

CHILDREN'S UTOPIA / FASCIST UTOPIA:
IDEOLOGY AND RECEPTION OF TEXTBOOKS
UNDER ITALIAN FASCISM

A Dissertation
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ABSTRACT

Capitalizing on children's "extraordinary ability to learn," Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini decreed an order to issue five elementary school textbooks, known as the *Libro unico dello Stato* in 1926. Reaching across Italy's geographic and multicultural barriers, the purpose of this state-issued textbook was to standardize Italian schooling and create a unified body of Fascist subjects. Yet, Fascist Italy's new curricula proved anything but uniform, as the regime issued two distinct rural and urban editions of the *Libro unico* between 1929 and 1944 following Mussolini's decree. Exploring tensions within the regime's ideas on nationalism in a study that combines literary, theoretical, and historical analyses, my dissertation, *Children's Utopia / Fascist Utopia: Ideology and Reception of Textbooks under Italian Fascism*, argues that the *Libro unico* served purposefully to stratify and not unify Italy's student body at the primary school.

Approaching my study of the regime's education reforms, pedagogic manuals, and scholastic reading material through an Althusserian framework, my work diverges from the issues which current scholarship has tended to focus on (i.e. militarism, Aryanism, *questione meridionale*) and in this way offers a new perspective on Fascist cultural history. Examining the rationale behind Fascist policies on elementary school education, I show how Mussolini established an apparatus of textbooks that would shape children into hard-working Fascist devotees. The purpose, as I see it, was one of economic exploitation. Placing students into lower-working classes, these textbooks, in addition to the vocational school system stemming from pedagogue Giovanni Gentile's 1923 school reforms, did not encourage students to pursue their studies beyond the elementary school level. Rather, they served to mold students into manual workers—farmers and industrialists—who would produce the products and services necessary to maintain the regime's autarchic policies at a time when Italy was experiencing an economic crisis. But what I uncover through my reading of the textbooks' stories, poems, and illustrations is the broader implications which this schooling had on class division as well as modern notions of *italianità*, democracy, and civic duty. Despite its failures, Fascist schooling established a system of stratification that contributes to class division and social inequality to this very day.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sylvia Tamara Hakopian received her Ph.D. in Italian Studies from Cornell University's Department of Romance Studies in 2017 under the direction of Professors Timothy Campbell, Enzo Traverso, and Medina Lasansky. Her research interests embrace both the history of schooling in Fascist Italy, 20th century Italian literature, and Marxist critical theory. Drawing on archival work conducted in Italy and in the U.S., Dr. Hakopian's dissertation titled, *Children's Utopia / Fascist Utopia: Ideology and Reception of Textbooks under Italian Fascism*, studies the Fascist subjection of Italian elementary school children by means of the government-issued schoolbook known as the *Libro unico dello Stato* between 1929 and 1944. An active member in the field of Italian Studies and the History of Education, she has received a number of competitive research awards, including the prestigious Luigi Einaudi Dissertation Research Fellowship, and has published an excerpt of her work on Education Minister Giovanni Gentile's 1923 curricular and textbook reforms in the volume *Utopia, the Avant-Garde, Modernism, and (Im)possible Life*, edited by David Ayers, et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015). Dr. Hakopian has taught a range of courses in language and literature with students from a variety of disciplines both in Italy and in the U.S. and has most recently become the recipient of Cornell's Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines Teaching Portfolio Award for her original first-year undergraduate writing seminar, "Imagining Pinocchio: Education in Italy and Modern Europe." Dr. Hakopian also holds a Post-baccalaureate certificate in Classics with an emphasis in Latin, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in English with an emphasis in British literature from the University of California, Los Angeles. She is fluent in Italian, Armenian, and English and has advanced knowledge of French.

I dedicate this work to my parents, Amalia and Hakop, in gratitude for their love and persistence to see their children succeed.

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PREFACE

Italian Cultural History in Perspective: Fascist Textbooks beyond Racial Politics and Militarism

My journey to pursue this dissertation topic came about accidentally. I was conducting research for a paper on *romanità* and the Fascist discourse of power in the fall semester of 2009, when I came across a copy of Roberto Forges Davanzati's 5th grade textbook, *Il balilla Vittorio*, at Cornell University's Olin Library. I remember glancing at that Fascist-era schoolbook for the first time, feeling an utmost sense of shock: the child on the cover was dressed in military attire and held a large rifle in his hand. That image was a violent one for me and sparked a plethora of questions in my mind. Why was this child holding a gun? Why was the child wearing paramilitary regalia? Why did the Fascists offer such images to children, and what did they all mean? How were children supposed to read and understand these texts? How did the Fascists themselves view children, childhood, and elementary school education? This shocking image of a *balilla* on the cover of Forges Davanzati's schoolbook combined with my initial questions became the overall motivation behind the focus of my dissertation. Yet, what I found in the course of my research surprisingly ran counter to my initial assumptions about Fascist education.

Children's Utopia / Fascist Utopia: Ideology and Reception of Textbooks under Italian Fascism engages with current historiography on Fascist culture and explores tensions within the regime's ideas on nationalism and *italianità* through an analysis of textbooks and elementary school education. Approaching my study of the regime's education reforms and scholastic reading material through an Althusserian framework, my work diverges from the issues which current scholarship has tended to focus on (i.e. militarism, Aryanism, *questione meridionale*) and in this way offers a new perspective on Fascist cultural history. Examining the rationale behind

the Italian Fascist regime's policies on elementary school education between 1922-1944, I specifically investigate the ways in which Mussolini established an apparatus of rural and urban textbooks that would fundamentally serve to shape Italy's children into hard-working Fascist devotees. The purpose, as I see it, was one of economic exploitation. The Fascists used elementary school education as a means to restrict children within lower working classes. Their goal was to mold students into manual workers—farmers and industrialists—who would produce the products and services necessary to maintain the regime's autarchic policies at a time when Italy was experiencing an economic crisis.

Through my reading of government circulars, pedagogic manuals, and textbooks, my argument, for one, diverges from the established literature, which says that military practices, including marching, carrying guns, and wearing uniforms, primarily served to shape children into soldiers. Militarism, I maintain, was only a framework for representing the regime's ideas of work. It became a means for teaching the behaviors—blind obedience, discipline, hard work, devotion, nationalism, respect for hierarchy—that would keep children from questioning the ideas and values they were being taught. Instead of fashioning an army out of children, militarism served to produce a strict labor force that would obediently carry out assigned tasks within a desired time frame. Doing so, this labor force would help ensure a steady rate of productivity at the workplace and regulate Italy's economy efficiently.

As the title to this research suggests, the main characters in this work are not only the Fascist writers, pedagogues, and policymakers—(e.g., Benito Mussolini, Giovanni Gentile, Giuseppe Bottai, Roberto Forges Davanzati)—responsible for the compilation of such reading material and academic curricula, but also the elementary school children, studying the textbooks. Children are at the front and center of these textbooks, and, as I see it, play an important role

within the regime's scope for the country. Their willingness to undertake jobs in agriculture and industry would serve to purge the country of lazy, selfish individuals who presumably contribute to Fascist Italy's catastrophic decline. Readers, or "fanciulli utopisti," as pedagogue Nazareno Padellaro calls them, are being taught that if they work hard and do what they are told, they can actively establish a new peaceful order, namely a prosperous and united Fascist society. The *Libro unico dello Stato*, in other words, lays out the utopian blueprint for a kind of Fascist revolution: a rejection of the old, weak, idle liberal Italy for the establishment of a new, disciplined, hierarchical, ordered Fascist Italy made prosperous through work.

Viewing the *Libro unico* through this lens, I allude to Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry's definition of children's utopian literature. According to the scholars,

Utopian and dystopian writing for children and young adults has been produced for a variety of reasons, and it has had a range of effects, from play and escape to sustained political reflection. In utopian writing, younger readers must grapple with social organization; these utopian works propose to teach the young reader about governance, the possibility of improving society, the role of the individual and the limits of freedom. Utopian writing for children and young adults examines the roots of social behavior and encourages the child to question his or her own society. It often sets up a confrontation between the child and the adult world. In addition, children and young adults are generally in the center of the

action or set of concerns, sometimes even bearing the major responsibility for the formation, survival, or reform of the society.¹

Children no doubt “bear the major responsibility,” as Hintz and Ostry put it, of “reforming” Italian society by practicing manual labor. As they read about the possible jobs they can take, children learn about the various forms of Fascist hierarchy and understand their proper role and function within society. Of course, Fascist textbooks do not encourage children to question their learning and worked according to how Mussolini believed Italian identity, social norms, and national life *ought* to be defined. Indeed, by way of the *Libro unico*’s rhetorical strategies, the regime sought to make their utopian ideology their readers’. The rationale behind using utopia as a rubric, therefore, was to nationalize and unite Italy’s student body under one common goal. It sought to engage students, give them a shared sense of purpose, and make them feel involved in the regime’s project of building an economically prosperous nation.

Understanding the Fascist government’s policies to educate children through this framework of an ideological utopia becomes especially useful when we consider competing notions of rural and urban *italianità* sprinkled across editions of the *Libro unico*. Here I bring Ostry and Hintz’s definition of children’s utopian literature into dialogue with Frederic Jameson’s notion of ideology and “ruling-class consciousness” as being “in its very nature Utopian.”² In my view, Fascist utopian ideology within the *Libro unico dello Stato* is built around the “perception of what threatens the survival group,” as Jameson suggests.³ Identifying

¹ Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, “Introduction,” *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults* (New York: Routledge, 2003): 1.

² See Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981) 289-290.

³ Jameson 290.

tensions between the regime's representation of rural and urban Italy, I show how the state-issued textbook harbors a multitude of conflicting ideologies and narratives that communicates a sense of discord and ultimately sets Italians of these demographic areas at odds. The concept of utopia accordingly becomes a framework for examining the struggles and failures in the regime's own conceptualization of Italian national identity against class diversity and multiculturalism and for studying how such ideas of *italianità* are formed.

Within the textbooks, race, quite curiously, is seldom mentioned. When it does appear, the term *razza*, moreover, is *not* described using words and expressions (e.g., white Aryanism and hyped virility) found typically within Nazi rhetoric and largely contrasts with the anti-Semitic language and images found in such journals as the *Difesa della razza* or in such children's magazines as the *Corriere dei piccoli*.⁴ This includes the textbooks issued under Education Minister Giuseppe Bottai at the time of Italy's racial laws between 1938-1939.⁵ Here

⁴ Literature on the *Difesa della razza* is vast. The following represents only a sample: Francesco Cassata, *La difesa della razza: politica, ideologia e immagine del razzismo fascista* (Turin: Einaudi, 2008); Michele Loré, *Antisemitismo e razzismo ne La difesa della razza, 1938-1943* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2008); and Joshua D. Zimmerman, ed. *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945* (Cambridge: U of Cambridge P, 2005). On the *Corriere dei piccoli*, see Fabiana Loparco, *I bambini e la guerra: il Corriere dei Piccoli e il primo conflitto mondiale (1915-1918)* (Florence: Nerbini, 2011); Claudio Carabba, *Corrierino, Corrierina: la politica illustrate del Corriere della sera* (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 1998); Sabrina Fava, *Piccoli lettori del Novecento: i bambini di Paola Carrara* (Lecce: Pensa Multimedia, 2016).

⁵ In accordance with the 1938-1939 racial laws, Minister Bottai passed a decree establishing elementary schools for students of the Jewish faith. Within that same year, Bottai, moreover, made it illegal for mainstream elementary and middle schools to adopt textbooks that were written by or made reference to Jewish authors. Bottai's directives, however, never appear to have come to complete fruition, as his administration soon after allowed for exceptions. Circular n. 20439 published on July 22, 1939, for instance, allowed publishing companies to produce books that cited or made reference to Jewish authors. The directive states, "Facendo seguito alle disposizioni impartite con la circolare n. 20439 del 22 luglio, e in relazione ad analoghi quesiti pervenuti a questo Ministero, avverto che nei libri di testo per le scuole sono consentite le citazioni ed ammessi, in genere, i riferimenti al pensiero di autori di razza ebraica, sia italiani che stranieri – beninteso, con la maggiore parsimonia – solo se si tratti di autori morti non oltre la metà dello scorso secolo. È altresì consentito, e senza limitazione alcuna, che nelle bibliografie

again, my analysis of an Italian Fascist identity by way of elementary textbooks deviates from established literature, which sees racist politics as the main factor in shaping individuals into Fascist subjects. Throughout the *Libro unico*, Italians are primarily represented as a people, or race, if we want to call it that, of hard workers. They are the sole, direct descendants of Ancient Romans—Romulus and Remus, Julius and Augustus Caesar—who built Italy’s boundaries and infrastructure through manual labor. Examples of such language may be found throughout editions of the *Libro unico*. In addition to the tales which I discuss in Chapter Three and Four, compiler Maria Zanetti, for one, quotes Mussolini in her work, *Patria: Il libro di lettura per la IIIa classe dei centri urbani*, as noting, “Roma è il cuore potente della nostra razza. Chi tiene Roma, tiene la Nazione.”⁶ Within Piero Bargellini’s *Il libro della IV classe elementare: letture*,

contenute nei testi scolastici siano menzionate opere di autori di razza ebraica.” To my knowledge, the regime never issued any *Libro unico* specifically for the Jewish elementary school. This in addition to the exceptions in Bottai’s directives make me wonder whether the regime never fully enforced its laws because they may have proven costly to publishing companies. On Bottai’s directives, see “Istituzione di scuole elementari per fanciulli di razza ebraica,” *Giornale della Libreria* 29 Oct 1938: 481; “Divieto di adozione nelle Scuole di libri di testo di autori di razza ebraica,” *Giornale della Libreria* Oct 1938: 279-280; “Elenchi delle sostituzioni dei libri di testo degli autori di razza ebraica,” *Giornale della Libreria* Oct 1938: 286; “Testi scolastici di autori di razza ebraica,” *Giornale della Libreria* 17 Sept 1938: 254; and also “Chiarimenti ministeriali in merito all’epurazione dei libri di testo dal punto di vista razziale,” *Giornale della Libreria* 26 Aug 1939: 253.

⁶ The original quote says, “Roma è il cuore potente della nostra razza. È il simbolo imperituro della nostra vitalità del popolo. Chi tiene Roma, tiene la Nazione.” Emphases here are mine and serve to highlight the differences between Zanetti’s and Mussolini’s text. Within that same speech titled, “Per la sagra dei combattenti,” the Fascist leader elaborates by attributing qualities of industriousness and discipline to the idea of a revitalized *razza italiana*. He states, “La frase che si deve vincere la pace non è un luogo comune. Racchiude una profonda verità. La pace si vince con la concordia, col lavoro, con la disciplina. Questo è il vangelo aperto dinanzi agli occhi delle nuove generazioni che sono uscite dalle trincee, un vangelo semplice e schietto che tiene conto di tutti gli elementi, che utilizza tutte le energie, che non si abbandona a tirannia o ad esclusivismi grotteschi, perché ha dinanzi agli occhi una mèta sola, una mèta comune: la grandezza e la salvezza della Nazione!” See Maria Zanetti, *Patria: Il libro di lettura per la IIIa classe dei centri urbani*, illus. Mario Pompei (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1942) 158, and also Benito Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, ed. Edoardo and Duilio Susmel, vol. 19 (Florence: La Fenice, 1957) 287.

Italy appears to have triumphed over adversity perhaps better than any other country in light of the sacrifice and toil of its people. Italian ingenuity, according to Bargellini, has civilized not solely those within the regime's African colonies but those across the world. He writes:

L'Italia dunque ha veramente fatto da sè. Essa ha conquistato il suo Impero non solo col eroismo, ma anche col suo genio. L'Impero, affidato alle meravigliose doti della razza italiana, è l'Impero della giustizia, l'Impero del genio, del lavoro, l'Impero della civiltà.

Per l'Impero italiano i figli migliori han dato sudore, sangue e luce d'intelligenza.

Le nuove generazioni italiane, alle quali il Duce ha dato l'impero, devono sempre di più educare il loro animo al sacrificio, il loro cuore all'ardimento, le loro menti allo studio.⁷

Bargellini likewise compares the *Duce* to Julius Caesar, stating,

Anch'Egli, come Cesare, ha posto fine alle lotte dei partiti. Anch'Egli ha pensato al popolo, ha dato lavoro. Anch'Egli ha vinto il mondo, spezzando l'assedio di cinquantadue nazioni, e ha vinto in Africa, in sette mesi, la guerra contro un impero schiavista.

⁷ Piero Bargellini, *Il libro della IV classe elementare: letture*, illus. Angelo della Torre (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1938) 170. A similar tale in which Italians are celebrated for their ingenuity and work may be found in Padellaro's tale, titled "L'impero." See his volume, *Il libro della terza classe elementare*, illus. Carlo Testi (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1938) 206-208.

Non ha prigionieri dietro di sè, ma le ombre di un imperatore senza trono e di molti ras senza più autorità par che gli posino ai piedi.

E anch'Egli non pensa al suo personale trionfo. Vede un immenso lavoro ancora da compiere. Regioni intere da colonizzare; paesi che aspettano una legge; popoli che vogliono lavorare. Vede ingiustizie da riparare, dolori da sollevare, tristezze da consolare, tradimenti da punire, eroismi da esaltare.⁸

Within these tales teleology plays an important part in representing Italians: Mussolini and his people are defined by and practice the activities of their presumed Roman ancestors. Manual work, therefore, becomes an expression of the glories of their ancient past and the means for establishing a prosperous future. It becomes a lens by which children may understand their cultural heritage, national identity as well as their contribution to and place in the world.

As I discuss in Chapter Three and Four, stories and poems on Italy's colonial conquests within the *Libro unico* largely represent the African terrain as a new frontier that provides opportunities for work and for improving the Italian economy. These stories yet again provide a

⁸ Bargellini 173-174. Within this passage, the Fascist government, symbolized in the figure of Mussolini, particularly adopts a rhetoric of collaboration. Here Italian colonists do not appear to enslave the African people, but rather work with them (e.g., "par che gli posino ai piedi"). Similar examples may also be found in the tale, "Con i nostri valorosi in Africa" (Zanetti 183-184) and "Dubat" (Bargellini 86-92). This latter tale in Bargellini's fourth grade textbook celebrates the bravery of a young Somalian named Amed Ascìò. Accompanying Italian troops across the African terrain, he eventually sacrifices himself to save the captain of the army. According to scholar Drew Chappell, such rhetoric of collaboration is also typical of American social studies textbooks. Chappell studies the ways in which these schoolbooks represent an American society, characterized by social accord and racial equality. See Chappell's essay, "Training Americans: Ideology, Performance, and Social Studies Textbooks," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 38.2 (2010): 248-269.

utopian vision of a Fascist Italian population mobilized by its government's call to work. Whether they are within the confines of mainland Italy or abroad, these Italians—adults and children alike—appear united in their shared goal to contribute to Italy's economic prosperity. Exceptions to these are the very few stories, which describe Italian soldiers' combat against Abyssinians during the colonial wars. These stories tend to focus on the Fascist army, rather than its enemies, and lists soldiers' struggles and advancements toward victory. In taking this narrative approach, the textbooks' tales largely downplay the racial tensions that scholars have identified through other textual media and thus notably do not adopt any xenophobic rhetoric.⁹

This raises the question as to why racism never plays a prevalent role within the textbooks as it does, say, in children's magazines. Why for that matter did Bottai allow for exceptions to his directives against using elementary school textbooks compiled by or making reference to Jewish authors? I do not yet have an answer to these questions. However, in developing this work further in the future, one possible avenue for responding to these issues would involve a comparative study of editions of the *Libro unico* published for elementary schools both within the *regno* and abroad in the African colonies.¹⁰ Studying the language and images of these texts and the ways in which they educate, we might understand the regime's notion of *italianità* with respect to minority groups living in Italian territories. Notwithstanding any possible answers, these questions, nevertheless, bring me to the larger issue of why studying

⁹ Padellaro's "L'impresa abissina" in fact appears one of the very few which makes derogatory comments against the African "enemy." Describing the difficulties which the Italian army faced, Padellaro briefly says, "Il mare non ha diviso la barbarie e non ha diviso l'eroismo. La scimitarra, arma barbara dei negri, e le sanzioni, arma barbara dei bianchi, hanno gareggiato in ferocia." See Padellaro 202.

¹⁰ The regime published a *Libro unico dello Stato* for elementary schools abroad and issued two sets of textbooks for use within the African colonies between 1930-1941. It disseminated one set within schools established exclusively for native Italian children and the other set within schools designated for indigenous African children. See "I libri per le scuole coloniali," *Giornale della Libreria* 18-25 July 1931: 234.

textbooks are so important. Why ought we study the *Libro unico*? Why Fascist textbooks, and what can they tell us about dictatorships as a whole?

As I sketch in Chapter Two, the Fascist regime valued reading highly as a means for disseminating its ideology across Italy and, by way of various propaganda campaigns and education reforms, sought to create a reading public out of children. It is within this milieu that authors published such literature as Salvator Gotta's *Piccolo alpino*, Maria Rossi Gentile's *Un balilla non trema!*, Giorgio Berlutti's *Il cuore d'Italia* as well as the *Corriere dei piccoli* and *Il giornalino della domenica*. These books and journals adopted an italo-centric view of the world and hence caricatured people of different cultures and nationalities. Yet, while the Ministry of Education wanted children to be exposed to these books and magazines, encouraged teachers to bring them to class, and asked parents to purchase them, it never actually compiled nor required students to study them at school. In comparison to these optional reading materials, which not many families could regularly afford to buy, the *Libro unico dello Stato*, in that respect, is unique. The textbook was compiled and issued under the strict supervision of the Ministry of Education and was made compulsory throughout all of Italy's elementary schools. Because children were exposed to this reading material for a significant number of hours at school on a daily basis, the textbook held a major role in educating according to Fascist ideology and perhaps reached a much larger audience than the above books and magazines. Combined with existing archival resources detailing its content, layout, pricing, distribution, and didactics, the textbook can provide us with perspective on how the regime sought to educate children *en masse*. At the same time, we can likewise understand how certain ideological values within the *Libro unico* might have competed or conflicted with those communicated through various forms of media—toys, films, radio programs, literature, journals—as well as after-school programs and activities.

In my analysis of the *Libro unico dello Stato* here across this work, I have already, for one, identified two competing, rural and urban notions of *italianità* and how these ideas undermined the regime's utopian vision of a Fascist Italy, united in its people's shared willingness to establish economic autarchy. I complicate the idea of a rural and urban Italy specifically by pointing to the regime's own inconsistencies with how it defined these geographical areas. Rurality and urbanity for the Ministry of Education do not simply appear to delineate a north-south divide as studies on the *questione meridionale* have maintained. And as I see it, the regime's inconsistencies rather open up questions to what it means to nationalize a population in light of strong multiculturalism. Despite eliminating courses on Italian dialects and local histories in favor of teaching a single Fascist cultural narrative, the MPE cannot help but allude to the regional in its rural and urban textbooks. In Italy's case, this plurality is highly rooted within not only its various regions but also at a more local level across its provinces.

Yet, my work here is hardly finished. Given these differences in the *Libro unico's* treatment of race, colonialism, and autarchy it would be interesting and important, for one, to compare this work with textbooks published not only under other Fascist regimes (e.g., Nazi Germany, Vichy France) but also under other democratic systems of government (e.g., USA, Britain) that may have likewise adopted nationalist rhetoric. The purpose in this comparative study would be to trace any commonalities that may exist between these texts and understand why these commonalities are there. This would give us insight into a definition of what makes a regime authoritarian or authoritative. Pursuing this issue within the Italian context, another avenue to consider would be to compare Mussolini's vision of education with that which came before in the period of the *Risorgimento*. As I briefly mention in Chapter Five, the system of education in this earlier period likewise insisted on preparing a class of children to pursue

manual work. This type of pedagogy was not exclusive to Italy and in effect was put into practice throughout Europe and the United States as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Fascist pedagogy, therefore, was based on a long-established tradition of educating children according to the constricts of the economic circumstances affecting countries at the time. Perhaps the main question to investigate in the course of such a project would be to understand how rooted Italian Fascism was within the *Risorgimento* and how that relationship affected Italian education and questions of national identity in the long run.¹¹ As my dissertation here focuses on an analysis of the *Libro unico*, it is in this respect modest in scope. Opening up questions for further study on issues concerning *italianità*, education, children, economic exploitation, and Fascism, nevertheless, I believe that it represents the beginnings of a much larger project.

¹¹ Alberto Mario Banti is one scholar who has detected major commonalities between the two historical periods and argues that Italian Fascism represented an extreme form of the *Risorgimento*. See his volume, *Sublime madre nostra: la nazione italiana dal Risorgimento al fascismo* (Rome: Laterza, 2011).

Chapter One

Planting the Seeds for Economic Exploitation: School and Textbook Reforms at the Dawn of Italian Fascism, 1923-1924

Introduction

In a speech given on the occasion of European liberation at the Department of French and Italian at Columbia University on April 25, 1995,¹ Umberto Eco ironically recalls participating as a child in the *Ludi Juveniles*,² a public sporting event organized by the Fascist government in Italy. Introducing his talk, Eco notes: “Nel 1942, all’età di dieci anni, vinsi il primo premio ai Ludi Juveniles (un concorso a libera partecipazione coatta per giovani fascisti italiani—vale a dire per tutti i giovani italiani). Avevo elaborato con virtuosismo retorico sul tema: ‘Dobbiamo noi morire per la gloria di Mussolini e il destino immortale dell’Italia?’ La mia risposta era affermativa. Ero un ragazzo sveglio.”³ Eco’s account begs the question: what kind of a Fascist could the “bright” ten-year-old Eco be? How might children of a young age be turned into Fascists? In what did the Fascist education of children consist? Eco does not answer these questions but uses two contradictory terms that merit attention.

The parenthetical description defining his competition includes two terms—“libera” and “coatta.” A key word highly valued by the Fascists, “libera” or “libertà” refers to the way in

¹ Umberto Eco, “Introduzione,” *Cinque scritti morali* (Milan: Bompiani, 1997) 5-8.

² Angela Teja categorizes the *Ludi* as a “competitive sport,” in which the *balilla* would participate. See “Italian Sport and International Relations Under Fascism,” *Sport and International Politics: The Impact of Fascism and Communism on Sport*, ed. P. Arnaud and J. Riordan (London: E & FN Spon, 1998) 147-170.

³ Original in English. Italian translation cited here is from “Il fascismo eterno.” Eco 25-48.

which children were to arrive at and internalize Fascist education *willfully*.⁴ Pedagogic manuals by the Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB) as well as the pedagogue, Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice, stress the importance of engaging the “allievo” and making sure that no student would be forced into following the recommendation of his instructor.⁵ Eco’s aside in which a specific part of the Italian population (the Fascist youth) also refers to the whole, recalls the philosophies of education minister and author of the *Origini e dottrina del fascismo*, Giovanni Gentile, on individual and collective will.⁶ Here Eco depicts Italian youth as aiming toward a goal shared by the Fascist state. Yet, the term “coatta” undermines any such possibility of “freedom” and “collective nationalism,” suggesting that coercion played a role in Eco’s participation in the *Ludi*. The image of a “collective and willful youth,” therefore, is an illusion.⁷ Eco himself indicates that his address to the crowd in the form of a question was nothing but a piece of rhetoric spoken with virtuosity. Did the rhetorical question mean something for Eco the child?

⁴ Defining “libertà” in terms of free will, Education Minister Giovanni Gentile, notes: “[L’educazione] si propone, indubbiamente, di sviluppare nell’uomo la libertà, poichè educare è far uomo; e l’uomo è degno del suo nome quando è padrone di sè, con la iniziativa e la responsabilità de’ suoi atti, con la coscienza e il discernimento delle idee che accoglie, professa, afferma, propaga; sicchè tutto quello che fa, dice e pensa, si possa dire veramente che sia egli a farlo, dirlo e pensarlo.” *La riforma dell’educazione: discorsi ai maestri di Trieste, Opere complete di Giovanni Gentile*, vol. 7, 55 vols. (Florence: Sansoni, 1955) 30-31.

⁵ Compare the ONB’s *Metodo per l’educazione fisica dei fanciulli* (Rome: Tipografia del Littorio, 1931) 11-12 and Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice’s, *La riforma della scuola elementare: vita nuova della scuola del popolo* (Palermo: R. Sandron, 1925) 53.

⁶ “In conclusione, io, come quel cittadino che sono, voglio quel che voglio io: ma, quando si va a vedere, quel che io voglio coincide precisamente con ciò che vuole lo Stato (che io voglia). E la mia volontà è la volontà dello Stato” See Gentile, *La riforma* 25, 26.

⁷ The relationship between the individual and the collective, coercion and consent under Fascism is not a new concept and has been considered at great length by a variety of scholars. The following is a sample: Karen Pinkus, *Bodily Regimes: Italian Advertising Under Fascism* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995); Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997); Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981); Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2004); George Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999).

What does it mean to be a child subjected to Fascism?⁸ The history of Fascist education and pedagogy here warrants attention.

Current Scholarship on the History of Fascist Education and Textbooks

A great deal has been written on children and education under Fascism. Much scholarship sheds light on ministerial decisions involving the reorganization of schools and the Fascist curriculum.⁹ Degl'Innocenti, Gentili, Koon, and Mazzatosta discuss the politicization of children within the broader context of the education reforms under ministers Giovanni Gentile and Giuseppe Bottai. Galfrè for her part focuses on the reforms of the *scuola secondaria*, while

⁸ Louis Althusser defines a subject as an “interpellated” individual who submits to and practices ruling ideology, imaginary “world-outlooks” conveyed by such institutions as the Church, schools, family, cultural, legal, and political bodies. Louis Althusser, “Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus,” *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001). For a useful overview of the term, see also Warren Montag, *Louis Althusser* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003); Antonio Callari and David F. Ruccio, eds., *Postmodern Materialism and the Future of Marxist Theory* (Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 1996).

⁹ By no means complete, a bibliography on the Fascist education of children would include the following: Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani, “Premessa,” *Il libro per la scuola tra idealismo e fascismo: l’opera della Commissione centrale per l’esame dei libri di testo da Giuseppe Lombardo Radice ad A. Melchiori (1923-1928)* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2005); Gianni Bertone, *I figli d’Italia si chiaman Balilla: come e cosa insegnava la scuola fascista* (Rimini: Guaraldi, 1975); Jürgen Charnitzky, *Fascismo e scuola: la politica scolastica del regime (1935-1943)*, trans. Laura Sergo Bürge and Ina Pizzuto (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1996); Ester De Fort, *La scuola elementare dall’Unità alla caduta del fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996); Maurizio Degl’Innocenti, *L’epoca giovane: generazioni, fascismo e antifascismo* (Manduria: Piero Lacaita, 2002); Rino Gentili, *Giuseppe Bottai e la riforma fascista della scuola* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1979); Tracy H. Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1985); Monica Galfrè, *Una riforma alla prova: la scuola media di Gentile e il fascismo* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2000); Maria Teresa Mazzatosta, *Il regime fascista tra educazione e propaganda: 1935-1943* (Bologna: Cappelli Editore, 1978); Lorenzo Minio-Paluello, *Education in Fascist Italy* (London: Oxford UP, 1946); Luciano Pazzaglia, Roberto Sani, and A Bianchi, *Scuola e società nell’Italia unita: dalla Legge Casati al Centro-Sinistra* (Brescia: La Scuola, 2001); Giuseppe Ricuperati, *La scuola italiana e il fascismo* (Bologna: Consorzio provinciale pubblica lettura, 1977).

others evaluate such printed materials as textbooks, games, newspapers, and advertisements addressed to an infantile audience.¹⁰ Bacigalupi and Fossati consider selections of prose from elementary textbooks before, during, and after the Fascist period, while Montino examines chapters on grammar, math, history, and religion in Fascist era textbooks and notebooks. Recent writing, moreover, concentrates on the history of publishing under Fascism and the political-editorial-economic aspects of producing children's textbooks and teacher's aids.¹¹ Ascenzi investigates the Pigna Paper Mill of Bergamo and the production of texts in relation to market demands, policies of autarchy, and colonialism, while Sani and Turi discuss the political influence of such Fascist intellectuals as Lombardo-Radice and Gentile on such Tuscan publishers as Sansoni, Bemporad, Vallecchi, and La Nuova Italia. Such a historiography provides insight into Fascist views regarding children and childhood; the forms and methods of persuasion used in communicating to young people; and the regulation of the industry publishing didactic material. As useful as these readings are, however, few examine elementary

¹⁰ Marcella Bacigalupi and Piero Fossati, *Da plebe a popolo: l'educazione popolare nei libri di scuola dall'Unità d'Italia alla Repubblica* (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1986); Egle Becchi and Ongaro F. Basaglia, eds. *Il Bambino Sociale: Privatizzazione e deprivatizzazione dell'infanzia* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1979); Carmen Betti, *Educazione e propaganda: l'analisi dell'indottrinamento nei messaggi e nei contenuti* (Milan: Emme, 1977); Davide Montino, *Le parole educate: libri e quaderni tra fascismo e repubblica* (Milan: Selene, 2005).

¹¹ Anna Ascenzi, *Education and the Metamorphosis of Citizenship in Contemporary Italy* (Macerata: Eum, 2009); Giorgio Chiosso, *Teseo '900: editori scolastico-educativi del primo novecento* (Milano: Bibliografica, 2008); Monica Galfré, *Il regime degli editori: libri, scuola e fascismo* (Rome: Laterza, 2005); Roberto Sani and Carmela Covato, "Percorsi dell'editoria scolastica nel ventennio fascista. A proposito di un recente volume," *History of Education & Children's Literature* 1.2 (2006): 369-383; Gabriele Turi, "L'editoria scolastica come problema storiografico," *Percorsi del libro per la scuola fra otto e novecento: la traduzione toscana e le nuove*, ed. Carmen Betti (Florence: Paganini, 2004) 9-22; Gian Bruno Ravenni, "Le fonti per lo studio del libro e dell'editoria in Toscana nei progetti della Regione Toscana," *Percorsi del libro per la scuola fra otto e novecento: la traduzione toscana e le nuove*, ed. Carmen Betti (Florence: Paganini, 2004) 97-100; Luciana Bellatalla, "Tipografi, librai ed editori a Pisa tra Otto e Novecento: al servizio dell'educazione?" *Percorsi del libro per la scuola fra otto e novecento: la traduzione toscana e le nuove*, ed. Carmen Betti (Florence: Paganini, 2004) 133-146.

schoolbooks with a focus on respecting the different ages and demographic backgrounds of children as well as their receptivity to Fascist ideology.

Before You Were the Gleam in Mussolini's Eye: A New Reading of Children, Fascist Textbooks, and Subjection

Children were important to the regime, because of their youth and vast ability to learn. Attending elementary school in their formative years, these children were believed to be easily influenced and, therefore, could prove an efficient means to perpetuate Fascism beyond Mussolini's tenure in government. Across these pages, I concentrate on the way in which the state-issued elementary school textbook known as the *Libro unico dello Stato* contributed to the Fascist subjection of children between 1929-1944. Reaching across Italy's geographic and multicultural barriers, the purpose of this textbook was to standardize Italian schooling and create a unified body of Fascist subjects. Yet, Italy's new curricula proved anything but uniform, as the regime categorized elementary school children into two rural and urban demographic groups. As it did so, it issued two distinct editions of the *Libro unico* across the first and fifth grades. In a study that combines both literary and historical analyses, this work argues that these two sets of the *Libro unico* served purposefully to stratify and not unify Italy's student body. Placing them into lower-working classes, the textbooks in fact served to support Mussolini's plan to build an autarchic nation based primarily on farming and industrial manufacturing at a time when Italy was experiencing an economic crisis. But what I uncover through an Althusserian reading of the textbooks' stories, poems, and illustrations is the broader implications, which this schooling had, on class division as well as modern notions of *italianità*, democracy, and civic

duty. Despite its failures, Fascist schooling and its textbooks established a system of stratification that contributes to class division and social inequality to this very day.

This move to stratify Italy's population notably began before 1929, as the regime slowly issued the curricular reforms that would eventually make way for a state-issued elementary schoolbook. Responding to previous claims that textbooks issued before 1927 were compiled "exclusively" on pedagogic motives and lack Fascist "political bias," in the first installment to this work, I focus on the historical context of education under Fascism and discuss the regime's first set of curricular reforms. The first of three sections in this initial chapter analyzes the figure of the education minister, Giovanni Gentile, as a philosopher and as a reformer. Here I pay close attention to Gentile's ideas on "libertà" and analyze his use of the term "spirito" in relation to his education policies. What I find is that despite his insistence on "libertà," Gentile's academic curricula provided no room for children to question their studies in a critical way, leaving them vulnerable to Fascist subjection. Next, I convey a close reading of Gentile's central role in the 1923 education reforms and the 1923-1928 *Commissione centrale per l'esame dei libri di testo* and examine his views on children and childhood. Noting the ways in which Gentile prescribed a program that would expose elementary students to Fascist values through classroom reading exercises on a daily basis, I show how schoolbooks became an apparatus for establishing economic and political order at the very onset of the regime. While Gentile neither mandated that the State issue any single text nor prescribed plans to train students for any specific job, his objectives, I argue, already began to place children into certain social strata and thus framed how the regime published the *Libro unico* between 1929 and 1944.

In Chapter Two, I contextualize Mussolini's pursuit for a *Libro di Stato*. Examining various archival documents, government circulars, and newspaper articles, I first discuss the

events, which led to the “fascistization” of Italy and, especially, the elementary school. The assassination of Socialist Deputy, Giacomo Matteotti allowed the government to establish points of surveillance upon Italians and thereby the means to instill Fascist values in everyday life. Examining the “fascistization” of editorial companies, the reading public as well as the *scuola elementare*, I next discuss the *Battaglia del libro*—the regime’s 1926 propaganda campaign to create a desire for reading. Gaining publicity through this campaign, the regime legitimized its efforts to modify its curricular programs once more and publish two, rural and urban, editions of the *Libro di Stato*. Mandating content that would entice students to occupy jobs strictly within their communities, the Ministry of Education, I maintain, aimed at building a utopian class-consciousness. Espousing their interest in the *Libro unico*, it sought to motivate students’ willing participation in Italy’s agricultural and industrial sectors. Proceeding forth, I discuss the ways in which the 1934 and 1939 school programs produced a textbook-centered classroom built around the *Libro unico*. In light of these sources, I show how repetition became the preferred means of subjecting children to the Fascist ideologies in the *Libro unico*.

In Chapter Three and Four, I examine a child’s receptivity to the Fascist ideologies present in the *Libro unico*. I take a look at examples of stories, poems, and anecdotes on manual labor within selected editions of the textbook, published for elementary schools situated in rural and urban areas of Italy. Here I consider such works as Roberto Forges Davanzati’s *Il balilla Vittorio*, a fifth grade textbook modeled on Edmondo De Amicis’ novel *Cuore*.¹² Engaging in a close reading of the texts, I show how the role of language and illustration were used to make children into working-class, Fascist subjects. Nevertheless, while they may have been a powerful

¹² Roberto Forges Davanzati, *Il balilla Vittorio: il libro della V classe elementare* (Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, 1938).

apparatus, rural and urban *Libri unici* manifest fundamental differences in the way in which they depict children as workers. These inconsistencies allow us to comprehend Mussolini's failure to subject readers into a coherent body of Fascists. Looking beyond the *Libro unico*, I furthermore demonstrate how the regime thwarted its own ideological education of children as it struggled to define the criteria that would legally distinguish its population as either rural or urban. This process of categorizing and subcategorizing children into rural and urban groups underscores the regime's paradoxical attempt to nationalize its people in light of the country's strong regional differences. It ironically gave way to ambiguous notions of *italianità*, opening up possibilities for multiple ideologies and hence competing subject positions.

Despite its demise, Fascist schooling continued to shape Italian society both within and beyond the post-war era. Wrapping up this work in Chapter Five, I show how textbooks issued after 1946 likewise emphasized manual work alongside Italian patriotism. These texts ultimately reinforced the social barriers and class dynamics that Fascism instilled and prevented Italians from gaining a sense of democratic solidarity. It, moreover, continues to have repercussions to this day, as the current vocational school system stemming from Gentile's reforms mostly caters to immigrants and Italians of low socio-economic backgrounds. Whether or not we live in a dictatorship, textbooks, I conclude, can hegemonically form the basis of our identities and our ways of thinking about ourselves and others, and, as such, deserve careful attention and scrutiny. Notwithstanding its contribution to such class division, Italy as well as such countries as France debate the presumably "democratic" importance of technical training over a liberal education. Posing questions for further study, I ask: how does such schooling prepare students to participate as citizens in a democratic society especially when it may lead to social stratification?

Speculating on this last question, I offer a final analysis with a more comparative approach to issues concerning ideology, education, reading, and textbooks.

Yet, before moving on to the historical context of Fascist education under Gentile and to the analysis of child receptivity, I want to introduce the methodological approach that I will be extending across these chapters. That approach centers on the concept of ideology.

Althusser and the Ideological State Apparatus

At first glance, Louis Althusser's "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus" seems an obvious choice to talk about children and education. Althusser sees education as the "dominant" ideological apparatus central to the training of subjects in a capitalist system. Availing itself of "vulnerable" children at a very early age, the school instructs pupils using ideologically charged materials.¹³ To begin, I would like to consider the elements of Althusser's theory that I find key to my discussion on Fascist education: the term apparatus; education as the presumed "dominant" ideological apparatus; discipline and good behavior; and hierarchy in relation to subjection. In the course of my outline, I signal to the ways in which I relate Althusser's work to Fascist education and proceed with an initial examination of Fascist schools, textbooks, and didactic materials as an ideological apparatus.

According to Althusser, the reproduction of capitalism and "labor power" largely depends upon the subjection of individuals to the established order by an apparatus.¹⁴ Defining apparatus as the means of subjection, Althusser identifies two types: the Repressive State

¹³ Althusser 104.

¹⁴ Althusser 89.

Apparatus (RSA) and the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA).¹⁵ Functioning chiefly by violence and force, the RSA refers to the State and includes government, police, courts, and military.¹⁶ In contrast, the ISA consists of “private institutions”—religious, academic, familial, political, cultural, and social—and operates according to what Althusser calls “world outlooks” or ideology. Designated as “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence,” ideology constitutes the ethical, moral, and behavioral codes recommended by the ISA.¹⁷ It not only consists of rules and values to abide by, but also becomes the lens by which individuals understand their world and deem it a reality. Neither the RSA nor the ISA stands independent of one another; both work to achieve the goal of perpetuating the reproduction of capitalism. Althusser writes:

Each [ISA] contributes towards this single result in a way proper to it. The political apparatus by subjecting individuals to the political State ideology, the ‘indirect’ (parliamentary) or ‘direct’ (plebiscitary or fascist) ‘democratic’ ideology. The communications apparatus by cramming every ‘citizen’ with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc. by means of the press, the radio, and television. The same goes for the cultural apparatus (the role of sport in chauvinism is of the first importance), etc. The religious apparatus by recalling in sermons and the other great ceremonies of Birth, Marriage, and

¹⁵ Althusser 92.

