broadcast in two seasons).[9]

Produced both by public and private channels, the *miniserie* is becoming an ever more popular tool to enact revisions of Italian history. Hence we will explore how fictional series produced since the end of the Cold War have been instrumental in rewriting the country's public memory, in the moment of historical and political transition that followed the disappearance of political parties who belonged to the Constitutional pact established in 1945. The new political forces which appeared after the transition to the Second Republic, in particular the right-wing parties that became dominant in the 'Berlusconian era', were in fact keen to redefine Italy's primary historical events such as the Second World War, the Holocaust, Fascism, and the anti-fascist Resistance, in order to legitimize the new political landscape of the Second Republic.[10] Revisionism in the context of the difficult memory of political violence in the 1970s has been more complex, but in general the miniseries under examination show that there is a tendency to depoliticize and privatize social history in order to find a common denominator for collective remembrance. The selected period of production therefore encompasses the fall of international Communism in 1989 and the restructuring of the Italian political system in the early 1990s up to the present day.

Re-enactment, reconciliation and shared memories

The special section explores different points of view and debates on the ways in which television reconfigures the relation between the past and the present, a particularly difficult relation for a country marked by 'divided memories'.[11] Milly Buonanno speaks of a 'temporal turn' at the beginning of the third millennium, which in televisual storytelling has fostered a widespread trend of a 'return to the past'.[12] This temporal switch is a feature that has spread beyond Italy and can be related to what Paul Ricoeur has defined the 're-enactment of the past' in contemporary narration.[13] In Buonanno's view, television drama has taken up the baton of programmes of historical popularization and has achieved the objective of broadening the horizon of a generalist audience. She therefore disagrees with the statement 'that television spoils the memory and erases history by obdurately sticking to the present'.[14]

The Italian case contributes to broader discussions about European memory within the global context of the rewriting of national histories after 1989.[15] In fact, with the end of the Cold War a number of dominant historical narratives were criticized or downright rejected, opening up new historical debates, but also creating new dominant narratives about twentieth-century history. This is notably

the case for the historiography of the Second World War, which has been greatly shaped by Cold War narratives.[16] In the specific case of Italy, the post-Cold War period has given priority to narratives describing the transition to the Second Republic as an occasion of post-ideological reconciliation, in which Italy's 'divided memories' of the Second World War and the Cold War could be finally overcome.

Some critics see in these attempts at reconciliation a special commitment for public television to construct a 'shared memory'.[17] But is this really possible and desirable? As Philip Cooke observes in relation to the specific memory of the Italian Resistance, 'any attempts to create a common identity around the Resistance have met and always will encounter problems'.[18] Indeed, is it at all useful — Cooke asks us — 'to create a sense of national identity (if such a thing is desirable) around the Resistance'?[19] Would a more coherent or 'shared' memory of similar events of national importance simply not risk replacing one version of history for political ends with another? In this special section we will, then, reflect upon attempts to create a coherent and 'shared' memory through televised historical narrations, and explore the risks of an instrumental usage of historical narrations for specific political purposes.

Televisionism

The neologism 'televisionism' stands for the employment of television as a way to promote new historical narratives which find their political and intellectual roots in post-Cold War historical revisionism. We will explore not only the televised remediation of national historical narrative, but also reassess the concept of historical revisionism in the context of fictional rewritings aiming to become part of the 'collective' memory of a group.[20] We draw on Emiliano Perra's definition of historical revisionism, that is, 'a complex set of discourses aimed at doing away with anti-fascism as the cornerstone of Italian democracy, and at replacing the dichotomy between fascism and anti-fascism with that between totalitarianism and democracy'.[21] At the same time, we may also identify 'good' uses of revisionism,[22] if the concept is taken in its objective meaning of a paradigm change of interpretations which orientates towards an exploration of the past in the present, on the basis of transformations in society and shifts in collective memory.[23]

With regard to the televised remediation of national historical narrative, we will furthermore see that it is possible to speak of truly 'transmedial' constellations of memory, to which literature, film, and television contribute with their own, media-bound perspectives and modalities of reception.[24] This 'transmedial' dimension means that television products concerning historical events are not simply cultural artefacts but originate as a result of a variety of factors and within the boundaries of 'public memory'. The latter can be defined as 'the memory of the public sphere, a discursive space within society where different collective memories confront each other'.[25] In other words, public memory is the background against which various parts of the social structure exchange and negotiate views.[26]

The focus on public memory allows for a shift towards an analysis of the public debate engendered by television drama, that is, towards a reception studies of televised history. Furthermore, when 'televisionism' is identified with this open and mobile space of negotiated memories, it can provide more or less political

interpretations of fictionalized history on television. Buonanno and Perra, for example, disagree on how to interpret the success and timeliness of the miniseries *Perlasca: un eroe italiano*, aired on RAI Uno on 28 and 29 January 2002. For Perra, the series about a supporter of Fascism who rescued 5200 Jews in 1944 is a clear example of the 'normalization' of Fascism as promoted in conservative and 'post fascist' environments, and disseminated through the media.[27] Buonanno, on the contrary, argues that the historical drama's thematic option in favour of civil resistance makes paramount that these aesthetic and ethical choices are made in 'wishing to appeal to a shared notion of Italianness'.[28]

Mediated memory

Critical and favourable visions of broadcasting 'collective memories' depend not only on the consideration of the use of history by public media,[29] but also on the form given to history by the specific medium of television. Joanne Garde-Hansen calls to mind Marshall McLuhan's credo that 'societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication'.[30] This emphasis on modes or modalities of media and memory brings us to the concept of 'mediated memory', that is, the idea that the act of remembering an individual or collective past today is 'entirely mediated through documentaries, films, literature, digital storytelling and video diaries'.[31] In other words, memory is constantly mediated by 'technologies of memory'.[32] In this perspective, Alison Landsberg has developed the concept of 'prosthetic memories', referring to those memories that originate 'outside a person's lived experience and yet are taken on and worn by that person through mass cultural technologies of memory'.[33] Indeed, popular culture informs life stories, 'in that narrators draw on generalized, public versions of the aspects of the lives that they are talking about to construct their own particular, personal accounts'.[34]

Mediation and the mediated experience applies not only to cinema but also, and perhaps even more so, to television films and documentaries, especially when considering the popularity of a medium such as television, particularly in the Italian context. As Marika Tolomelli observes, television is among those mass media that perhaps more than any other puts itself at the top of that pyramidical structure of the public sphere, claiming a tendentially indisputable strength of influence on processes of forming public opinion.[35] Television is then crucial in the process of transference of memory, as 'fictional media' – in Astrid Erll's words – have the potential 'to generate and mold images of the past which will be retained by whole generations'.[36]

In her chapter on 'Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory', Erll introduces a pluri-medial level of 'pre-mediation', that is, a 'tight network of other medial representations (and medially represented actions) [that] prepare the ground for the movies, lead reception along certain paths, open up and channel public discussion, and thus endow films with their memorial meaning'.[37] The miniseries *Perlasca* offers a good example of this 'pre-mediation'. As Perra has observed, if the miniseries introduced the figure of Perlasca to a wider audience, 'it did not come out of a void; rather it capitalized on, and represented the crowning of, a decade-long process'.[38] Clearly, then, the binary opposition between media as 'mass', 'popular', and 'artificial', on the one hand, and memory as lived, authentic,

and experienced, on the other, should be reconsidered as being blurred.[39] It is therefore important to keep in mind that the personal memory of viewing an historical event is 'structured by the ideologies of the broadcaster and the broadcast and the consumption of the broadcast in the private sphere, not by the reality of the event as staged in the unmediated world'.[40] This premise has two flip sides: one of manipulation and one of democratization of 'collective memory', in which form or style becomes a decisive criterion.

ITALY'S DIVIDED MEMORIES

In order to situate the examples of miniseries discussed by the authors of this special section, it is necessary to have some notion of the most recent scholarly debates related to Italy's public history and its 'divided memories'. Divided memories play a significant role in current political culture and in processes of identity formation. They have marked Italian history since the nineteenth century, resulting in 'certain accounts [being] excluded from historical discourse for long periods of time'.[41] Scholars have widely debated over the issue of Italy's divided memories, from its colonial legacy to the legacy of the fascist regime and of anti-fascist Resistance during World War II up to the traumatic memory of terrorism and *stragismo* during the 1970s and the early 1980s, the so-called *anni di piombo* — or 'years of lead'.