¹⁶ Althusser 97.

¹⁷ Althusser 109.

Death, that man is only ashes, unless he loves his neighbour to the extent of turning the other cheek to whoever strikes first.¹⁸

Codes of conduct set forth by the ISA hence operate in the interest of the State, or RSA, by instructing order and maintaining its political support. Here Althusser privileges the school among the ISAs in its ideological subjection of children.

Because children are compelled to attend, Althusser asserts that the school plays a “dominant role”¹⁹ over other ISAs and “has the obligatory (and not least, free) audience of the totality of children in the capitalist social formation, eight hours a day for five or six days out of seven.”²⁰ Thus the school apparatus exploits young children so as to subject them to “ruling ideology.” The school, moreover, fosters direct social interaction between a child and an instructor who ideologically shapes minds by way of materials chosen for the academic curricula.

According to Althusser, academic disciplines acquire “forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology*.” Examining them, he discerns two types: the first, practical “‘know-how’ wrapped in the ruling ideology (French, arithmetic, natural history, the sciences, literature)”; the second, theoretical knowledge, “or simply the ruling ideology in its pure state (ethics, civic instruction, philosophy).” Both classes furnish the student with the rules, behaviors, and skills required to play an economic role and perpetuate capitalist society. Let us consider an example from the first category. Althusser maintains, for instance, that language instruction, (i.e. “French”), sustains order by teaching children the ability to give as well as receive commands.

¹⁸ Althusser 104.

¹⁹ Althusser 104.

²⁰ Althusser 105.

Because educators use language to instruct, the terminology employed is by force coercive and likewise serves to subject students. Thus, if I were learning to speak Italian correctly, I would *have to*, for instance, make my adjectives and nouns agree in number and gender in order to communicate coherently.

At the same time, language instruction may also ensue a means for establishing a supposed common end. The adoption of a national language not only establishes order, but also links citizens by presuming, however superficially, a national identity.²¹ History, culture, or theology courses, for instance, adopt a rhetoric that extols the achievements of the State and advocates patriotism. Examples according to Althusser include terminology and expressions concerning the “Glory of Rome” and the “Humanism of the Great Forefathers.” This now brings me to Althusser’s second (“the theoretical”) category of the academic curriculum.

The educational system prepares children for subjection, by teaching them not only “know-how” but also “ethics and civic instruction.” By means of courses in religion and government, children learn to behave correctly. Althusser explains correct behavior in terms of obedience and duty; he defines it as “the attitude that should be observed by every agent in the division of labour, according to the job he is destined for: rules of morality, civic and professional conscience, which actually means rules of respect for the socio-technical division of

²¹ Gramsci suggests how a standardized language could presumably be useful for national unification. He notes: “Le «grammatiche normative» scritte tendono ad abbracciare tutto un territorio nazionale e tutto il «volume linguistico» per creare un conformismo linguistico nazionale unitario, che d'altronde pone in un piano più alto l'«individualismo» espressivo, perché crea uno scheletro più robusto e omogeneo all'organismo linguistico nazionale di cui ogni individuo è il riflesso e l'interprete.” *Quaderni del carcere*, vol. 3, 4 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1975): 29 §2, p. 2343. On Gramsci and normative grammar, see Peter Ives, *Gramsci's Politics of Language: Engaging the Bakhtin Circle and the Frankfurt School* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004) 40-48; Tullio De Mauro, “Language from Nature to History: More on Gramsci the Linguist,” *Gramsci, Language, and Translation*, ed. Peter Ives and Rocco Lacorte (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010) 51-62.

labour and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination.”²² For Althusser, the practice of obedience sustains the reproduction of capitalism. In other words, respecting authority and fulfilling one’s duties prompts efficiency and allows the laborer to do his or her part in maintaining the order and progress of the economy at the workplace. Yet here again, the academic system as an ISA does not solely function by way of ideology. Teaching and enforcing submissiveness entails, to a degree, repression.²³ Thus: “School and Churches use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion, selection, etc., to ‘discipline’ not only their shepherds, but also their flocks.”²⁴ Though physical punishment does not predominate within Fascist education, the language in many texts threatens and shames those who do not obey rules or authority.

In keeping with Althusser’s theory, the level of education one successfully pursues determines one’s position in the working class. The upper echelons of the labor force consist of a fewer number of individuals than its base; and while the highest ranking members comprise “the agents of exploitation (capitalists, managers), the agents of repression (soldiers, policemen, politicians, administrators, etc.) and the professional ideologists (priests of all sorts, most of whom are convinced ‘laymen’),” the lowest ranking members include “workers or small peasants” followed by “small and middle technicians, white-collar workers, small and middle executives.”²⁵ The latter group, Althusser explains, characterizes children “ejected ‘into production’” “somewhere around the age of sixteen.” His terminology suggests how the education system positions children within a social stratum and *forces* them out to pursue manual labor. Such stratification echoes that produced by the Fascist curricula under the Gentile reforms and the ONB. Hierarchies within the education system subject students in order that they not

²² Althusser 89.

²³ Althusser 97-98.

²⁴ Althusser 89.

²⁵ Althusser 105.

only fulfill roles in the labor industry, but also maintain social order and propagate the Fascist regime. Nevertheless, when distinguishing force as the means of producing subjects within an apparatus, Althusser also indicates that children cannot control their subjection. How might we then map Althusser's understanding of the educational apparatus onto Italian Fascism and its subjection of children?

Under Fascism, the subjection of children appears much more complex. We know that not everyone shared equally in the process of Fascist subjection. Eco's aside mentioned earlier reminds us that despite his forced participation in the *Ludi*, the education apparatus failed to make a Fascist out of him. The Duce himself would have furthermore agreed: he too acknowledged failures in the Fascist project and in the "fascistization" of Italians.²⁶ Here, the Althusserian notion of subjection by force comes up short in explaining some of the workings and outcomes of producing Fascist subjects.²⁷ What kind of an active role did children assume within the apparatus of Fascist education, and how might that have paved the way for Fascist subjection, if at all?

²⁶ See Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the 20th Century*, trans. Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1997) 166-168, 198, 201.

²⁷ Recent scholarship on the notion of subjection from Foucault to Deleuze reveals the limitations of Althusserian methodology. While Althusser for his part argues that the ISAs and RSAs unilaterally determine subjects by force, Foucault maintains that the apparatus [*dispositif*] "constitutes and constrains, but does not determine, the subjects with whom it is concerned." Individuals, rather, take agency in the process of what the latter terms subjectivization. Compare Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh," *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) 194-228; Gilles Deleuze, "What is a *dispositif*?" *Michel Foucault, Philosopher*, trans. Timothy J. Armstrong (New York: Routledge, 1992) 159-168; Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?: and Other Essays* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009); Deborah Youdell, "Subjectivation and Performative Politics: Butler Thinking Althusser and Foucault: Intelligibility, Agency and the Race-Nationed-Religioned Subjects of Education," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 27.4 (2006).

In order to answer this question, I now want to turn to a reading of Gentile's education reforms and the reports of the *Commissione centrale per l'esame dei libri di testo*. The objective is to point out the ways in which the *Ministro della Pubblica Istruzione* established apparatuses that allowed for the possibility of the "fascistization" of children. Of particular interest are the terms *libertà* and *spirito*.

Giovanni Gentile: the Fascist Philosopher, the Fascist Pedagogue

About to leave high school in Sicily to pursue philosophy at the Scuola Normale in Pisa, eighteen-year-old Giovanni Gentile reflected skeptically upon the tedious education he had received thus far in Italy. He writes:

Allora, almeno in provincia, pochi i libri a portata dei giovani, schematico, formale, chiuso in quadri tradizionali l'insegnamento. Non conferenze, non giornali, non dibattiti che giunsero allo spirito di chi, nato in un piccolo centro, a saziare la brama di sapere non aveva ricorso a quelle deserte e tristi biblioteche comunali [...] Il passaggio dal liceo all'università, dalla provincia alle grandi città era come un tuffo degli animi giovanili dall'antico nel moderno, dal passato, classico e scolastico, nel presente attuale e vivo.²⁸

With the phrase, "saziare la brama di sapere," we recognize the sort of education Gentile desired but never received. He presents himself as a curious young man with a "passion" for learning. Testimonies of close friends and relatives recall seeing Gentile studying and working throughout

²⁸ Gabriele Turi, *Giovanni Gentile, una biografia* (Turin: UTET, 2006) 8.

his career whether he was a student, a philosopher, a Fascist pedagogue, or an education reformer.²⁹ His son, Benedetto Gentile, notes how his father “cadeva sui libri in sonni profondi per levarsi invece la mattina assai presto. E così ha fatto, finché ha vissuto.”³⁰ Gentile invested and engrossed himself completely in his studies and wanted an academic curriculum that would engage him as a learner. As an “allievo” at the Italian school, nevertheless, Gentile spent a great deal of his time memorizing facts. He did not learn to question the forms or means by which he came to acquire that information. Therefore, the learning process became “chiuso” and “deserto” and neglected to bring other sources—current events, debates, conferences—into dialogue with curricular materials. Superficially acquiring knowledge, he did not learn to think critically and independently. Contemplating his adolescence with frustration, he clearly was reacting against the method of schooling at the time.³¹

Positivism markedly characterized the education system during Gentile’s youth.³² In the Italian context, positivism theorizes that knowledge can be verified empirically and that natural phenomena constitute reality.³³ According to positivist philosophers, physiological processes, therefore, govern a person’s actions and shape his or her character. In light of this theory, the

²⁹ A bibliography on the life of Giovanni Gentile includes the following: Turi, *Giovanni Gentile*; Daniele Coli, *Giovanni Gentile* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004); Benedetto Gentile, *Ricordi e affetti* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1988); Ugo Spirito, *Giovanni Gentile* (Florence: Sansoni, 1969).

³⁰ Gentile 13.

³¹ Refer to Armando Carlini, *Il pensiero pedagogico dell’idealismo* (Brescia: La scuola, 1968) xii; Fabrizio Ravaglioli, “Gentile pedagogista europeo,” *Giovanni Gentile, la pedagogia la scuola*, ed. Giuseppe Spadafora (Rome: Armando, 1997) 84-85.

³² The bibliography on Italian positivism and Gentilian pedagogy is extensive. The following is only a sample: Antonio Santucci, *Eredi del positivismo: ricerche sulla filosofia italiana fra ’800 e ’900* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996); Piero Di Giovanni, ed. *Giovanni Gentile: la filosofia italiana tra idealismo e anti-idealismo* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2003); Giorgio Chiosso, “Il rinnovamento del libro scolastico nelle esperienze di Giuseppe Lombardo Radice e dei «lombardiani»,” *History of Education & Children’s Literature* I.1 (2006): 129; Sergio Hessen, *L’idealismo pedagogico in Italia: Giovanni Gentile e Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice* (Rome: Armando Armando, 1960).

³³ Carlini x-xi; see also “Positivism,” *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1983 ed.

individual is reduced to “la sua pura è semplice animalità.”³⁴ Herein lies the source of Gentile’s main critique of positivism and the education curriculum.

According to the Italian philosopher, man is able to govern his own thoughts and actions and thus make his own choices.³⁵ Rejecting positivism for idealism, Gentile argues that man understands reality and formulates knowledge through experience and education.³⁶ He writes: “Ma, come è proprio d’ogni forma della sua attività, l’uomo non educa solo istintivamente e quasi abbandonandosi alla sua natura. Ha coscienza del fatto suo, e apre gli occhi sulla propria azione educatrice, per indirizzarla per la via più breve alla mèta, a fine di non disperdere le proprie energie, anzi ricavarne il maggior frutto possibile. L’uomo riflette.”³⁷ Inspired by the philosophies of Hegel, Gentile terms man’s ability to shape his own *spirito*—thoughts, actions, and attitudes—as *libertà* and incorporates the notion into his 1923 education reforms.³⁸ These reforms, nevertheless, far from reached the results that would allow children to think critically. Though aiming for a curriculum that would allow students to cultivate themselves autonomously, Gentile surprisingly ran counter to his own philosophies of *libertà*.

³⁴ Carlini xi.

³⁵ According to Santucci, Gentile’s predilection toward idealism could be found in the fact that positivism “colpiva” “certi registri ambienti intellettuali, all’idea o mito borghese del progresso; ed allora, [...] la lezione idealistica si rendeva necessaria per stabilire una cultura dell’uomo per l’uomo nel segno della tradizione.” By means of his reforms, therefore, Gentile sought to formulate Italy’s national culture. Cfr. pp. 193-194.

³⁶ Carlini xv-xvi; see also “Idealism,” *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1983 ed.

³⁷ See Gentile, *La riforma* 28.

³⁸ Alberto Signorini, “La figura del maestro nella pedagogia di Gentile e nel pensiero di Lévinas,” *Giovanni Gentile: la pedagogia, la scuola*, ed. Giuseppe Spadafora (Rome: Armando, 1997) 89; Antimo Negri, *Giovanni Gentile educatore: scuola di stato e autonomie scolastiche* (Rome: Armando, 1996) 109-110; Giuseppe Spadafora, “Gentile e la pedagogia, (1891-1902),” *Giovanni Gentile: la pedagogia, la scuola*, ed. Giuseppe Spadafora (Rome: Armando, 1997) 168.

Climbing the Academic Ranks in “The Most Fascist Of All Reforms”: Gentile’s Riforma della scuola

Gentile began to reform the Italian education system in 1923, a year after the formal establishment of the Fascist government.³⁹ Hailed as “the most Fascist of all reforms” by Mussolini,⁴⁰ Gentile’s transformation of the education system was administrative, structural, and curricular.⁴¹ Despite incorporating notions of *libertà* into the curriculum, Gentile aimed at regulating government control over spending, hierarchical divisions of the educational apparatus, as well as the ideological formation of children.⁴² For the Education Minister, the reforms assumed society’s civic duty to educate every Italian child on his or her obligations toward the Patria.⁴³ He writes: “Noi oggi perciò vogliamo una scuola nazionale, italiana, governata da un vigoroso concetto non tanto dei diritti quanto piuttosto dei doveri del popolo italiano, e cioè di ogni italiano.”⁴⁴ Legally obliged to attend school up to the age of fourteen, children under such presumptions were understood as adults in training, endowed, at least theoretically, with the freedom to arrive at or pursue the Fascist doctrine willfully.⁴⁵ As mentioned, the lack of force exercised upon the child had assumed the purpose of establishing consent among students toward

³⁹ Koon 49.

⁴⁰ W.D. Ross, “Forward,” *Education in Fascist Italy* (London: Oxford UP, 1946) viii; See also, Koon 43.

⁴¹ On the administrative changes made to the Italian school, refer to Minio-Paluello 109-115; De Fort 357-360; Howard R. Marraro, *The New Education in Italy*, (New York: S.F. Vanni, 1936) 27-39; Giuseppe Tognon, “La riforma scolastica del ministro Gentile (1922-1924),” *Giovanni Gentile: la pedagogia, la scuola*, ed. Giuseppe Spadafora (Rome: Armando, 1997) 325-327.

⁴² See Luigi Ambrosoli, *Libertà e religione della riforma Gentile* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1980) 73; Gaetano Bonetta, “Genesi e formazione della concezione scolastica gentiliana,” *Giovanni Gentile: la pedagogia, la scuola*, ed. Giuseppe Spadafora (Rome: Armando, 1997) 258; Koon 60, 69; De Fort 362.

⁴³ Cfr. Minio-Paluello 1-3, 68; Galfré, *Una riforma* 45-46; Jürgen Charnitzky, “Il dibattito critico sulla riforma Gentile in Italia e all’estero,” *Giovanni Gentile: la pedagogia, la scuola*, ed. Giuseppe Spadafora (Rome: Armando, 1997) 341.

⁴⁴ See Giovanni Gentile, *Fascismo e cultura* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1928) 42-43.

⁴⁵ Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice, *Vita nuova* 22-23.

Fascist authority.⁴⁶ Thus much like his predecessors, Gentile maintained that education allowed for the establishment of “political order.”

The goal to establish “political order” among children involved the reorganization of the school. Gentile’s administration sectioned off schools according to discipline, age, and gender, as it founded and tacked new academic institutions onto pre-existing ones.⁴⁷ His reforms, for instance, established the *scuola materna*. Accommodating children between the ages of three to six, the school was non-obligatory and lasted nearly three years.⁴⁸ After establishing the *scuola materna*, Gentile next extended elementary schooling from four to five years and classified its courses of study under two categories. He classified one’s first three years at the elementary school under the category of the *grado inferiore* and defined the following two under the category of the *grado superiore*.⁴⁹ In addition to these changes, Gentile established three kinds of elementary schools in response to low funding levels and poor student performance. The first type of school, known as the *scuole classificate*, was supervised by local government officials and administrators; the second, the *scuole provvisorie*, was commissioned by cultural institutions with authorized legal authority; the third, the *scuole sussidiate*, was managed by private institutions, often headed by unqualified individuals.⁵⁰ Each of these three elementary schools received funding from different sources and had a different administrative structure. De Fort and Koon make distinctions between these elementary schools and the urban and rural areas in which

⁴⁶ Koon 49.

⁴⁷ While Gentile reformed the university system and the academic curricula of the Scuola Normale, I will here provide a general overview of the reforms of the nursery, primary, and secondary schools. A bibliography on the university reforms includes the following: De Fort 361; Alessandra Moschetta, *La filosofia nell’università italiana: dalla Legge Casati alla riforma Gentile, 1859-1923* (Pescara: Edizioni scientifiche abruzzesi, 2007) 133-164; Marraro 207-278; Bonetta 260-262.

⁴⁸ De Fort 365; Ambrosoli 145-148.

⁴⁹ Koon 50.

⁵⁰ De Fort 362-363; Koon 50.

they were often located. They note that whereas schools in major urban centers did indeed last five years, schools in rural and under privileged areas lasted three or four years, well below the standard sought by the reforms.⁵¹

Technical disciplines at the secondary level were also reorganized and bifurcated into two institutions—the *scuola complementare* and the *corso integrativo di avviamento professionale*.⁵² The former replaced the preceding *scuola tecnica*, while the latter, a three-year program devised as a “set of complementary courses for vocational training,” succeeded the *corso popolare*.⁵³ The technical school offered introductory level instruction for its students, providing the basic “know-how,” to quote Althusser, required for a job in the labor force. According to De Fort: “A livello inferiore si collocavano due nuove scuole cui era delegato il compito di assicurare un minimo d’istruzione, consentendo, almeno formalmente, il completamento d’obbligo, senza suscitare fallaci illusioni d’ascesa sociale e stornare dai compiti produttivi la massa dei fanciulli *fruges consumere nati*, cioè la scuola complementare il corso integrativo.”⁵⁴ Such changes at middle schools in addition to those at the high school sought to curtail rather than increase opportunities for better jobs.

In addition to the already existing *liceo classico* at the high school level, the *liceo femminile*, the all-women’s school, was established alongside the *liceo scientifico*.⁵⁵ Academics at the *liceo femminile* consisted mostly of disciplines that would teach women the skills to become better housekeepers, wives, and mothers.⁵⁶ Students, therefore, took courses in home

⁵¹ De Fort 365; Koon 50.

⁵² Ambrosoli 96-98; Piergiovanni Genovesi, *La riforma Gentile tra educazione e politica: le discussioni parlamentari* (Ferrara: Corso, 1996) 29-31; Tognon 327; De Fort 361-362.

⁵³ De Fort 361-362.

⁵⁴ De Fort 361.

⁵⁵ Koon 51; Tognon 327.

⁵⁶ Koon 51.

economics in addition to music and dance with the intent of learning “proper” decorum.⁵⁷ In effect, the school worked not toward integrating women into the labor force and rather aimed at keeping them at home. The effects of such structural changes at the high school and middle school were likewise reinforced by exams.

At the transition stage between the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels of education, exams were administered to ensure the advancement or non-advancement of schoolchildren.⁵⁸ Given their level of difficulty, a majority of students could not pass and were forced either to repeat their courses or follow a different academic curriculum. For instance, elementary students, who could not pass the *esame di Stato*, lacked the requisite needed to enter into the secondary school and attended the technical school instead. Here, these children prepared themselves for jobs in the labor force. As an ample number of students failed, Gentile’s *esame di Stato* thus made it difficult for students to climb the social ladder and compelled them to fill positions in manual work. Here, I find Althusser’s notion of the division of labor useful in my analysis of the effects of Gentile’s education reforms.

Gentile’s motivation for implementing exams was primarily social. He and his administration believed that the majority of the Italian people ought to comprise “la massa che deve restare operaia.”⁵⁹ According to the ministry, therefore, the “formazione spirituale e professionale,” offered by the new curriculum, was not well-suited for these men and women. Limiting access to higher education by means of exams, the Ministry of Public Education chose

⁵⁷ Minio-Paluello 96.

⁵⁸ Minio-Paluello 77, 84; Galfré 24-30, 35; Koon 50; Genovesi 36-37, 102-107; Tognon 329; Rodolfo Mondolfo, *Educazione e socialismo: scritti sulla riforma scolastica, dagli inizi del '900 alla riforma Gentile* (Manduria: P. Lacaita, 2005) 189-192; Franco Cambi, “Giovanni Gentile: il nazionalismo, il fascismo, e l’educazione,” *Giovanni Gentile: la pedagogia, la scuola*, ed., Giuseppe Spadafora (Rome: Armando, 1997) 328-330.

⁵⁹ Ambrosoli 96.

where to place students within the ranks of Italian society. By virtue of the fact that only a small number could climb the academic ladder and pursue professional careers, the government could ensure its own political control and power.⁶⁰

Cultivating Spirito and Libert : Gentile's Revision of the Academic Curricula

In addition to restructuring Italy's schools, Gentile made revisions to the academic curricula under the pretense of cultivating *spirito* and *libert *.⁶¹ Ranging in the arts, social and natural sciences, and mathematics, disciplines chosen for the curriculum presumably allowed students to mold spirit. Nevertheless as it served to maintain political order and promote Italian nationalism, this new course of study aimed primarily at shaping students into steadfast and obedient Fascists rather than freethinking individuals. Contemplating on this new curriculum, Gentile writes:

Arte, storia, letteratura, scienza, scuola e istituzioni giuridiche, vita morale e religiosa, preparazione militare, movimento sociale, finanziario, economico, sono elementi, diversi ma tutti essenziali al contenuto della nuova cultura la quale deve coltivare ciascuno di questi elementi nella sua specifica indole, senza violentarne la natura e imporgli esigenze estranee e per ci  stesso ripugnanti e dannose. Deve tutti compenetrarli del suo unico spirito, e con questo arrivarli, fonderli, farne

⁶⁰ Ambrosoli 97.

⁶¹ Minio-Paluello 68; Ambrosoli 66-67; Mondolfo 193-208; Bonetta 256-260; Negri 49-63.

succo e sangue di questa coscienza fascista, a cui tutti, in vario modo, lavoriamo quanto siamo italiani, che viviamo l'ora presente.⁶²

Gentile and his team of pedagogues notably prioritized one set of disciplines over others in its ability to cultivate spirit, making it the focus of the new Fascist school curricula.⁶³ Analyzing Gentile's choices, we can see how the MPI ultimately built an academic program that would keep students from developing into critical thinkers and, instead, encourage them to pursue careers in manual labor.

Introduced for the first time as a formal study at the secondary level, philosophy, for instance, held a great deal of weight alongside history in the Gentilian curriculum. According to the MPI, it allowed children to “reflect,” a quality hailed as fundamental in the “spiritual action” of education.⁶⁴ He notes: “Se il centro di ogni educazione è la scuola, per fare gli italiani bisogna indirizzare la scuola alla formazione delle libere menti. Ma la mente non è libera, se non quando è conscia, padrone di sé; e questa coscienza non può essere data se non dalla filosofia.”⁶⁵ Both philosophy and history required students to engage with the material, to ask questions, and to

⁶² Gentile, *Fascismo* 73-74.

⁶³ Under the *ventennio*, pedagogy was a widely discussed topic, whose body of literature included journals—*Annali d'istruzione elementare*, *Diritti della scuola*, and *Scuola italiana moderna*—as well as the work of individuals, many of whom collaborated with the Education Ministry. These thinkers included not only textbook compilers Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice, Alessandro Marcucci, Piero Bargellini, and Vera Cottarelli Gaiba, but also pedagogues Vincenza Battistelli, Giuseppe Giovanazzi, Giorgio Gabrielli, Riccardo Dal Piaz, Italo Cinti, Vito Felice Cassano, and Giovanni Rossi to name a few. Their work centers on topics, ranging from methods of teaching reading and writing to the use of the radio, physical education, architecture of the classroom, and teacher training. For a useful catalogue of sources on Fascist pedagogy, see Giorgio Chiosso's edited volume, *La stampa pedagogica e scolastica in Italia (1820-1943)* (Brescia: La Scuola, 1997). On pedagogic journals published during the *ventennio*, see also Chiosso's “La stampa scolastica e l'avvento del fascismo,” *History of Education and Children's Literature* 3.1 (2008): 257-282.

⁶⁴ Minio-Paluello 70.

⁶⁵ Spadafora 160.

bring their studies into dialogue with the past, present, and future lives of Italians. Here, however, the study of Italian history markedly held priority over world history. The curriculum emphasized the latter insofar as it would not “[restrict the mind] in a kind of geographical prison.”⁶⁶ Moreover, the approach to studying world history would be one conditioned by and taught against Italy’s “national culture.” Familiarizing oneself with the history and politics of the past in this restricted way, the student might become aware of the present workings of the Nation-State and work to ensure its survival. Indeed as Gentile notes, “Nations issue from ‘Spirit’, are ‘Spirit’ itself in actual life, and trying to forget one’s own nation would lead to suicide.”⁶⁷ Philosophy and history courses thus represented a means of fashioning a sense of patriotism and nationalism and did not serve to provide a well-rounded education per se.

Teaching literature and art held similar ideological objectives according to Gentile. Literature courses, for one, did not consist of training students to analyze and explicate the language and stylistics of the texts being read. The curriculum rather obliged students to reflect on the figure of the author. With this approach, each student had the task to “revive in himself the mind and feelings of the writer; he [had to] discover with critical acumen the main strains and motives in the work or passage he [had] before his eyes.”⁶⁸ In reading aloud selections written by such authors of the *Ottocento* as Leopardi, the student would not only learn proper Italian grammar, but also think about his or her own reaction to the work and, by consequence, develop an appreciation for Italian literature. Gentile explains:

⁶⁶ Minio-Paluello 75.

⁶⁷ Minio-Paluello 75.

⁶⁸ Minio-Paluello 72-73.

[Il maestro] legge, e con lui gli scolari, che così imparano a conoscere la lingua, cioè gli scrittori, per esempio, il Leopardi: la parola del Leopardi, la sua anima, che per la lettura del maestro, si spande per la scuola, entra nelle anime degli scolari, vi fa tacere ogni altro sentimento, ne caccia ogni altro pensiero: vi palpita dentro essa, commossa, vibrante; si fa in ciascuno l'anima sua, che parla a se stessa un linguaggio suo: con le parole del Leopardi, sì, ma di un Leopardi che è a ciascuno il suo, carne della sua carne, e uno dei momenti più felici della sua vita, in cui più caldo scorre il sangue, e più forte pulsa nelle vene, e più piena e possente è la vita, che si è levata in alto, a toccare le cime. Ognuno che senta dal proprio interno echeggiare quella parola leopardiana, rifletterà egli che quella parola è eco di un'eco? Effetto di una parola ridetta dopo che fu detta dal Poeta? L'esperienza ci dice di no; ma se alcuno si distraesse dal godimento della poesia, che, saputa leggere, gli suona nell'anima, e dicesse che quella parola è del maestro, non sua, anzi del Poeta, egli direbbe uno sproposito: perché quella che ascolta intently dentro di sé, quella è sua, tutta sua.⁶⁹

For Gentile, the student engaged with the work both physically and mentally when reading it aloud. Performing in such a way allowed the student to feel the emotions that presumably affected the author. The student thus gave life to the work and made the author's passions his or her own. Such an interaction brought the writer and history of the period into dialogue with the present, asserting, thereby, continuity between the two. Individually carrying Leopardi's legacy into the present, for instance, by means of speech, the student played a role in ensuring the

⁶⁹ Gentile, *La riforma* 46-47.

survival of the Italian culture. Here again, preserving the Italian culture takes precedence over teaching children how to read and write well.

Alongside reading and recitation exercises, classes in art and design offered a medium through which children could freely express themselves.⁷⁰ As per Gentile, drawing and note taking converged with a student's ability to instill within himself or herself a *spirito scientifico*.⁷¹ An important tool in this regard was the diary, which students were required to bring to class everyday.⁷² By means of the diary, students could communicate their thoughts and hence "[exercise] freedom."⁷³ They frequently drew a number of objects in their diaries with the assumed purpose of procuring and furnishing themselves with a "vivo spirito di ricerca e di osservazione."⁷⁴ Drawing a likeness of a building, students could become familiar with geometrical patterns, shapes, and colors as well as reflect upon its architectural structure and engineering. Rendering various sketches of nature—public parks, trees, and gardens—at different times of the year, they could also become aware of such processes as the growth of vegetation and the change of seasons. Given Gentile's recommendations for teaching Italian literature and history, however, we here can ask whether such exercises of observation likewise involved forming an appreciation for—rather than an actual "scientific" critique of—Italian architecture and landscapes. As I note above, the rationale behind Gentile's recitation exercises consisted of developing a full understanding of Italian culture from a historical and literary standpoint. Having taken such courses, a child could potentially carry this framework for reading

⁷⁰ Lombardo-Radice, *Vita nuova* 48, 55-56.

⁷¹ Lombardo-Radice, *Vita nuova* 38-39.

⁷² Lombardo-Radice, *Vita nuova* 48, 55-56.

⁷³ Minio-Paluello 73.

⁷⁴ Lombardo-Radice, *Vita nuova* 38.

and studying Italian literature and history into his or her courses of art and design.⁷⁵ One's "freedom of expression," in this way, could simply become a declaration of cultural pride born out of one's ideological schooling.

In line with the MPI's reforms above, Latin under the new curriculum likewise offered students a way to approach their study of the Italian language from a historical point of view. Latin figured greatly in Gentile's academic program, because it was a means of achieving the "way to a knowledge and understanding of human civilization more than any other language."⁷⁶ Gentile particularly incorporated Latin into courses on ancient Roman history. The minister's decision to integrate Latin as opposed to other ancient languages into the curriculum here appears clear and demonstrates one example of the bias with which he reformed the Italian school. The MPI, for instance, expressed his preference for Latin over ancient Greek, because of its historical and linguistic relationship to Italian. The rationale behind Gentile's revisions therefore lay not in enhancing students' understanding of Italian grammar but rather in forming a Fascist national identity tied to the glories of Italy's ancient Roman past.⁷⁷

Italian grammar, much like Latin, did not constitute a course on its own, as Gentile deemed it unsuitable for the new idealistic curriculum.⁷⁸ After all, according to the MPI, formulaic grammar classes provided no opportunities for students to think creatively about the use and study of Italian. Grammar classes, as Gentile notes, served only "di sovrapporsi e

⁷⁵ As I will discuss in Chapter Two, Gentile's successors indeed maintained their predecessor's focus on teaching art and design. They likewise envisioned note taking and drawing as a vehicle for disseminating Fascist culture. See ch. 2, pp. 58-63.

⁷⁶ Minio-Paluello 73.

⁷⁷ Gabriella Klein, *La politica linguistica del Fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986) 61.

⁷⁸ By means of the term "idealistic," I am referring to Gentile's rejection of positivism. See above pp. 16-17.

imporsi al linguaggio nella sua creativa spontaneità.”⁷⁹ As a discipline “che sia semplice ornamento o arredamento dell’intelligenza,” grammar, alongside math and science, hence ranked low in its ability to cultivate spirit.⁸⁰ Eliminating all formal grammar courses, the administration believed that students intuitively acquired the ability to speak and write well through interactions with faculty and by exposure to formal Italian in such courses as history, religion, geography, science, and literature.⁸¹ Lombardo-Radice writes: “[L’italiano] non è materia «specificata» di studio, ma comprende tutti gli insegnamenti, tutti essendo occasione di arricchimento del lessico e di correzione linguistica, e la più parte di essi anche di esercizi scritti...[L’italiano] si fa...facendo scienze; o storia e geografia, e via dicendo.”⁸² Thus reading constituted the most effective means of exposing students to proper Italian, while the instructor played a vital role in correcting them. Despite this very crucial task, nonetheless, it is worthwhile to note how teachers had to allow students to be creative and spontaneous with the language as per Gentile’s reforms. Lombardo-Radice notes, “[Deve] stare in guardia il maestro che voglia rispettare il carattere spirituale della cultura,” and hence implies that teachers ought to correct students minimally.⁸³ This in addition to the fact that students neither explicitly learned Italian grammar rules, nor analyzed literary stylistics suggests the possibility that a majority learned neither to speak nor

⁷⁹ Gentile, *La riforma* 119-120

⁸⁰ Gentile, *Fascismo* 38-39. For a general overview on Gentilian views on science and grammar see also Minio-Paluello 74; Klein 60.

⁸¹ Despite eliminating grammar courses, Gentile nevertheless prescribed lessons requiring students to translate phrases from their own dialects into standard Italian. MPI Francesco Ercole subsequently dropped these lessons from the curriculum in 1934. See Enzo Golino, *Parola di Duce: Il Linguaggio Totalitario del Fascismo* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1994) 57-59; Klein 28.

⁸² Lombardo-Radice, *Vita nuova* 37.

⁸³ Gentile, *La riforma* 120.

write properly. With a lack of linguistic skills, students could risk their chances of climbing the social ladder.⁸⁴

In addition to these changes to the Italian curriculum, Gentile lastly reintroduced religion as a discipline of study. Overturning the 1877 Coppino law, the MPI made it obligatory for students to study religion—as opposed to philosophy—at the elementary school.⁸⁵ According to the reforms, the value of teaching religion lay in its capacity to nurture spirit through its transcendental and moral precepts. Motivation for this choice lay in Gentile’s view of young children and in their mental capacity to study philosophy. Minio-Paluello explains:

Children under ten are not likely to rise to the highest form of understanding, but are inclined to feel the presence of greatness in a religious way, i.e. in ‘objects’ over-powering their own being. This naïve approach to ‘Spirit’, considered as a God outside and above man, is peculiar to the first stage of the human mind. Religion, therefore, is to take a fundamental share in the teaching of elementary school children; when they grow up they will find out the real and complete meaning of dogmas, stories, and rites; philosophy will explain them as a partial view which did not take into account the ‘subjective’ side of ‘Spirit.’⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Klein 49; Peter Ives, “A Grammatical Introduction to Gramsci’s Political Theory,” *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society* 10.1 (2009): 42, 47-49.

⁸⁵ The 1877 Coppino law made it illegal for schools to teach courses on religion at the elementary school level. On the Coppino law, consult Alessandro Ferrari, “The Problem of Civic Cohesion and the Role of the State School in France and Italy: Historical, Religious, and Secular Comparisons,” *Journal of Moral Education* 35.4 (2006): 537.

⁸⁶ Minio-Paluello 73.

The advantage of instructing children in religion as opposed to philosophy lay, on the one hand, in the belief that the former was simplistic and rudimentary and, therefore, easily comprehensible. Philosophy, on the other hand, would be too complex for students between the ages of eight and eleven. Moreover, as its instruction was conveyed in forms of “myths and popular superstitions,” religious instruction could perhaps appear more appealing to children.⁸⁷ Herein lies a contradiction in the Gentilian philosophy: whereas children were expected to approach the disciplines critically, the administration did not actually believe in their capacity to do so. At the same time, the emphasis on teaching religion at the elementary level suggests that students ought to focus on acquiring rules of proper moral and ethical conduct. The curricular objective thus lay perhaps in teaching children to obey and respect authority rather than to think openly.⁸⁸

As per his pedagogic philosophy, Gentile prescribed *libertà* as the means by which a student could fashion a “coscienza fascista” for himself or herself and defines Fascism as the means of living and thinking freely. He notes: “[L’indispensabile] è che ognuno porti serietà di ricerca e di convinzione, sincerità e lealtà di pensiero. L’indispensabile è che ognuno si formi da

⁸⁷ Koon 48.

⁸⁸ On Gentile and notions of *obbedienza*, turn to Ambrosoli 66-67. The Fascists indeed made it very clear that they did not want children to think critically. Fascist pedagogue and schoolbook compiler, Nazareno Padellaro, whose work I will discuss in Chapter Three, for instance, chastises students in his third grade *Libro unico* for asking the question, “Why?” He writes: “Un fanciullo che, non eseguisce prontamente gli ordini è come un moschetto il cui otturatore s’inceppa. [...] È vero: se non ci fossero i «perché?», non ci sarebbero fanciulli. I fanciulli, infatti, vogliono vedere le cose che vedono i grandi. Ma, essendo piccoli, non arrivano a tutto.” He warns: “Ogni «perché?», chiesto prima di obbedire, è come un rattoppo alla divisa. Siate fieri di esser riconosciuti più per la vostra ubbidienza che per il vostro nome.” His language here not only undermines a child’s capacity to think and reason. In comparing a curious child to a jammed “moschetto,” he likewise suggests that such a student is unfit for being a member of Fascist society. Such a child would inhibit this Italian society from progressing and fulfilling its duties to the *patria*. See Padellaro 56-58. Padellaro’s text is accompanied by Carlo Testi’s drawing of sword striking at a question mark.

sé le sue idee, onestamente, ognuno pensando con la propria testa, e coltivando più che gli è possibile questa testa, della quale gli convien fare il Massimo uso.”⁸⁹ He continues and notes that Fascism “non è un programma di idee da accogliere e diffondere. Giacché il fascismo non è, e non sarà mai un catechismo o una dottrina già formulata o da formulare in proposizioni sacramentali. Il fascismo è vita, e dottrina di vita; orientamento e ispirazione.”⁹⁰ But as we have seen thus far, Gentile’s structural and curricular reforms were ideologically motivated. Gentile’s history, philosophy, religion, literature, and Latin courses held more weight than grammar, math, or science classes. Fashioning cultural pride in addition to teaching children to behave correctly was more valuable than tediously instructing the “abstract” principles of the latter group of courses. Yet, grammar, math, and science courses train students to speak well and to develop problem solving and reasoning skills. A basic knowledge of math, grammar, and science could allow the student to advance himself or herself minimally at the work place. One did not acquire the training or opportunity to seek skill-based jobs of higher pay; students could not climb the social ladder and improve the quality of their lives. Here, I find Gentile’s education reforms to be enigmatic in their advocacy of training students to think critically. Children were set up to fulfill a specific objective, namely to appreciate and support the Italian culture and sustain the country economically by assuming manual work. As we shall see, textbook reforms further sought to promote such ideologies and to shape the Fascist individual.

⁸⁹ Gentile, *Fascismo* 144-145.

⁹⁰ The idea that Fascism was never a “formulated doctrine” or “a set of catechisms,” of course, is ironic. Institutions such as the ONB, PNF, and the Ministry of Education often issued scholastic manuals representing the regime’s values in the question and answer format typical of catechisms. Classic examples of such manuals include those (e.g., *Il primo libro del fascista*, *Il secondo libro del fascista*, *Il capo squadra balilla*, *Il capo squadra piccola italiana*) distributed to *balilla* children. These volumes have been republished in full in Carlo Galeotti’s *Saluto al Duce! I catechismi del Balilla e della piccola italiana* (Rome: Gremese, 2001) and *Credere obbedire combattere: i catechismi del fascismo* (Rome: Graffiti, 1999).

Changes to the curricula led to debates on the structure and content of the ideal schoolbook. Nowhere do we see the importance placed upon refashioning textbooks more than in Gentile's establishment of the *Commissione centrale per l'esame dei libri di testo*. In addition to his academic reforms, Gentile founded this *Commissione centrale* in order to specify guidelines for the composition and publication of the Italian schoolbook.⁹¹ Many individuals were involved, extending beyond Gentile's tenure as education minister. Between 1923-1928, for example, participants included Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice, Giovanni Vidari, Balbino Giuliano (minister of education between 1927-1929), Michele Romano, and Alessandro Melchiori—each of whom headed the annual *Commissione* within the years cited. In the following section, I want to discuss the choices and decisions of the 1923-1924 *Commissione* under Gentile and Lombardo-Radice and analyze the ideological biases offered on children and childhood. Of particular interest are the recommendations of the proceeding *Commissioni* leading on to the “fascistization” of the school textbook and the publication of the *Libro unico dello Stato*. How did each Commission maintain Gentile's suggestions and notions of childhood despite the modifications made to them over time? The answer appears in both the content and layout of the textbooks.

Under the Lombardo-Radice Commission, guidelines on the typography and physical appearance of textbooks proved substantial. Members of the Committee tirelessly pointed out minute mechanical errors and typos; criticized authors for the “vivacity of the language used in the text”; and rejected lengthy books with few illustrations. By Committee standards, textbooks needed to appear attractive and clear. To make it so, the Commission required that the

⁹¹ Ascenzi, “Premessa” xi.

typesetting used be “grandi” and “nitidi.”⁹² Recommending that they be printed on paper of good quality, Lombardo-Radice next demanded that textbooks come across as being “armonica” and “sobria.” As many pages of the examined texts could not be turned without being ripped out, the Committee further insisted that they be well-bound.⁹³ Illustrations likewise were considered indispensable as their value lay in their ability to engage the student. According to the Committee, the ideal schoolbook contained colorful, original images that enhanced the text. Most illustrations in existing textbooks were neither appealing nor emblematic of textual themes, while others emerged as reprints of those found in other different schoolbooks.⁹⁴ The *Commissione*, moreover, carefully evaluated the length of books. Members recommended that each category of textbooks possess a determined number of pages. Therefore, third grade literature books could not exceed one hundred pages, while fourth and fifth grade books would be limited to three hundred pages.⁹⁵ In enticing the child’s attention by means of colorful images, concise content, and clear typography, such guidelines presumably served to motivate the child’s interest. Lombardo-Radice and his Commission of Fascist pedagogues indeed wanted children to develop a “love” for their textbooks and, thereby, become willing learners.⁹⁶ He writes: “Il libro di lettura deve essere bello e buono divertente e organico e vivo, perché la sua essenziale finalità è di educare. Deve bensì dare l’amore della lettura e il desiderio del sapere, ma chi voglia farne un manuale insegnativo di nozioni varie, di storie, di igiene, di diritti, e doveri, ne svista la

⁹² Lombardo-Radice, *Vita nuova* 62.