With regard to World War II, the violent struggle taking place in northern Italy between Axis troops and the anti-fascist Resistance gave rise to a wide range of conflicting memories in post-war Italy, generating political divisions which have lasted until our present days.[42] At the same time, scholars have noted how counter-memories of wartime violence were progressively silenced during the First Republic by different political forces, contributing to the creation of a series of *rimozioni* or silenced memories in Italy's public memory. The country's shift of alliance from Nazi Germany to the Allies through unconditional surrender in 1943, the Nazi occupation of northern Italy, and the anti-fascist Resistance movement all allowed post-war Italian elites to gloss over the country's fascist, anti-Semitic, and colonial legacy. Rosario Romeo coined a famous phrase which is illustrative of this situation: 'the Resistance, performed by few, served as a cleansing of the conscience for all'.[43] In addition, Claudio Pavone has noted that anti-fascist unity governments after 1945 eschewed responsibility in international negotiations, refusing war reparations and 'the very idea that an Italian could be judged by Ethiopians or by people from the Balkans, who were considered to be a step lower in the scale of civilization'.[44] Moreover, thanks to a series of amnesty laws approved in 1946, most fascist war criminals were never judged for their violence against civilians in Italy and abroad, and

> the credit acquired by moving into the Allied camp paradoxically helped absolve the fascists and their military apparatus both on the legal front and on that of common conscience, which was confused but eager for clarity, and thus contributed to the urge to move ahead.[45]

The divided memories and legacies of World War II were reinforced during the Cold War era. As noted by Guido Crainz, the political opposition between Fascism

and anti-Fascism was quickly replaced by one between Communism and anti-Communism in the early Cold War period. After the Christian-Democrats' electoral victory in 1948, the government marginalized the memory of the Resistance, which remained confined to the oppositional Communist and Socialist Parties. Throughout the 1950s, discussions of Fascism on the newly founded Italian broadcasting service RAI were rare, and both Communists and Socialists were excluded from any broadcasting for the tenth anniversary of the Liberation in 1955.[46] It is only since the beginning of the 1960s that the Resistance was valued once again as a source of political legitimization across the political spectrum, and that Fascism was publicly discussed on national television. At the same time, this new national narrative glossed over the civil war which had taken place during World War II between fascist and anti-fascist forces, as well as Fascism's complicity in the Holocaust, and focused instead on the struggle of Italians against Nazism.[47]

These narratives — constructing what has been defined as the 'myth of the good Italian' — contributed to evading discussion on Fascism's imperialist enterprises, and pushed Italy's colonial legacy towards the margins of collective memory.[48] The loss of the colonies in 1945, as a result of Italy's military defeat, meant in fact that the country did not have to go through a process of decolonization, as, for instance, France did in the 1950s and 1960s.[49] A new narrative was formed around Italy's 'benevolent' colonialism, and the debate about the political responsibility for colonial crimes was almost completely eschewed. This *rimozione* continued until recent years: two films about Italian colonialism produced in the 1980s, the BBC's *Fascist Legacy* (1989) and the Libyan sponsored *The Lion of The Desert* (1981), were censored in Italian public television and remain scarcely known to the Italian public even today.[50]

The memory struggle over the interpretation of Second World War was further enhanced after 1968, due to the emergence of the protest movements of 1968–1969 and of the New Left. The latter opposed the moderate strategies of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and its political 'betrayal' of the ideals of the anti-fascist Resistance, reflected primarily in the PCI's involvement in the *compromesso storico* — a political alliance between Communists, Socialists and the Christian Democrats — and in its support of Giulio Andreotti's government after the elections of 1976. Revolutionary ideals, including the notion of a 'betrayed Resistance', were (re-)appropriated by younger generations of left-wing militants and nurtured terrorist groups that arose in the early 1970s.[51] Thus the 1970s became, as Richard Bosworth and Patrizia Dogliani have observed, 'a time of public contestation about the past which then seemed, in many eyes, indeed, the key to the present and future'.[52]

It was mostly, however, the conflicts between left-wing groups and the Italian state, as well as the *strategia della tensione* enacted by right-wing groups in complicity with the secret services apparatus, that contributed to Italy's political polarizations.[53] The 'years of lead' were thus marked by violent episodes of terrorism — largely of left-wing matrix — and neo-fascist *stragismo* (derived from *strage* or 'massacre'). Among the most dramatic incidents of political violence are the 1969 bomb attack of Piazza Fontana in Milan, which is generally interpreted as the beginning of the *strategia della tensione*;[54] the 1978 kidnap and murder of the Christian-Democrat leader Aldo Moro by the left-wing terrorist group, the

Brigate Rosse; and the 1980 neo-fascist bomb massacre in Bologna, killing eighty-five people and wounding over 200.[55] Many of these events have never been resolved in legal terms, nor has Italian history education managed to transmit a faithful, impartial, and complete interpretation of the 1970s.[56] As a result, the decade contains a series of 'open wounds' which continue to nurture debates and obstruct a process of working through of the 'trauma' of the 1970s,[57] specifically when political violence resurfaces in the present.[58]

With the end of the Cold War and of Italy's First Republic, as mentioned earlier on, a new process of memorialization and history writing developed in Italy, with clear political aims.[59] Despite the fact that, until 1989, Christian-Democratic governments firmly controlled RAI Uno,[60] the new strand of right-wing historical revisionism supported the idea of a left-wing hegemony over culture during the First Republic, and thus also over the interpretation of Fascism and of the Resistance.[61] Many of these scholars followed the theses of revisionist historian Renzo De Felice (1929–1996), the author of a monumental biography of Benito Mussolini and of a book-length interview, issued in 1995, entitled *Rosso e nero*,[62] in which he introduced the phenomenon of 'attesismo', or 'wait-and-see-ism', the survival strategy of the 'large grey zone' of Italy's civil society during 1943–1945.[63] As noted by Giovanni De Luna, De Felice's works aimed at writing a history of Fascism and of the Second World War from the point of view of the *ceti medi* or the silent majority, against the Marxist historical tradition promoted by anti-fascist forces.[64]

The positions of De Felice found a wider public in the post-Cold-War era, in the climate of the 'end of ideology'. Italian revisionist historians pursued a 'demystification' of the alleged anti-fascist bias in Italian history writing and aimed at a 'non-ideological' depiction of Fascism as modernizing factor in Italian history.[65] This interpretation clearly distinguished Fascism from Nazism and from the Holocaust, reinforcing the 'myth of the good Italian' mentioned earlier on. In the attempt to equalize fascist and anti-fascist violence, moreover, a strong emphasis was placed on episodes of partisan violence during the Second World War, and in its immediate aftermath. These historical episodes have been rediscovered and popularized for the general public, notably through Gianpaolo Pansa's bestsellers on the history of 'the defeated', that is, fascist combatants.[66]

A similar 'demystification' did not occur with regard to the 1970s, for the simple reason that the 'years of lead' have never allowed for any 'positive' legacy or myth to take root in the public sphere in the first place. Recently, however, journalists Mario Calabresi and Benedetta Tobagi have attempted to rewrite (in 2007 and 2009 respectively) the history of their fathers killed in (left-wing) terrorist attacks,[67] thus representing the point of view of the victims of terrorism and of their families. Both have since then been offered to collaborate with the RAI, Calabresi as the conductor of the programme 'Hotel Patria' and Tobagi as a member of RAI's Administrative Council. These examples could provide potentials for 'good' uses of revisionism in the sense of a paradigm change of interpretations oriented towards a collective exploration of the past in the present. At the same time, they cannot exclude the risk of turning victimhood into an uncontested version of the past, a phenomenon analysed by De Luna in his book *La repubblica del dolore*.

Italian miniseries: creating italianness through emotions

This special section of *The Italianist* will follow not the chronological order of production of the (mini)series discussed, which would set apart *Donne armate* (Sergio Corbucci, 1991) from the other productions, all dating from the 2000s, but the order of the historical episodes addressed. Emiliano Perra's article discusses miniseries featuring clergy and lay figures who, in relation to the drama of the Holocaust, become symbols of 'rescue' from a Catholic viewpoint. Susanne Knittel's contribution establishes a link between two series by Alberto Negrin, *Perlasca: un eroe italiano* (2002) and *Il cuore nel pozzo* (2005), which deals with the delicate issue of the *foibe* (a series of executions carried out in 1943 and 1945, mostly by Yugoslav partisans). This approach enables her to interpret the latter as the 'Italian Holocaust'. Mauro Sassi, on the other hand, discusses fictional retellings of two defenders of human rights in different time frames and fighting against different enemies, in his comparison of Negrin's miniseries on Perlasca with a miniseries about General Carlo Alberto dalla Chiesa. Silvia Casilio introduces a (trans-)generational and long-term approach in her analysis of two series set in post-war Italy, Marco Tullio Giordana's celebrated *La meglio gioventù* (2003), which follows the 1968 generation — represented by the fictional brothers Matteo and Nicola Carati — up to the 2000s, and the popular series *Raccontami* (Tiziana Aristarco, 2006). The latter shifts attention towards the years of the economic miracle, generally experienced as a happy period in Italy's difficult post-war reconstruction. Andrea Hajek, finally, discusses Corbucci's *Donne armate* (1991), an attempt to come to terms with the traumatic memory of 1970s political violence at a time when the end of the Cold War and the *Tangentopoli* corruption scandal provoked a radical re-organization of the Italian political system, as a result of which Italian historiography (and not only Italian) embarked on a process of rewriting the history of the Italian Republic. It does so by placing two opposing actors, a female terrorist and a female police officer, on the same level, in an attempt at seeking reconciliation.