⁹³ Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma della scuola elementare: scuole, maestri, e libri; raccolta di indagini essenziali* (Palermo: R. Sandron, 1926) 296.

⁹⁴ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 297.

⁹⁵ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 62-63.

⁹⁶ This rhetoric of a child’s “love” for reading extended beyond Gentile and Lombardo-Radice’s tenure at the Ministry of Public Instruction and will be further discussed in Chapter Two regarding the regime’s propaganda campaign known as the *Battaglia del libro*.

funzione precipua.”⁹⁷ Recognizing the value in using illustrations, Lombardo-Radice likewise believed that the language of textbooks could also captivate the student and drive him or her to learn.

I libri di lettura, i libri della Patria

Language revision was a major concern for the Lombardo-Radice Commission, whose suggestions revealed the members’ predilections for Italy and Italian children. Director Maria Pezzé Pascolato, for instance, rejected four-hundred-and-fifty-nine books of literature, because they lacked exactitude and simplicity in their writing. Seen as exaggerated and unrealistic, the books “failed” to provide the student with “real” information that would help him or her to reason analytically about his or her surroundings.⁹⁸ At the same time, Pascolato argued that the texts needed to affect students emotionally and recommended that selections of poetry incorporate such auditory stylistic devices as “assonance,” meter, and rhyme.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the Commission placed limits on the kinds of emotions the textbooks could convey. They frequently criticized authors, who used terms that were too emotional and “overly-sweet,” (“tante, troppe lodi e sdolcinature e carezze”). Convinced that such language belittled students, Pascolato urged compilers to replace such diminutives as “amorini,” “cuoricini,” and “tesorini” with more “serious” vocabulary.¹⁰⁰ Such alterations reveal the Commission’s anxieties about representing Italian children as weak and pampered individuals. In light of their edits, the textbooks could provide the model for a tenacious and independent Italian child.

⁹⁷ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 53, 62; compare also Chiosso, “Il rinnovamento” 129.

⁹⁸ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 294.

⁹⁹ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 303-304.

¹⁰⁰ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 296.

In order to provide authors with a framework for depicting the ideal Italian student, the Commission evaluated and issued guidelines for literature books. Their first set of critiques dealt with characterization. Marked with “descrizioni convenzionali,” selections of reading often portrayed such typical stock characters as Tonino, Carluccio, Mariuccia, and Ninetta, who chiefly functioned as foils within a plot.¹⁰¹ Demanding the inclusion of more round characters, the Commission asked for more complex story lines that would appear rather realistic to the student. The characters within these revised story lines, nonetheless, were not as true to life as one might think. Members indeed placed limits on the kinds of attributes authors could develop in devising characters. Criticizing stories of death and abandonment, they censored texts in which orphaned protagonists conveyed feelings of “terrore della vita più tosto che il coraggio e la speranza.”¹⁰² Feelings of vengeance, nostalgia for the idleness of summertime, envy, and the preoccupation of making good impressions on people likewise had no place in the Italian textbook, according to the *Commissione*. The Pezzé Pascolato report declared that such stereotypical depictions of the irrational, egocentric, and lazy child thrust a wedge between the readership and the protagonist. It advised that the textbook provide the means for the Italian child to identify with the protagonist.¹⁰³ Here, we recognize another paradox within the judgments offered by the Commission. On the one hand, members demanded that the texts authentically represent Italian children. On the other hand, their suggestions ran contrary to their objective and provided a biased view of Italian childhood. Editing tragic narratives and any negative descriptions that would make Italians appear disgraceful, the Commission sought to revise the

¹⁰¹ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 304.

¹⁰² Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 306.

¹⁰³ Giorgio Chiosso notes: “La riflessione lombardiana delinea una scuola che intende superare il distacco tra scuola ed esperienze infantili per immaginarla in funzione dei bisogni e delle capacità proprie dell’infanzia.” Refer to “Il rinnovamento” 134.

image of the child and promote a framework for how the readers themselves ought to behave and view themselves.

Final criticisms levied against literature books pertained to authors' representations of Italy and its terrain. According to the Commission, no direct contact occurred between protagonists and the land. Authors often portrayed characters as travelers, who visually acknowledge the beauty of the Italian countryside, mountainside, and beaches in passing. The Pezzé Pescolato report notes: "Nei testi per le scuole le città non si parli della campagna se non di passaggio, come di villeggiatura per le vacanze; che in tutti non si parli delle montagne se non a proposito di colonie scolastiche alpine; non si parli del mare—e ben raramente—se non a proposito di colonie balneari."¹⁰⁴ According to the *Commissione*, the lack of detail failed to impart to children a sense of patriotism and admiration for Italy. At the same time, the lack of interaction between the protagonist and the terrain conveyed no notions of sacrifice. Pezzé Pescolato continues: "Alle nuove generazioni, le quali debbono fare prospera e grande l'Italia «con l'aratro e prora» questi libri nulla offrono che faccia conoscere veramente ed amare la vita dei campi ed il sacro lavoro della terra; nulla che faccia conoscere ed amare la vita marinaresca."¹⁰⁵ With the phrase "il sacro lavoro della terra," Pezzé Pascolato recommends that children invest themselves in and recognize the value of hard work and agricultural labor. At the same time, she markedly communicates that children come to esteem rural life. Instead of motivating readers to pursue a higher education, the Commission suggests that children strive for

¹⁰⁴ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 308.

¹⁰⁵ The phrase "con l'aratro e prora" here refers to D'Annunzio's *Canto augurale per la nazione eletta*, influenced by Giosue Carducci's *Odi barbare*. It was used heavily by Mussolini to convey themes of patriotism and sacrifice and, as I will show, saturates editions of the *Libro unico* published and disseminated in rural areas of Italy. For an overview of the regime's use of this phrase, see Consult Lorenzo Braccisi, *Roma bimillennaria: Pietro e Cesare* (Rome: «L'ERMA» di Bretschneider, 1999) 168-169.

manual work. By means of the text, it therefore attempts to confine children to a less sophisticated lifestyle. In like manner, Pezzé Pascolato's contention that children love "la vita marinaresca" further substantiates that objective and promotes the seafaring life.

Pezzé Pascolato and the Lombardo-Radice Committee indeed scrutinized negative depictions of the sea. Members recommended that authors not only praise the Italian Navy, but also amend macabre tales in which protagonists suffer injury or death from fishing disasters at sea. Pezzé Pascolato writes: "Della nostra Marina, mai si fa parola, nemmeno per glorificarne l'opera di abnegazione e di eroismo durante la guerra: se v'ha un accenno, non all'Armata, ma a qualche piroscafo mercantile, si descrivono se mai gli agi e le comodità dei transatlantici stranieri."¹⁰⁶ One protagonist, Pulcinella, hesitated to approach the water when visiting the Italian coast; she perceived the sea as a place of destruction. According to Pezzé Pascolato, such a story as Pulcinella's could instill a sense of fear in children.¹⁰⁷ She deems such depictions of the sea and navy as cowardly ("vigliaccheria") and denies their potential in shaping "lo spirito dell'Italia nuova."¹⁰⁸ In addition to promoting seafaring labor, the Commission offers revisions that impart a national identity, marked with qualities of bravery as opposed to fear and weakness. As we shall see in the next section, such notions of *italianità* likewise appear alongside typographical emendations in history, geography, religion, math, and alphabet books.

I libri di scuola e i sillabari tra la storia, la geografia, la religione, e l'aritmetica

The Committee's suggestions for revising history and geography textbooks appear consistent with those put forward for literature books. Examining three hundred and seventeen

¹⁰⁶ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 308.

¹⁰⁷ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 308.

¹⁰⁸ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 308.

volumes, Lombardo-Radice's *Commissione* largely criticized authors yet again on their structure and language use.¹⁰⁹ According to the report written by Giuseppe Prezzolini, history books differed not from one grade level to the next. Third and sixth grade textbooks, for instance, appeared distinguishable solely by the addition of a chapter and comprised a series of "anecdotes, biographies, and lists of dates" that only superficially depicted Italian history. Typographical errors, convoluted definitions, and awkward expressions typified the material.¹¹⁰ Pointing out, for example, the misuse of punctuation marks, the Committee expressed concern over whether the books could teach the student to read, write, and speak well. Prezzolini notes: "Anche la punteggiatura è trascurata e ci si domanda come i ragazzi possono imparare ad esprimersi bene, studiando su tali modelli."¹¹¹ Given the structure and content of the books, the Committee argued that the work risked leaving the students confused and disinterested.

Yet the inability to spark student interest lay not only in the writing style, but also in the actual presence of the author within the text. Most books lacked an apparatus criticus or glossary that could provide perspective on the problems and issues raised by the text. As Lombardo-Radice explains: "Non soltanto v'è assenza, ma diremmo v'è la paura di assumere un atteggiamento risoluto e netto di fronte ai problemi e ai fatti storici. Gli autori di molti libri mancano di sincerità, sono volontariamente incerti, reticenti, equivoci."¹¹² Here we acknowledge further inconsistencies in the Committee's argument. While urging students to formulate their ideas independently, it simultaneously requires authors to editorialize the work and provide readers with biased opinions that could espouse interest in the material. On the one hand, the *Commissione* accuses authors of prioritizing certain arguments or historical facts over others

¹⁰⁹ Ascenzi, "Premessa" 9.

¹¹⁰ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 313.

¹¹¹ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 313.

¹¹² Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 313.

based on preference. The committee continues: “[In] molti libri si sente la cura di scansare la narrazione di fatti storici che l’autore crede, grettamente, spiacevoli a questa o a quella parte, o a questa o a quella credenza.” On the other hand, the Committee advocates its own predilections concerning the content and make-up of history books, leaving students vulnerable to ideological subjection once more.

Lombardo-Radice’s selections of reading for history books, for instance, illustrate a prime example of bias. He recommends that textbook compilers focus their work on such historical figures of the *Risorgimento* as Giuseppe Mazzini and place emphasis on physiognomy rather than prescribing a list of dates and events. He writes: “Vi sono date inutili, nomi, matrimoni, battaglie che ingombrano la mente del fanciullo; sfondo di un’epoca col suo colorito.”¹¹³ Demanding more patriotic and moralistic reading material, the Commission, moreover, seeks to eliminate the presumably typical “racconti di stragi e violenze” found in history books.¹¹⁴ According to the Prezzolini report commissioned by Lombardo-Radice, these older history books frequently included accounts of “bruttore,” “crudeltà,” “atrocità,” and “pazzie,” which holistically rendered the material profane and offensive. It points out, in an example, the supposedly distasteful story of a woman from Ancona, who offers to nurse a famished soldier. Raising objections to the tale, Prezzolini notes: “Buon gusto e senso morale restano ugualmente offesi dalla madre anconetana che «offre il capezzolo» a un soldato, per nutrirlo.” Imagining the soldier suckling from a bare-chested woman, the Committee associates the crudeness of the tale to that of Carlo Zima, a historical figure drenched in solvent and burned to death by Austrian forces. While acknowledging the woman’s exploit as one of generous

¹¹³ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 314.

¹¹⁴ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 315.

sacrifice, the *Commissione* nevertheless deems the tale as violent as the story of Carlo Zima. The report explains:

Con ciò non è detto che si debba scrivere una storia irreal e vaga, tutta sorridente e serena, ma non occorre fermarsi sui particolari atroci e brutale del fatto, bensì far risaltare ciò che in essi vi è di positivo di degno di ammirazione, di sforzo e di sacrificio compiuto per il bene. Non sarà soverchio desiderio quello che la Commissione esprime dicendo che sarebbe opportuno nel libro per i ragazzi un senso di pudore quasi materno.¹¹⁵

In order to maintain a sense of “maternal modesty,” the Committee seeks to censor any references to a woman’s nipple. Here, the Committee insinuates that such presumably violent stories could perhaps morally corrupt children. By chastising nudity, they prescribe to children their own sense of social ethics in history textbooks; they proceed and next extend their biases into geography texts.

Comparable to the criteria established for the compilation of history texts, guidelines for science and geography books similarly focused on structure and content. In addition to recommending illustrations, the Commission opted for concise and coherent texts that would be accessible to the child. Here, Committee members largely removed and emended factual content deemed too complicated for children. Examining textbooks of “geografia astronomica e fisica,” they strongly advised compilers to abbreviate captions and indications in order that they be more straightforward. Moreover, they omitted any elaborate explanations on things already

¹¹⁵ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 315-316.

“conosciute, evidenti, notorie.”¹¹⁶ At the same time, the Committee privileged and sought to incorporate a great deal of mythical content in the narrative of these books. They criticized writing, for instance, that did not “spingono l’alunno a immaginare i misteri infiniti dell’universo stellato.” Recommending that authors adopt an anthropocentric approach to compiling tales of geography, Lombardo-Radice urged authors to focus on “l’elemento descrittivo della vita umana sulla superficie del globo in relazione con la superficie stessa.” Rather than exclusively focusing on such natural locales as mountains and lakes, the Commission suggested that authors include descriptions of cities and regions as well as such man-made Italian structures as castles, walls, and *palazzi*. Motivation for the choice lay in the belief that Italian architecture seemed “più parlanti comprensibili e vivi.”¹¹⁷ The geography book thus became a means of promoting the country’s culture by establishing a link between children and the Italian landscape. Similar revisions appeared in religious textbooks.

The Lombardo-Radice Commission reviewed few books of theology. Reprints of old editions, these examined texts contained a series of catechisms that lacked the colorful illustrations and explanations recommended by the Committee. Laying out rules of conduct in a rather “scientific” manner, a part of the texts on the one hand neglected to present the material creatively. Others, according the Committee, were, on the other hand, largely flamboyant in style. Once more, the *Commissione* asked that religious books cultivate student morale by allowing readers to engage with the texts. The committee explains:

I libri di testo della religione debbono diventare «come il punto di concentrazione di tutti gli elementi di cultura spirituale nei vari insegnamenti» e debbono quindi

¹¹⁶ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 316.

¹¹⁷ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 317.

riuscire a svegliare ed educare nell'alunno l'intimità buona ed il raccoglimento morale. La semplicità del dettato e la bellezza della sua presentazione debbono secondare la virtù ispiratrice delle grandi verità e delle inesauribile carità divina nei bambini.¹¹⁸

The terms “raccoglimento,” “la virtù ispiratrice,” and “bellezza” highlight the means by which students were to learn and internalize the Christian doctrine. The first term suggests that students study and think about the work so that they might independently accept its content. Nevertheless, the term “bellezza” implies that attractive illustrations bear the burden of “inspiring” a sense of intrigue within the student. Replacing religious dictums with illustrations, the Committee hence sought to entice and persuade rather than coerce the child into his or her studies. The text, hence, becomes an apparatus that allows the student to engage with the Committee’s ideological biases. The task of finding a religious text worthy of use in schools was not as problematic, however, as the mathematics text.

Approximately three hundred and fifty volumes of math books met with much dissatisfaction by the Committee. Consisting largely of reprints of the 1849 *Compendio di aritmetica*, many of these textbooks required updates to the examples, explanations, and definitions provided. While pointing out typos and errors, the *Commissione* predominantly invested itself in analyzing and revising such parenthetical expressions as “[$(5+2) \times 7-10$] / 3.” According to members, such expressions were too complicated for students and needed simplification. Conveying disapproval, moreover, on the didactics of the text, the group asked that the material communicate with a gentle and happy tone. The report notes: “L’autore deve

¹¹⁸ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 292; Ascenzi, “Premessa” 9-11.

esprimersi teneramente col bambino, parlare con garbo e composta gaiezza al fanciullo, dev'essere pratico e convincente col giovinetto che sarà domani un impiegato, un operaio, un agricoltore.”¹¹⁹ Without being coercive, authors needed not only to “convince” their readers to study arithmetic, but also potentially prepare them to pursue jobs as manual laborers, clerical workers, or agriculturalists. Here, notably, the Committee reveals its conviction that Gentile’s education system aim primarily at training a majority of children for jobs in industrial and bureaucratic sectors of society. As I will show in following chapters, Gentile’s predecessors likewise maintained this objective of training students into manual laborers. Their goal with these textbooks was to construct a labor force that would maintain the regime’s economic policies of autarchy. Yet, math textbooks illustrate one example of how Gentile’s Commission sought to ideologically train children with a particular world-view. It is also worthwhile to take a look at the Committee’s revisions to *sillabari*.

While third, fourth, and fifth-grade schoolbooks consisted of stories and excerpts of literature, first and second-grade primers and *sillabari* chiefly comprised phonetics exercises. Though the Committee paid lesser attention to providing guidelines for writing primers, they nevertheless held the view that the text could prove influential for the young child and recommended that its content be carefully chosen. Lombardo-Radice writes:

Molto dipende da questo primo libriccino, che, se non altro, darà o torrà la fede negli altri che verranno dopo, e li farà prendere più o meno sul serio, e li farà amare o disamare. Appunto perché questi son piccoli libri, niente è piccolo in essi, niente è senza importanza, come in generale nella educazione della prima

¹¹⁹ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 325.

infanzia. Tutto dovrebbe essere sereno, puro, buono, insomma, nel senso più completo della parola.¹²⁰

Primers, moreover, served as a tool for teaching a sense of morale in addition to transmitting an idealistic, tranquil, and peaceful outlook of the world. According to the Commission, the majority of *sillabari* pessimistically depicted Italy and Italian children. As noted by the *Commisione*:

I bambini, nella prima età, non fanno che credere e rialzarsi, e gli zoppi sono una piccola minoranza: ma gli autori di questi libri vedono il mondo pieno di sventure e di deformità, e nelle pagine pullulano gli sciancati, gli storpi, i gobbi, i guerci, i ciechi, i sordomuti, i blesi, i balbuzienti; e le prime parole che il bimbo impara a sillabare sono: PIO È MIOPE E NANO; LINO È NATO MUTO; e i primi raccontini parlano di ragazzi cattivi, che scherniscono gli infelici, e di ragazzi buoni, che occorrono a raccattare la gruccia, ecc. Mai nemmeno nei volumi per i più grandicelli, parole che tolgano all'imperfezione fisica quel senso di umiliazione e di nulla che mostri una compensazione morale di intellettuale a tali sventure nulla che nella rassegnazione faccia ammirare la forza dell'animo.¹²¹

Juxtaposing children with physical deformities and speech impediments with those who misbehave, the Committee criticizes authors for producing material that could potentially defile the morale of “vulnerable” students “che non fanno che credere.” Physical deformities here

¹²⁰ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 299.

¹²¹ Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 300.

imply moral disfigurement. Trivializing Italy's disabled children by marking them as a "minoranza," the Committee's scope appears utopian.¹²² By means of the primer, they seek to construct an imaginary group of Fascist children that is physically attractive and, therefore, mighty and incorruptible. By virtue of their beautiful bodies, these exemplary children possess "la forza dell'animo." Uniting Italian children under such a false image, Lombardo-Radice's texts disseminate a "symbol of personal and national regeneration."¹²³

The Archetypal Text: Gentile's Textbook Reforms following the Commissione Lombardo-Radice

Four other commissions followed that presided by Lombardo-Radice. The number of books examined by each varied in greater or lesser degree with respect to that reviewed by the first *Commissione*. For the most part, the textbook requirements did not change as each committee sought to maintain Lombardo-Radice's ideas and policies.¹²⁴ All four succeeding

¹²² In comparison to Ostry and Hintz's understanding of the term, Frederic Jameson defines utopia in his *The Political Unconscious* as "the proposition that *all* class consciousness—or in other words, all ideology in the strongest sense, including the most exclusive forms of ruling-class consciousness just as much as that of oppositional or oppressed classes—is in its very nature Utopian." He adheres to a rather Hegelian notion that utopias function by means of group solidarity rather than such "ethical categories" as right or wrong, good or bad that would distinguish the utopian group from the "other." See Jameson 289-290.

¹²³ Mosse 3-4.

¹²⁴ Cfr. Lombardo-Radice, *La riforma* 316-317; Italy, Ministry of Public Education, Ministerial Commission, *Relazione della Commissione ministeriale per l'esame dei libri di testo da adottarsi nelle scuole elementari*, [Commissione Vidari], *Il libro per la scuola tra idealismo e fascismo: l'opera della Commissione centrale per l'esame dei libri di testo da Giuseppe Lombardo Radice ad A. Melchiori (1923-1928)*, ed. Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani (1925; Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2005) 429; Italy, Ministry of Public Education, Ministerial Commission, *Relazione della Commissione ministeriale per l'esame dei libri di testo da adottarsi nelle scuole elementari e nei corsi integrativi di avviamento professionale*, [Commissione Giuliano], *Il libro per la scuola* (1926; Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2005) 579; Italy, Ministry of Public Education, Ministerial Commission, *Relazione della Commissione ministeriale centrale per l'esame dei libri di testo da adottarsi nelle scuole elementari e nei corsi integrativi di avviamento professionale*, [Comissione Romano], *Il libro per la scuola* (1927; Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2005) 666-667.

commissions required that the authors bestow ample illustrations on good quality paper; cited deficiencies in the language use; deplored grammatical errors; and criticized math and science books for their the lack of coherence. The Vidari Commission, for instance, removed selections of poetry that “sounded bad” and lacked consistent syllables per line.¹²⁵ All four commissions, moreover, required that textbooks inspire not only children’s interest and spirit but also a sense of patriotism. Vidari praised the inclusion of such martyrs and heroes of the *Risorgimento* and World War I as Guglielmo Oberdan, Cesare Battisti, Nazario Sauro, Emmanuele Filiberto di Savoia, Luigi Cadorna, Armando Diaz, and Gabriele D’Annunzio.¹²⁶ Giuliano, for his part, denounced science book authors, who focused on “i grandi fisici stranieri.” He demanded those writers to insist that “la fisica è una scienza essenzialmente italiana.”¹²⁷ The commissioners additionally sought to highlight the recent progresses of “New Italy.” By doing so, they set the country’s history in a narrative that would buttress the presumed accomplishments of the current regime.

With the exception of the Melchiori Commission, all the reviewers required textbook compilers to represent the presumed “real” qualities of Italian children. According to the reports, Italian students were not puerile and infantile, but rather “pronto e aperto.”¹²⁸ To the commissioners, qualities of weakness defined the Italian child of the preceding decade. Giuliano, for instance, remarked that the textbooks too often gave prominence to the obsequious and hypocritical “fanciullo vecchio,” “che non cessa mai, nemmeno un minuto, di essere la

¹²⁵ *Relazione della Commissione ministeriale per l’esame dei libri di testo da adottarsi nelle scuole elementari* 430.

¹²⁶ *Relazione della Commissione ministeriale per l’esame dei libri di testo da adottarsi nelle scuole elementari* 432-433.

¹²⁷ *Relazione finale della Commissione ed elenco dei libri esaminati nelle sessioni di agosto e settembre* 380.

¹²⁸ *Relazione della Commissione ministeriale per l’esame dei libri di testo da adottarsi nelle scuole elementari* 430.

consolazione dei genitori e del maestro, che soccorre il poverello e fa i sermoni ai compagni e si fa ammirare persino quando tenta di fare una scappatella anche lui, ed è un noioso insopportabile anche quando vuol essere anche lui un frugolo come i suoi compagni.”¹²⁹ Similarly, the Romano Commission expected the Fascist school to mold the child into the “uomo nuovo” who possessed such “virile” qualities as “lealtà, il coraggio, il lavoro, la perseveranza, il disinteresse, la probità, nonché il culto della religione dei nostri padri, e il rispetto per l’autorità e per la gerarchia, pur senza trascurare le virtù gentili, che formano il soave corteggio della umana bontà e generosità.”¹³⁰ Like their predecessor Lombardo-Radice, Vidari, Giuliano, and Romano participated in constructing and furnishing textbooks with utopian notions of the Italian child.¹³¹

Despite the consistencies, however, a few noteworthy differences remained. These were eventually integrated into the *Libro unico dello Stato*. Submitted to the MPI in 1926, the Giuliano report, for instance, condemned the lack of emphasis placed upon the figure of Mussolini and the Fascist movement. The commissioner writes: “Non basta evidentemente, per fare il libro italiano che noi vogliamo, intercalare nel testo molti ritratti del Re e di Benito Mussolini, e nemmeno infiorare il testo di frasi in onore del Governo Nazionale, e nemmeno sciogliere entusiastici inni alla divinità della Patria.”¹³² In addition to the “definitive elimination”

¹²⁹ *Relazione della Commissione ministeriale per l’esame dei libri di testo da adottarsi nelle scuole elementari e nei corsi integrativi di avviamento professionale* 580.

¹³⁰ Romano, here, of course, cites Mussolini in his reference to the *uomo nuovo*. As I will discuss in Chapter Three and Four, Mussolini’s idea of the *uomo nuovo*, in fact, does not refer to any literal soldier as many scholars have argued, but rather refers to workers. Here, Romano’s reference to Mussolini’s *uomo nuovo* suggests the characteristics, which the subjected Fascist child ought possess. For the quote cited here, see *Relazione della Commissione ministeriale centrale per l’esame dei libri di testo da adottarsi nelle scuole elementari e nei corsi integrativi di avviamento professionale* 666.

¹³¹ With the mention of “utopia,” I am again making reference to Ostry and Hintz’s as well as Jameson’s definition of the term. See above p. 40, n. 119.

¹³² Italy, Ministry of Public Education, Ministerial Commission, *Relazione della Commissione ministeriale per l’esame dei libri di testo da adottarsi nelle scuole elementari e nei corsi*

of “antinational propaganda,” the ultimate Italian textbook was to be ideologically “fascisticized” and decisively marked with the themes of the “culto della Patria.”

The call to include Fascist ideology within the schoolbooks, however, was not completely unforeseen. The move towards such a measure occurred amid discussions for a single State-issued schoolbook. On May 13th, 1926, Mussolini proposed the initiative while at a meeting with his Chamber of Deputies.¹³³ Following the *Duce*'s speech, MPI Pietro Fedele drafted the legislations that would be ratified by his successor Giuseppe Belluzzo. After Giuliano submitted the reports, urging writers to include selections on Mussolini and the Fascist movement, the make-up of the *Commissioni* markedly changed. By 1927, the review board consisted of ONB President Renato Ricci and five other commissioners.¹³⁴ With plans for a *Libro unico* looming, the final Melchiori Commission virtually disapproved all eight hundred seventy six volumes of textbooks submitted for examination. According to the report, none of the history, geography, civics, and economics texts corresponded “perfettamente ai fini della scuola fascista.”¹³⁵ The judgments of the Melchiori Commission thus helped pave the way for the publication of the State school textbook.

Scholars such as Minio-Paluello and Koon have suggested that up to 1927, textbook requisites were founded “exclusively” on pedagogic motives. Finding no “political bias,” they

integrativi di avviamento professionale, [Commissione Giuliano], *Il libro per la scuola* (1926; Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2005) 580.

¹³³ See Roberto Sani, “The ‘Fascist Reclamation’ of Textbooks from the Gentile Reform to the School Charter of Bottai,” *History of Education & Children’s Literature* III.2 (2008): 308.

¹³⁴ The move to change the number of members was not the first. The first Royal Decree on the examination of textbooks recommended that regional commissioners examine, then hand over textbooks to a central *Commissione*. Nonetheless, this directive was not carried out, and the central *Commissione* maintained full control. Bacigalupi 161.

¹³⁵ Italy, Ministry of Public Education, Ministerial Commission, *Relazione della Commissione per l’esame dei libri di testo da adottarsi nelle scuole elementari e nei corsi integrativi di avviamento professionale*, [Comissione Melchiori], *Il libro per la scuola* (1928; Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2005) 702.

point to the lack of Fascist propaganda and stress Ricci's absence at the first three commissions. According to the scholars' analyses, therefore, Committee members between 1923-1926 held no Fascist sympathy and imparted their decisions accordingly. I am quite skeptical and tend to side with Ascenzi and Sani, who have argued that Gentile and Lombardo-Radice laid the foundation for the *Libro unico*.¹³⁶ They explain that although the 1923-1924 Committee aimed at avoiding "every form of political propaganda and deference to Fascism," materials exalting the *Patria* and the *Grande Guerra* comprised "the essential nucleus" of the kind of Fascist education imparted by the *Libro unico* in the 1930's and 1940's. We know that such Committee members as Pezzé Pascolato, Nazareno Padellaro, Giuliano, Romano as well as Lombardo-Radice and Gentile openly professed themselves Fascist. In addition to signing the *Manifesto degli intellettuali fascisti*, they actively produced literature on Mussolini and the Fascist regime.¹³⁷ A mastermind behind the didactic layout of the textbook, Padellaro, for instance, helped compile materials for the *Libro unico*.¹³⁸ As my investigation into Gentile's education and textbook reforms has shown, the curriculum was constructed so that children could achieve a Fascist lifestyle in line with the supposed will of the *Stato*. Gentile's pedagogy indeed coincided with Fascist ideology.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, questions still remain that merit further consideration as to the ideological effects of Gentile's reforms on Italian children.

¹³⁶ Sani, "Fascist Reclamation" 301.

¹³⁷ Emilio R. Papa, *Fascismo e cultura: il prefascismo* (Venice: Marsilio, 1974).

¹³⁸ Padellaro's role as a Fascist pedagogue, whose didactic methods laid the foundation of the *Libro unico*'s content and structure, will be discussed in Chapter Three.

¹³⁹ Compare Cambi 187; Charnitzky 341; Ambrosoli 67; Genovesi 43.

Reforms Above and Beyond: Some Further Considerations

Clearly, Gentile and his successors formulated an ideological apparatus in the form of the textbook. Compiling and composing such didactic materials, they provided students with the “know-how” that would determine their place in the workforce and in society. Inscribing their own interpretations by means of their revisions, they also prescribed to the child notions of Fascist patriotism, nationalism, masculinity, and *italianità*. In effect, as Jameson suggests, the child received the text “always-already-read.”¹⁴⁰ The texts in other words defined the ways in which Italian children *ought* to understand and interpret their role as Fascists. By means of schoolbooks, the Fascist pedagogues aimed at constructing a national identity and an ideological social consciousness. Yet, as Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg’s Althusserian analysis of the Montessori school in *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians, 1860-1920* allows us to see, the Fascists were not the first to seek a utopian project.¹⁴¹ I wonder: how might the Fascist textbook contribute to an understanding of the formation of an Italian subject and the construction of Italian national identity? How did the themes of the text work to fashion, as Ravaglioli terms, a “formazione di un apparato della interiorizzazione?”¹⁴² With the emphasis placed on the visual components of schoolbooks, we could recognize the role that images play in ideologically shaping the child and in communicating a national identity.

According to Antonio Gibelli, Fascist propaganda indeed ideologically interpellates children into subjects as a result of its accessibility, simplicity, and emotionally charged images

¹⁴⁰ Jameson 9.

¹⁴¹ Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians, 1860-1920* (Chicago: U of Chicaco P, 2007) 6-7.

¹⁴² Ravaglioli 76-77.

of war and nationhood.¹⁴³ Referring to such printed materials as postcards and advertisements in his study of children as a “people” in Modern Italy, he writes: “Nella semplificazione didascalica e nello sforzo di raggiungere la massima efficacia, i temi, le procedure di convincimento, le corde emotive toccate, le associazioni di idee evocate trovano una essenzialità e una chiarezza del tutto speciali, rivelando aspetti profondi della cultura nazionalistica di guerra per se stessa.”¹⁴⁴ Gibelli seems to argue that the images are powerful enough to effect children. Nonetheless, we know that children must engage actively with the material. They must sympathize with the themes of nationalism so that its message is communicated. And so: *how* are these children taught to identify with such ideas vested in the images present in textbooks?¹⁴⁵ How might a child’s age, gender, social status, geographic location, or emotional and mental development prevent or allow him or her to grasp and respond to the images conveyed in didactic material?¹⁴⁶ Were there different and competing narratives of nationalism or perhaps regionalism that downplayed the ideological formation of Fascist students?

While I will answer these questions in detail across this work, I would like to briefly consider here Roberto Dainotto’s analysis of regionalism. His study sheds light on Gentile’s “highly problematic” conception of Italian national identity and as such frames the way I will

¹⁴³ Antonio Gibelli, *Il popolo bambino: infanzia e nazione dalla Grande Guerra a Salò* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005).

¹⁴⁴ Gibelli 47.

¹⁴⁵ An analysis of Padellaro’s pedagogy, as I will show in Chapter Three, will especially help in answering this question.

¹⁴⁶ An incomplete bibliography of the psychological development of children might include: D. W. Winnicott, *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (New York: International Universities Press, 1965); Jacqueline Nadel and Darwin Muir, *Emotional Development: Recent Research Advances* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005); Susanne A. Denham, *Emotional Development in Young Children* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998); Henry Dupont, *Emotional Development, Theory and Applications: A Neo-Piagetian Perspective* (Westport: Praeger, 1994); Jean Piaget, *The Essential Piaget*, ed. Howard E. Gruber and J. Jacques Vonèche (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

discuss the failures of Fascist subjection in coming chapters.¹⁴⁷ Indicating a dialectical tension between Gentile's notions of regionalism and nationalism, Dainotto writes: "Disguised as love for the local and the particular, the blood and soil rhetoric of 'local histories' almost looks like the dissolution and unmaking of nationalism—but only if one does not see in it, vaguely but clearly visible, the *risorgere* of the same old nationalism that we thought had set in the horizon."¹⁴⁸ Dainotto's premise allows us to take another look at not only Gentile's curricular and textbook reforms but also the publication of the *Libro unico*. While the philosopher promotes the study of standard Italian, he does not hinder children from being "creative with the language" and hence from using regional expressions in their speech. He eliminated grammar classes and, yet, allowed students to translate their regional vernacular into standard Italian at school. While striving for a national culture, he simultaneously promoted the local, agricultural, and littoral. Despite their attempts at unifying Italians, the Fascist government likewise incorporated regional themes into their *Libro unico* and circulated different textbooks for children in cities, rural areas, and abroad.¹⁴⁹ This pedagogical objective, I believe, contributed to a sense of social stratification, which Italians still find difficult to overcome. How might have Fascist textbooks confounded the process of ideologically shaping children and in promoting a national identity in light of the strong presence of regionalism? Taking these questions into

¹⁴⁷ Roberto Dainotto, "'Tramonto' and 'Risorgimento': Gentile's Dialectics and the Prophecy of Nationhood," *Making and Remaking Italy: The Cultivation of National Identity Around the Risorgimento*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna von Henneberg (Oxford: Berg, 2001) 242-243.

¹⁴⁸ Dainotto 253.

¹⁴⁹ Examples of such texts include the following: Giuseppe Fanciulli, *Lecture di religione: (per le scuole elementari italiane all'estero)* (Verona: A. Mondadori, 1935); Alessandro Marcucci, *Sillabario: scuole rurali* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1930); Angiolo Silvio Novaro and La Direzione Generale degli Italiani all'estero, *Il libro della 4a classe elementare* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1931).

account in the chapters to follow, I uncover the images and stories present within the textbook and discuss its relationship with student readers.

Chapter Two

To Arms, Child! The Battle for a Fascist Reading Public and the Libro unico dello Stato, 1926-1939

Introduction

Reacting to the Fascist government's decision to administer the *Libro unico dello Stato* in 1928, Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice famously wrote to Giovanni Gentile about the former's disastrous effects on his colleague's education reforms. Addressing the one-time Minister of Public Instruction, Lombardo-Radice notes in dismay: "Proprio in questi giorni è *crollata* la riforma della scuola elementare voluta da te, con il decreto del *libro unico*, compilata per tutti al centro, che svuota di ogni significato ideale quel tentativo nostro di organizzazione della scuola, che pur nominalmente continua a sussistere come cosa tua che rimane... 'intatta.'"¹ Lombardo Radice's polemical use of the terms "crollata" and "ferita a morte" to describe the *Libro unico*'s effect on the "significato ideale" of the *Riforma Gentile* suggests that the scope of the two academic programs opposed each other. The *Libro unico*, in other words, pedagogically challenged Gentile's philosophy of idealism, which was so rooted in the 1923 Reforms. The former subverted the latter's attempt at restructuring the elementary school and forming a class of students that would shape themselves independently and arrive willingly at the Fascist material furnished by the curriculum. According to Lombardo-Radice, the content and method of the *Libro unico* had caused the academic program to regress back into the boring and repetitive repertoire of positivism. Yet, why would the government impose a tedious curriculum based on memorization? What was its scope in stipulating the addendum of state-issued textbooks to the

¹ Quoted in Ascenzi, "Premessa" 3 and Monica Galfré, *Il regime* 95.

“most Fascist of all Reforms”? And lastly, what significance does the *Libro unico di Stato* have in its capacity to educate students into Fascists as opposed to the texts issued by the *Commissioni* under Gentile?

While the pedagogue’s language here might lead one to believe that the state-issued textbook completely eradicated the *Riforma*, we know in fact that the Ministry of Education retained Gentile’s program at the moment of the *Libro unico*’s issue. Indeed the textbook posed no threat to the administrative and structural directives of the Gentile reforms, but only to a certain extent resisted its academic programs. Proposed as a solution to Gentile’s curricular regionalism, the *Libro unico* would serve to unify Italians nationally.² Issuing the book solely for students at the elementary level, the State required schools throughout Italy to teach the same material. By means of such texts, no distinctions would exist between any student despite demographic differences. Every Italian would follow the same course of study and likewise would receive the same education. Nonetheless, the Education Ministry’s rhetoric and pedagogical policies vastly contrasted with its administration of the *Libro di Stato*, leaving students no more unified than they were under Gentile’s leadership.

As paradoxical as this might seem, the MPE did this deliberately and, as I will argue here, comprised the government’s new utopian project: shape and unify children into Fascists by means of large-scale exposure to the ideological state-school textbook both in and outside of the elementary school. Still, while maintaining social strata and hierarchies in this very process, the *Ministro dell’Educazione Nazionale* continued Gentile’s program of supporting the government

² Italy, Camera dei Deputati, *Atti parlamentari, Discussione del disegno di legge: Stato di previsione della spesa del Ministro dell’istruzione pubblica per l’esercizio finanziario dal 1° luglio 1926 al 30 giugno 1927*, Legislatura XXVII, 1st sess., 13-15 May 1926 (Rome: Tipografia Camera dei Deputati, 1926) 5713. See also Mariella Colin, *Les enfants de Mussolini: De la Grande Guerre à la chute du régime* (Caen: U of Caen P, 2010) 185, 190-1; Bacigalupi 195; De Fort 410-412.

not only ideologically but also economically. Indeed, in their potential to both adopt Fascist values as well as provide a large labor force, children for Mussolini represented a means to sustain the Fascist regimes' project of economic autarchy.

In this chapter, I look at the differences between the Fascist government's curious distribution of the *Libro unico di Stato* in light of its rhetoric for unity. I consider the following questions: what were the reasons behind the call for the *Libro unico*? What were the conditions that led the MPE to formulate and issue the state textbook? How did the government's administration of the *Libro* contribute to dividing Italian youths demographically and, at the same time, synthesize its efforts to unify them under Fascism? Furthermore, how did reading, in particular, fit into the process of ideologically subjecting children within the utopian project of making Fascists?

To answer these questions, I first discuss the events which led to the "fascistization" of Italy and, especially, the elementary school. The assassination of Socialist Deputy, Giacomo Matteotti, as I will show, allowed the government to establish points of surveillance upon Italians and thereby the means to instill Fascist values in everyday life. Examining the "fascistization" of editorial companies, the reading public, as well as the *scuola elementare*, I next discuss the *Battaglia del libro*—the regime's 1926 propaganda campaign to create a desire for reading. Gaining publicity through this campaign, the regime legitimized its efforts to modify its curricular programs once more and publish two, rural and urban, editions of the *Libro di Stato*. In providing an initial analysis to the State-issued textbook to follow, I focus on newspaper articles from the *Giornale della Libreria*, a leading weekly literary periodical, in which Italian intellectuals debated the issue and use of the *Libro di Stato*, and government circulars published by the Minister of Public Education between 1929 and 1943. These stipulated not only the

content but also the publication and dissemination of the state school textbooks. They also provided an overview of the content published in the *Libro di testo* for school children, specifically in the rural and urban areas of Italy.

In the final section of this chapter, I lastly investigate the 1934 and 1939 school programs, which made the *Libro unico* the central focus of the everyday scholastic curriculum. Mandating content that would entice students to occupy jobs within their communities, the Ministry of Education, I maintain, aimed at building a utopian class-consciousness. Espousing interest for the *Libro unico*, it sought to motivate students' willing participation in Italy's agricultural and industrial sectors for the economic benefit of the country. In light of these sources as well as the teaching methods recommended by the Ministry of Public Education, I show how repetitive reading exercises became the preferred method of subjecting children to Fascist ideology by means of the State-issued textbook. To introduce the regime's goals and efforts in issuing the *Libro di Stato*, I want to take a look at one particular circular issued by the Minister of Public Education. Studying this document, we indeed recognize the ministry's discrepancies in its call to unify Italians and understand the *Libro unico* as an apparatus of Fascist subjection.

Unify and Divide: The Need for the Libro unico dello Stato

On the 13th of May 1930, the head of the Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, Balbino Giuliano, released a directive titled, "Scelta ed uso dei libri di testo negli istituti medi

d'istruzione.”³ Published the year in which the *Camera dei deputati* had ratified and mandated the use of the *Libro di Stato* in elementary schools, the circular lays out the norms for the selection and instruction of middle school textbooks. Though not aimed at the primary school, Giuliano's decree hints at the government's argument in publishing a singular, state-issued schoolbook. Addressing a counsel comprised of school superintendents as well as the *Presidi* of the *Licei Ginnasi, Scientifici, and Istituti tecnici and magistrali*, Giuliano insists on the responsibility of teachers for choosing the textbook that best fits the goals of the ministry and the country. Here, we can begin to understand better the degree to which the State would use and distribute the schoolbooks as well as the quality of education the material would provide. Giuliano writes:

Avanti e come avviamento alla coordinazione degli insegnamenti affini tra di loro e alla fusione di tutte le discipline in un unico blocco di forze—nel che la scuola consegna veramente quella personalità morale coerente ed armonica che conviene ad un istituto educativo—il Preside e i professori devono curare che disarmonie, disequilibri, lacune non si annidino nell'ambito di ciascuna materiale, pel solo fatto che questa è affidata, nei diversi gradi d'insegnamento, a più persone. Chi, tra queste, deve curare lo svolgimento nel grado più alto e perciò avviare gli alunni al saggio finale dei loro studi (esame di maturità o di abilitazione) [...]

³ Italy, Ministero dell'educazione Nazionale, Direzione Generale Per L'Istruzione Media Classica, Scientifica e Magistrale, *Scelta ed uso dei libri di testo negli istituti medi d'istruzione*, Circ. n. 46 (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1930) Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University Libraries, Durham, NC. 16 Apr 2013. Note that in September 1929, the Camera dei Deputati legally changed the *Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione* to the *Ministero della Educazione Nazionale* so that its name would reflect the new goal of shaping children according to its “esigenze.” On the MPI becoming the MPE see De Fort 393.

Ma tanta è l'importanza di un indirizzo unitario e concorde fra tutte le forze vive di una scuola, che io non so concepire come, anche quando essa risulti della coesistenza di più corsi completi, ciascuno di questi proceda nella scelta dei libri di testo come se fosse un istituto a sé, ignaro e indifferente verso ciò che si fa negli altri. Ciò, oltre ad imporre acquisto di nuovi libri agli alunni che si debba o convenga far mutare da un anno ad un altro il corsi di appartenenza, costruirebbe una disformità negli strumenti essenziali di studio tra gli alunni che frequentano uno stesso istituto, disformità che troppo detrae a quello omogeneità di procedimenti, con la quale l'istituto deve dar testimonianza aperta di aver meditato il suo programma educativo.⁴

Stressing qualities of unity by using such utopian terminology as “coordinazione [...] in un *unico* blocco di forze,” “indirizzo *unitario* e concorde fra tutte le forze vive di *una* scuola,” “gli alunni che frequentano *uno* stesso istituto,” the Minister of Public Education suggests that all schools, public or private, within the country ought to produce a faculty and student body shaped according to one moral “personalità”.⁵ Emphasizing the phenomena of “disarmonie,” “disequilibri,” “lacune,” and “disformità,” Giuliano further implies that the then current education system plays on Italy’s demographic differences and creates a divide among students and faculty. Yet, not one Italian student differs from the next, and each ought to have equal access to his or her schooling. The means of unifying Italian students thus results in a curriculum based on state-issued textbooks. All students and faculty educated at the Italian school by means

⁴ *Scelta ed uso dei libri di testo negli istituti medi d'istruzione* 4-5.

⁵ All emphases are mine.

of such a book will possess the same mind set and understanding about themselves and their surroundings. However, in advocating such a textbook-oriented program, what might be the quality of schooling that Giuliano and his administration want to achieve? The Minister's language particularly becomes vague at the moment when he elaborates on the didactic goals of the school.

Noting that instructors, by means of textbooks, must “curare lo svolgimento nel grado più alto e perciò avviare gli alunni al saggio finale dei loro studi (esame di maturità o di abilitazione),” Giuliano seems to encourage all students to pursue a higher degree. Nevertheless, his enigmatic choice of verbs—“curare” and “avviare”—and his mention of exams suggests no determination, firmness, or urgency on the part of the instructor to guide students to achieve a diploma or university degree. Likewise, the Minister of Public Education neglects to mention any resolve on the students' part to pursue a challenging academic career. The main goal of administering textbooks in the school program consists in students *taking*, but not necessarily *passing* the *esame di maturità* or *abilitazione*. Echoing the rhetoric of his predecessor Giovanni Gentile, Giuliano, hence, implies the contrary of what we might have understood at first glance: while the ministry wants to educate all Italians, it does not push students to receive a higher education. Its scope rather lies in fashioning them according to the “moral” ideology, which the regime prescribes. What shape or form does this “moral” ideology then take? What might it tell us about the quality of education which the textbooks provided?

Objection toward the state schoolbooks validates Lombardo-Radice's polemic against the *Libro unico* and sheds light on the Giuliano administration's lack in motivating students to advance in their scholastic careers. The body of critical literature on the *Libro unico* proved vast. Ranging from teachers to publishers to pedagogues and politicians, reactions of many proved

unfavorable. Teachers lamented the lack of freedom in choosing their own texts as well as the content of the new textbooks.⁶ Editorial companies complained about government regulation of the market.⁷ Such noted pedagogues as Ernesto Codignola and Luigi Volpicelli denounced the textbooks for their blatant Fascist propaganda.⁸ Among those who critiqued the *Libro di Stato*, nevertheless, Franco Ciarlantini, a noted writer, journalist, member of the government's Chamber of Deputies, and President of the editorial union, *Federazione Nazionale degli Industriali Editori*, emerged especially as a leading challenger.⁹

Ciarlantini questioned the *Libro unico*'s efficacy as a tool in educating Italians. Drawing a comparison between the books compiled by Gentile and Lombardo-Radice's *Commissioni centrali* to the first editions of the state schoolbooks in an article published in the *Giornale della Libreria* in 1930, he denigrated the latter's banal content. The deputy notes: "Lo stato ha sempre avuto a sua disposizione per legge—degli organi di controllo per i libri scolastici: e nessuno avrebbe potuto scrivere cose men che ortodosse, sia quando esistevano le commissioni provinciali, sia quando istituirono le commissioni centrali per la versione dei libri."¹⁰ Consisting of "orthodox" language, the textbooks taught children ordinary rather than new and interesting material. Students, thus, risked becoming disinterested in their schooling. Continuing, Ciarlantini then warns of the quality of education students would receive by means of the new textbooks.

This follows: "Gli è che il libro unico ha l'inconveniente...di essere sempre lo stesso, per lo più,

⁶ See De Fort 413-414.

⁷ Galfré, *Il regime* 96-97; Colin 213; Maria Cristina Morandini, "Fascismo e libro di Stato. Il caso dei sussidiari," *Teseo '900: Editori scolastico-educativi del primo novecento*, ed. Giorgio Chiosso (Milan: Editrice Bibliografica, 2008) LV.

⁸ Cfr. Bacigalupi 195-198.

⁹ A sample of Ciarlantini's criticism against the *Libro unico* may be found in Bacigalupi 192-195; Colin 189; and Galfré, *Il regime* 92.

¹⁰ Franco Ciarlantini, "Un articolo dell'on. Ciarlantini sul Libro di Stato," *Giornale della Libreria* 30 Jan 1932: 22.

di essere conosciuto dai ragazzi prima ancora di essere adoperato. Manca perciò dei requisiti di novità e, vorrei dire, di sorpresa che costituivano ogni anno la gioia degli alunni [...] Il secondo anno, in molte scuole, era ancora in condizioni di conservazione tali da rivenduto con un notevole sconto.”¹¹ Ciarlantini’s censure not only emphasizes the lack of education the *Libro* imparts to students, but also insists that the material remains unchanged and becomes repetitive. As the textbooks are resold or passed down to other family members, and remain in the vicinity of those who owned it before, children are exposed to them but do not advance by obtaining any further knowledge. In light of Ciarlantini’s criticism, we can now interpret Giuliano’s academic program as one which hinders students from advancing in their studies. Here, the question still remains: why would the Minister of Public Education want to discourage Italian youth from receiving a more challenging education that would cultivate and prepare them for a higher degrees and competitive jobs? What does it mean for students to have access to such repetitive material?

The answer, I argue, lies in Ciarlantini’s own use of the term “control.” Maintaining the policies of the 1923 reforms, the Education Ministry adopted the repetitive Fascist content of the *Libro di testo* to subject children ideologically and place them in particular sectors of the workforce.¹² The result would allow the government to regulate Italy’s economy. Yet, in order to

¹¹ Ciarlantini 22.

¹² By this argument, I again mean to apply Althusser’s definition of a subject as an “individual” who submits to and practices (e.g., “interpellates”) an imaginary system of beliefs or “ideology,” constructed by such ideological state apparatuses or institutions as the church, schools, and family as well as cultural, legal and political bodies. The purpose of subjecting individuals, Althusser notes, is economic, namely, to reproduce “labour power” or capitalism. See ch. 1, n. 8. By means of “Fascist ideology,” I specifically reference Giovanni Gentile’s *La riforma dell’educazione*, in which he defines Fascism, as an expression of the single, mutual will of the Nation-State and the people to carry out the duties of the *patria* and establish political order. See ch. 1, n. 6. For a definition of Fascism and its relation to the Nation-State, see E. Gentile, *Fascismo: storia e interpretazione* (Bari: Laterza, 2002).

discuss in greater detail the relationship between the *Libro di Stato* and the Fascist regime's attempt to subject its youth, we ought to consider the conditions that allowed for and encouraged Mussolini to develop an apparatus in the form of a textbook. Circumstances leading to the *Libro unico* included Mussolini's attempt at grounding his political tenure during his first few years in office and the campaign to "fascisticize" Italy and Italians.

Fascist Education is the Answer: Giacomo Matteotti, the Duce, and the Motion to Ideologically Shape Children

The move to provide a rigorous Fascist education by means of the *Libro unico di Stato* came about significantly during the first four years of Mussolini's coming to power. Within this "so-called legalistic period" between 1922-1926, the *Duce* sought to lay the groundwork for the dictatorial regime that would protect his position as Italy's leader.¹³ Here, he identifies political affiliates either in support or in opposition to the Fascist government and devises measures to secure his authority. To solidify and validate his ascension during the initial period of his tenure, Mussolini first superficially "[displayed] a purely formal respect for the political procedures and the institutions of the liberal state, along with a certain degree of tolerance of the criticism led by opposition forces."¹⁴ Thus, he expressed his intent to uphold Italy's constitution in the attempt to stabilize the country politically as it recovered from the *Grande guerra* and transitioned from

¹³ Mauro Canali, "The Matteotti Murder and the Origins of Mussolini's Totalitarian Fascist Regime in Italy," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 14.2 (2009): 145. See also E. Gentile, "The Problem of the Party in Italian Fascism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 19.2 (1984): 251; and Giovanni Sabbatucci, *1924. Il delitto Matteotti* (Bari: Laterza, 2007) 8.

¹⁴ Canali 145.

Giolitti's Liberal government.¹⁵ Such a procedure would allow Mussolini to temper the antagonism between his supporters and opponents.

The *Duce*'s Fascist colleagues, however, did not respond well to his political compromises, and factions within the party presented itself as a challenge to his attempt at unifying the government. As historian Emilio Gentile notes, coalitions within the Fascist party held "differences of opinion, ambition, political rivalry, conflicting interests, regional patriotism, personal distrust and hatred. [...] There were schisms and violent clashes between old and new Fascists, who poured in *en masse* after the party came to power, between modernists and extremist, between those favoring 'normalization' and the supporters of the 'second revolutionary wave.'"¹⁶ While some understood and supported the need to establish order, other more radical members of the PNF, for instance, strongly subscribed to the notion of revolutionizing Italy according to the new Fascist "way."¹⁷ To manage the political discord in his party, Mussolini yielded to his colleagues' arguments against his policies.¹⁸ Yet, this solution only resolved part of his problem. Criticism brought against the regime grew further to encompass not only that expressed by his own party members, but also that of such opposition forces as the liberal, socialist, and communist party.¹⁹ Giacomo Matteotti, here, was at the forefront of the campaign. Having emerged as a chief opponent, he constituted not only a political but also ideological threat to Mussolini and the Fascists.²⁰

¹⁵ See Luigi Salvatorelli, "Il delitto Matteotti e la crisi del 1924-26," *Fascismo e antifascismo, lezioni e testimonianze*, 2 vols. (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1967) 148.

¹⁶ E. Gentile 257.

¹⁷ See E. Gentile 257; Salvatorelli, 150; and Canali 145.

¹⁸ Canali 145.

¹⁹ Canali 145-146.

²⁰ Scholarship on Giacomo Matteotti is extensive. The following list represents only a sample: Canali 143-167; E. Gentile 251-274; Salvatorelli 148-168; Sabbatucci 1-14; Giovanni Sale, "Il

A young socialist leader and Member of Parliament, Matteotti aggressively pursued, exposed, and vocally opposed the corrupt dealings of Mussolini and Fascist party members to the point of inciting a “crisis” in government.²¹ In numerous speeches delivered in the *Camera dei deputati* as well as in published articles, Matteotti revealed the *Duce*’s relations with his political opponents as one sustained by violence. Recounting the brutal measures used, he described in detail the way in which PNF members beat, shot, and killed union workers as well as socialist officials who sought to organize against the government.²² Examples of such speeches include one delivered in the *Camera* on the 10th of March 1921. Here, he describes such victims as one “capolega” taken from his home at night, beaten, tortured, shot and left tied to a tree in the Polesine.²³ According to the *deputato*, the Fascists employed such methods in order to instill fear and, hence, dissuade any “anti-fascist” from exercising his or her rights to assemble and protest.²⁴ Reacting to the beatings of socialists seeking to unionize, Matteotti addresses the *Camera* in the following words: “[Oggi] che il proletariato, per mezzo della libertà e della propria forma di organizzazione, intacca i profitti capitalistici, la libertà viene negata e viene proclamata la violenza contro di essa.”²⁵ Analyzing the young parliamentary leader’s speech, we

delitto Matteotti,” *La civiltà cattolica* 3697 (2004) 13-26; Giovanni Borgognone, *Come nasce una dittatura: l’Italia del delitto Matteotti* (Bari: Laterza, 2013).

²¹ Canali 151; E. Gentile 251.

²² According to Canali, many of these assaults were committed by Mussolini’s Ceka, a secret police organization. On the Ceka, see Canali 146; Philip Morgan, “‘The Party is Everywhere’: The Italian Fascist Party in Economic Life, 1926-1940,” *The English Historical Review* 114.455 (1999) 85-111; Michael Ebner, “The Political Police and Denunciation During Fascism: A Review of Recent Historical Literature,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 11.2 (2006) 209-226.

²³ Giacomo Matteotti, “La violenza fascista nel Polesine,” *Contro il fascismo. Un anno di dominazione fascista* (Molinara: West Indian, 2013) 23.

²⁴ Giacomo Matteotti, “La violenza” 25.

²⁵ Giacomo Matteotti, “Difendiamo insieme la causa del nostro Paese e la causa della civiltà,” *Contro il fascismo. Un anno di dominazione fascista* (Molinara: West Indian, 2013) 17.

can identify Fascist violence as a repressive state apparatus that threatened Italian democracy.²⁶ Indeed, exposing primarily the aggression committed against members of his own party, the leading opposition PSU, he showed the PNF to be a “reactionary” group.²⁷ Feeling intimidated by their socialist adversaries, the Fascists, Matteotti argued, used violence as a means for self-interest: to secure and retain power in government.

Notwithstanding his own pursuit of the PNF, Matteotti similarly denounced members of his own circle, who agreed to collaborate with the *Duce*'s party by remaining silent and refusing to condemn and indict those responsible for the assaults committed against socialists. Addressing the violence committed in the Polesine, Matteotti points out the passivity of his colleagues and calls them to action. He notes:

[Da] parte nostra, per lo meno da parte dei nostri organismi responsabili, non vi è stata mai nessuna provocazione. L'ordine è: restate nelle nostre case, non rispondete alle provocazioni. Anche il silenzio, anche la viltà sono talvolta eroici. Questo è l'ordine; ma, malgrado questo, si bruciano le Case del Popolo. E allora non è più lotta politica, non è più protesta, non è più reazione. [...] Dobbiamo noi combattere la lotta politica in questa maniera? Siamo anche noi autorizzati a metterci sul questo terreno? Ma vi levaste allora almeno di mezzo, noi del Governo e ci lasciaste combattere con dignità a parità di condizioni.²⁸

²⁶ On the repressive state apparatus, cfr. ch. 1, n. 15.

²⁷ Canali 149-150.

²⁸ Giacomo Matteotti, “La violenza” 25.

Speaking on behalf of his fellow deputies, Matteotti's rhetorical questions, marked with the modal, "dobbiamo noi combattere," and passive verbs "siamo anche noi autorizzati" communicates their subordinate position to the Fascists. Asking whether they are "allowed" to protest, Matteotti notes the hesitancy of his colleagues. By avoiding any confrontation with the PNF out of fear, they subject themselves into a group whom the Fascists have successfully subordinated through verbal threats and physical violence. His call to oppose the establishment thus singles Matteotti as a figure resistant to not only Fascists but also socialists in parliament.²⁹

Undeniably, Matteotti appears not as the only pursuer of Fascist crimes. Anti-fascist "dissidents" such as Giovanni Amendola, Cesare Forni, Alfredo Misuri, Alberto Bergamini and Ulderico Mazzolani also protested against Mussolini and his party.³⁰ Later in the *ventennio*, intellectuals led by Benedetto Croce, the former Minister of Education, declared their objection toward Fascism in the "Manifesto degli intellettuali anti-fascisti."³¹ Still, Matteotti's further revelation of major Fascist corruption scandals provided the opportunity for the government to realize its premeditated goal of establishing a totalitarian regime and "fascisticizing" the school.³²

Two particular instances of corruption—the election fraud of 1924 and the Sinclair Oil scandal—catalyzed Mussolini's pursuit of dictatorship. In his "L'ultimo discorso" in government on the 30th of May 1924, a few weeks before his assassination on June 10th that same year, Matteotti offered further evidence of fraud in the parliamentary elections of the 6th of April

²⁹ In addition to resisting silent fellow party members, Matteotti similarly struggled against other "powerful leaders" in the PSU who "collaborated" and "established alliances" with the PNF. He thus often found himself at odds with members of his own party as well as those in the PNF. See Canali 148-149.

³⁰ Canali 150.

³¹ See Papa 191-197; Michel Ostenc, "Una tappa della fascistizzazione: la scuola e la politica del 1925 al 1928," *Storia contemporanea* 4.3 (1973): 485.

³² Canali 143; Sabbatucci 2; Sale 13.

1924.³³ By means of “terrore” and “intimidazione” in addition to the attack and assassination of such candidates as the socialist Antonio Piccini in Reggio Emilia, the Fascists gained two-thirds majority in parliament.³⁴ Exposing the aggressive and criminal tactics employed by Mussolini and the PNF, Matteotti’s evidence, once more, identifies the government as a repressive state apparatus. Intimidated by the use of violence, common people as well as political rivals thus apprehensively supported the PNF. Commenting on the use of force, he says:

Per vostra stessa conferma dunque nessun elettore italiano si è trovato libero di decidere con la sua volontà. Nessun elettore si è trovato libero di fronte a questo quesito...Nessuno si è trovato libero, perché ciascun cittadino sapeva *a priori* che se anche avesse osato affermare a maggioranza il contrario, c’era una forza a disposizione del Governo che avrebbe annullato il suo voto e il suo responso.

A rinforzare tale proposito del Governo, esiste una milizia armata...Esiste una milizia armata...la quale ha questo fondamentale e dichiarato scopo: di sostenere Capo del Governo base indicato e nominato nel Capo del fascismo e non, a differenza dell’Esercito, il Capo dello Stato.

Vi è una milizia armata, composta di cittadini partito, la quale ha il compito dichiarato di sostenere un determinato Governo con la forza, anche se ad esso il consenso mancasse. In aggiunta e in particolare...mentre per la legge elettorale la

³³ Giacomo Matteotti, “L’ultimo discorso,” *Contro il fascismo. Un anno di dominazione fascista* (Molinara: West Indian, 2013) 53-61. On the details surrounding Matteotti’s murder, see Canali 143-145; Sabbatucci 1; Sale 14.

³⁴ See editorial note in Matteotti, “L’ultimo discorso” 53.

milizia avrebbe dovuto attenersi, essendo in funzione o quando era in funzione, e mentre di fatto in tutta l'Italia specialmente rurale abbiano constatato in quei giorni la presenza di militi nazionali in gran numero...³⁵

As Matteotti's protests garnered the attention of the Italian people, he became more of a legitimate risk. The PSU gained support at an ever-increasing rate, and the PNF consequently risked losing its authority in government.³⁶ The threat of exposure and risk of losing popular backing gave Mussolini further incentive to subject his people and, especially, children ideologically.³⁷

Yet, it was Matteotti's interest in and expected speech, scheduled for June 11th, 1924, on Mussolini's participation in the Sinclair Oil bribery and exploitation scandal that led to his ultimate assassination and allowed for the events that would make the government a totalitarian regime.³⁸ According to historian Mauro Canali, "[The] American Sinclair Oil company was making large payments to leading Fascists [...] in return for an exclusive monopoly to drill for oil on Italian soil and in the Italian colonies."³⁹ The danger of exposing Mussolini's involvement in the scandal could hurt his political and popular credibility and trigger his downfall.⁴⁰ By assassinating Matteotti and ridding himself of the "the only genuine serious adversary of Fascism," Mussolini could aggressively pursue his project of "fascisticizing" Italy politically,

³⁵ Matteotti, "L'ultimo discorso" 54-55.

³⁶ Canali 151.

³⁷ Bruno Wanrooij, "The Rise and Fall of Italian Fascism as a Generational Revolt," *Journal of Contemporary History* 22.3 (1987): 406-407.

³⁸ Canali 143.

³⁹ Canali 143 and 158-165.

⁴⁰ Canali 162.

economically, and socially.⁴¹ In other words, Mussolini's use of violence against socialist supporters and, especially, Matteotti enabled him to construct and administer the ISAs that would subdue the population and ensure his support.⁴² "Fascistization," in turn, provided Mussolini the framework for shaping the country's ISAs and distinctively the educational system.

Educating Italians into Fascists: the Duce's Campaign to Fasciticize Italy and the School

This "fascistization," by which I mean to name the regime's insertion of Fascist values into all aspects of Italian life, required the State to establish points of surveillance over the country's political, economic, religious, academic and domestic sectors.⁴³ Exercising force to subdue the people within this process consequently permitted Mussolini to shape the people according to Fascist ideology.⁴⁴ Making Fascists out of Italian men, women, and children, who practice these values, in turn, allowed for maintaining and securing the *Duce's* power as the country's head.⁴⁵ As Philip Morgan notes:

⁴¹ Canali 164.

⁴² By means of the acronym ISA or "Ideological State Apparatus," I am again referring to Althusser's seminal essay on the term and the "reproduction of labour power." Cfr. ch. 1, p. 8.

⁴³ I here understand Mussolini's "fascistization" of Italy as the establishment of a surveillance network, through the framework of Michel Foucault's monumental work, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), in which he qualifies modern society as "panoptic," consisting of a "growth of the disciplinary networks" in the form of not only prisons but also social, academic, economic institutions, whose rules and regulations work "to exercise a power of normalization." Cfr. Foucault 301-307. This approach to understanding "fascistization," nevertheless, is not new and has been considered at length by George Talbot in *Censorship in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007). For a definition of the term "fascistization," see also Morgan 86-87; Koon 34; E. Gentile 261-264; Canali 146.

⁴⁴ Berezin 13-14.

⁴⁵ Morgan 109.

The Fascist State was not envisaged as the neutral guarantor of the individual's freedom of action, but as an interventionist 'ethical' force which interfered in every aspect of people's lives in order to re-educate and shape them to its own values and purposes. In 'fascistizing' the nation, the PNF delivered the nation to the State, a mission expressed in Party Secretary Achille Starace's absurdly ambitious goal of 'controlling every single individual and every square foot of territory.'⁴⁶

Following the Matteotti affair, "'fascistizing' the nation," to borrow Morgan's term, encompassed several steps undertaken across the period of the *ventennio*.⁴⁷ The first measure consisted in dissolving all national parties and making the PNF the sole political organization of Italy.⁴⁸ Establishing a "centralized police state," the parliament formally repressed all non-PNF political voices.⁴⁹ Legitimizing the military and the police's use of violence, Mussolini could keep anti-fascists at bay and discipline citizens.⁵⁰ While regulating the use of force in order to "restore civil and political life in Italy to normal" (and hence to ensure support), the government simultaneously enlisted the masses in helping them survey and report any suspicious anti-fascist acts.⁵¹ Managed by the *Divisione affari generali e riservati*, list of informants included not only such political affiliates as ex-socialists and communists, federal employees, "labor syndicates,

⁴⁶ Morgan 87.

⁴⁷ One Fascist intellectual, Camillo Pellizzi, admitted that the "fascistization" of Italy never reached completion and, in a sense, never could in light of Fascism's inherent state of perpetual revolution. See Camillo Pellizzi, *Il partito educatore* (Rome: Tipografia della Camera dei Fasci e delle Corporazioni, 1941) 43-44. On criticism pertaining to Pellizzi and "fascistization" refer to E. Gentile 272.

⁴⁸ Ebner 212; Morgan 86; E. Gentile 252.

⁴⁹ Ebner 211 and Canali 146.

⁵⁰ Canali 146-147.

⁵¹ Cfr. Canali 146 and Ebner 210.

the postal and telegraphic services, [and] the railway,” but also ordinary citizens, neighbors, and family members.⁵² School children, for instance, had the task of monitoring and reporting teachers and faculty for their anti-fascist commentary.⁵³ In addition to the series of patriotic “battaglie” (e.g., “Battaglia del Lira,” “Battaglia del Grano,” “Battaglia Demografica”) launched to regulate the country’s economy and demographic size, Fascist organizations allowed the government to observe ordinary men, women, and children directly.⁵⁴ The *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro*, the *Opera Nazionale Maternità ed Infanzia*, and the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* all kept track of Italy’s workers, mothers, and children, while providing avenues for exposing them to Fascist ideas.⁵⁵ However, these institutions allowed Mussolini and the PNF to keep an eye on the people in their leisure time. Areas in which the people invested a majority of their time

⁵² Ebner 213-216; see also Talbot 21-47.

⁵³ “Espionage of Students on Teachers,” *Il popolo d’Italia* 24 Feb. 1929. Box 5, Folder 1, Constantine M. Pannunzio Papers, 1921-1945, Hoover Institute Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Palo Alto, CA. 23 May 2013. According to Fascist pedagogue Giuseppe Giovanazzi, this “espionage” of students, parents, and other “local authority” upon teachers defined a consortium known as the “Fiduciario di scuola.” This “Fiduciario,” was not a legitimate organization created and established by legislative measures. As Giovanazzi explains, “[*Non*] è previsto dalla legge organo alcuno,” and “*non ha alcuna base legale o regolamentare, e quindi nessun valore giuridico. È una necessità pratica, che non potrà venir trascurata in un definitivo ordinamento amministrativo della scuola primaria.*” It became a covert means to “practice” surveillance upon elementary school teachers. Despite the surveillance system placed upon them, teachers themselves likewise were required to formally denounce students, families, and faculty who expressed or demonstrated anti-fascist sentiment. See Giuseppe Giovanazzi, *La scuola primaria fascista (suo ordinamento e i suoi problemi) per i concorsi magistrali* (Turin: Paravia, 1937) 22. For further reading on this topic, see also Mimmo Franzinelli, *Delatori: spie e confidenti anonimi: l’arma segreta del regime fascista* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2012) 34-41; and Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004).

⁵⁴ On the Battaglia del Lira, see Roland Sarti, “Mussolini and the Italian Industrial Leadership in the Battle of the Lira, 1925-1927,” *Past & Present* 47 (1970) 97-112 and Morgan 92. On the Battaglia del Grano, see Carol Helstosky, *Garlic & Oil: Food and Politics in Italy* (New York: Berg, 2004) 75-77 and Morgan 103-104. On the Battaglia Demografica, refer to Helstosky 118-119 and Horn 46-65.

⁵⁵ On the OND, see De Grazia 152-159; on the ONMI, refer to Horn 66-94; on the ONB, see Carmen Betti, *Opera Nazionale Balilla e l’educazione fascista* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1984).

lacked a surveillance network. Among such locale as the workplace and the home, the school provided a notable liaison between the people and the Fascists in power.

Requiring several measures, the “fascistization” of the school likewise produced points for surveillance and initiated propagandistic “Battaglie.”⁵⁶ As Koon suggests, the process established

an increase in the blatantly political content of the school curricula [...]; ever tighter control and subordination of teachers to make them faithful servants of the state and eliminate academic freedom; more rigid centralization of the school administration to bring all academic personnel under the close supervision of the ministry; the use of the school as an agency of military regimentation; and the establishment of paramilitary party youth groups that would compliment the political works of the schools.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, unlike the use of repression mentioned above, the regime did not, at least legally, employ physical violence or force at school, as it did not want children to be Fascists simply because they were afraid.⁵⁸ The purpose stemmed from the need to instruct and raise children to contribute willingly to the welfare of the nation. Immersed in education, children could then

⁵⁶ In light of the hierarchy and administrative changes brought to the school in 1923, De Fort notably argues that the “fascistization” of the school began with Giovanni Gentile’s academic reforms and came into fruition following the Matteotti affair. See also De Fort, *La scuola* 387-388.

⁵⁷ Koon 63.

⁵⁸ Wanrooij 408.

share their studies with their parents and also encourage them to adhere to Fascism.⁵⁹ The government hence recognized the school's importance in rearing children: the latter invested a majority of their time at school while growing into adulthood; the academic environment, in turn, played a large role in forming their and their parents' attitudes. Mussolini made this clear in his opening speech to the "Primo Congresso Nazionale della Corporazione della Scuola" on the morning of December 5, 1925.⁶⁰ Addressing teachers, he notes:

Nella scuola tutto comunica: dall'asilo infantile all'università, e gli insegnanti prendono e consegnano le generazioni della piccola età alla matura giovinezza, e allora si impone la più stretta solidarietà morale e intellettuale fra tutti gli insegnamenti, anche perché la mèta alla quale debbono tendere sforzi è comune: l'educazione del popolo italiano. E questa educazione comincia nelle prime scuole e deve culminare nelle università.⁶¹

Yet, in order to produce such citizens, the process of shaping Italian "morale and intellect" required a thoroughly Fascist curriculum. Mussolini continues:

Così stando le cose, e le cose stanno realmente così, il Governo esige che la scuole si ispiri alle idealità del fascismo, esige che la scuola non sia, non dico ostile, ma nemmeno estranea al fascismo o agnostica di fronte al fascismo, esige

⁵⁹ Marisa Giorgi, "Forging the New Man: World War I Narratives for Children," *GSI* 1 (2014): 4.

⁶⁰ Benito Mussolini, "Parole ai docenti," *Opera omnia*, ed. Edoardo and Duilio Susmel, vol. 22 (Florence: La Fenice, 1957) 22-25.

⁶¹ Mussolini 22.

che la scuola, in tutti i suoi gradi e in tutti i suoi insegnamenti, educi la gioventù italiana a comprendere il fascismo, a rinnovarsi nel fascismo e a vivere nel clima storico creata dalla rivoluzione fascista.⁶²

By “fascistizing” the school, Mussolini aimed at not only shaping Italians according to the “idealità del fascismo,” but also purging anti-fascists and anti-fascist beliefs from the domestic sector. Distinguishing the need to “evitare una coalizione che si sarebbe formata tra coloro che non vogliono studiare, quelli che sono svogliati di insegnare, i padri di famiglia troppo indulgenti e finalmente tutti coloro che, essendo all’opposizione, debbono opporsi a tutte le misure del Governo,” the *Duce* sought to rid Italy of lazy, pampered, and unenthusiastic individuals who resisted learning.⁶³ He suggests that the education of children thus represents one of survival for the Fascist State. Not only would such instruction relieve the country of weak children, but also of adults, who might oppose the government. Rearing morally and intellectually strong citizens, the country would, as a result, unify under Mussolini and perpetuate Fascism.

Reading emerged as the preferred means of achieving this goal. However, significant obstacles hindered the government from educating its people by means of books: a substantial reading public did not exist as Italy suffered a high rate of illiteracy.⁶⁴ Requiring a great deal of effort, reading appeared unattractive and difficult even for those children and adults, who were literate.⁶⁵ Publishing companies, as a result, experienced a crisis as they suffered a significant

⁶² Mussolini 23.

⁶³ Mussolini 23.

⁶⁴ Ester De Fort, *Scuola e analfabetismo nell’Italia del ’900* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995).

⁶⁵ The problem of reading and literacy in Italy was, in fact, one of national concern even before the coming of Fascism. See Sabrina Fava, *Percorsi critici di letteratura per l’infanzia tra le due guerre* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2004) 17-19 and Bacigalupi 3-8. On the people’s attitude toward reading during the Fascist period, refer to Fava 147-155 and De Fort, *Scuola e analfabetismo*

loss in revenue.⁶⁶ Citing reasons for such obstacles, intellectuals concerned with the “problema della diffusione del libro” adopted a language quite similar to Mussolini’s and blamed the Italian people, whom they deemed “lazy” and “indifferent” toward reading.⁶⁷ Literary critic Ettore Romagnoli, for example, declared that an Italian would spend “allegrementi venti lire per un paco di sigarette, ma si allarma se un libro costa cinque lire.”⁶⁸ Likewise commenting on the “pigrizia spirituale italiana,” the *commissario straordinario della Federazione delle biblioteche popolari*, Leo Pollini adds, “Bisogna persuadere il popolo italiano a leggere, alla stessa maniera che lo si è persuaso ad avere una disciplina, a risparmiare, ad avere il suo pane, a rispettare e far rispettare la sua moneta [...] Bisogna vincere l’obiezione che chi lavora—e chi non lavora oggi?—non abbia tempo per leggere.”⁶⁹ Such disinterest, thus, threatened the regime’s economic and totalitarian goals. The less people read, the less exposure they would have to the ideas that would make them Fascists. Magistrate and critic Fernando Palazzi explains, “La questione del libro è la questione della coltura: un problema di civiltà, di dignità nazionale, e quindi squisitamente politico. Diciamo di più: è un problema di alta politica: per fare un popolo non bastano quaranta milioni di ventri: ci vuol almeno qualche milione di cervelli.”⁷⁰ Without books, Italians could not possess the education that would allow them to form the political “popolo” and

266-267. On the “lotta contro l’analfabetismo e la dialettologia” in Fascist Italy along with statistical analyses of the illiteracy rate during the time, cfr. Klein 27-47.

⁶⁶ “La crisi del libro in Italia,” *Giornale della Libreria* 14 Aug 1926: 432.

⁶⁷ See “Per la ‘Battaglia del Libro,’” *Giornale della Libreria* 17 July 1926: 397; “La ‘battaglia del libro’ nel commento della stampa,” *Giornale della Libreria* 17 July 1926: 397-398; “La Battaglia del Libro” 5 June 1926: 287-288.

⁶⁸ “La Battaglia del Libro” 287.

⁶⁹ See Leo Pollini, “La cultura e il libro,” *Il libro d’Italia nel decennale della vittoria* (Milan: Ravagnati, 1929) 342. Pollini would later become the director of the Istituto Fascista di Cultura. On Leo Pollini’s involvement in the “diffusione del libro” during the *ventennio*, see Maria Luisa Betri, *Leggere, obbedire e combattere: le biblioteche popolari durante il fascismo* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1991) 43-88.

⁷⁰ “La Battaglia del Libro” 287.

govern their country according to Fascist ideas. As children would grow up to take charge of Italy, schools thus held the responsibility of “insegnare ad amare il libro.”⁷¹ Yet, what were the ways in which the regime could promote Fascist books and learning? The answer might come as a surprise.

The Spiritual Battle for the Mind: The Battaglia del Libro and the Birth of the Libro Unico dello Stato per La Scuola Elementare

In addition to administering the resources that would make school attendance obligatory under the Gentile reforms, the government made authors and editorial companies comply with its “esigenze” of creating and promoting Fascist books. Passing a series of laws, the parliament first worked to ensure that all published content be Fascist. Issued on November 7th, 1925, one titled, “diritto dell’autore,” functioned as a surveillance network on writers.”⁷² According to this law, all authors seeking to publish held the task of registering and declaring their work at the *Ufficio della proprietà intellettuale* at the *Ministero dell’economia nazionale*.⁷³ The author’s name would then be made public in the *Bollettino Ufficiale* of the administrative office. Thus, no author could publish anonymously, and all materials were subject to government scrutiny. Yet, such legal requirements proved useful in allowing not only the government but also ordinary people to keep an eye on writers. By law, if the author decided to publish his or her work, he or

⁷¹ “La ‘battaglia del libro’ nel commento” 397.

⁷² Italy, Parliament, *Regolamento per l’esecuzione del R. Decr. legge 7 novembre 1925, n. 1950, sul diritto d’autore*, *Giornale della Libreria* 29 Aug 1926: 451-455. For a useful overview on authors and censorship in Italy during the *ventennio* refer to Guido Bonsaver’s *Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 2007) and *Mussolini Censore* (Rome: Laterza, 2013).

⁷³ See article 1, section 1, *Regolamento per l’esecuzione del R. Decr. legge 7 novembre 1925, n. 1950, sul diritto d’autore* 451.

she would need to make a request in writing to the *Ufficio della proprietà*.⁷⁴ The latter bureau would then make the former applicant's request public in the *Bollettino* as well as in two journals "di maggiore diffusione nel Regno" at the author's expense. The fact that the State stipulated and insisted the author's name be published in the papers of "maggiore diffusione" suggests that it wanted to disseminate the information as widely as possible. Should the writer publish anti-Fascist material, he or she could then be held accountable and prosecuted immediately. At the same time, if the sudden decision to withdraw publication aroused any suspicion, authorities could once again indict the author. Royal Decree, number 1950, thus became one way of submitting authors and their writing to the control and supervision of the government.

While authors confronted new requirements for publishing their work, editorial companies likewise felt the pressure to adapt to the new political "esigenze" of the Fascist regime and gathered frequently to discuss content appropriate for publication. A year after the Royal Decree on the rights of authors, a session of the *Assemblea Generale Straordinaria dei Soci* convened for three days in Rome to discuss the content and publication of books.⁷⁵ In addition to Giovanni Gentile and other diplomats, editors in attendance included those from such major publishing companies as Bemporad, Mondadori, and Vallardi. The objective of the meeting, among many, was to "elevarsi verso sempre più alti destini per virtù del Governo Nazionale." In his speech, Roma Staderini, delegate of the Carisch publishing company in Milan, describes the urgency of all editors to promote the "current culture of nationalism." He elaborates:

⁷⁴ See article 1, section 2, *Regolamento per l'esecuzione del R. Decr. legge 7 novembre 1925, n. 1950, sul diritto d'autore* 451.

⁷⁵ "Assemblea Gen. Straordinaria dei Soci. Roma 8-9-10 nov. 1926 (Sala Borromini)," *Giornale della Libreria* 20 Nov 1926: 607-621.

Mai infatti, in questo periodo di rinnovata attività, noi sentimmo l'elevatezza della missione squisitamente nazionale affidataci, mai come ora comprendemmo la necessità di non cessare secondi nel collaborare alla grandezza del nostro paese.

Ed è dinanzi alle Autorità che rappresentiamo il Governo Nazionale e dipendono dalla saggezza del Primo Ministro, che io dichiaro solennemente che gli editori e i librai italiani mettono tutte le loro energie, la loro volontà, la loro obbedienza al servizio della cultura.⁷⁶

In addition to promoting Fascist values by means of their publications, Staderini's use of the terms "obbedienza" and "volontà" further implies that he and his colleagues take the initiative to comply with the requirements laid out by Mussolini. At the behest of the economic crisis in which they found themselves and the threat of going out of business, editorial companies felt compelled to "fascistize" the industry and their products. Receiving government support to increase production of books for the ideological benefit of the people, editorial companies would earn a larger profit. However, to increase their earnings and satisfy the regime's "needs," they demanded and discussed measures to raise awareness and encourage adults and children to read more. In collaboration with the government, editors hence resolved to launch a series of events to combat the "crisi del libro."

Considered the "Battaglia del Grano spirituale," the propaganda campaign known as the "Battaglia del Libro" addressed the "crisi di diffusione" by promoting books as desirable and

⁷⁶ "Assemblea Gen. Straordinaria dei Soci. Roma 8-9-10 nov. 1926 (Sala Borromini)," *Giornale della Libreria* 20 Nov 1926: 607.

affordable objects.⁷⁷ Its ultimate goal consisted in creating “il pubblico che legge” and in preparing “nuove cerchie di amatori.”⁷⁸ Announced in the journal *Fiera Letteraria* for the first time in May 1926, the campaign notably rallied enough popular support to allow the State to regulate, legitimately, the publishing industry. Consisting of such Fascist officials, cronies, and editorial dignitaries as Senator Enrico Corradini, Arnaldo Mussolini, Margherita Sarfatti, and Antonio Vallardi, a “comitato promotore per la Battaglia del Libro” began to organize a book fair. Deemed the “giornata del Libro,” the government required its people to attend, purchase books, and / or subscribe to one editorial company.⁷⁹ While disseminating advertisements in print and film, committee members alongside other Italian intellectuals, furthermore, introduced government measures to intervene in the cost and sale of books. In addition to requiring publishers to provide readers with discounts on books and journals, they asked the government to “influire sul costo della carta e [l’]aumentare il numero e la dotazione delle biblioteche.”⁸⁰ Further suggestions included a subsidy for the shipping and delivery of books as well as statutes on the number and kinds of texts that were issued.⁸¹

⁷⁷ “La ‘battaglia del libro’ nel commento” 397. Scholarship on the “Battaglia del Libro” is scarce. Maria Luisa Betri briefly mentions the propaganda campaign along with the “crisi del libro” in course of her discussion on the Fascist expansion of libraries across Italy in *Leggere, obbedire e combattere* (cfr. pp. 49-54). While she argues that this campaign served mainly to benefit the declining editorial industry, I maintain that the “Battaglia” demonstrates the regime’s initiative to create public awareness and disseminate Fascist ideas by means of books. I here develop and expand on the “Battaglia” by contributing specifically an analysis of primary articles published in the *Giornale della Libreria*. These articles discuss the “Battaglia del libro” as it regards the *Libro unico dello Stato* and the editorial and political move to encourage children to read.

⁷⁸ “Assemblea Gen. Straordinaria dei Soci. Roma 8-9-10 nov. 1926 (Sala Borromini),” *Giornale della Libreria* 20 Nov 1926: 607.

⁷⁹ Cfr. “Per la battaglia” 397; “La Battaglia del libro,” *Giornale della Libreria* 26 June 1926: 356-7; Kenneth Scott, “Mussolini and the Roman Empire,” *The Classical Journal* 27.9 (1932): 651; Betri 49.

⁸⁰ “La ‘battaglia del libro’ nel commento” 397.

⁸¹ “La ‘battaglia del libro’ nel commento” 397.