When we look at the ways in which the television series analysed by the authors contribute to the production of new historical discourses, it is possible to identify a series of narrative mechanisms that are specific to the medium of Italian miniseries. In Perra's analysis of the biopic genre it becomes clear how narrative patterns are informed by specific historical contexts and concerns. This explains the didactic tone and the absence of moral ambiguity when establishing a link between religion and rescue in Italian Holocaust dramas. Knittel focuses on the aesthetic strategies employed by Negrin in *Il cuore nel pozzo* with the purpose of making the *foibe* appear a genocide against the Italian people. In order to ground this claim in historical veracity, the series superimposes a fictional narrative on the historical record of the *foibe*. Sassi's contribution asks for the development of a neo-Durkheimian framework like that developed for anthropology and political science to better grasp the links between contexts of production and styles of representation. Casilio discusses the visualization of the transformations in Italian culture of the 1950s and 1960s in *La meglio gioventù* and *Raccontami*, exploring the 'mediated historiography' and the narrative modalities of fictional rewritings of the past for the creation of a national identity. She demonstrates that a revision of history is achieved as plural and conflictual memories of the past are eliminated

in order to produce a shared memory for younger generations. This occurs through the depoliticization of 1968 and the erasure of social conflict and revolutionary movements for political change. Hajek, finally, provides a theoretical analysis of the gendered choice and reception of actors and of the interplay between *Donne armate* and other films and television programmes of that period by applying Erll's definition of (pluri)mediality and pre-mediation, and by placing the miniseries in the context of processes of reconciliation and transitional justice.

A second point of convergence in the articles is that of emotion and affect. In *La repubblica del dolore*, De Luna stressed the importance of both, notably the centrality of the 'paradigm of victimhood' and the 'privatisation of pain' in the construction of televised narratives of Italian identity through history. Emotions such as empathy and trauma are mobilized to create mechanisms of individual and collective identification with the characters in the series: male and female (anti-) heroes, but also children, often victims of senseless violence.[68] Televised narratives are also highly sexualized and gendered: love and family stories involving different generations are crucial narrative mechanisms used to create a sense of identification in the viewer, and to produce narratives about violence, politics, and heroism, as well as to create narratives about national identity and sexual diversity.

All the contributions focus on emotion as a crucial vehicle for empathy. Perra shows how empathy in hagiographic biopics on rescue figures is manipulated in order to create an historical Italianness that is 'inherently good' and 'Catholic'. Stressing precisely these values as being inherently Italian, the biopics fail to address 'new Italians', a growing part of the Italian population not raised within this tradition of national identity. Knittel argues that a focus on defenceless subjects enlarges the cruelty of the Slav perpetrator: with the help of emotional identification, an Italian tragedy is created which stages a uniform memory with the suffering of the Italians at its centre. For Sassi, the emphasis on emotion is typical for individualistic styles of representation that highlight anomalies and risk-taking behaviour. In combination with a hierarchical style, which guarantees an accepted but not necessarily a historically accurate reading of historical facts, the style of the miniseries can be defined as prevalently hierarchical with a strong individualistic component. Emotion is also central in the series analysed by Casilio, due in part to the personal involvement — in both products — of screenwriter Stefano Rulli. Indeed, Casilio demonstrates that the individual stories of the characters merge with collective memories of those years, in an attempt to create a shared, public memory and testimony of a lived past. Hajek argues that in *Donne armate* the moral divide between 'good' and 'evil' characters is abandoned in order to question the role of the terrorist, not only an offender but here also a victim. She shows how recognition and alignment with police officer Angela, the legitimate holder of a weapon in the miniseries, shifts towards terrorist Nadia, who is transformed into a victim and a heroine as she gives up her freedom to save Angela's life.

The different contributions demonstrate that the creation of a shared memory through historical fictional miniseries is hindered on the levels of historical credibility, on that of rhetoric and on the level of emotional manipulation. Fiction is used to create and to ground a generally accepted reading of history as well as a collective feeling of Italianness. In other words, in the miniseries discussed, what is

missing is the disruptive quality of emotions which could problematize received hierarchies of memory and provoke doubts and critical reflections in the spectator. Only *Donne armate*, which in a certain sense inaugurates Second Republic revisionism, uses empathy precisely to put the dichotomy between 'good' and 'evil' into question, in an attempt to come to terms with the divided memory of political violence.