Of particular priority for the *comitato promotore*, here, was the issue of textbooks. Senator Ettore Ciccotti cited the “super-produzione di libri scolastici” as one cause for the decline in book sales.⁸² As many neither purchased nor read these “jumbled” texts, produced often “in a hurried manner,” the materials represented “un inutile materiale ingombrante di scarto.”⁸³ According to the senator, the content of such texts of literature furthermore required qualities adapting “alle condizioni” and “consuetudini del paese.”⁸⁴ Senator Ciccotti’s discussion significantly indicates awareness for not only the “crisi del libro” but also the Fascist *Libro unico di Stato*. Calling for the Education Ministry to standardize both its content and format, he provides an avenue for popular support and hints at the simultaneous legislative debates for the state-issued elementary schoolbook.

Echoing Ciccotti’s language on textbooks and the “Battaglia,” deputy Antonio Anile detailed the financial and enrollment problems afflicting the school in light of the high cost of materials.⁸⁵ Bringing the matter into debate in the *Camera dei deputati* on the 13th of May 1926 while discussing the budget of the Ministry of Public Instruction, he cited the price of textbooks as one reason for the “diminuzione notevole nelle iscrizioni alle scuole primarie.” He notes:

I termini sono questi – quanti figliuoli del nostro popolo lavoratore restano ancora in uno stato di abbruttimento; quanti altri frequentano delle scuole che per offesa all’igiene dovrebbe essere chiuse; quanti altri sono costretti a lasciare le scuole per la indigenza delle famiglie, le quali non sono in grado di sopportare le spese

⁸² “La crisi del libro” 432.

⁸³ “La crisi del libro” 432.

⁸⁴ “La crisi del libro” 432.

⁸⁵ *Discussione del disegno di legge: Stato di previsione della spesa del Ministro dell’istruzione pubblica per l’esercizio finanziario dal 1° luglio 1926 al 30 giugno 1927* 5713.

che quotidianamente si domandano per l'acquisto di quaderni o di libri, specialmente dove i Patronati funzionano male.⁸⁶

Much like his colleague Ciccotti, Anile notes that the bulk of the cost of education lay in the numerous amount of schoolbooks, which students and teachers did not read completely.

Substantiating Anile's argument with the total number of pages compiling textbooks, the Minister of Public Instruction, Pietro Fedele provides the statistics. He counts:

Ogni alunno della terza classe elementare dovrebbe leggere o studiare 550 pagine di solo testo, della quarta classe 900 pagine, della quinta 1000 pagine. Tutta questa carta stampata poco meno della carta stampata elettorale, non viene letta, e solamente se ne impara qualche brano a memoria qua e là: ed allora si riforma a quei vieti sistemi di apprendimento che sono stati condannati dalla riforma.

I libri di testo sono due per la prima classe, tre per la seconda classe, sette per la terza classe, sette per la quarta et otto per la quinta. Per la terza, quarta e quinta classe si tratta di una vera biblioteca. Economicamente tutto ciò è rovinoso [...] senza dubbio il carico è superiore ai 55 milioni di lire.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *Discussione del disegno di legge: Stato di previsione della spesa del Ministro dell'istruzione pubblica per l'esercizio finanziario dal 1° luglio 1926 al 30 giugno 1927* 5713.

⁸⁷ *Discussione del disegno di legge: Stato di previsione della spesa del Ministro dell'istruzione pubblica per l'esercizio finanziario dal 1° luglio 1926 al 30 giugno 1927* 5783.

Mussolini's recommendation to publish "cinque or sei libri fondamentali di Stato" would solve the high costs as each class would use one, single schoolbook.⁸⁸ By regulating their sale, the price of textbooks would consequently decrease. Furthermore, students could afford to enroll at school.⁸⁹ By making the texts mandatory, at the same time, the government could expose students to its ideology on a daily basis both at school and at home. The *Libro unico di Stato* thus became a strategy to fighting the "Battaglia del libro" and constructing a reading public out of children.⁹⁰ Yet, what sorts of Fascists were these books going to make?

While the *Camerati* here did not yet specify the contents of the *Libro di Stato*, their discussions further indicate the goal of using the school textbook and elementary education as a means for achieving a hierarchical Fascist society, economically sustained by the future masses. Mussolini and the PNF expected the education system to train the vast majority of students, particularly from the middle and lower working classes, and labeled the *scuola elementare*, its programs, and materials as the "primo crogiolo per la preparazione e la cernita di quei lavoratori intelligenti, colti, educati, che sono indispensabili alle civiltà italiana, alla civiltà fascista."⁹¹ The schooling students receive at the primary level, and later on, at the secondary level would prepare them to "fornire per sè soli una cultura sufficiente ad esercitare degnamente il minuto commercio, o un mestiere, on un piccolo impiego."⁹² Use of the terms "sufficiente," "degnante," "minuto," and "piccolo" here indicate the goal in educating Italian youth. Children should not

⁸⁸ *Discussione del disegno di legge: Stato di previsione della spesa del Ministro dell'istruzione pubblica per l'esercizio finanziario dal 1° luglio 1926 al 30 giugno 1927* 5713.

⁸⁹ Monica Galfré, "Introduzione. L'inarrestabile ascesa di Mondadori tra scuola e mercato," *Mondadori. Catalogo storico dei libri per la scuola (1910-1945)* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2008) 13-14.

⁹⁰ See interview with Ministro Belluzzo in "La crisi del libro in Italia" 432.

⁹¹ *Discussione del disegno di legge: Stato di previsione della spesa del Ministro dell'istruzione pubblica per l'esercizio finanziario dal 1° luglio 1926 al 30 giugno 1927* 5750.

⁹² *Discussione del disegno di legge: Stato di previsione della spesa del Ministro dell'istruzione pubblica per l'esercizio finanziario dal 1° luglio 1926 al 30 giugno 1927* 5750.

receive “too much” schooling, as they were to “fit” into the careers that their social classes mandated. Assuming “small” jobs with little responsibilities, children moreover faced no challenges, developed no ambitions, and thus felt dissuaded from climbing the social ladder. Situated within the lower ranks of the Fascist hierarchy, thanks to their education, children would only participate politically by means of the Fascist corporations that represented them, economically, by means of the “little” industrial or agricultural jobs they had, and culturally by adhering willingly to Fascism.

Educating children in this way, however, did not mean that the government had no faith in children’s mental capacities. On the contrary, Mussolini himself acknowledged, “I bambini hanno una facoltà straordinaria a imparare!”⁹³ Rather, using textbooks and the academic curricula to restrain children to their proper social ranks and securing their own political and economic support, the Fascist *Camerati* and education ministry aim at building a utopian class-consciousness, much like their predecessor Giovanni Gentile.⁹⁴ Espousing children to “love” the textbooks that taught the “know-how” to obtain the “proper job” alongside the ideals of the Fascist regime, the academic curricula sought to unite Italian children by imparting and stressing their willing participation in the lower working classes.⁹⁵ In order to analyze this utopian project of building a lower rank of working-class children through textbooks, I want to examine a series of laws and school programs that legitimized and regulated the use of the *Libro di Stato della scuola elementare* as well as the debates concerning its actual contents.

⁹³ *Discussione del disegno di legge: Stato di previsione della spesa del Ministro dell’istruzione pubblica per l’esercizio finanziario dal 1° luglio 1926 al 30 giugno 1927* 5719.

⁹⁴ Referring to the term, “utopian class-consciousness,” I draw once more upon Jameson, who identifies class-consciousness and ideology as being “in its very nature utopian.” See ch. 1, n. 116. On the notion of technical training via Gentile’s reforms, cfr. ch. 1, pp. 29-30 and 41-42.

⁹⁵ Using the term, “know-how,” I refer to Althusser’s discussion of school material in his “Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus.” Cfr. ch. 1, n. 21. This idea of “love” once more echoes Gentile’s philosophy of “spirit” and “volontà.” Refer to ch. 1 pp. 32, 35.

Putting the Libro unico to Work: the Administration and Dissemination of Fascist Ideology in the Form of the Textbook

The *Libro di Stato* was not a phenomenon unique to Italy or the Fascists. Anile acknowledged the adoption of the state-issued schoolbook by “altre nazioni” while discussing the concept in the *Camera*.⁹⁶ Guido Baccelli, Minister of Public Instruction between 1881 and 1900 had similarly suggested that the government issue a *Libro di Stato* in 1913 to save on publishing costs.⁹⁷ Likewise in 1923, the Ministry of Public Instruction under Gentile ratified a law mandating a state-issued *Quaderno Balilla*, scrutinized by Giacomo Matteotti both in print and in parliament (see fig. 2.1).⁹⁸ Despite all previous attempts at publishing a *Libro unico dello Stato*, nevertheless, the passing of the Royal Decree, *Norme per la compilazione e l'adozione del testo unico di Stato per le singole classi elementari*, on January 7, 1929, approximately three years after Mussolini introduced the motion in parliament, marked the government's attempt at fully controlling the publication of all elementary schoolbooks for the purpose of immersing students in Fascist values and holding them in specific social strata.⁹⁹ Stipulated by law, the

⁹⁶ *Discussione del disegno di legge: Stato di previsione della spesa del Ministro dell'istruzione pubblica per l'esercizio finanziario dal 1° luglio 1926 al 30 giugno 1927* 5713.

⁹⁷ See Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani, eds., “Dalla «epurazione della letteratura didattica» all'approvazione del testo unico di Stato: L'opera della Commissione centrale per l'esame dei libri di testo” in *Il libro per la scuola tra idealismo e il fascismo: l'opera della Commissione centrale per l'esame dei libri di testo da Giuseppe Lombardo Radice ad A. Melchiori (1923-1928)* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2005) 7 and De Fort, *La scuola* 411.

⁹⁸ On the law concerning the *Quaderno Balilla*, see “Forniture scolastiche a buon mercato,” *Giornale della Libreria* 15 Aug 1923: 284-285. On Matteotti's protest and publication against the propagandistic use of the notebook in schools see his article, “Quaderni Balilla e Provveditori Piazzisti” included in his work, *Sulla scuola*, ed. Stefano Caretti (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1990) 222.

⁹⁹ Italy, Parliament, *Legge 7 gennaio 1929, n. 5 -- Norme per la compilazione e l'adozione del testo unico di Stato per le singole classi elementari, Il libro per la scuola nel ventennio fascista: la normativa sui libri di testo dalla Riforma Gentile alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale (1923-1945)*, eds. Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani (Macerata: Alfabetica, 2009) 118-119.



Fig. 2.1. 1923. *Quaderno balilla*. Anonymous. Black and White illustration of the front cover of the 1923-1924 state-issued notebook for the elementary school. The *Quaderno balilla* represents the regime's very first attempt at publishing scholastic material under the *ventennio*.

administration and dissemination of the textbooks allows us to see how the government aimed at achieving this goal.

Legislation did not hesitate in mandating the branches of government that would finance, produce, and market the text in accordance with the “esigenze” of the regime. Three assumed the task of realizing the *Libro unico*. Having issued the books for the first time in the academic year 1930-1931, the Ministry of Finance funded the *Libro di Stato*, based on the money specified in its annual budget. Under the delegation of *commissioni* the Ministry of Education debated, compiled, and edited the content of the textbooks. Finally, the Provveditorato Generale dello Stato, Domenico Bartolini, superintendent of the Ministry of Finance, oversaw the printing and distribution of the texts.¹⁰⁰ It is at the level of the Provveditorato Generale dello Stato where we see a great deal of control exercised upon editorial companies and their delivery of textbooks to students.

According to articles four, five, and seven of the textbook law, the Provveditorato Generale was to regulate the retail and circulation of the books.¹⁰¹ The office decided, in other words, which publishing company would receive and sell the *Libri* and stipulated the areas and communities of the country where they could provide them. After having laid out the “compilazione” and the “impaginazione” of the *Libro unico* and received proofs from the *Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato* and the *Libreria dello Stato*, the Provveditorato sent all related materials—“l’occorrente numero di galvani stereotipie, le copie di trasporto, per le parti da

¹⁰⁰ Italy, Ministro per l’Educazione Nazionale and Il Ministro per le Finanze, *Decreto Interministeriale 22 agosto 1930-VIII – Modalità per la stampa e la vendita da parte del Provveditorato generale dei testi unici di Stato per le scuole elementari, Il libro per la scuola nel ventennio fascista: La normativa sui libri di testo dalla Riforma Gentile alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale (1923-1945)*, eds. Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani (Macerata: Alfabetica, 2009) 135-139.

¹⁰¹ *Decreto Interministeriale 22 agosto 1930-VIII – Modalità per la stampa e la vendita da parte del Provveditorato generale dei testi unici di Stato per le scuole elementari* 136.

eseguire in litografia, delle singole pagine nonché la carta della stampa, la tela ed il cartoncino per la rilegatura ed i volumi tipo di campione”—to members of a group of wholesale dealers known as the *Società delle Messaggerie Italiane*.¹⁰²

This group of wholesalers consisted of government authorized “case editrici,” who belonged to either the *Associazione Editori e Librai Italiani* (AELI) or the *Federazione Nazionale Fascista dell’Industria Editoriale*.¹⁰³ Purchasing each text from the Provveditorato at a 40% discount, these approved publishing companies would then distribute to their “botteghe” where they would sell the *Libri di Stato* directly to the public, at prices indicated by the State in article six of the *Decreto Interministeriale*.¹⁰⁴ One authorized bookseller, for example, could purchase copies of the *Libro unico per la seconda classe elementare* at three lire a piece from the Provveditorato, then sell it to the public for five lire each.¹⁰⁵ The hierarchy that was established for the transaction of textbooks is noteworthy here, as it indicates the restrictions, which the government placed upon the business dealings of each *casa editrice*.

¹⁰² *Decreto Interministeriale 22 agosto 1930-VIII – Modalità per la stampa e la vendita da parte del Provveditorato generale dei testi unici di Stato per le scuole elementari* 135-136. The *Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato* (IPS), formally the *Istituto Poligrafico della Guerra*, established in 1923, held the task of printing all official government documents and publications including the «Gazzetta ufficiale». All documents including the *Libro di Stato* published by the IPS were housed and sold in the *Libreria dello Stato* or state archive and bookstore. Later, the *Libro unico* would be published and printed by the Fascist *Libreria del Littorio*, a propaganda administration directed by Giorgio Berlutti, writer of juvenile literature. On the state archive and bookstore, see *La Libreria dello Stato* (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1928) 3-4, 61; on the *Libreria del Littorio*, cfr. “La Libreria del Littorio inaugurata a Roma dall’on. Turati,” *Giornale della Libreria* 8 Jan 1927: 16.

¹⁰³ Italy, Ministero delle Finanze, Provveditorato Generale dello Stato, “Federazione Nazionale Fascista dell’Industria Editoriale: Promemoria approvato dal Provveditorato,” *Giornale della Libreria* 27 Sept 1930: 660-661.

¹⁰⁴ *Decreto Interministeriale 22 agosto 1930-VIII – Modalità per la stampa e la vendita da parte del Provveditorato generale dei testi unici di Stato per le scuole elementari* 135.

¹⁰⁵ For a full list of all prices, see *Decreto Interministeriale 22 agosto 1930-VIII – Modalità per la stampa e la vendita da parte del Provveditorato generale dei testi unici di Stato per le scuole elementari* 135-136.

According to the addendum to article twelve of the *Decreto interministeriale* passed by the Provveditorato Generale, any editorial company who was not a member of the AELI or the *Federazione* could neither purchase copies at wholesale nor sell to the public without first producing required credentials and an application to the government.¹⁰⁶ As the Provveditorato's "Promemoria" on the sale and distribution of the *Libro unico* states, "Tutti i librai che non siano stati precedentemente iscritti negli elenchi dell'AELI e della Federazione, dovranno dare nelle ordinazioni gli estremi per il loro riconoscimento e segnatamente quello possesso della licenza di esercizio per la rivendita dei libri."¹⁰⁷ In addition to providing a license to sell books, the candidates furnished "gli estremi" or "essential documents" "per il riconoscimento" of the company. Conferring such specified documents would allow for the identification of the company and would hence imply a means for the company to prove its allegiance to Fascism. By keeping a dossier on the publishing company's employees, the regime in turn could keep surveillance on retailers and hold them accountable for any unauthorized action. Yet, maintaining reports on the members of the *case editrici* encompassed only one example of the regulations placed on the sale of the *Libri unici*.

Editorial companies could not sell the books freely across the country, and no member of the *Messaggerie* could sell directly to the public.¹⁰⁸ The MPE mapped and assigned specific zones to the *case*, where they could distribute books to *botteghe*, or points of sale. Each zone corresponded to one or more regions of Italy. As article seven of the *Decreto Interministeriale*

¹⁰⁶ "Federazione Nazionale Fascista dell'Industria Editoriale: Promemoria approvato dal Provveditorato" 660-661.

¹⁰⁷ "Federazione Nazionale Fascista dell'Industria Editoriale: Promemoria approvato dal Provveditorato" 661.

¹⁰⁸ See article 11 of the *Decreto Interministeriale 22 agosto 1930-VIII – Modalità per la stampa e la vendita da parte del Provveditorato generale dei testi unici di Stato per le scuole elementari* 137-138.

specifies, “Ad ognuno delle case editrici è assegnato per lo smercio dei volumi una determinata zona, con divieto assoluto di vendere e di svolgere qualsiasi attività od ingerenza all’infuori della zona medesima.”¹⁰⁹ For the 1930-1931 academic year, the Provveditorato established twelve zones as follows: zone one, Venezia-Giulia; zone two, the Veneto, Venezia Tridentina, and Emilia; zone three, Lombardia; zone four, Piemonte; zone five, Liguria; zone six, the Toscana, Marche, and Umbria; zone seven, Lazio and the Abruzzi; zone eight, Campania; zone nine, Molise and Puglia; zone ten, Basilicata and Calabria; zone eleven, Sicilia; and zone twelve, Sardegna.¹¹⁰ Allowing for the delivery of textbooks in the African colonies, the government further authorized specific publishers in zones two and eleven: the *Industrie Riunite Editoriali Siciliane* in Palermo could allocate the *Libri unici* to “botteghe” in Cirenaica, Tripolitania, Eritrea, Somalia, and Dodecaneso, while the “Messaggerie Italiane di Bologna could issue books in Zara.¹¹¹

To ensure that publishing houses complied with this regulation, the ministry by law required each copy of the *Libro unico* to possess a “contrassegno” or “marca” of the Provveditorato Generale specifying the zone in which the book could be sold (see fig. 2.2). The fourth clause of the *Decreto* demanded that “ogni volume ha applicata una marca del Provveditorato dello Stato differente per ciascuna delle zone fissate per la vendita dei libri e indicherà la zone entro la quale i libri devono essere venduti.”¹¹² While the MPE reorganized

¹⁰⁹ Cfr. *Decreto Interministeriale 22 agosto 1930-VIII – Modalità per la stampa e la vendita da parte del Provveditorato generale dei testi unici di Stato per le scuole elementari* 137.

¹¹⁰ “Libro di Stato. Ripartizione delle zone di rifornimento per le Case Editrici,” *Giornale della Libreria* 13 Sept 1930: 647-648. For recent criticism on the distribution of the *Libro di Stato* in government specified zones, see Galfré, *Il regime* 100.

¹¹¹ See subsection titled, “Libro di Stato,” included in article, “Federazione Nazionale dell’Industria Editoriale,” *Giornale della Libreria* 4 Oct 1930: 683-684.

¹¹² Cfr. *Decreto Interministeriale 22 agosto 1930-VIII – Modalità per la stampa e la vendita da parte del Provveditorato generale dei testi unici di Stato per le scuole elementari* 137;



Fig. 2.2. 1930. Official stamps of the *Provveditorato Generale dello Stato* listing the name of the “zone” or region in which the *Libro unico dello Stato* was authorized for sale. The first stamp corresponds to that issued for zone seven, Lazio and the Abruzzi; the second, for zone nine, Puglia; and the third, for zone six, Toscana.

zones by authorizing and forbidding certain publishing companies to sell the textbooks over the next fourteen years, the rule regarding the “contrassegni” remained unchanged.¹¹³ Located either on the back cover or front insert and marked with the term “collaudo,” these “contrassegni” resembled red, green, or blue-colored stamps and indicated the textbook’s inspection number (see fig. 2.3).¹¹⁴ As the books lacking the official seal were considered illegal and counterfeit, the presence of “contrassegni” allowed the government to track the textbooks, to make an account of the number produced, and to hold publishers accountable should their products appear in

“Federazione Nazionale Fascista dell’Industria Editoriale: Promemoria approvato dal Provveditorato” 660.

¹¹³ As a result of their use of political tactics, certain publishing companies as Mondadori and Vallecchi monopolized a large portion of the market to sell the *Libri di Stato*. Such “hegemony” over the sales of textbooks account for the redistribution of editing companies in certain zones. Compare, for instance, those listed in the zones in the following ministerial circulars issued by the Provveditorato Generale dello Stato: “Libro di Stato per la resa e per la vendita degli esemplari di vecchia edizione 1930,” *Giornale della Libreria* 19 Sept 1931: 265-266; “Libro unico di Stato per le scuole elementari,” *Giornale della Libreria* 1 Oct 1932: 234; “Distribuzione del Libro di Stato. Rettifica,” *Giornale della Libreria* 1 Oct 1932: 234-235; “Libro di Stato,” *Giornale della Libreria* 2 Oct 1937: 288; “Libro di Stato. Disposizioni per la campagna scolastica 1935-1936,” *Giornale della Libreria* Sept 1935: 225-226; “Disciplina della vendita del Libro di Stato,” *Giornale della Libreria* 16 Sept 1939: 149; “Disciplina della vendita del Libro di Stato per il 1940-1941,” *Giornale della Libreria* 21 Sept 1940: 474-475. On Mondadori and Vallecchi’s market control, see Galfré, *Il regime* 131, 145-147 and also Bonsaver, *Censorship* 43-53.

¹¹⁴ Despite the different locations in which we find them in remaining copies today, the regime by law in fact specifically mandated that publishing companies affix the “marca di contrassegno” “sull’angolo sinistro in alto della facciata interna della copertina di ciascun volume” of the *Libro unico*. The color of each stamp likewise indicated the zone in which the *Casa editrice* had permission to sell the books. In similar fashion, elementary school notebooks issued and managed by the ONB carried red, green, yellow, or blue stamps. However, each color officiating the edition, by contrast, indicated the notebook’s cost rather than point of sale. On the specific location and colors for the “marca di contrassegno” in the *Libri di Stato*, see Article 7, *Decreto Interministeriale 22 agosto 1930-VIII – Modalità per la stampa e la vendita da parte del Provveditorato generale dei testi unici di Stato per le scuole elementari* 137. On the use of the *marca* in elementary school notebooks, see “L’accordo fra la Confederaz. Del Commercio e l’O.N.B. per la fornitura dei libri e del materiale scolastico,” *Giornale della Libreria* 19 Sept 1931: 267. For a study of Fascist-era notebooks, see Juri Meda, et al. *School Exercise Books: A Complex Source for a History of the Approach to Schooling and Education in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 2 vols. (Florence: Polistampa, 2010); Luigi Marella, *I quaderni del Duce: tra immagine e parola* (Manduria: Barbieri, 1995); and also, Montino 153-178.

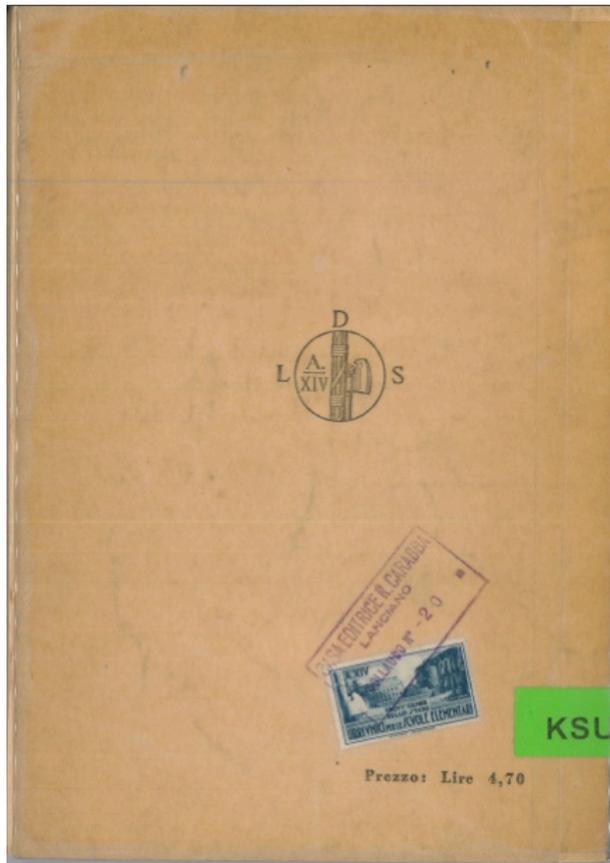


Fig. 2.3. 1935. Back cover of Ornella Quercia Tanzarella's, *Il libro della II classe elementare: letture*, illus. Mario Pompei (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1935). As per Article seven of the *Decreto interministeriale – 22 agosto 1930*, Tanzarella's official state-issued textbook features the insignia of the *Libreria dello Stato*, the price of the textbook (e.g., 4.70 Lire), as well as a blue-colored stamp furnished by the *Provveditorato Generale dello Stato*. Note the inspection number, name of the *casa editrice* (e.g., R. Carraba), as well as the word, *collaudo*, (e.g., ("inspected")) impressed upon the back cover near the stamp.

unauthorized zones.¹¹⁵ By means of strict market control, the government could limit buyers from accessing certain textbooks.

Social demographics first played a role in the kinds of schoolbooks issued to consumers. The Ministry of Public Education required different textbooks for rural and urban areas of Italy.¹¹⁶ In the first year of use, it published three types of *Libri unici* for the first and second grades. Alessandro Marcucci's *Il libro per la prima classe rurale* and *Il libro per la seconda classe rurale*, for instance, were allocated to schools in the countryside. Using different "metodi didattici," the other two compiled by Ornella Quercia Tanzarella and Dina Bucciarelli-Belardinelli—*Sillabario e piccole letture* and their *Il libro della seconda classe*—were furnished to the *scuole urbani*. Urban schools throughout Italy utilized either Tanzarella's or Belardinelli-Bucciarelli's textbooks according to appropriate ministerial circulars. Thus schools in Lombardia, Toscana, Campania, Lazio, Molise, Puglie, Sicilia and Sardegna used Tanzarella's first and second grade texts, while in Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Venezia Tridentina, Emilia, Piemonte, Liguria, Marche, Umbria, Basilicata, Calabria, and Abruzzi, schools employed Belardinelli-Bucciarelli's.¹¹⁷ Given the different editions in use, Italian students across the country curiously did not study the same materials.

Likewise exacerbating student education, economics factored into the government's circulation of the *Libri unici* within both urban and rural areas of Italy. The poorer the region, the more likely students were to avail themselves of outdated versions of the *Libro unico*.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Cfr. Article 7, *Decreto Interministeriale 22 agosto 1930-VIII – Modalità per la stampa e la vendita da parte del Provveditorato generale dei testi unici di Stato per le scuole elementari* 137.

¹¹⁶ Italy, Ministero dell'Educatione Nazionale, *Adozione del Libro di Stato nelle Scuole Elementari del Regno. Decreto n. 36, Giornale della Libreria* 4 Oct 1930: 683-684.

¹¹⁷ Italy, Ministero dell'Educatione Nazionale, *Adozione del Libro di Stato nelle Scuole Elementari del Regno. Decreto n. 36, Giornale della Libreria* 4 Oct 1930: 684.

¹¹⁸ See De Fort, *Scuola e analfabetismo* 242-248.

Therefore, schools in the north and northwest of Italy adopted updated editions, and schools in the south and northeast assumed older prints of the *Libro*. When regions could not afford to purchase newer books, they received former volumes *in rimanenze*, even if the texts did not correspond to those decreed in previous ministerial circulars. For example, in the 1931-1932 school year, Venezia Tridentina acquired Tanzarella's first and second grade textbooks, when the year before they had used Belardinelli-Bucciarelli's instead.¹¹⁹ Likewise that same year, academic programs in Sardegna applied Belardinelli-Bucciarelli's text when they had previously employed Tanzarella's. Inconsistencies thus marked the allocation of textbooks. Such redistribution of the *Libri unici* indeed occurred quite frequently at the start of the academic school year and illustrated the government's attitude toward educating children in lower-income areas.¹²⁰ While, on the one hand, Mussolini and the MPE demanded that rural schools compete academically with their urban compatriots, they, on the other hand, did not exert any effort in helping the former achieving that goal.¹²¹ Here, we might again interpret this negligence in educating the children of "contadini" as the regime's way of maintaining its economic scope in the agricultural sectors of Italy. Yet, how did the *Ministro dell'Educazione Nazionale* ensure that students studied the proper textbooks?

¹¹⁹ See circular issued by the Ministro dell'Educazione Nazionale in "Libro unico di Stato per le scuole elementari," *Giornale della Libreria* 1 Oct 1932: 234.

¹²⁰ Schools in Cagliari, Cosenza and Potenza, for instance acquired the older *Libro unico per la terza classe elementare* "in rimanenze" for the 1935-1936 school year; those in Calabria, Campania, Sicilia, Lucania, and Sardegna continued to receive outdated versions of Bucciarelli-Belardinelli and Tanzarella's books, while in certain "provincie del Regno" other schools used "i testi aggiornati e modificati" in all five grades. Refer to ministerial decrees issued by Provveditorato Generale dello Stato and the Ministry of Public Education published in the following articles: "Libro di Stato. Testo unico per la classe terza," *Giornale della Libreria* 19 Oct 1935: 249; "Libro di Stato. Nuove disposizioni del Ministro E. N. sull'uso dei testi di nuova e di vecchia edizione," *Giornale della Libreria* 14 Nov 1936: 222.

¹²¹ De Fort, *Scuola e analfabetismo* 268-271.

Further regulations sought to curb the use of unauthorized state school textbooks. Ministerial circulars issued by the MPE as well as the office of the Provveditorato Generale urged all schoolbook vendors to exchange older editions remaining in stock with newer ones.¹²² Providing detailed instructions on how to reconstitute the books, the Provveditorato ordered retailers to make sure the books were

imballati in modo da non subire deterioramenti durante il viaggio, in quanto saranno accettati soltanto i volumi in perfette condizioni [...] L'involucro esterno dei colli dovrà portare ben visibile l'indicazione: *Testi scolastici di ritorno*, mentre in ciascun pacco dovrà essere incisa la distinta in triplo dei volumi in esso contenuti; una copia sarà restituita all'editore ed una trasmessa all'Istituto Poligrafico.¹²³

Vendors subsequently submitted reports to the Provveditorato indicating the number of texts being replaced.¹²⁴ As booksellers could exchange the old for new based on what the former was worth, the ministry encouraged them to render the textbooks in pristine condition. Books in near perfect condition subsequently could be traded at no extra cost to the vendor.

To oversee the return and proper use of textbooks, the Ministry of Education not only disposed of "propri funzionari" from its own office but also had school administrators check on

¹²² Cfr. Ministerial circular number 12101 reproduced in article, "Libro di Stato—Resa dei volumi per la III e la IV classe," *Giornale della Libreria* 20 May 1939: 166.

¹²³ "Libro di Stato—Resa dei volumi per la III e la IV classe" 166.

¹²⁴ See "Libro di Stato. Disposizione per il cambio dei testi di 1a e 2a classe presso i Librai e cartolibrai," *Giornale della Libreria* 29 Sept 1934: 223.

students.¹²⁵ School superintendents, “regi ispettori scolastici,” and “direttori didattici” examined classrooms and informed teachers about ministerial decrees on the *Libro unico*. Instructors, in turn, urged families to ensure that their children possessed the correct editions of texts and held the task of acquiring new books directly from the *librai* for those who could not purchase them in time.¹²⁶ At the end of the school year, professors gathered and handed students’ books over to the *librai*, who would then forward them to the government. Not all students gave their textbooks back, however. As well-to-do children purchased their books, they retained them. Those who could not afford to buy school materials, by contrast, received their books on loan and returned them to their teachers at the end of the academic year.¹²⁷

Students from all demographic and economic backgrounds thus also played a role in the distribution of the *Libri*. As poorer students had to return their schoolbooks, they, like the *librai*, kept their books in impeccable condition. Since the books were passed “per altre mani,” from one student to the next, reasons for maintaining them were “di ordine igienico.”¹²⁸ To ensure students conserved their books well, teachers could administer contests. Those who proved the most “distinti nella conservazione del testo” could receive “piccoli premi o altre forme di riconoscimento” as a reward.¹²⁹ Students who bought and kept their copies of the *Libri unici*, in the meanwhile, could also furnish them to their relatives under certain “exceptional”

¹²⁵ See Minister Ercole’s decree n. 6976 issued on November 9, 1934 published in “Libro di Stato. Vendita dei testi per la 1a e 2a classe elementare,” *Giornale della Libreria* 17 Nov 1934: 374.

¹²⁶ Refer to circular number 18, issued under Giuseppe Bottai’s administration, *Libri di Stato per le scuole elementari. Norme per l’anno scolastico 1937-38, Il libro per la scuola nel ventennio fascista: La normativa sui libri di testo dalla Riforma Gentile alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale (1923-1945)*, eds. Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani (Macerata: Alfabetica, 2009) 184-185.

¹²⁷ “Libro di Stato,” *Giornale della Libreria* 25 Dec 1937: 38.

¹²⁸ *Libri di Stato per le scuole elementari. Norme per l’anno scolastico 1937-38* 185.

¹²⁹ See “La nuova edizioni dei testi scolastici,” *Giornale della Libreria* 6 May 1931: 79.

circumstances. They too were required for hygienic reasons to maintain clean textbooks and could pass them along so long as the editions were authorized for use.¹³⁰ Children who refused to purchase or obtain current editions of textbooks could be punished. For the MPE, students who resisted having the appropriate copy of the *Libro unico* opposed the “principi del Fascismo.”¹³¹ During Giuseppe Bottai’s tenure at the Ministry of Education, teachers hence could admonish students for lacking “rispetto alla scuola e a loro medesimi.”¹³² Becoming objects of social ostracism and emotional shame, students in turn were hence compelled to have the books in possession. Such hegemonic ordinances on the use and maintenance of books continued to regulate not only commerce and sales, but also student education. By keeping their copies clean, students acquired discipline while demonstrating a love and respect for their books. In this way, they helped the government in its goal to educate young Italians according to Fascist “esigenze.” They became tools in maintaining and cherishing the apparatus that would shape them into Fascists. Yet, what qualities of the textbooks could specifically make children into Fascists? How might we define and identify the content of the textbooks? How was the material of the *Libro di Stato* chosen?

¹³⁰ *Libri di Stato per le scuole elementari. Norme per l’anno scolastico 1937-38* 186.

¹³¹ “Disposizioni del Ministero dell’E.N. sui «Temi svolti» e sulle traduzioni interlineari,” *Giornale della Libreria* 3 Dec 1938: 335.

¹³² Bottai served as the *Ministro dell’Educazione nazionale* between 1936-1943. During his tenure as MPE, Bottai famously issued his own Fascist school reforms for the elementary and middle school, known as the *Carta della Scuola*. On Bottai’s work in the Fascist government, see “Giuseppe Bottai,” *Camera dei Deputati, Portale Storico*, 26 Jan 2017 <<http://storia.camera.it/deputato/giuseppe-bottai-18951103#nav>>. Bottai’s monumental school charter has been largely studied by scholars. Below is only a sample of literature available: Colin 297-304; Mazzatosta 43-62; De Fort 44-54, 146-147, 429; Koon 164-165.

Reforming the Textbook: The Commissione per il Libro di Stato, 1929-1943

Working in collaboration with the MPE and Mussolini, who personally invested time in developing the state school textbook, the *Commissione per il Libro di Stato* gathered and edited didactic material according to regime requirements.¹³³ Operating directly under the *Duce* and the Ministro dell'Educazione Nazionale, one class of members consisted of such Fascist officials as ONB chief Renato Ricci, Provveditorato Bartolini, Augusto Turati and Professor Augusto Antonelli, the *fiduciario nazionale dell'associazione fascista della scuola per l'istruzione elementare*.¹³⁴ Providing the government with added measures to oversee the content and physical makeup of the textbooks, these individuals enforced the criteria that would make the *Libri di testo* Fascist and bridge such ancillary academic institutions as the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* with the elementary school. Protagonists representing the *balilla* as well as children performing the Fascist salute thus made their way into the textbooks, illustrating the regime's goal of forming children according to the motto, "Libro e moschetto, Fascista perfetto." Marked with a *balilla* gesturing to the littorio on its cover, Alfredo Petrucci's *L'Italiano Nuovo: il libro della seconda classe elementare* became one example of a schoolbook that adopted a blatant Fascist guise thanks to the committee who compiled it.¹³⁵

¹³³ Mazzatosta 98.

¹³⁴ See "Il libro di Stato sarà distribuito nelle scuole nel Natale di Roma," *Giornale della Libreria* 12 Oct 1929: 614; "I pregi e le caratteristiche dei libri di Stato," *Giornale della Libreria* 3 May 1930: 360; "Libri di testo e programmi per le scuole elementari," *Giornale della Libreria* 10 Feb 1934: 30.

¹³⁵ See Alfredo Petrucci's *L'Italiano nuovo: il libro della seconda classe elementare* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1939). Petrucci's cover illustration (i.e., fig. 4.4) will be discussed in detail in ch. 4, pp. 25-27. On the relationship between schooling and physical education, refer to Davide Montino, "Libro, quaderno e moschetto. Pedagogia della guerra nelle letture e nelle scritture scolastiche durante il regime fascista," *History of Education & Children's Literature* 2.2

Yet, subordinate to their ranks were also several subcommittees, who supplemented the *Libro*'s Fascist iconography with reputable material.¹³⁶ Unlike those of the main *commissione*, most of the members here consisted of well-known academics, authors, and illustrators, who assumed the task of compiling and designing textbooks for one particular class of elementary students. Among the three set up by Ministro Romano in 1934, for instance, one *sottocommissione* compiled books for the third grade; another for the fourth; and the last for the fifth. While for the most part these individuals associated themselves with the period's academic and literary, rather than political, milieu, they nonetheless identified with Fascism and supported the administration of the state-issued schoolbook.¹³⁷ Members included such academics as pedagogue Alessandro Marcucci, Camillo Quercia of the *capodivisione del ministero dell'educazione nazionale*, Nazareno Padellaro, a school superintendent and head of the 1934 academic reforms, Dante Dini, a founding member of the *corporazione della scuola*, Piero Bargellini, "direttore didattico" in Florence, Benedetto Cosentino, an elementary school teacher in Rome, and Alfredo Panzini, President of the *Accademico d'Italia*.¹³⁸ Selected by Mussolini himself, moreover, a slew of eminent authors and painters became associated with the *Libro di Stato*. Noted writers included not only Tanzarella and Bucciarelli-Belardinelli, but also Grazia Deledda, Nobel prize laureate for literature and author of the 1930 edition of *Il libro della terza classe elementare*, Angiolo Silvio Novaro, and Roberto Forges Davanzati, considered one of the "famosi fascisti." In addition to Bruno Angoletta and Mario Pompei, frequent contributors to the

(2007) 193-216; Philip V. Cannistraro, "Mussolini's Cultural Revolution: Fascist or Nationalist?," *Journal of Contemporary History* 7.3-4 (1972) 131-133; Teja 150.

¹³⁶ "La commissione ministeriale per l'esame dei libri scolastici," *Giornale della Libreria* 15 Dec 1934: 398.

¹³⁷ Bacigalupi 194.

¹³⁸ "La commissione ministeriale per l'esame dei libri scolastici" 398; Galfré, *Il regime* 215, n. 11.

Giornalino della domenica and the *Corriere dei piccoli*, renowned illustrators consisted of Enrico Pinocchi, who provided artwork for Salvatore Gotta's children's novel *Il piccolo alpino*, and Duilio Cambellotti of the *art nouveau* school who designed editions of *Pinocchio* and *Alice and Wonderland*.¹³⁹ The presence of materials from such a group of well-known academics, artisans, and writers would hence serve to furnish esteem and credibility to the Fascist content, makeup and overall reputation of the *Libro di Stato*.¹⁴⁰

While according to law textbooks were revised every three years, the process of gathering and putting together materials for the *Libro unico* nevertheless proved difficult.¹⁴¹ In the first year of its publication, for instance, the textbook committee required its subordinate members to complete the work within a few months time so that the texts could be finalized and issued on the “Natale di Roma,” date of Mussolini's ascension to government.¹⁴² Such members as Quercia Tanzarella found the deadlines too frustrating to meet. She criticized the MPE for the pressure of submitting proofs and its tardiness in issuing her an approved edition along with compensation.¹⁴³ Others in addition to Tanzarella asked for deadline extensions, which the

¹³⁹ On Marcucci, Quercia, Padellaro, Dini, Bargellini, Cosentino, and Panzini, see Galfré, *Il regime* 93, 215, n. 11 and Ascenzi, *Education and the Metamorphosis of Citizenship* 182, n. 53; on Tanzarella, Belardinelli-Bucciarelli, Deledda, Novaro, and Davanzati, refer to Galfré, *Il regime* 93, Ostenc 503, Bacigalupi 181, 194-195, 219 n. 33; on Pinocchi, Cambellotti, Angoletta, and Pompei, see Colin 367-369, 373, 377 and Antonio Faeti, *Guardare le figure: gli illustratori italiani dei libri per l'infanzia* (Rome: Donzelli, 2011) 230-232, 317-318, 373-374. For a useful and comprehensive list of all authors and illustrators of the *Libri unici dello Stato*, see Bacigalupi 196-197.

¹⁴⁰ Bacigalupi 194.

¹⁴¹ *Legge 7 gennaio 1929, n. 5 -- Norme per la compilazione e l'adozione del testo unico di Stato per le singole classi elementari* 118.

¹⁴² “Il libro di Stato sarà distribuito nelle scuole nel Natale di Roma” 614.

¹⁴³ Oronzina Quercia Tanzarella, Letters to Bemporad, 12 Aug 1920 – 2 Mar 1960, 106.1, Il fondo Bemporad dell'Archivio Storico Giunti Editore, online resource, 14 Aug 2014 <http://www.soprintendenzaarchivistica toscana.beniculturali.it/fileadmin/inventari/Bemporad.pdf>.

Ministry of Education often refused.¹⁴⁴ To remedy the strains and allow for more efficiency in putting together the textbooks, the *commissione* proposed a “concorso nazionale” in 1934.¹⁴⁵ Whereas before the job of synthesizing material for the *Libro* belonged to the *commissione*, the *concorso* was open to all teachers and writers.