Alternatives to televisionism

This exploration leads us to conclude that Italian television — at least in the form of fictional miniseries — is unable to create any sense of collective historical consciousness which is critical and not necessarily manipulative. The authors express their concern that historical revisionism on television has become a political practice, with direct involvement not only of the Italian government — especially in the Berlusconi era — but also of the Catholic Church (in the case studies analysed by Perra). What exactly does this mean? Is television as a medium not suited to offering a productive input to public memory? Could we think of alternative usages of television as a way to raise political and historical awareness?

At this point the comparison with other audiovisual media in relation to the uses and abuses of memory and history may be useful. In a special issue of *Studies in Documentary Film*, contemporary Italian documentary cinema is analysed as a counter-discourse in opposition to the hegemonic discourse of television, not so much with regard to content as to form:

> [...] it is in the formal treatment of the subject matter and in the explicit rejection of certain televisual and conformist formats that monopolize the range of vision and promote a univocal regime of seeing that documentary shows its strength. We may say that the poetics is political.[69]

The editors of the special issue believe that similar subversive ways of seeing can also be achieved through television. The latter can, in fact, become a non-conformist medium of resistance when it is enacted as a strategy of activist intervention.[70] According to Anita Angelone, initiatives to launch micro-television stations that transmit free programming only in the smallest of areas, where the airwaves are not already occupied by existing channels, could satisfy the criteria that — according to Patricia Zimmerman — 'materialize new publics and actualize new spaces and domains'.[71] We may also reconnect with Garde-Hansen's notion of democratizing memory-making through digital media. We should, in fact, bear in mind that Italian television nowadays is challenged by the emergence of digital media,[72] which might be more capable of formulating critical discourse.

To conclude, what media should be engaged with in order to address the recent past in a critical way and so as to interact with public opinion? Should this task be passed from television to digital media and to the experimental form of contemporary Italian documentary cinema, with the risk, however, of transferring criticism to a margin of low-budget and risk-taking production? In 2010, the Danish political drama television series *Borgen* won the Prix Italia, an international Italian television, radio-broadcasting, and website award. Could

such a 'what if' approach to recent national political history within, and not outside, the mainstream television production be thinkable for Italy as well?

The debate about the possibilities of criticality inherent in the medium of television remains open, and deserves more attention. In this special section of *The Italianist* we aim to explore the potential and the limits of historical television drama, and the risks of political manipulation present in televised history, hoping that this exploration will lead to further discussions about television culture in the Italian context, and on the ways in which this medium contributes to the construction of public history and memory. As becomes clear from the different contributions, despite the emergence of new media, the 'old' medium of television fully retains its political and symbolical power. It is here to stay, and needs to be confronted.

NOTES

[1] Guido Crainz, 'The Representation of Fascism and the Resistance in the Documentaries of Italian State Television', in *Italian Fascism: History, Memory, and Representation*, ed. by Richard Bosworth and Patrizia Dogliani (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), p. 128.

[2] Ann Gray and Erin Bell, *Televising History: Mediating the Past in Post-war Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 1.

[3] See, for example, Ann Gray and Erin Bell, 'History on Television: Charisma, Narrative and Knowledge', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10·1 (2007), 113–33; Sonja De Leeuw, 'Television Fiction: A Domain of Memory. Retelling the Past on Dutch Television', *Televising History*, pp. 139–51.

[4] Milly Buonanno, *Italian TV Drama and Beyond: Stories from the Soil, Stories from the Sea* (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), p. 231.

[5] Tiziana Ferrero-Regis, 'Cinema On Cinema: Self-reflexive Memories in Recent Italian History Films', *Transformations*, 3 (2002), <http://www.transformationsjournal.org/journal/issue_03/pdf/ferrero-regis.pdf> (p. 3) [accessed 11 November 2012].

[6] See for the issue of television censorship Alberto Abruzzese, 'Censorship in the Time of Berlusconi', in *Culture Censorship and the State in Twentieth-Century Italy*, ed. by Guido Bonsaver and Robert Gordon (Oxford: Legenda, 2005), pp. 179–90; Vanessa Roghi, 'Television and Censorship: Preliminary Research Notes', in *Culture Censorship and the State in Twentieth-Century Italy*, ed. by Guido Bonsaver and Robert Gordon (Oxford: Legenda, 2005), pp. 150–57; Nina Rothenberg, 'Political Cleansing and Censorship in Public Television — A Case Study of Michele Santoro and Enzo Biagi', in *Resisting the Tide. Cultures of Opposition under Berlusconi (2001–06)*, ed. by Daniele Albertazzi et al. (New York and London: Continuum, 2009), pp. 217–30.

[7] Giovanni De Luna, *La repubblica del dolore: le memorie di un'Italia divisa* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2011).

[8] See Crainz.

[9] Buonanno, p. 209.

[10] Emiliano Perra, 'Legitimizing Fascism through the Holocaust? The Reception of the Miniseries *Perlasca: un eroe italiano* in Italy', *Memory Studies*, 3·2 (2010), 95–109.

[11] John Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[12] Buonanno, p. 199. Buonanno has authored various volumes on Italian television drama.

[13] Buonanno, p. 200.

[14] Buonanno, p. 210.

[15] De Luna, p. 14.

[16] Jan-Werner Müller, *Memory and Power in Post-war Europe: Studies in*

the Presence of the Past (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[17] Buonanno, p. 219.

[18] Philip Cooke, *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 193.

[19] Cooke, p. 193.

[20] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992). See also Jeffrey Olick, 'From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products', in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 151–61.

[21] Perra, p. 98.

[22] Enzo Traverso, *Il passato: istruzioni per l'uso. Storia, memoria, politica* (Verona: Ombre corte, 2005).

[23] Loredana Guerrieri, 'Nuovi "revisionismi". Dal caso Faurisson alla nascita di un negazionismo marxista', in *Paradigma Lager. Vecchi e nuovi conflitti del mondo contemporaneo*, ed. by Silvia Casilio, Annalisa Cegna, and Loredana Guerrieri (Bologna: CLUEB, 2010), p. 49.

[24] See Astrid Erll, 'Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction', in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 1–16.

[25] Perra, p. 96.

[26] On public memory, see Kendall R. Phillips, 'Introduction', in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. by Kendall R. Phillips (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), pp. 1–14.

[27] Perra, p. 98.

[28] Buonanno, p. 223.

[29] Perra reminds us of the fact that 'public memory' can also, if not simply, be identified with official political statements (p. 96).

[30] Cit. in Joanne Garde-Hansen, *Media and Memory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 61.

[31] Garde-Hansen, p. 42. On media and memory, see also José van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

[32] Marita Sturken, 'Memory, Consumerism and Media: Reflections on the Emergence of the Field', *Memory Studies*, 1·1 (2008), 73–78 (p. 75).

[33] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory. The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 19.

[34] Penny Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews', *Culture and Social History*, 1·1 (2004), 65–93 (p. 68).

[35] Marika Tolomelli, *Sfera pubblica e comunicazioni di massa* (Bologna: Archetipolibri, 2007), p. 44.

[36] Astrid Erll, 'Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory', in *Cultural Memory Studies*, p. 389.

[37] Erll, p. 396. See also Holger Pötzsch, 'Renegotiating Difficult Pasts: Two Documentary Dramas on Bloody Sunday, Derry 1972', *Memory Studies*, 5·2 (2011), 206–22 (p. 208).

[38] Perra, p. 100.

[39] Garde-Hansen, p. 39.

[40] Garde-Hansen, p. 32.

[41] Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory*, pp. 14, 11. In his conceptualization of Italy's divided memories, Foot (p. 8) draws on Giovanni Contini's book *La memoria divisa* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1997).

[42] Andrea Mammone, 'A Daily Revision of the Past: Fascism, Anti-Fascism, and Memory in Contemporary Italy', *Modern Italy*, 11·2 (2006), 211–26. See also Gianpasquale Santomassimo, *Antifascismo e dintorni* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2004).

[43] Quoted in Claudio Pavone, 'Introduction' [special issue on Hidden pages of contemporary Italian history], *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 9·3 (2004), pp. 271–79 (p. 273). See also Claudio Fogu, 'Italiani brava gente: The Legacy of Fascist Historical Culture on Italian Politics of Memory', in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. by

Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 147–76.

[44] Pavone, p. 272.

[45] Pavone, p. 273; on Italy's post-war amnesty, see Mimmo Franzinelli, *L'amnistia Togliatti: 22 giugno 1946: colpo di spugna sui crimini fascisti* (Milan: Mondadori, 2006). On war crimes and their memory, see Filippo Focardi and Lutz Klinkhammer, 'The Question of Fascist Italy's War Crimes: the Construction of a Self-Acquitting Myth (1943–1948)', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 9·3 (2004), 330–48.

[46] See Crainz, p. 126.

[47] Crainz, p. 129.

[48] Pavone, p. 272. See also David Bidussa, *Il mito del bravo italiano* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1994).

[49] Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare: storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002), p. 434.

[50] Labanca, pp. 455–56.

[51] Philip Cooke, 'The Resistance Continues: A Social Movement in the 1970s', *Modern Italy*, 5·2 (2000), 161–73 (p. 161).