Allowing teachers and writers to contribute to compiling the *Libro unico* suggests that the MPE aimed at representing the textbook as an autarchic piece of work shared among all Italians. In providing their work for the nation, compilers became model patriots who set examples of sacrifice. Evidence of such rhetoric appears within the textbooks themselves. The back insert of Piero Parini’s fifth grade reader, for instance, illustrates: “Nel atto di licenziare i fogli di stampa la Direzione Generale delle Scuole Italiane all’Estero ringrazia vivamente le Case Editrici, che vollero concedere la pubblicazione di brani di loro proprietà rinunciando ad ogni e qualsiasi diritto d’autore, ispirandosi a quella liberalità ed a quel patriottismo, che sono nobile tradizione degli Editori italiani.”¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, as the editorial suggests, the MPE used the initiative of allowing instructors to complete in the *concorso nazionale* to further survey its academic body.

Similar to those put on authors and editors in 1926, textbook compilers were also subject to regulations. Any person interested in submitting to the competition had to declare his or her name, address, and work at the *Ministro dell’Educazione Nazionale*.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, the author had to establish “previ eventuali accordi” with the Ministry with respect to his or her choice and

¹⁴⁴ “Il libro scolastico di Stato. Le richieste degli editori,” *Giornale della Libreria* 16 Mar 1929: 183; “Sul libro di Stato. Una lettera del Ministro Belluzzo,” 6 Apr 1929: 232.

¹⁴⁵ “La compilazione dei testi di Stato,” *Giornale della Libreria* 21 Apr 1934: 98.

¹⁴⁶ See back insert of Piero Parini’s *Il sole d’Italia. Letture classe V* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1930).

¹⁴⁷ See article three of Italy, Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale, “Concorso per i nuovi libri di lettura delle terze, quarte e quinte classi,” Circ. n. 98, *Giornale della Libreria* 21 Apr 1934: 116.

use of illustrations and content.¹⁴⁸ Should the work be pre-selected, the MPE reserved the right to edit and correct the “bozze di stampa.”¹⁴⁹ Such a measure to emend the drafts of textbooks extended and further limited the rights of the compiler and ensured the State’s full control over the content and circulation of the manuscripts. If the assigned *commissione giudicatrice dei concorsi* accepted and approved one piece of work, the author would lose all ownership.¹⁵⁰ According to article ten of the ministerial circular issued on the 27th of April, 1934, “I concorrenti, i cui testi risultano approvati per la adozione quali testi di Stato, con liquidazione in loro favore dei premi per essi stabiliti, cesseranno da qualsiasi diritto che possa loro pervenire dalle disposizioni vigenti sulla proprietà letteraria, e i testi approvati resteranno in piena, assoluta ed esclusiva proprietà dello Stato.”¹⁵¹ In other words, by receiving a monetary reward for the manuscript, the authors in a sense sold the work, which in turn became the sole property of the regime. To gain approval and win the contest, writers hence had to comply with the criteria established for the makeup of the textbook’s form and content.

Analyzing its requirements, we recognize the Fascist values—autarchy, unity, obedience, devotion to Fascism—which the regime seeks to convey by means of the *Libro di Stato*.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Cfr. article 5 of “Concorso per i nuovi libri di lettura delle terze, quarte e quinte classi” 116.

¹⁴⁹ Cfr. article 9 of “Concorso per i nuovi libri di lettura delle terze, quarte e quinte classi” 116.

¹⁵⁰ Cfr. article 10 of “Concorso per i nuovi libri di lettura delle terze, quarte e quinte classi” 116.

¹⁵¹ Cfr. article 10 of “Concorso per i nuovi libri di lettura delle terze, quarte e quinte classi” 116.

¹⁵² Quite interestingly, textbooks under the Third Reich, Soviet Union, and Vichy France displayed similar values to promote a strong and unified nation. For textbooks on Nazi Germany, see Lisa Pina, *Education in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2010); Gilmer W. Blackham, *Education in the Third Reich: a Study of Race and History in Nazi Textbooks* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985). On the Soviet Union, cfr. Alla Salnikova, “Transformations in Russian Children’s Texts during the First Years of the Bolshevik Rule: Internalizing Sovietness” in *School Exercise Books: a Complex Source for a History of the Approach to Schooling and Education in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Macerata: Macerata UP, 2010) 387-402; Dorena Caroli, “Leafing Primers and Reading Books: Recent Trends in the History of School books in Russia,” *History of Education and Children’s Literature* 7.2 (2012) 471-476. On Maréchal Pétain’s influence on

Similar to those established by the Gentilian *commissioni*, criteria for the *Libro unico* honored its physical material, length, and structure. Requiring page limits, the commission favored reducing the length of certain student textbooks and increasing that of others. Thus, third grade textbooks could surpass their previous length of one hundred pages under the Lombardo-Radice commission but could not exceed more than two hundred pages. Shortened by fifty, fourth grade *Libri unici* could not go beyond two-hundred-and-fifty pages. By contrast, fifth-grade textbooks remained at the same length of three-hundred-pages.¹⁵³ The *Libro di Stato* thus gradually increased in length by fifty-page increments for each subsequent academic school year, whereas under Lombardo-Radice's committee schoolbooks differed by two hundred pages between the third and fifth grades. The purpose of retaining and modifying the overall page limits of the *Libri* was to allow students to read and digest completely the content and illustrations of the entire book within the academic school year. Thus, as the government claims, it would not become "wasted material" as was the case with the schoolbooks published before. Yet, we also recognize an important trend in the page limit requirement. While children read a total of seven hundred pages within the course of the third and fifth grades of their elementary school career before the advent of the *Libro di Stato*, here, they read fifty pages more. The overall increase suggests that as students advance in their elementary programs, they become further immersed in the ideological content present in their schoolbooks. The steady progression in reading material hence permits more efficiency in studying the Fascist content compiled by an "autarchic" group of writers and illustrators.

schoolbooks in Vichy France, see Frédéric Thuin's *Pétain et la dictature de l'image: enfance & jeunesse, cinq ans de propagande* (Mortagne: Daniel Bordet, 2011).

¹⁵³ See article 11 of "Concorso per i nuovi libri di lettura delle terze, quarte e quinte classi" 116.

Consisting of “cellulosa nazionale” the paper used to compose the *Libro di Stato* was furthermore autarchic.¹⁵⁴ We find evidence of the use of such materials not only in ministerial circulars and newspaper articles but also within the books themselves. Publication information found in such *Libri unici* as those by Maria Zanetti, Forges Davanzati, and Alfredo Petrucci indicate that the volumes were printed “su carta fabbricata nello stabilimento di Foggia dell’[Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato] e con materie prime nazionali.”¹⁵⁵ Producing and consuming the *Libri unici di Stato*, Italians—editors and students alike—participated together in the economic campaign to support the regime at a national level. A product, made with one hundred percent Italian materials, the Fascist textbook could thus form students into one hundred percent autarchic Italians.

Forming an autarchic Italian, in fact, encompassed one of the primary goals of employing the *Libro unico*. Responding to the “piena e non artificiale aderenza [...] allo spirito fascista,” the material categorizing the *Libri* likewise needed to be autarchic. Void of any “influenza straniera,” its content specifically required “la efficacia a formare e perfezionare l’Italiano nuovo” and “la forza fascinatrice sull’animo dei fanciulli.”¹⁵⁶ Echoing the norms laid out by the

¹⁵⁴ See “I lavori della corporazione della carta e della stampa,” *Giornale della Libreria* 24 July 1937: 238 and “Libro di Stato – Resa per i volumi per la III e la IV classe,” *Giornale della Libreria* 20 May 1939: 828.

¹⁵⁵ The examples noted here are samples of the many, which indicate the autarchic materials comprising the books. See the following: Maria Zanetti, *Il libro della prima classe* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1937); Roberto Forges Davanzati, *Il Balilla Vittorio* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1938); Alfredo Petrucci, *L’aratro e spada. Letture per la III classe dei centri rurali* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1941).

¹⁵⁶ “Bilancio della Cultura Popolare alla Camera Fascista,” *Giornale della Libreria* 20 May 1939: 168; and also article 11 of “Concorso per i nuovi libri di lettura delle terze, quarte e quinte classi” 116. Bottai’s use of “fanciulli” here is noteworthy and refers to the long-established attitude held toward children in the period following the Risorgimento. Children during this time were romanticized as potential figures of political importance for the future of Italy. Examples of fiction include not only De Amicis’ *Cuore* and Collodi’s *Pinocchio*, but also Giovanni Pascoli’s *Il fanciullino* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1982) as well as Luigi Bertelli’s *Il giornalino di Gian Burrasca*

Gentilian *commissioni*, the Ministry of Public Education instructed that the texts shape Italians particularly into the new Fascist Italian and entice them to approach the work willfully in light of its “fascinating” and attractive content.¹⁵⁷ To achieve this aim for literature texts, Bottai notably suggests that authors use simple and straightforward language. He explains: “Una lingua pura e familiare deve esprimere, sostenere e chiarificare stati d’animo appartenenti alla fanciullezza autentica e non fittizia, a quelle che vive e si forma nell’Imperiale clima fascista.”¹⁵⁸ Bottai’s call for a familiar language that will “sustain” its readers first implies that the *ministro* did not want children to read material that was too difficult. While this meant that students would not be challenged in their reading, it also meant that the text would not be misinterpreted or overanalyzed. Still Bottai cautions against the use of boring material. He suggests that the language attract by providing an accurate and “authentic” representation of childhood. The more real the representations seem, the more likely elementary students can identify with the protagonists, themes, and subject matter. As a result, they would be more inclined to study the work. Once the content and simple language succeed in obtaining and retaining their attention, the schoolbooks could begin forming them according to the “Fascist imperial climate.” Yet, Bottai emphasizes that the material not only attract but engender student attachment.

Incorporating emotionally charged material would further entice students into embracing the *Libro di Stato* and allow for shaping them efficiently into Fascists. The Minister of Public Education continues, “Brani e racconti, rievocazioni ed impressioni aduggiano facilmente il

(Novara: De Agostini, 2012). On the “novecento” being the “secolo dei fanciulli,” see Gibelli 3; and also Loparco 27-28.

¹⁵⁷ Comparing Bottai’s requirements here to Gentile’s, we indeed recognize once more a major overlap between their conception of Fascist textbooks and pedagogy. Cfr. ch. 1, p. 30-32.

¹⁵⁸ See article 9, Italy, Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale, *Concorsi per nuovi testi di lettura da adottarsi quali testi di stato nelle scuole elementari*, Circ. n. 173 in “I concorsi indetti dal Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale per il libro di Stato,” *Giornale della Libreria* 7 Aug 1937: 243.

fanciullo, se non son limpidi e significativi, se non evitino concettosità, gonfiezze, e soprattutto certe stasi descrittive tanto estranee alla mentalità dei piccoli, che rifugge con istinto infallibile, da certo manierismo predicatorio.”¹⁵⁹ Bottai’s significant use of the term “rievocazioni” suggests the way in which children will interact and identify with the material. The content will take the form of individual and collective memory that will present itself as something experienced, interior, and personal, yet, at the same time, common to and shared by all children. Assuming and insisting on their sensitivity to such material, Bottai suggests that the emotional response will “enliven” the text and create a new memory for children. Memory, by means of language and literature, thus, becomes the tool by which the MPE seeks to create the “interiorizzazione dell’ideologia.”¹⁶⁰ Yet, to ensure this “interiorizzazione” the minister demands that illustrations accompany the text.

Illustrations reinforce memory and impose upon the way the child imagines the text as he or she reads. Bottai explains, “Un soffio di arte, ma di arte nostra, deve vivificare le pagine del libro di lettura, il quale può solamente divenire l’amico ed il compagno del fanciullo, se sa suscitare sentimenti forti, e sa attingere le fonti eterne del cuore umano.”¹⁶¹ As the term “vivificare” infers, the illustration ought to provide authenticity and life to the text. Images thus may include “episodi o quadri di vita nella loro palpitante umanità, figure o fatti che balzino vivi

¹⁵⁹ See article 9, “Concorsi per nuovi testi di lettura da adottarsi quali testi di stato nelle scuole elementari” 243.

¹⁶⁰ Bottai’s idea of performing the text by way of memory borrows from Padellaro’s notion of a “memoria affettiva,” which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. Using the term, “interiorizzazione dell’ideologia” I here refer back to Fabrizio Ravaglioli discussion of Gentile’s education policies. See, ch. 1, n. 135.

¹⁶¹ See article 9, “Concorsi per nuovi testi di lettura da adottarsi quali testi di stato nelle scuole elementari” 243.

agli occhi del lettore, mostrando *in atto* la bellezza delle idee che li hanno animati.”¹⁶² So long as they appear real to the child, the illustrations will work along with the language to convince students of its truthfulness and emotional appeal. The use of such presumably autarchic Italian materials, which students could claim as their own, would solidify their association with the textbook. The images, in addition to the text, form part of the memories, which the *Libro unico* constructs and conveys upon children. By projecting these images, the content aims at becoming part of their reality. Nevertheless, such criteria appeared not only in the compilation of literature texts.

Similar to the literature sections included in the *Libro di Stato*, math, science, history, and geography chapters required content that would “give life” to the material and attract learners.

Laying out the criteria for compiling these sections, Bottai begins:

Non si vogliono monografie giustapposte, nelle quali ciascuna materia ignori le altre e si esaurisca per così dire, nella propria trattazione. Unità di metodo, d’ispirazione e di sviluppo debbono dare al fanciullo non la consapevolezza dell’esistenza di una storia, di una geografia, di una grammatica, ecc, bensì chiara coscienza del Paese, del suo glorioso passato, della sua struttura, del suo volto, delle sue espressioni e soprattutto del suo presente.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Italy, Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale, Commissione Giudicatrice dei concorsi, *Relazione della commissione giudicatrice dei concorsi per nuovi testi di lettura da adottarsi quali testi di stato nella scuola elementare, banditi in data 14 luglio 1937-XV, con scadenza 31 marzo 1938-XVI*, Bollettino Ufficiale dell’Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale 7.2 (1938): 3563-3565.

¹⁶³ Italy, Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale, *Concorso per la compilazione del testo di Stato degli insegnamenti vari per la classe terza elementare*, in “I concorsi indetti dal Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale per il libro di Stato,” *Giornale della Libreria* 7 Aug 1937: 244.

According to the Minister of Public Education, no sections or chapters of the *Libro unico* should stand independent of the other. Continuity of content, structure, and aim ought to tie sections together to make for a more systematically organized and organic text. As with selections of literature, math, science, history, and geography texts likewise should work to “inspire” and attract children to the material. With the phrase “coscienza del Paese,” Bottai furthermore suggests that the material not only present itself as familiar, real, and ongoing, but also that it reflect qualities “internal” to the student. Discussing current affairs, history texts, for instance, place students into the teleology created by the regime. Tales within the schoolbook reflect and become an extension of who readers are as Italians and specify their place within the Fascist regime.¹⁶⁴ By focusing on the familiar “structure” of Fascist Italy, children learn about the expressions and customs that they already practice and further understand their place within the hierarchy. Language and images together hence form an apparatus that link students to their political surroundings and circumstances.

To reinforce this relationship between the student and the *Libro unico*, Bottai’s circular once again requires authors to include materials that appeal to children emotionally. Article nine notes: “Un insegnamento globale in cui le nozioni si prestino vicendevole sussidio mirerà alla fissazione di stati d’animo fondamentali, alla chiarificazione della coscienza un vivo impulso ad agire.”¹⁶⁵ Using the phrase “un insegnamento globale,” Bottai not only reinforces the importance of establishing continuity between the chapters of different subject matters, but also notes that the content consists of characteristics that are shared, common, and familiar to students.

¹⁶⁴ In fact, as I will discuss in Chapter Three and Four, it is not only history but also literary texts that serve to place children into the teleology created by the regime. We will see this especially with the textbooks compiled by Marcucci, Eros Belloni, Petrucci, Luigi Rinaldi, and Pina Ballario.

¹⁶⁵ Cfr. Article 9, “Concorso per la compilazione del testo di Stato degli insegnamenti vari per la classe terza elementare” 244.

Describing the “chiarificazione delle coscienze,” he insinuates that all materials alongside literature should convey images and texts that allow no room for misinterpretation or doubt. The MPE hence has already read and interpreted the material, which students should accept without question.¹⁶⁶ Suggesting that the text prompt the “fissazione” of student minds, Bottai further encourages the texts to maintain student attention. The outcome of compiling and administering the *Libro unico* in such a way would hence create the “desire” and “impulse to react.” As the material becomes internal to the student, the latter will learn to “react” and interpellate himself or herself based on the constellation of ideology expounded in the *Libro*. Nonetheless, what were the means by which students could learn to internalize the content of the *Libro unico* and become Fascists? How did the school didactic programs accommodate the use of the *Libro di Stato*?

Creating a Textbook-centered Classroom for a Better Fascist Economy: the Curricular and Didactic Reforms of 1934 and Bottai’s Carta della Scuola.

Providing the Italian elementary school with a state-issued school textbook, the MPE likewise “fascisticized” the academic programs to coordinate better the ideological formation of elementary school children. As Michele Romano declared to his colleagues in parliament, the issue of the *Libro unico* necessitated curricular reforms. Making the call for the government to take further charge of school didactics, he states: “Per creare una coscienza unitaria, morale e politica nel popolo è necessaria l’uniformità dell’insegnamento elementare possibile, solamente sotto il controllo dello Stato.”¹⁶⁷ Once the programs corresponded with the contents of the *Libro*

¹⁶⁶ Cfr. ch. 1, n. 133.

¹⁶⁷ This speech delivered on the 30 of November 1928 was reproduced in the article titled, “Libro di Stato,” *Giornale della Libreria* 15 Dec 1928: 740.

unico, the regime could prove efficient in educating “gli adolescenti nella nuova atmosfera creata dal fascismo, plasmare loro una coscienza consapevole dei doveri del cittadino fascista, di quello che l’Italia è stata nella storia, nelle letture, nelle scienze, nelle arti, quello che essa può diventare.”¹⁶⁸ Modifications to the school programs over the course of the *ventennio* specified the required methods teachers used to convey a thoroughly Fascist education by means of the *Libro di Stato*.

Under Gentile, textbook reading exercises figured into a large part of the academic curriculum. Courses in religion required students to read “letture storiche di religione cattolica,” while also studying religious poetry.¹⁶⁹ Music courses demanded that students follow and undertake the sight-reading of musical notes of religious and patriotic songs.¹⁷⁰ Students in literature courses would study and recite “brani di prosa” or “poesie.”¹⁷¹ In like fashion, such reading and memorization exercises involving the *Libro unico* also became the primary means of achieving the regime’s academic goals.¹⁷² The focal point and magnitude of reading material, nevertheless, intensified significantly following the 1923 reforms. The move to revise the curricula to allow for more exposure to Fascist ideas by means of reading activities began with a lapse of four years following the first issue of the *Libro unico*. Ministro Ercole’s so-called

¹⁶⁸ See “I criteri per la compilazione dei nuovi libri di testo,” *Giornale della Libreria* 17 Nov 1928: 677.

¹⁶⁹ Lombardi 393.

¹⁷⁰ Lombardi 395-396.

¹⁷¹ Lombardi 401.

¹⁷² Amendments to Gentile’s reforms, which largely remained in effect until Bottai’s 1939 *Carta della Scuola*, emerged in phases and began with his successor Alessandro Casati. While Casati declared his intent to maintain Gentile’s reforms, criticism geared toward his policy prompted the new minister to propose changes to the *scuola complementare*, the *esame di stato*, and school uniforms, which came into fruition during the proceeding Fedele, Belluzzo, and Giuliano administrations. Nevertheless, the changes that the education minister put into effect did not mandate the use of textbooks until Ercole’s 1934 reforms. See Vittorio Del Nero, *La scuola elementare nell’Italia fascista dalle circolari ministeriali* (Rome: Armando, 1988) 55, 132. On Casati’s changes, see Del Nero 132.

“modest” revisions to the Gentile reforms in 1934 laid the groundwork for the *Libro unico di Stato*’s particular use as well as its specific contents.¹⁷³

Among the most significant changes he made to the Gentile reforms, Ercole diminished his predecessor’s focus on the regional and dialectical and instead concentrated heavily on providing texts that would represent Italy as a nation. Comparing the 1923 and 1934 academic reforms, we can find examples in which curricular material focusing on the Italian nation has replaced that on Italy’s regions. Samples of changes range in the arts and sciences. Ercole’s mandates for music classes, for instance, differ from Gentile’s. While the latter suggests that students learn songs that refer to the “tradizione locale, regionale, nazionale,” the former insists that children memorize “canzoni religiosi, popolari, patriottici.”¹⁷⁴ While the 1923 reforms allowed for courses teaching the Italian dialects, Ercole’s eliminated them.¹⁷⁵ Former classes on geography invested a great deal of time instructing children on not only Italy’s “storia delle regioni” and its various resources and characteristics but also the “paesi esteri.”¹⁷⁶ By contrast, preceding ones considered Italy’s regions only on a superficial level and solely when discussing the nation as a whole. Thus regions were discussed only when framed under the heading, “geografica fisica e politica dell’Italia,” and its “quadro vivo delle principali caratteristiche fisiche, etnografiche, artistiche, industriali e folcloristiche.”¹⁷⁷ Concerning the topic of world history, Ercole’s emphasized an Italo-centric view of foreign nations. With respect to themes concerning war and “dominazioni straniere,” “figure eminenti” of Italy’s national history gained

¹⁷³ Franco V. Lombardi reproduces both the 1923 and 1934 elementary school reforms in entirety in his *I programmi per la scuola elementare dal 1860 al 1985* (Brescia: La Scuola, 1987). See pp. 306-370 for the Gentile reforms and pp. 390-417 for the Ercole reforms.

¹⁷⁴ Lombardi 323-324, 394-395.

¹⁷⁵ Lombardi 309.

¹⁷⁶ Lombardi 345.

¹⁷⁷ Lombardi 405.

a prominent place.¹⁷⁸ As we can see, Ercole's programs converge upon reading, which represent the nation of Italy as a unified body. At the same time, his 1934 programs traded Gentile's regionalism for a representation of Italy that was rural and urban.

Mandating material for the *Libro unico* for courses in the *scienze naturali*, for instance, Ercole prescribed reading on such rural aspects of Italy as "il campo, la vigna, l'ulivetto, il bosco."¹⁷⁹ This is at odds with Gentile's concern for the study of the "vita contadino" and "marinaio" along with the "colonie, montane, marine."¹⁸⁰ Here Ercole purposefully maintains Gentile's focus on the agrarian. His intent, as I see it, is largely economic as students learn how to work with the local terrain. In addition to focusing on teaching children about domesticated animals, "utili all'uomo, con particolare riguardo ai bisogni locali e alle industrie," the 1934 reforms require elementary students to apply their reading and take part in the "celebrazioni più suggestive della Nazione e la viva conversazione sulle opere del Regime Fascista."¹⁸¹ Students contributed to the "battaglia del grano" and participated in the "bonifiche" as well as the "festa degli alberi" while acquiring values of "previdenza" and "risparmio."¹⁸² Students thus learn economic efficiency while supporting the propaganda campaigns of the Fascist regime. The program's rural focus furthermore found its counterpart in its emphasis on the urbane.

Ercole's reading on urban Italy resembled Gentile's but only to a certain point. Like his predecessor, the 1934 Education Minister allowed for studies concerning the country's municipal architecture. Thus students learned about important landmarks and the "case di città."¹⁸³

However, Ercole expanded on the 1923 reforms and made room for studies that focused on the

¹⁷⁸ Compare the history programs in Lombardi 347 and 406.

¹⁷⁹ Lombardi 411.

¹⁸⁰ Lombardi 343.

¹⁸¹ Lombardi 411.

¹⁸² Lombardi 391-392, 411.

¹⁸³ Lombardi 411-412.

country's industrial infrastructure. Children learned about petroleum manufacturing in Italy. Reading on the "sottosuolo italiano" gave "particolare riguardo a[lle industrie] locali, e cenno sulla loro estrazione (zolfo, minerali metallici, combustibili fossili, petrolio)."¹⁸⁴ Such a curricular focus once again provides perspective on the regime's project in shaping children into Fascists. Training them on rearing domestic animals or extracting petroleum encourages them to pursue manual work in agricultural or industrial sectors of society. These materials combined with themes of patriotism, duty for one's country, and nationalism prompts students to adopt willingly their local status within those particular areas of Italy. The content in textbooks hence establishes a synecdotal relationship between children and the nation. Children contribute to the welfare of Italy as a whole by being conscious of and embracing their function and duties in their own urban or rural communities.

In like fashion, the 1923 and 1934 reforms possess similar goals, despite the respective attention given to the regional and the national. Like Gentile, Ercole and his administration sought to construct curricula based on reading and use textbooks as a means for regulating and supporting the Fascist economy. By means of these later reforms, the MPE could

coordinare e rinforzare l'insegnamento professionale, che è fine a se stesso, ed ha lo scopo di preparare i lavoratori delle officine e dei campi ed i loro capi, i tecnici e gli impiegati per l'agricoltura, l'industria ed il commercio, tenendo i presenti ed assecondando le iniziative di carattere sindacale nel campo della produzione operaia e rurale; pertanto unificare l'insegnamento post-elementare, dandogli un

¹⁸⁴ Lombardi 411-412.

carattere prettamente professionale, artistico, industriale, agrario o commerciale, a seconda delle attività prevalenti nella provincia o nel Comune.¹⁸⁵

Maintaining and amplifying this curricular focus on the rural and urban for economic purposes following the Ercole reforms likewise constituted a priority for the Bottai administration. The latter largely maintained the daily academic program laid out in 1934, while providing more aggressive measures for ensuring Italy's economic success.

Issuing his *Carta della scuola* in 1939, Bottai further sought to educate the “coscienza sociale e produttiva propria dell'ordine corporativo” of elementary school children.¹⁸⁶ Following Ercole's curricular focus on the agricultural and industrial, Bottai endorsed the rural and urban in the school programs for the purpose of supporting Italy's workforce.¹⁸⁷ Adding to previous academic reforms, Bottai's curricular initiatives left no room for students to advance in their scholastic careers and seek competitive jobs in the labor force. In part nine of his *relazione alla camera dei deputati sulla carta della scuola*, Bottai mandates that the government officially divide the *scuola elementare* into the *scuola urbana* and the *scuole rurale* for the purpose of preparing children for work. He states:

I primi tre anni formano la scuola elementare propriamente detta, triennale, distinta in scuole cittadina e scuola rurale [...] Gli ultimi due anni di questo primo ordine, giovandosi degli attuali ordinamenti e programmi delle 4a e 5a

¹⁸⁵ See article 2 of Ministro Belluzzo's circular in “Gli sviluppi della riforma scolastica: le direttive del Duce al nuovo ministro dell'istruzione,” *Giornale della Libreria* 4-11 Aug 1928: 476.

¹⁸⁶ Lombardi 420.

¹⁸⁷ Del Nero 158-160.

elementare, che dovranno essere rivisti e adeguati, saranno posti sotto l'insegna del lavoro. Il lavoro entrerà in questa scuola nella forma più facile e adeguata a dei fanciulli; e, insieme, nella forma praticamente più utile per suscitare coscienza del lavoro, amore e interesse per esse e per avviarvisi praticamente la nomenclatura, quindi, degli strumenti più comuni, in relazione alla coscienza intuitive dell'attività del giuoco in attività del lavoro. Si passerà, quindi, gradualmente, dall'elemento semplice alla composizione di elementi semplici. Il lavoro agricolo nelle scuole rurali e nella non rurali, fornite di campicelli o piccoli laboratori sperimentali, sarà ordinato secondo la stessa elementarità del lavoro manuale.¹⁸⁸

As one might assume from Bottai's repetition of "adeguata," "facile," "praticamente," "semplice," the Ministry of Education designed an unchallenging and uncomplicated academic program. Teaching students sufficient or adequate materials, the administration, thus, selected ordinary or "common" jobs for students to follow by means of the curriculum. Creating an incentive by dictating that labor be viewed as a "game," the program, furthermore, seeks to ensure that students enjoy following and adhering to the material. Yet, day-to-day lessons relied on not only presumably agreeable experiments. Bottai maintained and followed Ercole's focus on creating a textbook-centered classroom.

Along with his predecessors, Bottai notably continued to build a curriculum based primarily on the textbook.¹⁸⁹ However, he disagreed with the editions of the *Libro unico* and sought to modify the academic programs so that reading from textbooks could further train

¹⁸⁸ Giuseppe Bottai, *La carta della scuola* (Milan: Mondadori, 1939) 25.

¹⁸⁹ Bottai 80.

students for their future in the Italian labor force. In an interview with *Popolo d'Italia* regarding the *Carta della Scuola* on the 13 December 1939, Bottai criticized former editions of the *Libro di Stato* and spoke of the importance of preparing students for the labor force through reading. Discussing changes for the *Libro unico* that would make Fascist education more applicable, Bottai states:

Più che cinque autori fatti male, valgono due fatti bene e che educino il gusto dei giovani e il loro bisogno di leggere: di leggere, di leggere moltissimo, non solo nella scuola e non solo gli autori dei programmi, che sarebbero, anche quelli dei più vasti programmi, troppo pochi. Più che le minuzie, e le novelle, le commedie, ecc. Del '500 vale una buona lettura dell'Ariosto. Più che le cose ricercate e sperimentate vale il *metodo*, *l'educazione* alla ricerca scientifica. Questa è la Scuola: non una scuola artificiosa, appartata dalla vita, ma che educa la vita e si continua in essa.¹⁹⁰

Bottai extends the importance of reading in not only classes of literature and religion but also the sciences. Reading in such courses both complements and enriches “research” and “experiments.” By studying their texts closely students will understand and adopt the means of scientific research that would prepare them for their future jobs in rural and agricultural sectors of society. To remedy his concern for training students through reading, Bottai reserved the ninth *dichiarazione* in the *Carta della scuola* to require elementary schools throughout Italy to use

¹⁹⁰ “Attuazione della Carta della Scuola un una intervista concessa da S. E. Bottai al «Popolo d'Italia»,” *Giornale della Libreria* 16 Dec 1939: 315-316.

either a *Libro di Stato per le scuole urbane* or a *Libro di Stato per le scuole rurali* officially at all grade levels. Yet, how did the MPE coordinate these books in the classroom?

Along with in-class activities in which students would read passages from the *Libro unico* aloud, the program reserved time for “occupazioni intellettuali ricreative.” Teachers here would read stories concerning the “vita nazionale” to students.¹⁹¹ Ministerial circulars and interviews indicate how Bottai expected instructors to serve as models, teach them how to read, and attract their attention. With a “tono più vivo e più dilettevole,” teachers were required to avoid, on the one hand, a “mechanical” way of reading that would bore students.¹⁹² Still, they had to maintain a sense of discipline while reading aloud. The ministry insisted that teachers adopt a posture that was “severo e virile” in “forma agilmente militare.”¹⁹³ While the MPE obliged teachers to make reading fun and lively, it nevertheless imposed control upon the activity. Acting out and performing the text demanded memorization, discipline, and also emotion. Such qualities could provide efficiency in interiorizing the Fascist ideas vested in the *Libro di Stato*. Yet, the academic program in the elementary school did not solely consist of collective reading under Bottai.

As the ministry believed that elementary school children were still not reading enough, Bottai continued Ercole’s collective reading program and reserved time for the “lettura a scuola

¹⁹¹ Lombardi 413-414.

¹⁹² See Italy, Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale, *Circolare ministerial 30 dicembre 1940 – XIX, n. 2 – Istruzione per l’uso del libro di lettura per la 1a classe, Il libro per la scuola nel ventennio fascista: La normativa sui libri di testo dalla Riforma Gentile alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale (1923-1945)*, eds. Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani (Macerata: Alfabetica, 2009) 230-231; Del Nero 168-169.

¹⁹³ See Giuseppe Bottai’s ministerial circular, “Stile nella scuola, Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale n. 15105 5 Dec. 1938-XVIII,” in his *Carta della Scuola* 311-312.

di passi opportunamente.”¹⁹⁴ Such a curricular program offered students the opportunity to read books of their own choosing by themselves at certain times of the day.¹⁹⁵ Instituting the program, the regime aimed at encouraging more of the activity and making reading a more enjoyable and Fascist experience. Bottai indeed recognized reading and studying as essential tools for internalizing Fascist values. He notes:

A scuola, per lo più, finora s'è letto poco. Gli alunni che leggono, leggono, di solito, fuori di scuola e quasi contro la scuola, quasi abusivamente rispetto ai loro doveri scolastici; leggendo quando leggono, è come si spogliassero del loro abito di alunni. Non sempre manifesta è non sempre confessata, s'è venuta creando, nella comune consuetudine, una specie di inconciliabilità fra «studiare» e «leggere», fra un leggere con profitto: un leggere in modo che la voce del libro non si perda col chiudersi delle sue pagine, ma si continui in noi, s'armonizzi, con la nostra voce, arricchendola e perfezionandola. Eppure, la parola «lezione» ha l'identica radice della parola «lettura».¹⁹⁶

Establishing classroom “biblioteche” filled with books recommended by the curriculum, the regime thus could further advance its project of ideologically subjecting children by means of texts. Using leisurely books alongside the *Libro unico*, such a program meant to consolidate the

¹⁹⁴ Lombardi 404. For further reading on Bottai and the *biblioteche della scuola*, see Betri 122-134.

¹⁹⁵ Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, *Circolare ministeriale 6 gennaio 1941 – XIX n. 31005 – Letteratura individuale. Biblioteca di classe e biblioteca nella scuola, Il libro per la scuola nel ventennio fascista: La normativa sui libri di testo dalla Riforma Gentile alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale (1923-1945)*, eds. Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani (Macerata: Alfabetica, 2009) 236-278.

¹⁹⁶ “Il libro nella scuola,” *Giornale della Libreria* 18 Jan 1941: 9.

task of studying with reading for pleasure. The focus on reading allows us to see the extent to which students received exposure to Fascist ideas. Using the *Libro unico* and supplemental texts for large amount of time during the day to recite and memorize its content could facilitate the “interiorizzazione” of Fascist values.

Understanding Repetition: Further Considerations for the Analysis of the Libro unico dello Stato

Interviews and ministerial circulars such as those above have in sum allowed us to see the motives behind the Fascist government’s need for a state-issued schoolbook. The *Libro unico dello Stato* was born out of Mussolini’s call to establish and secure support for Fascism by shaping children according to the regime’s values. In light of the Matteotti affair, the development and publication of the *Libro di Stato* could quickly be realized as the government took charge in managing and surveying the country’s various domestic and public institutions. The advantage of such an ideological apparatus as the textbook indeed lay in fact that it served as the main means of communicating Fascist values to elementary school children in a controlled manner. By presiding over its distribution, the Ministry of Public Education not only regulated the market of purchasing and selling books, but also placed restrictions on the information the books taught. Children did not learn the same materials across Italy as a result. Rather, the education they received depended on the demographic situation they found themselves in. Students in urban areas learned about industries, while *allievi* in rural areas studied farming and agriculture. Instead of advancing in their academic careers, students were thus encouraged to acquire knowledge and seek the jobs available in the communities, of which they were a part. Despite learning different subjects and materials as well as the inconsistencies that marked the

Ministry's dissemination of the texts, Italian students, nevertheless, would in this way participate together in supporting the Fascist economy.

As Bottai suggests, repetitive reading exercises and imagery in the *Libro di Stato* could serve to make children adhere to the Fascist ideas being taught. Yet, a question remains: what specific shape or form did the language and illustrations take in order to make children "interiorize" the Fascist values present in their reading? How did the placement and make up of the illustrations work with the text to convey the Fascist messages effectively and engender student interest so that they might practice the Fascist values willingly? How did the language, images, and messages differ between the texts? What might the differences between the *Libri unici* for rural and urban schools as well as those issued for Italian schools abroad tell us about the government's project to construct a Fascist class-consciousness among children?

While scholars such as Bacigalupi and Fossati, Koon, and Faenza, to name a few, have already identified the Fascist elements present within the *Libri di Stato*, I aim in the next installment of this work to provide further analyses to the material.¹⁹⁷ In this way, I seek to understand the meaning and general significance behind the process of educating children through reading.

¹⁹⁷ Liliano Faenza, *Fascismo e ruralismo nei «testi unici» di Grazia Deledda, Angiolo Silvio Novaro, Roberto Forges Davanzati* (Bologna: Alfa, 1985).

Chapter Three

Making Fascist Farmers: Reading, Repetition, and Ideological Subjection in the Libro unico per le scuole rurali

The Case for Schoolbooks and Economic Autarchy, An Introduction

Addressing middle school children in his 1934 scholastic manual, *Elementi di cultura fascista e di diritto costituzionale*, Alessandro Melchiori defines Mussolini's academic curriculum with the term "educazione guerriera."¹ According to the former PNF secretary and head of the last *Commissione centrale per l'esame dei libri di testo*, this "educazione guerriera" shapes students into disciplined, obedient, and industrious Fascists. Despite his reference to war, however, Melchiori cautions readers from misinterpreting this term as one, which advocates violence, noting:

«Dalla nostra grande fatica sorgeranno le fresche numerose generazioni che prepariamo e cioè: uomini di scarse parole di freddo coraggio, di tenace laboriosità, di cieca disciplina, del tutto irriconoscibili dagli italiani di ieri».

Con queste parole il Duce annunciava un giorno il fiero proposito di dare all'Italia generazioni nuove a cui affidare in un avvenire non lontano le responsabilità del potere attraverso le varie e complesse gerarchie del Regime.

¹ Alessandro Melchiori, *Elementi di cultura fascista e di diritto costituzionale, 2a edizione per le scuole medie* (Rome: Luzzati, 1934) 122-125. On Melchiori's activities as PNF secretary and member of the *Camera dei deputati*, see "Alessandro Melchiori," *Camera dei deputati, Portale Storico* 2015, 3 Nov 2015 <storia.camera.it/deputati#nav>. On Melchiori's work as the head of the 1928-1929 *Commissione centrale*, see ch. 1, pp. 26, 41-43.

Egli vuole che queste nuove generazioni crescano educate alla Scuole del Fascismo, che è scuola di coraggio, di ardimento, di tenacia, di volontà, di disciplina portato allo spasimo se fosse necessario. In una espressione sola, il Duce vuole che alle nuove generazioni sia data una educazione guerriera.

Quando Egli affermò questa sua volontà, coloro che amano interpretare a modo loro le parole del Duce videro in essa fieri propositi di guerra.

Grave errore sarebbe, o giovane fascista, se anche tu intendessi in questo senso le parole del Duce.²

To the intelligible reader, it might perhaps seem difficult *not* to associate “educazione guerriera” with the phrase “fieri propositi di guerra.” The terms “scarse parole,” “freddo coraggio,” “tenace laboriosità,” and “cieca disciplina,” after all, bring to mind the quintessential image of heroic and brave soldiers. These “uomini” (“men”) blindly obey their squadron leader and respect the “complesse gerarchie” (“complex rank and file”) within which they find themselves.³ When given orders, these soldiers neither question, nor doubt their commanders. They simply do what they are told.

² Melchiori 121. For the full transcript of the *Duce*'s speech, titled “La prima tessera fascista del 1928,” see Benito Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, ed. Edoardo and Duilio Susmel, vol. 23 (Florence: La Fenice, 1957) 85-86.

³ Notwithstanding Melchiori's use of the masculine noun “uomini,” I want to make it clear that the regime subjected both boys *and* girls to an “educazione guerriera.” His particular language here demonstrates what Barbara Spackman has deemed “the virilization of woman” or “the mixing and matching of gender and sex” within Fascist discourse and rhetoric. See her volume, *Fascist Virilities* 1-2 and also 34-48.

Scholars of Fascism, including George Mosse, Antonio Gibelli, and Mariella Colin, to name a few, have long identified this virile soldier as the Italian Fascist *uomo nuovo*, one who fights and defends one's country from all enemies domestic and foreign. In his *Image of Man*, Mosse for instance argues that the Fascist "new man" was "inspired by war experience"; Gibelli likewise in his *Il popolo bambino* states that militarism served to construct a Fascist "società non solo ordinata, gerarchicamente organizzata, ma anche impegnata in compiti di guerra."⁴ Colin furthermore understands the idea of the *italiano nuovo* as a means of shaping children's "imperial sensibility."⁵ The purpose, she argues, lay in developing student awareness toward the regime's military campaign in Colonial Africa. Citing Emilio Gentile, she adds that this method of education responded to the "need to create a citizen-soldier, who interiorizes and embodies the warlike temperament of a belligerent and conquering regime." Taking a look at the militaristic customs and practices undertaken on a daily basis at the elementary school, we may share these scholars' understanding of the *italiano nuovo* as a Fascist soldier.

Observing the motto *credere, obbedire, combattere*, children—boys as well as girls—attended school wearing uniforms, carried rifles, and practiced military-style marches in P.E. classes.⁶ Each morning, they saluted not only their national flag but also their instructors and

⁴ Mosse, *Image of Man* 160; Gibelli 25.

⁵ Colin 265. Original text is in French. All English translations here and across this chapter are mine unless otherwise noted.

⁶ According to Philip Peterson, the *balilla* rifle or *moschetto Balilla* was "not a real firearm" but rather a "toy" gun. He writes that while these rifles "appeared to have a chamber, it is believed only blank cartridges were ever made for them." See his *Standard Catalog of Military Firearms* (Iola: Gun Digest Books, 2013) 244. The regime particularly distributed the *moschetto* to balilla boys between the ages of 8 and 14 and to girls registered as *giovani italiane* between the ages of 14 and 18. See "A Genova rivista fasci e giovani italiane," newsreel, *Archivio Storico Istituto LUCE*, 1928, 5 Sept 2016.

<http://www.archivioluca.com/archivio/jsp/schede/videoPlayer.jsp?tipologia=&id=&physDoc=152&db=cinematograficoCINEGIORNALI&findIt=false§ion=/>. On legislation mandating military-style marches in elementary school P.E. courses, see Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione

peers *romanamente*.⁷ Raising their right arms in unison “con il gomito all’altezza dell’occhio destro e la mano distesa,” these primary school pupils performed the “goose step” and exhibited the features of a marching Roman legion.⁸ Through their scholastic activities, they presumably prepared themselves for war. Yet, censuring us with the line “grave errore” above, Melchiori thwarts our understanding of Mussolini’s so-called “educazione guerriera” here. If, as Melchiori suggests, the *scuola fascista* had no intention of molding children into soldiers, why were such military practices as marching, wearing uniforms, and carrying rifles integrated into its program? Why did Melchiori use such terminology to define Mussolini’s curriculum?

Puzzling though it may seem, the answer to these questions, Melchiori himself suggests, lies in the adjective “guerriera.” For the former PNF secretary, “guerriera” refers not to any literal, physical war as one might expect. Rather, it implies the values by which children may contribute to Fascist Italy from the home front. Continuing, Melchiori explains:

Quando Egli parla di educazione guerriera, parla sempre di quello spirito che Egli vuole trasmettere ai suoi collaboratori e a tutto il popolo italiano, che fa di ognuno di noi un uomo capace di affrontare con coraggio le battaglie della vita, poiché

Nazionale, *Circolare ministeriale 31 luglio 1928 n. 56. Ordine di Marcia ternario per gli alunni delle scuole elementari* in Del Nero 114. Encapsulating the values ascribed to the Gioventù Italiana del Littorio, the phrase, “Credere, Obbedire, Combattere” arises within the PNF’s handbook, *Il primo libro del fascista*, edited and reprinted in Galeotti’s *Credere obbedire combattere: i catechismi del fascismo* 102. On elementary school children’s uniforms and the *moschetto*, see also Galeotti’s *Saluto al Duce!* 21, 44, 68 75-77.

⁷ The Ministry of Education ratified its first set of legislation calling for the “saluto romano alla bandiera” in 1923. In 1926, however, the regime provided modifications to the law and mandated that students complete the *saluto romano* not only when showing reverence to the Italian flag but also when greeting school faculty. See Del Nero 49-50, 87; Galeotti, *Saluto al Duce!* 11.

⁸ For details regarding one’s movements when marching, standing at attention, or performing the *saluto romano*, see the fourth edition of the ONB’s, *Il capo-squadra Balilla* reprinted in Galeotti’s *Saluto al Duce!* 24.

ogni attività umana è una battaglia che si combatte, e tanto più lo è in Regime Fascista con un Capo che ci insegna a non adattarci alla nostra quieta vita quotidiana, bensì ad affrontare talvolta anche le avversità più dure della natura per piegarle alla nostra volontà. [...] È questa educazione che fa sì che un popolo sappia essere capace di grandi azioni sia in pace che in guerra [...] E tale forma eroica di educazione il Duce vuole dare a tutti i giovani, poiché tutti i giovani possono essere utili al Paese e debbono mettere le loro energie fresche e vibranti al servizio del Paese e del bene comune.⁹

According to Melchiori, an “educazione guerriera” is an ideology that places one’s everyday pursuits (“ogni attività umana”) in relation to a nation’s sense of prosperity.¹⁰ Though he describes these “activities” with the belligerent term “battaglie della vita,” Melchiori does not envision Italians in armed combat. These “battles” rather comes from within and, as Melchiori suggests, represent a test of one’s determination to carry out a task in light of the possible misfortune or hardship (“avversità”) it might bring. Qualifying “educazione guerriera” with both “spirito” and “volontà,” Melchiori particularly calls us back to Giovanni Gentile’s discourse on individual and collective will in the volume *La riforma dell’educazione*.¹¹ Since fighting the “battaglie della vita” entails one’s “energie fresche e vibranti al servizio del Paese e del bene comune,” Melchiori, like Gentile, suggests that one’s struggle to fulfill even the most ordinary or minute task benefits not only the individual but also the nation. As such, these tasks would appear worthwhile to the person, who would then have an incentive to fulfill his or her chores.

⁹ Melchiori 122, 123.

¹⁰ By means of the term “ideology,” I am again referring to Louis Althusser’s seminal “Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus.” See ch. 1, pp. 5-11.

¹¹ See ch. 1, p. 2, note 6.

After all, such patriotic devotion would provide a person a great deal of respect and social admiration. But why is it so important for the regime to make people facing the so-called *battaglie della vita* into steadfast individuals? Why is it so important for the child to adopt such an outlook and recognize his or her contribution to the nation through such everyday tasks?

Because one's everyday activities also involve taking up a job, an "educazione guerriera," in my view, becomes a means within the regime's own "battle" to establish economic autarchy. Formed by way of this instruction, Italian elementary school students might identify themselves as workers, determined in their domestic "battles" to sustain Fascist Italy by way of the autarchic products and services they can offer on a daily basis. Through an "educazione guerriera," Mussolini's dream of an autarchic utopian Italy could become the child's, and Fascism accordingly could survive beyond the *Duce's* tenure as head of state. In line with this view, I want to challenge the dominant claim that the *Libro unico* employed militarism in order to draft primary school children into literal soldiers as contemporary scholars, Mosse, Gentile, and Colin, have long argued. Interpreting the *italiano nuovo* from an economic standpoint, I maintain that the *Libro di Stato* availed itself of an "educazione guerriera" in order to stratify readers specifically into an ideal working class of *agricoltori* and *operai* that would ideologically and economically support the Fascist regime.¹² Commencing my study of the schoolbooks in this

¹² I am not the first to challenge accepted notions of the *uomo nuovo*. According to Emilio Gentile, formulating the model Fascist citizen or *uomo nuovo* on such a militaristic framework served to "abolish" the physical and cultural distinctions between Italians and gave them a common purpose. Tracing the origins of the *uomo nuovo*, Gentile identifies this new objective as one which called for the "conquista della modernità." See his *Culto del littorio* 239-253. My approach in reinterpreting the *uomo nuovo* in this chapter, nonetheless, distinguishes itself from Gentile's as it relies specifically on the idea of militarism as a framework for constructing model laborers out of Italians, whose shared purpose lies in building and strengthening Fascist Italy's autarchic economy.

chapter, I will be concentrating on *lettture* published for and disseminated in rural areas of Italy.¹³

My reading will include stories, poems, and illustrations selected from the following volumes:

Alessandro Marcucci's *Sillabario: classe rurali* and *Il libro della 2a classe. Scuole rurali*; Eros Belloni's *Il libro per la seconda classe delle scuole dei centri rurali*; Alfredo Petrucci's *L'aratro e la spada: letture per la III classe elementare dei centri rurali*; Angiolo Silvio Novaro's *Il libro della quarta classe elementare*; and Luigi Rinaldi's *Il libro della V classe: letture*.¹⁴ Tracing

elements of Fascist subjection in my analysis, I demonstrate how these textbooks work together

¹³ *Lettture* issued for the urban school will be discussed in the following chapter. By means of "lettture," I am referring specifically to textbooks that were published for Italian literature and reading courses. These books by definition consisted of children's *sillabari* or alphabet books in the first grade and compilations of prose or poetry in the second, third, fourth, and fifth grades. State-issued notebooks and *Libri di Stato* published for music, religion, math, science, and grammar courses will neither be discussed in this nor in the next chapter. Examples of this latter group of textbooks include: Achille Schinelli, *Canzoniere nazionale: canti corali religiosi e patriottici trascritti per voci di fanciulli* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1929); Angelo Zammarchi et al., *Il libro della terza classe elementare: religione, storia, geografia, aritmetica* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1935); Enzo Bonomi et al., *Il libro della III classe: religione, grammatica, storia, geografia, aritmetica* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1941); Angelo Zammarchi et al., *Il libro della quarta classe elementare: religione, storia, geografia, aritmetica, scienze* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1931); Angelo Zammarchi et al., *Il libro della IV classe elementare: aritmetica e scienze* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1938); Angelo Zammarchi et al., *Il libro della IV classe elementare: religione, storia e geografia*. (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1940); Armando Armando, *Il libro della IV classe elementare: aritmetica, geografia e scienze* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1941); Maria Mascalchi et al., *Il libro della V classe elementare: aritmetica e scienze* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1937); Luigi Filippo De Magistris, *L'impero d'Italia: il libro della V classe elementare* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1938); Angelo Zammarchi et al., *Il libro della V classe: religione, grammatica, storia* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1941); Carmelo Cottone et al., *Il libro della V classe elementare: aritmetica, geografia, scienze* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1943). For further reading on these titles, see Davide Montino, *Le parole educate* 133-151. For critical sources on Fascist-era notebooks, cfr. ch. 2, p. 37, n. 114.

¹⁴ Alessandro Marcucci, *Sillabario: classe rurali*, illus., Duilio Cambellotti (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1933); Alessandro Marcucci, *Il libro della 2a classe. Scuole rurali*, illus. Duilio Cambellotti (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1930); Eros Belloni, *Il libro per la seconda classe delle scuole dei centri rurali*, illus. Piero Bernardini (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1941); Alfredo Petrucci, *L'aratro e la spada: letture per la III classe elementare dei centri rurali*, illus. Pio Pullini (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1940); Angiolo Silvio Novaro, *Il libro della quarta classe elementare*, illus. Bruno Bramanti (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1931); Luigi Rinaldi, *Il libro della V classe: letture*, illus. Angelo Canavari (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1939).

to build a consistent and coherent class of farmers. How might these textbooks shape readers into such rural workers? The answer lies in the technique used to teach the “know-how” and “rules of respect” that would interpellate rural children into Fascist *soldati-contadini*.¹⁵

Thesis and Layout of Chapter

These rural editions of the *Libro unico* consistently use repetition in order to stress the “know-how” and “rules of respect” needed to sustain Fascist Italy’s economic prosperity through agriculture. My analysis is divided into two parts. Examining selections from Marcucci’s *Sillabario* in the first part of my reading, I show how the primer builds a lexicon based on agrarian terms (e.g., *aratro, prora, mietitura*) familiar to students. Focusing on the tools, machines, and methods for growing crop, this lexicon, on the one hand, introduces students at the outset to the skills that will train them to become *contadini*. Interpreted according to specific Fascist values of discipline, time-efficiency, collectivity, and nationalism, on the other hand, it likewise introduces the “rules of respect” that would allow readers to become productive soldier-like laborers. In the second part of my analysis of the *Libro unico*, I show how the habitual use of repetition in the content, structure, and illustrations found in second, third, fourth, and fifth grade textbooks next build on and reinforce the ideas in Marcucci’s primer. Adapting to the growing age of the child, the texts interpret agriculture from various points of views with the goal to bring efficiency to the Fascist subjection of rural children. Saturating the *Libro unico* published for the

¹⁵ According to Althusser, the “reproduction of labour power” and, hence, the ideological subjection of children require teaching both “know-how” and “rules of respect.” Through their education and reading exercises, these students acknowledge their place within a rigid hierarchy, respect various figures of authority, and practice the skills and behavior conducive to the efficient production of materials, goods, and services. On Althusser’s notion of the “reproduction of labour power,” refer to ch. 1, pp. 8-9.

second through fifth grades, farming defines these rural readers' way of life and stresses the main ideas of an "educazione guerriera": it specifically develops into an interpretive lens for Italy's geography, ancient Roman history, economic makeup, social behaviors, religious traditions, regime projects, and even the physical makeup of their textbook. It thus offers multiple ways by which rural children might orient themselves within their local communities and recognize the presumed value of their own contributions to Fascist Italy.

Within the textbooks' stories and poems, everyday farming activities and farmlands specifically develop into places of strife or battle. While at times authors represent these Italian territories in either a romanticized (e.g., Marcucci) or violent (e.g., Petrucci and Novaro) manner, the reading serves to make children emotionally invested in the themes at hand. Moved by the stories, these children could hence potentially become receptive to the regime's *esigenze* to build an autarchic economy through agriculture. Farmers throughout rural *Libri unici* are likewise compared often with such other urban laborers as blacksmiths and construction workers. As each becomes the focus of the readers' gaze, compilers insist that these tireless and robust *contadini* are the saviors of the Fascist Italian people and economy. Farmers, in this way, develop into the rural child-reader's model. Yet, embodied by such historical characters as Giuseppe Garibaldi, famed general of the Italian *Risorgimento*, and contextualized by such contemporary regime projects as the *battaglia del grano*, *la bonifica integrale del Agro Pontino*, and colonial expansion, this notion of a *soldato-contadino* is not an abstract one for readers. It thus appears a model that children could potentially emulate. Subsequent textual references to readers' own practice of agricultural activities in school gardens not only establish a teleological relationship between audience members and these historical figures and events. They also establish a sense of

italianità and suggest that readers themselves are interpellated subjects, *already* on the pathway to becoming future Fascist “contadinelli” in the *battaglie della vita*.¹⁶

Becoming the ideal, utopian *soldato-contadino*, however, involves not only adopting this interpretive lens on Italy’s farmer and farmlands. It also entails a spiritual transformation. Assuming the guise of the rural *uomo nuovo*, as we will particularly see in the textbooks compiled by Novaro and Rinaldi, means battling one’s tendency to become the *anti-uomo nuovo* often chastised by Mussolini. Related to the assumption that both city life and an urban occupation are less difficult than a rural one, this spiritual “battle” involves renouncing one’s aversion to rural work and, accordingly, one’s sense of idleness and unwillingness to sacrifice for the *patria*. Rurality is thus appreciated and understood in the *Libro unico* through the presumably harmful temptations and detriments of city life. Developing and expanding on Marcucci’s original lexicon, these texts together ultimately serve to interpellate students to face the *battaglie della vita* as morally upright and steadfast *soldati-contadini* devoted to farming work.

Though largely elided from these *Libri unici*, young rural girls are also expected to follow an “educazione guerriera.” Their participation as *contadine*, however, is not particularly symptomatic of the work they carry out in fields, but rather of their vocation as future wives, mothers, and caregivers. A mother’s affection and guidance signify a maternal “battle” to protect children from the presumed evils of the city and thus serve to keep her offspring within the rural *paese*. Practicing an “educazione guerriera,” these boys and girls consequently earn esteem from not only one’s parents, but also such Fascist dignitaries as Mussolini. Gaining social acceptance and reverence, they are hence incentivized to seek the jobs available in their rural communities.

¹⁶ Cfr. Althusser 117.

Evoking the Fascist leader in the last part of this chapter, I nevertheless anticipate some of the failures behind Fascist subjection, which we especially see with urban editions of the *Libro unico*. Here, I speculate on whether the *Duce* offers the same kind of favor and deference that would prompt urban students to practice industrial labor. Labor legislation and education reforms provide an initial understanding of the fundamental differences between rural and urban texts. In light of these legal documents, I highlight the ways in which the *Libro unico per le scuole rurali* shapes readers into workers in a much more methodical way than its urban counterpart. Namely since it specifies agrarian work, its skills, and tasks as a vocation necessary for sustaining Fascist Italy, it prevents students from interpreting their role as laborers in ways that might prove counterproductive to the regime's economic goals.

Yet before beginning my reading of the *Libro unico*, let us consider the theoretical framework that I will be using across this chapter and the Fascist pedagogy, which stressed the importance of repetition in classroom reading exercises. This approach centers on identifying the main elements—colors, images, narrative structures, literary techniques—which comprise the layout of the schoolbooks in question. In the next section of this chapter, I will first discuss Walter Benjamin's ideas of color in scholastic primers as a means of teaching children language.¹⁷ Benjamin's discussion will allow us to see how a child might approach his or her

¹⁷ Benjamin's essays on the topic encompass the following titles: "A Child's View of Color," *Selected Writings: Volume 1, 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996) 50-51; "A Glimpse into the World of Children's Books," *Selected Writings: Volume 1, 1913-1926* 435-443; "Children's Literature," *Selected Writings: Volume 2, Part 1, 1927-1930*, ed. Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005) 250-256; "Notes for a Study of the Beauty of Colored Illustrations in Children's Books," *Selected Writings: Volume 2, Part 1, 1927-1930* 264-266; and also "Premier rudiment verdoyants," *Enfance: eloge de la poupée et autres essais*, trans. Philippe Ivernel (Paris: Payots & Rivages, 2011) 119-124. Though largely understudied, current available scholarship on Benjamin's work concerning children, reading, and language acquisition includes: Sharon Jessop, "Children, Redemption and Remembrance in Walter Benjamin," *Journal of Philosophy*

first textbook with curiosity and interest, as Bottai demanded.¹⁸ To follow, I will then discuss Roland Barthes' notion of how signs in the form of illustrations and text may be read as any one author intended. Barthes' particular discussion of the terms "anchorage" and "relay" in his seminal essay, "Rhetoric of the Image," will provide an understanding into the ways in which Fascist children might have reproduced the regime's ideological values on work, while reading their books of *lettura*.¹⁹ Applying these terms to my reading of Fascist pedagogy, I will lastly provide an overview of the content and structure of the *Libro unico* as devised by Nazareno Padellaro.²⁰ A principle architect behind its structure, Padellaro advocated the use of repetition in

of Education 47.4 (2013): 642-657; Changnam Lee, "Les livres pour enfants et la phénoménologie de l'expérience éphémère à partir de Walter Benjamin," *Sociétés* 1.127 (2015): 85-95; Nicola Gess, "Gaining Sovereignty: On the Figure of the Child in Walter Benjamin's Writing," *MLN* 125.3 (2010): 682-708; Eric L. Tribunella, "Benjamin, Children's Literature, and the Child's Gaze," Walter Benjamin, Childhood and Pedagogy: An Interdisciplinary Symposium, Professor Stuart Hall Building, Goldsmiths, University of London, 6 July 2015; Sam Dolbear and Hannah Proctor, "Childish Adventures: Walter Benjamin's Journeys into Picture Books and Children's Encyclopaedias," Walter Benjamin, Childhood and Pedagogy: An Interdisciplinary Symposium, 6 July 2015.

¹⁸ Cfr. ch. 2, pp. 57-60.

¹⁹ Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977) 32-51.

²⁰ One cannot begin to discuss Fascist pedagogy without looking at the writing of Nazareno Padellaro. In addition to participating in the 1934 academic reforms as well as compiling his own *Libro di Stato*, Padellaro both directed and debated a number of pedagogic issues concerning elementary school education in such journals as *Montessori*, *Primato educativo*, and *Tempo di scuola*. See Giorgio Chiosso, ed., *La stampa pedagogica e scolastica in Italia (1820-1943)* (Brescia: La Scuola, 1997) 438-439, 506-507, and 696-697. Moreover, he produced a great deal of literature across the *ventennio* on theories concerning child development and principles of teaching. A sample of Padellaro's work on Fascist pedagogy consists of the following volumes: *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* (Rome: Scuola Salesiana del Libro, 1940); *La scuola vivente* (Turin: Paravia, 1933); *L'insegnamento della matematica nelle scuole elementari* (Rome: Edizioni Urbinati, 1939); *Spunti di didattica nuova* (Rome: Arte della Stampa, 1929); and *Fascismo educatore* (Rome: Cremonese Libraio Editore, 1938). In addition to those compiled for the elementary school, Padellaro similarly produced textbooks and manuals for middle schools and the *scuola magistrale*. See *Corso di storia. Ad uso delle scuole secondarie ad avviamento professionale* (Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1936), produced in collaboration with Armando Ludolini; *Cultura fascista: pagine di educazione morale e civile per la gioventù italiano e per le scuole* (Genoa: Lang & Pagano, 1929), co-written with Carmelo Licitra; and

order to “remote control” a child’s reading of the *Libro unico*’s illustrations and text.²¹ As my reading of Padellaro will demonstrate, repetition served to ensure that a child would not misinterpret his or her reading exercises and thereby escape from Fascist subjection. Let me now turn to a discussion of Benjamin’s writing on children, language acquisition, and primers.

Designing Textbooks, Forming Child-Readers: Theoretical Approaches to an Analysis of Fascist Pedagogy and Structure of Textbooks

Seducing with Color: Walter Benjamin, Language Acquisition, and Scholastic Primers

At first glance, philosopher Walter Benjamin’s writing on children, childhood, and pedagogy seems an obvious first choice when speaking about elementary school textbooks. His brief essays on scholastic primers and reading exercises give insight into the nature of language acquisition at the elementary school.²² For Benjamin, formal language acquisition begins with a child’s interaction with color. Colors, he maintains, bestow objects with ludic qualities that capture a child’s attention. Hues that are striking and “intense” bear powerful stimuli that attract and seize one’s “senses.”²³ Mesmerized by color, a child is visually engrossed. Yet, he or she does not become paralyzed in wonder. Provoked by feelings of pleasure, the child reproduces or responds to what he or she sees.²⁴ Benjamin explains: “In a child’s life, color is the pure

Enciclopedia dei maestri, 2 vols. (Milan: Anonima Edizioni Viola, 1942), co-compiled with Luigi Volpicelli.

²¹ With the term “remote-control,” I am referring specifically to Barthes’ discussion of the ways in which text directs readers’ focus upon images in order to communicate the author’s intended message. See Barthes 40.

²² For an overview of Benjamin’s work on the topic, cfr. pp. 10-11, n. 16 above.

²³ Benjamin, “A Child’s View of Color” 50-51.

²⁴ Benjamin, “A Child’s View of Color” 50.

expression of the child's pure receptivity, insofar as it is directed at the world."²⁵ Directing one's gaze onto the alluring colors at hand becomes a way for one to articulate one's fascination and curiosity. Benjamin defines this visual consumption of color as orientation.

For Benjamin, scholastic primers distinguish one means by which a child may orient oneself via color. He defines primers particularly as schoolbooks that are "printed in the form of picture writing."²⁶ Containing a combination of different hues, shapes, and lines, the primers serve to teach "onomatopoetic" vocabulary.²⁷ Employing color, the textbooks attract the young child, who, in turn, approaches his or her reading with interest and motivation. Inspired to learn and reproduce his or her vocabulary through reading and pronunciation, the child learns to communicate his or her captivation with color. Discussing the use of images in scholastic primers, Benjamin notes:

Draped with colors of every hue that he has picked up from reading and observing, the child stands in the center of a masquerade and joins in, while reading—for the words have all come to the masked ball, are joining in the fun and are whirling around together like tinkling snowflakes [...] When children think up stories, they are like theater-producers who refuse to be bound by "sense." [...] If you give children four or five specific words and ask them to

²⁵ Benjamin, "A Child's View of Color" 50-51.

²⁶ Benjamin, "A Glimpse into the World of Children's Books" 437.

²⁷ On the *sillabario* and its onomatopoetic language, refer to Benjamin, "Children's Literature" 250, and also Benjamin, "Premiers rudiments verdoyants" 119. In this latter piece, Benjamin examines the primers of illustrator and picture book author Tom Seidmann-Freud. To my knowledge, this essay has not been translated into English as of yet.

make a short sentence on the spot, the most amazing prose comes to light: thus not a glimpse into but a guide to children's books.²⁸

In order to teach language, the primer avails itself of a child's receptivity. Doing so, it provides a world "draped with colors." Yet, the images that the textbook offers possess not only visual qualities. Associated with vocabulary terms that get read and pronounced aloud, the pictures gain aural qualities. These sensorial characteristics transform the pictogram into a mnemonic device that would reproduce and inscribe the lexicon in mind. Internalizing the book's pictorial symbols thus becomes a playful and motivating act of schematic memorization. Linking written terms and phonemes with images, the primer presents lessons of language acquisition in the form of a game of word association. The successful recollection of the words via pictograms subsequently enables the child to take an assertive role like a theater director. Mastering and taking charge of the material at hand, the child articulates his or her newly acquired vocabulary at the will of his or her imagination.

Benjamin's analysis of color allows us to understand a child's incentive in learning and studying language via primers and calls us back to the Ministry of Education's own goals in espousing a "love for reading."²⁹ As *Ministro* Bottai himself argued when speaking of newly revised state-published *sillabari*, colorful images not only attract and espouse desire but also procure enough efficiency to maximize the time at which students will learn to read. He writes:

Il segreto del nuovo sistema d'insegnamento consiste appunto nel partire non dalle singole ed astratte lettere dell'alfabeto, bensì da parole che dicono qualche

²⁸ Benjamin, "A Glimpse into the World of Children's Books" 453.

²⁹ See ch. 2, pp. 50-52.

cosa al bambino e lo interessino. Quando egli avrà preso confidenza con un primo gruppo di parole, comincerà a distinguere i suoni, a cominciare dall'iniziale, e in questo lavoro di analisi sempre associate alle immagini, apprender senza sforzo e quasi contemporaneamente tutte le lettere alfabetiche.³⁰

In light of the alphabet book's use of colors, children might willfully learn, internalize, and reproduce its content. Yet, as helpful as Benjamin's essays on primers are, they do not point to the possible ideologies operating within the images and texts which children read.

Fascist Signs for Literacy: Barthes' "Rhetoric of the Image" and the Libro unico dello Stato

Roland Barthes may help us understand this shortfall in Benjamin's writing. In his seminal essay, "Rhetoric of the Image," Barthes provides us a framework for comprehending how illustrations and text may be read. Presenting a case study of a promotional poster issued by the *Panzani* brand pasta company, he investigates how "meaning gets into the image," and how images, in turn, operate with text to reproduce or reinforce certain ideological values held by addressees.³¹ While he restricts his study to the "advertising image," his analyses nevertheless can be applied to the *Libro di Stato*.³² "Undoubtedly intentional," to use Barthes' own words, the *Libro*'s stories, poems, short anecdotes, and illustrations, are meant to be read in a fixed and

³⁰ See Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, *Circolare ministeriale 30 dicembre 1940 – XIX, n. 2 – Istruzione per l'uso del libro di lettura per la 1a classe, Il libro per la scuola nel ventennio fascista: La normativa sui libri di testo dalla Riforma Gentile alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale (1923-1945)*, ed. Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani (Macerata: Alfabetica, 2009) 231.

³¹ Barthes 32.

³² Barthes 33.

determined way.³³ And so: what is the procedure by which the image and text work together to communicate ideological values?

To answer this question, Barthes begins his essay by defining image. Image, for Barthes, determines a “true system of signs” “reproduced” in such visual forms as advertisements, photographs, illustrations, films, cartoons, and comic strips.³⁴ Specifically, the signs contain “not merely shapes and colors,” but also “a number of identifiable (nameable) objects,” which one has encountered in “lived experience.”³⁵ Taking the promotional poster for *Panzani* brand pasta as his example, Barthes identifies the following “signs”: “some packets of pasta, a tin, a sachet, some tomatoes, onions, peppers, a mushroom, all emerging from a half-open string bag, in yellows and greens on a red background.”³⁶

“Reading” the signs in the advertisement, Barthes states, demands at the very least a certain “level of knowledge,” which he deems “anthropological.” He writes:

[In] order to ‘read’ this last (or first) level of image, all that is needed is the knowledge bound up with our perception. That knowledge is not nil, for we need to know what an image is (children only learn this at about the age of four) and

³³ Barthes 33; see also ch. 2 p. 51 on Bottai’s argument for clarity in the *Libro unico*’s content.

³⁴ Barthes 32.

³⁵ Barthes 32, 35. Barthes lays out three categories of signs. The first consists of the “symbol,” “which unites its signifier to its signified.” One example, Barthes notes, consists of the “cross.” As a sign, the cross stands for the signified religion “Christianity.” The second classification distinguishes a “*paradigmatic relation*” of signs, whose meanings are derived from their interaction with other signs. Colors lie in this second category. Barthes suggests that by itself “red,” has no meaning other than “color.” However, in correlation with the hue “green,” “red” denotes “prohibition,” or “stop.” Detecting “*syntagmatic relation*,” the third category of signs is a linguistic one and defines the relationship between “words of a sentence.” See “The Imagination of the Sign,” *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2000) 205-206.

³⁶ Barthes 33.

what a tomato is, a string-bag, a packet of pasta are, but it is a matter of an almost anthropological knowledge. This message corresponds as it were, to the letter of the image and we can agree to call it the literal message, as opposed to the previous symbolic message.³⁷

“Anthropological knowledge” consists of a set of basic facts gained empirically through one’s sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. This kind of knowledge permits one to identify and name the objects one perceives. As names strictly individuate the objects, they carry a “non-coded” or literal message.³⁸ Such objects referred to by Barthes consist, for instance, of the tomato. Having previously tasted a tomato, one has learned of its soft, round, pulpy-red attributes. With this knowledge, one is thereby able to recognize and label the familiar fruit in the *Panzani* advertisement.

In addition to “anthropological knowledge,” Barthes maintains that one may possess a “cultural” knowledge of the signs under study. Such knowledge enables one to ascertain a supplemental, “symbolic” meaning from the signs in the advertisement. Barthes points to the linear arrangement of the colors in the *Panzani* poster. Discussing the “cultural” information that the colors generate, he notes:

A second sign is more or less equally evident; its signifier is the bringing together of the tomato, the pepper and the tricoloured hues (yellow, green, red) of the poster; its signified is Italy or rather *Italianicity*. This sign stands in relation of redundancy with the connoted sign of the linguistic message (the Italian

³⁷ Barthes 36.

³⁸ Barthes 36.

assonance of the name *Panzani*) and the knowledge it draws upon is already more particular.³⁹

Displayed among the vegetables and fruits, the colors—red, yellow, and green—correspond to the hues found in the Italian flag. By means of the colors attributed to them, the products in the advertisement gain a significance that exceeds their literal meaning. Together, they “connote” a symbolic, national message.⁴⁰

Not all readers, however, possess the same “cultural knowledge” and may interpret signs in multiple ways. By that same token, they may not all visually consume the image in the same manner. Barthes hence defines signs as “polysemous; they imply, underlying their signifiers, a ‘floating chain’ of signifieds, the reader able to choose some and ignore others.”⁴¹ Should one presumably *choose* which signs to invest his or her interpretation in, he or she may not comprehend the figurative message, which the advertisement had intended to offer.⁴²

“Remote-Controlling” Readers: Barthes’ Definition of “Anchorage” and “Relay”

Nevertheless, as the image communicates an “intentional” message, the author’s main objective consists not of providing his or her public the freedom of reading the ad in any particular way that suits them. To prevent any misinterpretations of the signs in question, language and text gain a crucial function. Taking the form of “labels” and “captions” in the

³⁹ Barthes 34.

⁴⁰ Barthes 34.

⁴¹ Barthes 39.

⁴² Barthes 36, 43.

Panzani ad, the text identifies the specific category of objects, which one ought to pay attention to.⁴³ Defining the text and the “linguistic messages” they carry, Barthes notes:

Hence in every society various techniques are developed intended to *fix* the floating chain of signifieds in such a way as to counter the terror of uncertain signs; the linguistic message is one of those techniques. At the level of the literal message, the text replies—in a more or less direct, more or less partial manner—to the question: *what is it?* The text helps to identify purely and simply the elements of the scene and the scene itself; it is a matter of a denoted description of the image.⁴⁴

Particular “nomenclature” and descriptive phrases identify the objects in the image. They steer one’s gaze and limit the number of interpretations that can be inferred. Barthes defines this function of text as “anchorage.”⁴⁵ In the advertisement under study, the name *Panzani* indicates and anchors one’s thoughts specifically on the labelled bag of pasta. Its quality of being Italian underscores the colors—red, yellow, green—displayed by the arrangement of vegetables and fruits (e.g., tomatoes and peppers).

Yet, anchorage serves not only to make one acknowledge the presence of the literal objects or signs to which the ad’s text may refer. As “the viewer of the image receives *at one and the same time* the perceptual message and the cultural message,” the promotional poster simultaneously directs the addressee to the symbolic meaning of the product. Here, the “intended

⁴³ Barthes 33.

⁴⁴ Barthes 39.

⁴⁵ Barthes 38-39.

message” is a nationalistic one: *Panzani* indicates the idea of “*Italianicity*.”⁴⁶ In other words, the brand name makes reference to the Italian nation and culture and sheds light on the colors in the poster. As language functions to direct one’s interpretation of the ad, Barthes designates image and text as an ideological form of expression. This follows:

[The] anchorage may be ideological and indeed this is its principal function; the text *directs* the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others; by means of an often subtle *dispatching*, it remote-controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance [...] The text is indeed the creator’s (and hence society’s) right of inspection over the image; anchorage is a control, bearing a responsibility—in the face of the projective powers of pictures—for the use of the message [...] the text has thus a *repressive* value and we can see that it is at this level that the morality and ideology of a society are above all invested.”⁴⁷

As the text “remote-controls” readers, it “represses” or prevents them from ascertaining a variety of symbolic meaning, which the image may prescribe. By way of anchorage, language instead “elucidates” or discloses one specific notion intended by the author. Adding no further nuance, it stifles the possibility for multiple interpretations.

In light of the different forms of visual media, however, image and text do not always operate via anchorage. In such narrative forms as film dialogue and comic strips, the text

⁴⁶ Barthes 36.

⁴⁷ Barthes 40.

“complement[s]” or provides information that could otherwise not be understood from the image. Barthes defines this relationship between text and image as *relay*.⁴⁸ He states:

The function of relay is less common (at least as far as the fixed image is concerned); it can be seen particularly in cartoons and comic strips. Here text (most often a snatch of dialogue) and image stand in a complementary relationship; the words, in the same way as the images, are fragments of a more general syntagm and the unity of the message is realized at a higher level, that of the story, the anecdote, the diegesis [...]. While rare in the fixed image, this relay-text becomes very important in film, where dialogue functions not simply as elucidation but really does advance the action by setting out, in the sequence of message, meanings that are not to be found in the image itself. Obviously, the two functions of the linguistic message can co-exist in the one iconic whole, but the dominance of the one or the other is of consequence for the general economy of the work. When the text has the diegetic value of relay, the information is more costly, requiring as it does the learning of a digital code (system of language) [...]⁴⁹

While anchorage and relay may perhaps prove efficient, Barthes nevertheless cautions that they may in no way guarantee that a recipient recognizes the ideological values, which an author intended to communicate through text and image.

⁴⁸ Barthes 41.

⁴⁹ Barthes 41.

Despite being “remote-controlled,” audience members may still interpret the advertising image in multiple ways. As a result, the poster can fail in uniformly conveying one single ideological value across any one group. Barthes continues:

What gives this system its originality is that the number of readings of the same kind of lexical unit or *lexica* (of the same image) varies according to individuals [...] The variations in readings is not, however, anarchic; it depends on the different kinds of knowledge—practical, national, cultural, aesthetic—invested in the image and these can be classified, brought into a typology [...] each sign corresponds to a body of ‘attitudes’—tourism, housekeeping, knowledge of art—certain of which may be obviously lacking in this or that individual. [...] The image, in its connotations, is thus constituted by an architecture of signs drawn from a variable depth of lexicon of idiolects.”⁵⁰

The ideological value one has acquired beforehand may prevent or inhibit one from reading the image as its author had intended. Barthes’ consideration of the varied possibilities in “reading” any one image or text brings us back to Althusser and Foucault’s treatise on ideology and “multiple subjectivities.”⁵¹ As readers have different levels of education and come from different demographic backgrounds, their interpretation of an image will vary. With this in mind, how does Barthes’ concept of *anchorage* and *relay* allow us to understand the Fascist *Libro di Stato*?

⁵⁰ Barthes 46-47.

⁵¹ See ch. 1, p. 10-11 note 26.

To “Anchor” or “Relay,” that is the Question: Image and Text in Fascist Schoolbooks

The Fascist State-issued schoolbook consists of a series of illustrated signs that collaborate with written text to confer ideological values. Pictograms available in first-grade alphabet books or *sillabari*, as I understand it, work with the text by means of anchorage. Having pictorial signs at one’s disposal, a child recognizes that he or she ought to define, for instance, a farming tool that tills soil as *aratro* (“plough”). Associating an image, (e.g., ideogram of a plough), with its word, the student, on the one hand, learns a literal message. At the same time, the Fascist primers will furthermore reveal a specific interpretation of the sign at hand and prescribe the behaviors or “rules of respect” expected of young Fascist pupils.⁵² The *aratro*, to provide one example, will encompass a set of arms utilized in the “battaglie della vita.” It will afford the strict nationalist work ethic with which the regime seeks to shape its youth.

Forming the readers’ “digital code,” such key signs recur, remind, and dictate the specific manner of reading subsequent second, third, fourth, and fifth grade manuals.⁵³ As these schoolbooks predominantly privilege narrative text over image, however, I understand the relationship between the former and latter in terms of *relay*. Written text in the form of dialogue, stories, anecdotes, and poems “complement” accompanying illustrations with further “symbolic” meaning. In this way, the *Libro di Stato* builds on the repetitive themes that entice students to assume jobs in agriculture or manufacturing.

As the Ministry of Education demanded that the *Libro unico* disseminate “intentional messages” in a clear and straightforward manner, the possibility of varied and perhaps

⁵² Making reference to the term “rules of respect,” I am once more referring to Althusser. Cfr. above pp. 7-8, n. 15.

⁵³ By means of the term “digital code,” I am again referring to Barthes’ notion of relay in “Rhetoric of the Image.” Cfr. above, pp. 18-19.

conflicting interpretations proved a threat to compilers. As I have noted in Chapter Two, the MPE aimed at thwarting any misreading of the text through an exhaustive use of repetition.⁵⁴ In this next section, I will discuss the aural, visual, and kinesthetic forms making up children's memorization exercises in the *Libro unico dello Stato* as spearheaded by pedagogue Nazareno Padellaro. A member of the *Commissione per il Libro di Stato*, Padellaro emerged here as the principal architect behind the repetitive reading material in the Fascist *Libro unico*.⁵⁵

Investigating various theories of child development and pedagogy, he envisioned the above forms of repetition as an effective and efficient means of learning and recalling the "symbolic messages" prescribed by the schoolbook's images and text. His treatise on repetition specifically will allow us to understand the regime's rationale behind the overall structure of the *Libro unico*.

Repeat after Mussolini: Nazareno Padellaro, Rote Learning, and the Libro unico dello Stato

Discussing the contemporary "polemica didattica" on rote learning in the volume *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia*, Fascist pedagogue Nazareno Padellaro caustically presents researchers' analyses of memorization exercises.⁵⁶ Proclaiming them "antiscientific," Padellaro reacts against the didactic corpus, which has dismissed memorization as an efficient means of

⁵⁴ Cfr. ch. 2, pp. 7-9.

⁵⁵ On Padellaro's work in the *Commissione per il Libro di Stato*, see ch. 2 pp. 42-43. Scholarship on Padellaro, though scarce, includes De Fort, *La scuola elementare* 430, 433-436, Tina Pischetta, "Nazareno Padellaro: usi pedagogici della politica," diss., Università degli Studi di Sassari, 2011, and also Luca Montecchi, "Alle origini della «scuola serena» di Giuseppe Lombardo Radice e la cultura pedagogica italiana del primo Novecento di fronte al mito della scuola della Montecchi," *History of Education and Children's Literature* 4.2 (2009): 307-337.

⁵⁶ Padellaro, *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 79-91.

learning.⁵⁷ Preparing us for the argument he will present in favor of using repetition in the classroom, he writes:

S'era detto e si era scritto che la cultura intensiva della memoria era tutta a scapito del giudizio e della spontaneità; si era tentato dimostrare che la memoria è un segno di mediocrità di spirito; si era affermato che gli allievi che hanno più memoria sono fra i meno intelligenti; [...] si era perfino sostenuto che con della memoria si potevano stimolare tante qualità che non si posseggono, ed infine era prevalso il pregiudizio assai comune che la memoria fosse una facoltà indipendente dall'intelligenza.

La parola che serviva i nemici della memoria fu coniata e diventò una specie di dogma didattico: psittacismo.⁵⁸

Referring to them as a “dogma,” Padellaro seeks to destabilize the claims that one’s power of recollection stands independent of and unaffected by one’s “personalità.” He rejects the assertion that learning by memory signals a lack of intelligence, judgment (“giudizio”), and spontaneity (“spontaneità”) on a child’s part.⁵⁹ According to Padellaro, repetitive exercises only seem

⁵⁷ Padellaro, *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 80.

⁵⁸ Padellaro, *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 79-80

⁵⁹ Armando Gloria was one critic, who argued against the use of repetition in the classroom and denounced the language in Padellaro’s own third grade *Il libro della terza classe elementare*. Gloria writes: “[È] la ripetizione meccanica e, quindi, arida, atta a dimostrare che il discente non ha capito nulla perché nulla gli ha saputo dire l’insegnante. Bisogna mettersi in testa che il fanciullo non deve esprimersi col linguaggio del maestro o con quello del libro ma col proprio e tra lui e l’educatore, infine, deve svolgersi un’appassionata e diligente conversazione.” See Gloria’s review of Padellaro’s *Libro unico* in the pamphlet, “L’insegnamento della Storia nelle Scuole Elementari” (Anagni: Oreste Natalia & Figli, 1937) Box C.885, Folder XVII, Guido

“mechanical” as they function within a strict pedagogical framework: within these activities, certain words, phrases or ideas are recited a specific number of times in an uninterrupted manner within a determined time period. Syllables, accents, and punctuation supply the lesson with constant and unaltered patterns or rhythm. As such, memorization drills appear to be an action that one performs automatically without much thought. Yet, despite the presumedly mechanical way children apprehend their studies, committing one’s lessons to memory, Padellaro argues, lacks the hallmarks of repeating words carelessly like a parrot.⁶⁰

As per Padellaro, learning via repetition does not conflict with a child’s “love” or *volontà* to embrace his or her studies.⁶¹ Rather, it contributes to an “insegnamento fecondo” by

Mazzoni Pamphlet Collection, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University Libraries, Durham, NC. 16 Apr 2013: 12.

⁶⁰ Padellaro, *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 81.