[52] Richard Bosworth and Patrizia Dogliani, *Italian Fascism: History, Memory, and Representation* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), p. 7.

[53] The *strategia della tensione* can be defined as a political climate of fear and alarm as well as an illusion of the threat of political subversion coming from the left, which was provoked by right-wing organizations and aimed at creating 'an atmosphere of terror in the country so as to promote a turn to an authoritarian type of government'. Anna Cento Bull, *Italian Neofascism. The Strategy of Tension and the Politics of Nonreconciliation* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2008), pp. 7, 19; Andrea Hajek, 'Teaching the History of Terrorism: The Political Strategies of Memory Obstruction', *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 2·3 (2010), 198–216 (pp. 6–8).

[54] No verdict was ever reached in the Piazza Fontana trial, although the Court of Appeal officially attributed the crime, in 2005, to neo-fascists Franco Freda and Giovanni Ventura who could no longer, however, be sentenced as the crime had expired. See Luciano Lanza *Bombe e segreti. Piazza Fontana: una strage senza colpevoli* (Milan: Elèuthera, 2009); John Foot, 'La strage e la città: Milano e Piazza Fontana, 1969–1999', in *La memoria contesa. Studi sulla comunicazione sociale del passato*, ed. by Anna Lisa Tota (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2001), pp. 199–215.

[55] On the Aldo Moro case, see, among other sources, Alan O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana. Italian Cinema and Italian Terrorisms, 1970–2010* (Oxford and Berlin: Peter Lang, 2011). On the 1980 terrorist attack in Bologna, see Anna Lisa Tota, *La città ferita: memoria e comunicazione pubblica della strage di Bologna, 2 agosto 1980* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003); Anna Lisa Tota, 'Terrorism and Collective Memories', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 46·1–2 (2005), 55–78.

[56] Hajek, 'Teaching the History of Terrorism', p. 14.

[57] On trauma and the 1970s, see Ruth Glynn, 'Trauma on the Line: Terrorism and Testimony in the *anni di piombo*', in *The Value of Literature In and After the Seventies: The Case of Italy and Portugal*, ed. by Monica Jansen and Paola Jordão (Utrecht: Igitur Publishing, 2006), pp. 317–35, <http://www.italianisticaultraiectina.org/publish/articles/000009/english.html> [accessed 29 November 2012].

[58] See, for example, Andrea Hajek, 'L'errore di nascondersi dietro ai "fantasmi armati" degli anni '70', *TraMe*, <http://centrotrame.wordpress.com/2012/05/14/lerrore-del-nascondersi-dietro-ai-fantasmi-armati-degli-anni-70-2/> [accessed 29 November 2012].

[59] See *La storia negata. Il revisionismo e il suo uso politico*, ed. by Angelo Del Boca (Venice: Neri Pozza, 2009).

[60] Matthew Hibberd, *The Media in Italy: Press, Cinema and Broadcasting from*

Unification to Digital (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2008), p. 76.

[61] Pavone, p. 271.

[62] Renzo De Felice, *Rosso e nero*, ed. by Pasquale Chessa (Milan: Baldini and Castoldi, 1995).

[63] Robert C. Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture 1944–2010* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), pp. 146–47.

[64] De Luna, pp. 59–62.

[65] Crainz, p. 135.

[66] Massimo Storchi, 'Post-war Violence in Italy: A Struggle for Memory', *Modern Italy*, 12·2 (2007), 237–50. An answer to revisionism of the Resistance has come from Italian crime fiction, from writers such as Loriano Macchiavelli and Francesco Guccini. See on the issue of rewriting history in the Italian detective: *Memoria in Noir. Un'indagine pluridisciplinare*, ed. by Monica Jansen and Yasmina Khamal (PIE Peter Lang: Bruxelles-Bern, 2010).

[67] See Mario Calabresi, *Spingendo la notte più in là* (Milan: Mondadori, 2007); Benedetta Tobagi, *Come mi batte forte il tuo cuore* (Turin: Einaudi, 2009).

[68] Buonanno, p. 218.

[69] Anita Angelone and Clarissa Clò, 'Other Visions: Contemporary Italian Documentary Cinema as Counter-Discourse. Introduction', *Studies in Documentary Film*, 5·2–3 (2011), 83–89 (p. 85).

[70] Anita Angelone, 'Talking Trash: Documentaries and Italy's "Garbage Emergency"', *Studies in Documentary Film*, 5·2–3 (2011), 145–56 (p. 153).

[71] Angelone, p. 153.

[72] Michela Ardizzoni and Chiara Ferrari, *Beyond Monopoly: Globalization and Contemporary Italian Media* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010).