⁶¹ Versed on the writing of sociologist Emile Durkheim, child psychologists Jean Piaget and James Mark Baldwin as well as pedagogue Pierre Bovet, Padellaro rejected the theories of so-called “liberal” pedagogues, whose ideas he claimed dominated the field of education studies. According to Padellaro, such theories--(e.g., Durkheim’s “school megalomania,” Piaget’s “moral judgment of the child,” Baldwin’s “individual adaptation,” and Bovet’s juvenile “submission,”)--incorrectly envisioned the child as uncontrollable, egotistical and overindulgent. Embracing Gentilian ideas of *spirito* and *volontà*, instead, the Fascist pedagogue believed that children, or “fanciulli utopisti,” as he calls them, were by nature willingly obedient, selfless, hardworking and, at the same time, “instinctively” inclined toward “revolution.” While this may seem paradoxical to the intelligible reader, traits of rebellion for the Fascist intellectual did not conflict with, but rather supported one’s tendency toward order and obedience. Revolution, he maintained, encapsulated one’s “desiderio di instaurare un ordine di cose migliori, di dimenticare se stessi per gli altri, la volontà di obbedire alle leggi per esser degni dell’ora che scoccherà [...] [lo] spirito rivoluzionario e spirito educativo sono la medesima cosa.” Being rebellious did not imply that one sought a state of anarchy. By rejecting or “rebellious” against one set of laws, one seeks to establish another. As they by nature seek such an “ordine più puro, più bello, più umano,” Fascism, Padellaro argues, would provide children a way to fight against the “misery, weakness, and prosaic” qualities that had become the norm in the society in which they lived. Fascism in other words would inspire children to achieve their own objectives in realizing a more prosperous nation. On Padellaro’s comparative reading of the scholars above, see *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 44-45; on his views concerning “fanciulli utopisti,” refer to Padellaro, *Scuola vivente* 15-19, and *Spunti di didattica nuova* 77.

necessitating “un lavoro intellettuale.”⁶² Students take agency, as they perceive the rhythmic or aural qualities that characterize the words and phrases in the exercise. Using their sensorial—aural, visual, kinetic, linguistic—capacities to decipher the apparent traits of the words and phrases at hand in turn provides students the schemata to internalize their lesson.⁶³ The pedagogue explains:

È vero che nel bambino l'apprendimento a memoria è soprattutto gioia di suoni e di ritmo; piacere motore di ripetere: tutto questo può far credere che tale apprendimento sia meccanico, mentre invece è sensoriale. Ebbene, a conclusione di quanto abbiamo detto, aggiungeremo che [...] lo spirito umano tende a concepire tutte le cose sotto forma di meccanismo. Una rappresentazione meccanica è per noi perfettamente chiara; quando noi siamo pervenuti a spiegare meccanicamente un fenomeno, abbiamo l'impressione di esserne padroni, di poterlo produrre a volontà, regolandone la marcia.⁶⁴

⁶² Padellaro, *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 80-81.

⁶³ In his *Istruzione per l'uso del libro di lettura per la 1a classe*, Bottai echoes Padellaro's words as he calls for a scholastic primer that would play on a child's “istinto dell'osservazione.” In virtue of such a primer, children would learn how to read quickly and facilitate their own ideological “formazione spirituale.” Laying out the requisites for such a new first grade primer, he insists on pictograms or “segni alfabetici” that refer to “una immagine di facile ricordo.” Moreover, he demands that its vocabulary terms “dicono qualche cosa al bambino e lo interessino” and thereby relay a child's lived experience. Distinguished by specific “immagini” and “suoni,” its lexicon would espouse interest and advance “il lavoro di richiamo mnemonico.” See Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, *Circolare ministeriale 30 dicembre 1940 – XIX*, n. 2 231-236.

⁶⁴ Padellaro, *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 91.

In order that one efficiently memorizes one's lesson, one must invest one's full and active concentration. "Mastering" the material one learns through this method, one by consequence is able to recall "a volontà" without hesitation.

As repetition bids mental effort, Padellaro claims the impossibility to "dissociare la memoria dall'attenzione." He notes: "[La] distrazione d'ordine intellettuale, indebolisce sensibilmente la memoria nella sua estensione, nella sua durata e nella sua esattezza."⁶⁵ To support this view, Padellaro considers the case studies of American education psychologist Vivian Allen Charles Henmon. Citing the latter's studies on visual, kinetic, and aural methods of language acquisition, Padellaro asserts that children's lessons at school incorporate "quattro modi di presentazione." Discussing Henmon's methods, the Fascist pedagogue suggests that memorization take the following four forms: "visuale, auditivo, visuale auditivo e visuale auditivo motore."⁶⁶ Describing Henmon's experiments and their outcome, Padellaro observes:

Nella presentazione visuale gli alunni leggeranno con gli occhi alcuni nomi concreti, senza movimento d'articolazione con le labbra. Nella presentazione auditiva, l'esperimentatore, ossia l'Henmon, leggeva ad alta voce il materiale agli alunni che avevano gli occhi chiusi, ed evitavano i movimenti di pronuncia.

Infine, nella presentazione visuale-auditivo-motrice, l'alunno leggeva egli stesso

⁶⁵ Padellaro, *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 80-81.

⁶⁶ In "The Relation Between Modes of Presentation and Retention," *Psychological Review* 19.2 (1912): 79-96, Henmon understands text and image as visual media that children read. They mediate listening exercises, which students follow and memorize. On Padellaro's reading of Henmon refer to *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 83. For more recent studies on Henmon's experiments, see E. David Cronon and John W. Jenkins, *The University of Wisconsin: A History, 1925-1945: Politics, Depression, and War*, vol. 3 (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1994) 766; Marjorie Hogan et al., "Academic Success in Adolescence: Relationships Among Verbal IQ, Social Support and Emotional Intelligence," *Australian Journal of Psychology* 62.1 (2010): 30-41.

ad alta voce. Ebbene, Henmon ha ottenuto i migliori risultati con la presentazione auditiva, poi con la presentazione visuale auditiva, e infine con la presentazione visuale auditiva motrice.⁶⁷

In light of Henmon's results, Padellaro contends that memorization is a productive way to learn. The rhythmic sounds ("suoni e ritmo") produced when saying the terms over and over again within a certain time frame ascribes the task with musical and performative qualities that entice joy ("gioia"). Appealing to one's senses, repetitive exercises cater pleasure ("piacere"). By consequence, learning becomes not only a sensorial but also emotional experience. Offering delight, repetition furnishes children with an incentive to memorize their studies.

Performing Fascist Textbooks Like True Method Actors: Reading, Repetition, and Affective Memory as per Padellaro

Emotion provides efficiency to learning as it aids one's retention ("retentività") of the material. As Padellaro suggests, it involves forming a "memoria [affettiva], ossia la potenza dei ricordi di ricomparire sotto forma di sentimenti."⁶⁸ In creating this "memoria affettiva," primary school pupils form an emotional attachment to the terms and ideas they read.⁶⁹ An example

⁶⁷ Padellaro, *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 83.

⁶⁸ Padellaro, *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 91.

⁶⁹ Interestingly, the term "memoria affettiva" or "affective memory" is also famously attributed to Russian theater practitioner, Konstantin Stanislavsky, considered the "father" of modern "method acting." Though Padellaro does not mention him by name when discussing the term "memoria affettiva," Stanislavsky was a contemporary of the pedagogue. This makes me wonder whether Padellaro's didactics on reading may have been influenced by Stanislavsky's notion of a kind of emotional "method acting." Understanding Padellaro's idea of a "memoria affettiva" as a type "method acting" would allow us to see how emotionally invested children had to be in their

would include the phrase, “Il Fascismo ha salvato l’Italia.”⁷⁰ Here the text communicates Fascism as Italy’s savior. The feeling of gratitude and nationalism, which it might generate, would assist learners in recalling and reproducing Fascism as a heroic entity. Yet, in order that such memorization occurs, the phrase must “[colpire] il fanciullo.”⁷¹ The Fascist pedagogue notes: “[È] necessario ch’egli abbia nella fantasia l’immagine di un’Italia perduta e poi un Italia salvata. E non basta: bisogna ancora ch’egli senta l’Italia come cosa viva, come una creatura del suo cuore.”⁷² An exercise becomes memorable when the reader fully grasps the connotative meanings of its terms. Comprehending the phrase with visions of an “Italia perduta” and an “Italia salvata” would evoke powerful emotions of loss and joy and hence render the lesson into a mnemonic device.

Employing the idiom “viva,” moreover, Padellaro suggests that a sense of continuity and presence be established between the reader and the object studied.⁷³ Feelings of loss and

reading of the Fascist *Libro unico*. On the life of Stanislavsky and his notion of affective memory, see Larry C. Schmidt, “A Study of Discourse and Acting Pedagogy: How a Culturally Specific Acting Pedagogy from Russia Transformed Itself into the American Method,” diss., U of Missouri Columbia, 2002; Bella Merlin, *Konstantin Stanislavsky* (New York: Routledge, 2003); and also Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavsky: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁷⁰ Padellaro, *La scuola vivente* 7.

⁷¹ Padellaro, *La scuola vivente* 7. In citing Padellaro’s text in this section here, I am specifically responding to Gibelli’s claim that images and texts are by themselves powerful enough to effect children. Through my analysis of Padellaro, I am instead saying that texts and images have to take a *specific* form in order that children might efficiently engage with the material. This would of course come in addition to the fact that textbook instruction requires proper teacher training. Cfr. ch. 1, pp. 49-50 and also ch 2, p. 62.

⁷² Padellaro, *La scuola vivente* 7. Padellaro employed such similar rhetorical phrases in his third grade *Libro di Stato*. Examples include the lines “Il Re nutrì della sua fede l’Italia tutta” and “Il lavoro s’irradia dalla faccia.” Armando Gloria denounced the pedagogue for compiling such “complex” and “contorted” phrases. He maintained that such a “linguaggio arido” made Padellaro’s schoolbook “inaccessibile.” Compare Padellaro’s language in the chapter “Il Re imperatore” in *Il libro della terza classe* to Gloria’s censure in “L’insegnamento della Storia nelle Scuole Elementari” 10.

⁷³ Using the term “viva,” Padellaro once more employs the same rhetoric as Bottai when discussing the content of textbooks. Cfr. ch. 2, p. 50-51.

indebtedness associated with historical facts, terms, and ideas, would make Italy and the Fascist regime come to view as a true and lived experience. As such feelings are expressed in unison among a band of classmates, relevant exercises would establish group solidarity.⁷⁴ This follows: “Il ricordo di un’aggressione può provocare la collera e noi sappiamo come un’offesa in certe parti d’Italia rimane viva nel cuore di generazioni differenti, che la rivivono come un fatto presente. [...] Questo dono di una sovrana memoria affettiva è lo stesso dono inestimabile per il quale noi viviamo e sosteniamo la tradizione più grande del mondo, la tradizione di Roma.”⁷⁵ Each ensuing thought of Italy or Fascism would hence regenerate feelings of patriotism. Emotionally charged language and rhythm nonetheless entail one technique by which a child may internalize the ideological materials he or she acquires at the elementary level.

According to Padellaro, regulating the time at which one repeats one’s lessons correspondingly aids “retentività.” Referring to the case studies of Austrian psychologist Adolf Jost, he suggests that repetitive exercises extend over a significant length of time and incorporate few vocabulary terms or concepts at any one moment.⁷⁶ Discussing the results of Jost’s clinical evaluations of learning, memory, and retention, he concludes:

⁷⁴ Guiding this group, the instructor assumes an important role in ensuring that the student associates proper emotions to the studies at hand. Like Bottai, Padellaro advises teachers to exaggerate and enact the text by “[cercare] nella parola la sua potenza di movimento e d’incanto; [fare] che suono, senso delle parole, siano generate da pienezza di vita; e non da consuetudine parolaia.” Cfr. *La scuola vivente* 18, and also *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 83.

⁷⁵ Padellaro, *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 91.

⁷⁶ Padellaro specifically cites a series of experiments conducted by Jost in 1897. Discredited by modern scholars who have since found flaws in Jost’s methods, the experiment asked two participants to repeat a group of syllables twenty-four times over certain time intervals. See Padellaro, *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 82. On Jost’s experiment, see “Jost’s Laws,” *Dictionary of Theories, Laws, & Concepts in Psychology*, ed. Jon E. Roedelein (Westport: Greenwood, 1998) 864-879; Lars H. Alin, “The Memory Laws of Jost,” *Göteborg Psychological Reports* 27.1 (1997): 1-21; and John T. Wixted, “On Common Ground: Jost’s (1897) Law of Forgetting and Ribot’s (1881) Law of Retrograde Amnesia,” *Psychological Review* 111.4 (2004): 864-879.

I risultati mostrano che è meglio ripartire le ripetizioni in più giorni, in altre parole, che due ripetizioni al giorno, sono più efficaci di otto ripetizioni al giorno per tre giorni. Questo dato acquisto dovrebbe insegnare che una ripartizione del lavoro per la validità dell'esercizio e per la più facile acquisizione della memoria, è quella che suddivide nel più lungo tempo possibile gli esercizi.⁷⁷

Padellaro recommends that teachers cap the amount of information and knowledge that students acquire at school per day and suggests that they repeat these lessons over an extended period of time.⁷⁸ Taking into consideration the outcome of Jost's experiment, the Fascist pedagogue advises the careful selection and distribution of didactic material. He demands the "[necessità] quindi di una saggezza distributiva delle materie nei programmi, e necessità di armonizzare in modo gli esercizi per le diverse materie che nessuno faccia la parte del leone."⁷⁹ In light of Padellaro's guidelines, we can now comprehend the content and structure across all editions of the *Libro di Stato*.

⁷⁷ Padellaro, *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 82.

⁷⁸ As Padellaro limits the number of terms and concepts studied each day, one wonders to what extent his pedagogic methods might risk in creating a tedious learning environment. Here we are once again reminded of the criticism levied toward the *Libro di Stato*. Padellaro's own colleague Luigi Volpicelli, for instance, proclaimed the "disadvantages" of using such repetitive exercises in the state-issued schoolbook. In one article titled, "Libro di Stato," published in the journal, *Educazione fascista*, he lists the grievances of teachers, who disapprove of the regime's textbooks. One teacher, he reports, argues that the "sillabario, a mio parere, dovrebbe essere combinato in modo da non richiedere tanta perdita di tempo per dettature e copiare di esercizi atti ad intensificare l'apprendimento delle lettere e delle loro combinazioni." Having adopted the textbook in their classroom, others, according to Volpicelli, suggest that the "vantaggio" of memorization "è poco" and demand "letture più varie." See Luigi Volpicelli, "Libri di Stato," *Educazione fascista* 9.6 (1933): 559.

⁷⁹ Padellaro, *Pedagogia ed antipedagogia* 88.

Anatomy of Repetition: The Structure and Form of the Libro unico dello Stato

In line with Padellaro's premise, each edition of the *Libro unico dello Stato* showcases a calculated number of terms that recur within stories, poems, and anecdotes. From its actual shape to the organization of chapters to its particular themes, the textbook clearly demonstrates the Ministry of Education's use of repetition in an effort to shape readers into workers.⁸⁰ Repetition, for one, takes a tactile and familiar form in light of the textbook's physical layout. Measuring at about 17 cm by 24.7 cm or 15.3 cm by 21 cm, each edition of the *Libro di Stato* retains a regular shape.⁸¹ Consisting of autarchic material, the textbook furthermore symbolizes and reminds its readers of the regime's nationalist economic policies of self-sufficiency.⁸² Following the academic calendar, the State-issued textbook consisted of four sections titled under fall, winter, spring, and summer.⁸³ Chapters within each often come to light under the moniker of a month in the school year.⁸⁴ This method of organization mediated the proper activities for students to

⁸⁰ Davanzati himself even emphasizes that students memorize their lessons in his fifth grade text. See *Il balilla Vittorio* 180-181.

⁸¹ According to article two of the *Decreto interministeriale*, the Ministry of Education proportioned official first and second grade *Libri unici* at 17 X 24.5cm and subsequent third, fourth, and fifth grade volumes at 15.3 X 21 cm. See Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, *Decreto Interministeriale 22 agosto 1930-VIII – Modalità per la stampa e la vendita da parte del Provveditorato generale dei testi unici di Stato per le scuole elementari* 136.

⁸² On the autarchic make up of the *Libro unico dello Stato*, cfr. ch. 2, pp. 47-48.

⁸³ This particular way of structuring children's scholastic manuals and literature books was a common one. Edmondo De Amicis, for instance, organized *Cuore* (Milan: Garzanti, 2012) according to the academic calendar and commenced his novel with the chapter, "Ottobre." The format of such other novels as Vamba's *Il giornalino di Gian Burrasca* (Florence: Giunti, 2007); Paolo Mantegazza's *Testa: libro per i ragazzi* (Milan: Treves, 1888); Giuseppe Fanciulli's *Lisa-Betta* (Turin: S.E.I., 1938); and Giorgio Berlutti's *Il cuore d'Italia* (Rome: Unione Editoriale d'Italia, 1939) follow suit.

⁸⁴ This comes in exception to five of the regime's textbooks. Bargellini's fifth grade textbook, for one, consists of sections, whose titles refer thematically to various aspects of the city. The *Libri unici* compiled by Marcucci, Novaro, Zanetti, and Belardinelli-Bucciarelli are not organized into any specific chapters or sections.

engage in and the products to produce. Divided according to seasons, textbooks of the *scuole rurali*, for instance, indicated the weather and agricultural pursuits associated with each particular period of the year. October, for example, coincided with not only the beginning of the school year, but also the *vendemmia* or grape harvest. Stories on the summer wheat harvest likewise almost always combine descriptions of the *trebbiatrice* with the “know-how” of carrying out the *trebbiatura*.⁸⁵ Thematically organized in the same fashion, urban editions, suggest the particular foodstuffs to buy or consume.⁸⁶ Often accompanied by an illustration, simple chapter titles such as “Festa di lavoro” or “Natale di Roma” indicate a national holiday and allude to characters and themes repeated across the *Libro unico*. Stories on the “Festa di Lavoro,” for example, regularly feature mythical brothers Romulus and Remus. Presumed ancestors of Fascist Italy’s *uomini nuovi*, these characters do not appear as virile warriors as scholars have suggested. Rather with respect to the edition in which they appear, their persona systematically corresponds with either that of the ideal rural or urban worker. In *Libri unici per le scuole rurali*, therefore, the two characters come across as farmers. Meanwhile, in *Libri unici per le scuole urbane*, they are architects or manual laborers, who build city walls or aqueducts. Each, in turn, provides and teaches the terminology proper to the careers and tasks which readers ought to select. Romulus and Remus become the model soldier-workers for students to emulate.

Alliteration, rhyme, and parallel sentence structures on the one hand grant the *lettura* with aural qualities that facilitate memorization. The layout of individual stories, on the other hand, follows what Jane Baskwill identifies as “predictable structures.”⁸⁷ “[Allowing] children to

⁸⁵ In referring to the term “know-how,” I again refer to Althusser and his notion of the “reproduction of labour power.” Cfr above pp. 7-8, n. 15.

⁸⁶ This idea of consumption will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

⁸⁷ These “predictable structures” similarly characterize the forms of many popular children’s tales including those composed by the Brothers Grimm, Beatrix Potter, Dr. Seuss, Charles

develop the schemata necessary for comprehending various story types,” as Baskwill puts it, these structures “build repetition into the text” and make the tales and themes “memorable.”⁸⁸ Examples include the “chain” or “circular story,” in which the “ending and sequence of events takes the reader back to the beginning”; the “cumulative sequence,” which re-presents characters or events “in reverse order” as the tale progresses; pattern stories such as fairy tales, whose “events or scenes” reoccur; and “question-and-answer tales,” in which the story reiterates “a question throughout.”⁸⁹ Stories of this latter type in the *Libro di Stato* often involve a dialogue between a main child protagonist and an accompanying elder, parent, grandparent, sibling, neighbor, teacher, or family friend. Addressing the main character whose age almost always corresponds with that of the reader, the elder often poses rhetorical questions, on themes concerning work. Bright and colorful illustrations placed in close proximity to the text provide the appropriate signs that will aid the audience in formulating answers to the questions in advance. Imitating the protagonist, students not only respond to the queries posed by their *lettura*, but also learn to practice the same lessons imparted in the story.

The kinds of story structures and the number of illustrations employed in the *Libro di Stato* vary according to one’s level at the elementary school. Unlike first, second, and third grade texts, fourth and fifth grade *Libri unici* comprise less fairy tales and allegories. Black and white drawings or photos taken by the *LUCE* institute tend to replace colorful illustrations. They aim at providing, as Padellaro has suggested, a certain sense of “presence” or reality to the stories.⁹⁰ Despite these differences, tales across all volumes of *Libri unici* consistently employ repetition

Dickens, and Alexei Tolstoy. See Jane Baskwill, *Books as Bridges: Using Text to Connect Home and School Literacy and Learning* (Markham: Pembroke, 2010).

⁸⁸ Baskwill 23.

⁸⁹ Baskwill 22-25.

⁹⁰ These texts encompass Davanzati’s, Novaro’s and Bargellini’s *Libri unici*.

and link labor with militaristic ideas of discipline, blind obedience, and duty. Building a wall, working in the inferno of an *officina*, tilling the soil of one's farmland, and likewise raising children, as we will see, regularly manifest as *battaglie* necessary for the survival of an economically autarchic Fascist Italy.

L'aratro traccia il solco e la spada lo difende: Forming Fascist Contadinelli with Primers

Marcucci's Agrarian Pedagogy and his Sillabario per le scuole rurali

Having outlined Padellaro's techniques of repetition and his methods for structuring children's reading exercises, I will now begin my analysis of the *Libro unico dello Stato* and examine the work of compiler Alessandro Marcucci. Nowhere, in fact, do we see the importance placed upon the use and reuse of familiar signs to teach children proper skills, discipline, and work ethic than in Marcucci's first grade schoolbook. By virtue of his *Sillabario per le scuole rurali*, Marcucci adheres to the Education Ministry's "nuovi assetti culturali e economici."⁹¹ Teaching how to read and write, he aims at inscribing children into a fixed system of order and at shaping their "abito alla disciplina, all'ordine e all'obbedienza."⁹² For Marcucci, reading and

⁹¹ Alessandro Marcucci, *Il programma didattico: norme e istruzioni agl'Insegnanti per il PERIODO PREPARATORIO e per lo svolgimento degli insegnamenti fondamentali del corso elementare inferiore: scrittura, lettura, composizione, numerazione, disegno, geografia, nozioni varie con tavole illustrazioni per le esercitazioni*, 5th ed. (Rome: Le Scuole Per I Contadini dell'Agro Romano, 1930) 5. On the life and career of Alessandro Marcucci, see Giovanna Alatri, "Il caso di Alessandro Marcucci, artista-pedagogo e coscienza critica del gruppo," *Il modernismo a Roma, 1900-1915: Soprintendenza alla Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea*, ed. Archivi delle Arti Applicate Italiane del XX Secolo (Rome: Palombi, 2007): 27-31; G. Alatri, *Una vita per educare, tra arte e società: Alessandro Marcucci (1876-1968)* (Milan: UNICOPLI, 2006); and also G. Alatri, "Alessandro Marcucci e i valori educativi e sociali della scuola nella campagna romana," *I problemi della pedagogia* 1-2 (1993): 31-62.

⁹² Marcucci, *Il programma didattico* 10-11.

writing intrinsically instruct pupils order.⁹³ From the outset, the tasks involve familiarizing the audience with the regular signs or shapes that make up letters. Comprising each alphabetical character, circles, squares, triangles, and rectangles, as per Marcucci, entice a child to develop his or her “senso geometrico delle cose, il quale conduce ad abitudini di ordine.”⁹⁴ Learning to observe and trace such principal patterns, the child orients his or her view and coordinates the movement of his or her hand according to the conscripts of the written text.⁹⁵ Deeming this stage of language acquisition “preparatory,” Marcucci notes: “Il PERIODO PREPARATORIO, fin dal suo inizio con i suoi esercizi di disegno, ha dato all’occhio e alla mano del bambino alcune capacità: quella del rispetto del limite nello spazio e quella dell’uso della matita. Trattasi ora di mettere a profitto queste capacità avviandole a tracciare in determinati spazi—le righe del quaderno—determinati segni.”⁹⁶ Within every section of his *Sillabario*, Marcucci hence breaks down each letter according to the “nozione della linea retta e dello spazio chiuso” of which it consists.⁹⁷

⁹³ Marcucci, *Il programma didattico* 26.

⁹⁴ Marcucci, *Il programma didattico* 26.

⁹⁵ The textbook compiler’s notion here of observing and tracing letters as a means of orienting children brings us back to Benjamin’s discussion of colors above. Compare Marcucci, *Il programma didattico* 46 and Benjamin, “A Child’s View of Color” 50-51.

⁹⁶ Marcucci, *Il programma didattico* 50.

⁹⁷ Marcucci’s methods of introducing the alphabet letter by letter purposefully lengthened the process of teaching children how to read. Such a “lente d’ingradimento” indeed accommodated rural students who, Marcucci believed, were much slower learners than their urban colleagues. Convinced by the idea that “[l’ apprendimento] di cose nuove, mediante la lettura, richiede un processo mentale troppo difficile per il contadinello, che possiede poche cognizioni e pochi vocaboli,” Marcucci himself did not expect students to finish the *Sillabario* within the first grade. He envisioned that they would continue learning the alphabet into the second year of their studies. See Marcucci, *Il programma didattico* 15, 28, and 56. Issuing Gaiba’s primer in 1941, Bottai later would replace Marcucci’s method of teaching the alphabet in favor of the former’s “Presentazione simultanea di tutte le lettere.” On Gaiba’s pedagogy, see her volume *Come insegno a leggere e scrivere con l’alfabetiere illustrato* (Rome: Lamagna, 1940). On Bottai’s official mandate of Gaiba’s method, cfr. Italy, Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale, *Circolare ministeriale 30 dicembre 1940 – XIX, n. 2 231*.

While his readers consistently focus on the geometrical figures encompassing letters, Marcucci suggests that more be done “to accustom” (“assuefare”) their gaze to the regularities of the alphabet.⁹⁸ In order that letters materialize in mind, he associates each with appropriate pictograms. These consist of familiar objects “dell’uso comune ben cognitivi agli alunni” and “di significato accessibile.”⁹⁹ He then repeats these images in chunks of words and sentences that students memorize. This method of reading, according to Marcucci, would allow one to recognize the letter in the object and the object in the letter. As the images contain “oggetti tipici” to the “vita del contadino,” Marcucci restricts his rural lexicon to a list of terms that will serve his audience in their careers as “futuri agricoltori” and “contadinelli.”¹⁰⁰

Building a Rural Lexicon: Terms of “Know-how” and “Respect” in Marcucci’s Sillabario

Such methods of reading appear in the opening pages of Marcucci’s *Sillabario*.¹⁰¹ The very first letter Marcucci teaches, the vowel “o,” takes the shape of a circle.¹⁰² As the reader’s

⁹⁸ Marcucci, *Il programma didattico* 47.

⁹⁹ Marcucci, *Il programma didattico* 13, 57.

¹⁰⁰ Marcucci, *Il programma didattico* 14, 28, and 97. These quotidian “oggetti tipici,” as I see it, are symptomatic of what Barthes considers one’s “anthropological knowledge.” On Barthes’ notion of “anthropological knowledge,” cfr. above pp. 14-15.

¹⁰¹ Marcucci’s *Sillabario* was disseminated in rural schools between 1930 and 1933. Between 1937 and 1939, it was formally replaced by Maria Zanetti’s *Il libro per la prima classe*, followed by Gaiba’s in 1941. Within 1934 and 1936, rural schools utilized urban editions of the Education Ministry’s state-issued primers. On the distribution of these textbooks, see Bacigalupi 196-197; “Libri di Stato anno scolastico 1936-37,” *Giornale della Libreria* 26 Dec 1936: 221; and also Italy, Ministero per l’Educazione Nazionale, *Decreto Interministeriale 14 agosto 1940-XVIII, n. 28684. Norme per la vendita dei testi unici di Stato per le Scuole elementari per l’anno scolastico 1940-41, Il libro per la scuola nel ventennio fascista: la normativa sui libri di testo dalla Riforma Gentile alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale (1923-1945)*, ed. Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani (Macerata: Alfabetica, 2009) 221.

¹⁰² In his *Il programma didattico*, Marcucci insists that teachers begin with the letter “o” as its shape resembles “la più organica che si possa tracciare, e ad essa si riferisce il bambino quasi

gaze grows “accustomed to” the letter, he or she learns to associate the vowel with an actual image.¹⁰³ Here, Marcucci likens the roundness of the vowel “o” with that of an egg (“uova”), surrounded by little chicks (see fig. 3.1).¹⁰⁴ Similarly, on the next page, the textbook author associates the letter “o” with another round object, a wheel (“ruota”) (see fig. 3.2).¹⁰⁵ While the former pictogram refers to raising poultry, the latter perhaps suggests the transportation of farming materials. Already within the first few pages of his text, Marcucci hence provides examples of agricultural activities and products that would contribute to an autarchic economy.

Following the initial presentation of the letter “o” and the “typical” rural objects with which it associates, Marcucci provides the following vocabulary: “reo, oro, ora, ero, ira, ara, raro, rio, rea, arare, aria, orario, ieri, eroe, aero.”¹⁰⁶ Appearing disparate from one another, not all the listed terms seem to refer to agricultural life. “Ira,” for instance, denotes anger, and hence does not particularly correspond with the images previously introduced. Nonetheless, terms such as “oro” suggests money, while “rio,” first person conjugation of the verb “riavere,” implies lending or trade.¹⁰⁷ Both latter terms imply a notion of agricultural commerce and, thereby, perhaps reinforce Marcucci’s previous ideas of building an autarchic economy through raising

istintivamente, rapportandola ad oggetti a lui cogniti e cari: il cerchio, la ruota, la palla, l’arancia, il moneta, il sole, ecc.” Once the child masters the circle, he or she may then focus on letters that are “lineare verticale.” See Marcucci, *Il programma didattico* 47.

¹⁰³ Marcucci, *Sillabario* 6-11, and also *Il programma didattico* 47.

¹⁰⁴ Marcucci, *Sillabario* 6-7. Marcucci’s friend and brother-in-law, Duilio Cambellotti, provides the illustrations to the *Sillabario*. Native to Rome, Cambellotti often depicted the *contadino* of the Agro Pontino. On Cambellotti’s life and career, refer to G. Alatri, “Duilio Cambellotti: un contributo artistico al processo educativo,” *I problemi della pedagogia* 4-5 (1991): 353-392.

¹⁰⁵ Marcucci, *Sillabario* 8-9.

¹⁰⁶ Marcucci, *Sillabario* 9.

¹⁰⁷ The *Dizionario Garzanti Linguistica* defines *riavere*, as “riacquistare, recuperare, avere indietro, in restituzione,” and “avere di nuovo.” See “Riavere,” *Dizionario Garzanti Linguistica*, De Agostini Scuola, 2016, 3 May 2016 <<http://www.garzantilinguistica.it/en/search/?q=riavere>>.

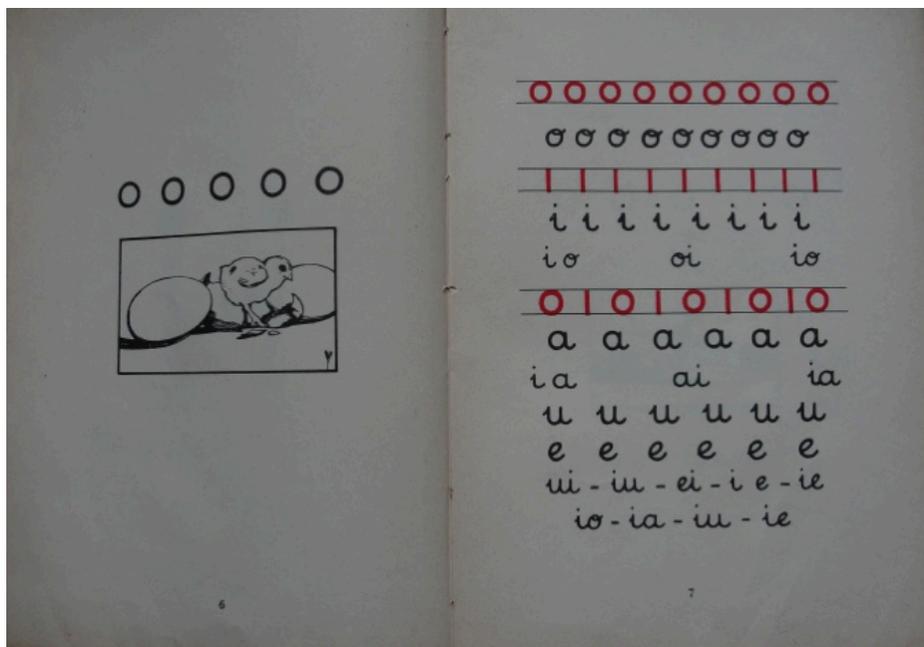


Fig. 3.1. Duilio Cambellotti. 1933. “Le uova e il pulcino.” Black and white illustration of a chick standing before three eggs. Marcucci, *Sillabario* 6. Note the repetition of the letter “o” in red and black script on the following page.

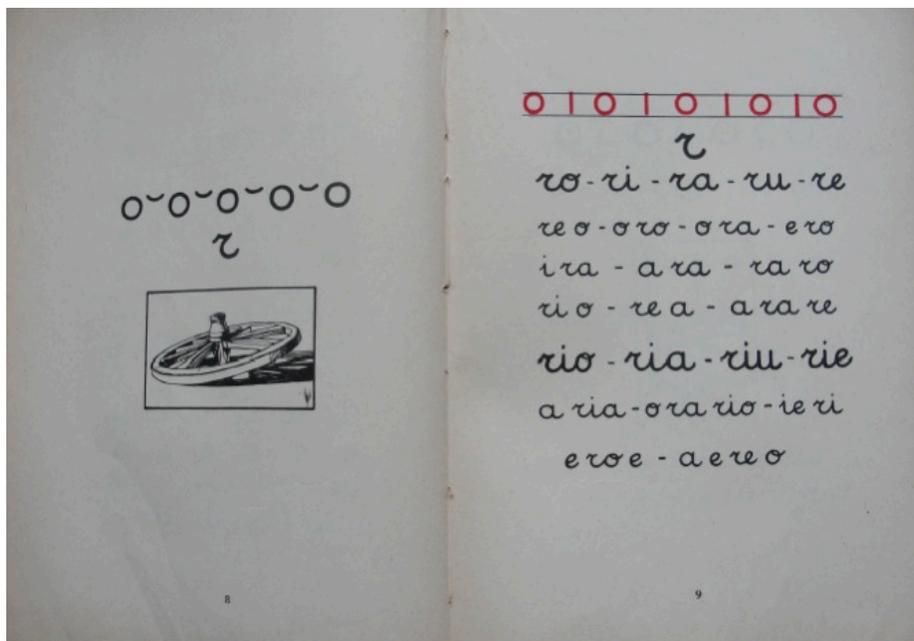


Fig. 3.2. Duilio Cambellotti. 1933. “La ruota.” Black and white illustration of a wheel. Marcucci *Sillabario* 8. Note the list of terms “reo, oro, ora, ero, ira, ara, raro, rio, rea, arare” as well as “aria, orario, ieri, ereo, aereo” on the following page.

poultry and transporting farming materials and foodstuffs. Indeed despite the variety of terms, agriculture here remains the center of focus.

The illustration of the wheel on the previous page steers and anchors one's attention and interpretation specifically upon the words "ara" and "arare."¹⁰⁸ The "ruota" indicates the component that allows an "aratro" to be mobile. "Ara" and "arare," to follow, repeat the illustration in the form of a verb. Reading these latter two terms with Duilio Cambellotti's drawing in mind, a child might imagine the "aratro" or plough in use. The forms, which the verbs take, may also suggest a grammatical relationship between the student and the action of plowing. Taking the third person present indicative form, on the one hand, "ara" may imply the phrase, "He or she plows." This sentence would transmit a fact or a general observation of a farmer performing a certain skill. Taking the form of a second person singular imperative, it may likewise impart the statement, "You, plow!" In this latter case, the verb acquires hegemonic characteristics as it addresses the reader and orders him or her to conduct an agricultural task. How one reads this term nonetheless is open to interpretation, as Marcucci does not contextualize it in a complete sentence. The compiler is thus obliged to use other examples of repetition in order to shape his readers into rural workers.

While the illustration of the wheel might suggest the "know-how" that the child-reader ought to acquire and practice, other round objects listed among Marcucci's vocabulary convey the work ethic necessary for fulfilling such a job. Notions of time put forward by the noun, "ora," for example evoke ideas of punctuality. "[Ieri]" ("yesterday") and "ero" ("I was") orient the child in time. "[Orario]" or the idea of keeping a timetable, moreover, advocates organization and work-time efficiency. Marcucci elaborates on these concepts of time further. By the sixty-

¹⁰⁸ Marcucci contended that the concept, *arare*, was a familiar one to rural students. See his *Il programma didattico* 57.

ninth page of his textbook, time advances forth as the subject of the first group of phrases, which the student learns. Among such sentences as “Mamma m’ha fatto un abito nuovo,” “la sorellina s’è fatta male al dito,” and “è un bell’anello d’oro con un rubino,” we find: “l’anno è passato – l’inverno è finito – l’albero non ha più i rami nudi - sei venuta un’ora più tardi – l’umidità rovina i mobili e i muri – l’operaio si alza di buon mattino per lavorare.” Such phrases temporally orient the child. At the edition of each new phrase, ideas of time complement those that came before. While “l’anno è passato,” communicates past time, “l’inverno è finito” indicates the end of one season—winter—and the beginning of a new one—spring. “L’albero non ha più rami” complements the sentence before by providing an image of a vernal landscape, in which trees regain their leaves. “[L’umidità] rovina i mobili e i muri” suggests the season’s warm and muggy weather and marks the moment in which farmers reassume their work. Progressing forth, sentences such as “sei venuta un ora più tardi” and “l’operaio si alza di buon mattino per lavorare” advise ideas of punctuality and, therefore, rules of expected behavior. The former reports the delay with which one has failed to arrive by a certain anticipated time. It suggests a lack of promptness or immediacy in the agent. The latter phrase, on the other hand, contrasts the former by emphasizing the *operaio*’s eagerness to go to work “al buon mattino.” He stands out as a disciplined man devoted to his career. Nonetheless reading about such model workers is not enough for Marcucci.

Practicing Vocabulary, Interpellating Readers: Kinesthetic Language in Marcucci’s Sillabario

In line with Padellaro’s treatise linking reading with a kind of “method acting,” Marcucci employs kinesthetic language to reemphasize ideas of time and punctuality in proceeding

pages.¹⁰⁹ Utilizing ideograms once more toward the end of his primer, he provides the illustration of a clock (see fig. 3.3). Eliciting the word “orologio,” he asks readers to practice anew the letter “o.” When articulating the pictogram into words, the shape of one’s lips corresponds with not only the geometrical form of the vowel pronounced, but also the outline of the object referred. Marcucci’s use of kinetic imagery prompts students to perform and associate themselves corporeally to the features of the letter, words, and objects being learned. One’s own body thus develops into a mnemonic device and grants one the ability to envision and memorize such abstract notions of time and punctuality. Doing so, it would in effect serve to discipline the child into fulfilling his or her tasks according to the regime’s expectations and thereby form him or her into an expedient Fascist. This reading of the letter “o” appears not the only example of Marcucci’s use of kinesthetic reading exercises.

Introducing the letter “d,” Marcucci once more utilizes visual, kinetic, and aural imagery. Here he breaks down the consonant into two geometric shapes—a vertical line and a circle. Combining to form the letter, the two resemble the pointing finger (“dito”) illustrated in figure 3.4.¹¹⁰ As a sign, the hand gesture denotes two connotative meanings: finger pointing individuates one object from another. At the same time, the gesture signifies the act of casting blame. The symptomatic meaning drawn from the illustration in turn elucidates the list of vocabulary on the facing page. This list of terms includes: “assiduo – fedele – duomo – ruvido – foderà – biada – obbedire – debole – dolore – difesa – denaro – umido – sudore – diminuire –

¹⁰⁹ On the notion of “method acting” in relation to Padellaro’s ideas on repetition and “memoria affettiva,” see above pp. 29-30, n. 68.

¹¹⁰ Shapes of such other consonants as “v” and “z” correspond respectively to that of the illustrated objects *vaso* (“vase”) and *zappa* (“hoe”). A common object, *vaso* has no particular figurative meaning and does not recur in the scholastic primer. In its reference to agriculture, however, *zappa* reappears as an infinitive and as a conjugated verb in the phrase, “Non zappa bene.” For Marcucci’s introduction to consonants “v” and “z,” see *Sillabario* 28, 49, 58, 61-62.

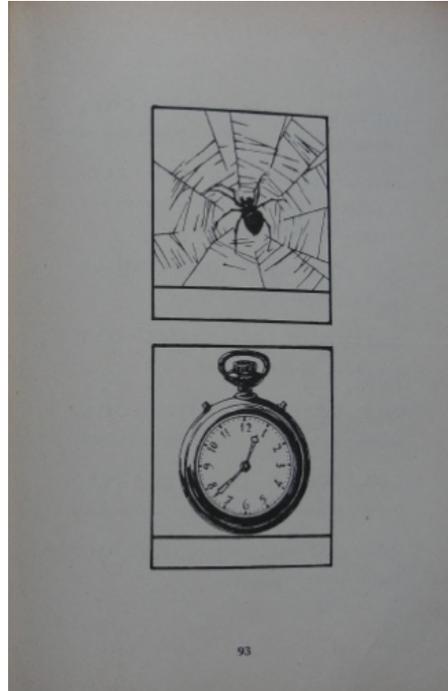


Fig. 3.3. Duilio Cambellotti. 1933. “Ragno e orologio.” Black and white illustrations of a spider spinning its web and a clock below. The clock here is an example of a round object whose shape corresponds with that of the letter “o.” Marcucci, *Sillabario* 93.

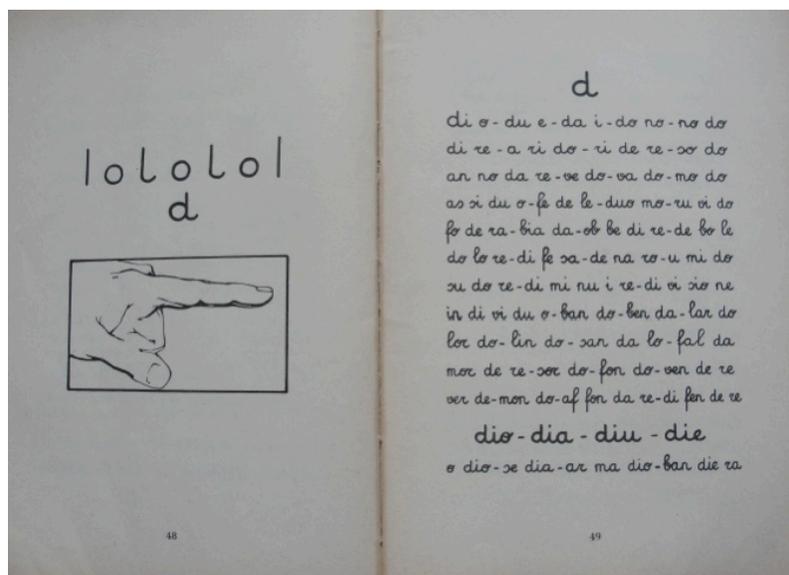


Fig. 3.4. Duilio Cambellotti. 1933. “Il dito.” Black and white drawing of a hand. Marcucci, *Sillabario* 48. Parts of the hand here resemble the geometric figures—circle and straight line—that constitute the alphabetical character, “d.” The straight pointed finger refers to its vertical line, while the clutched fist alludes to its roundness. Note the corresponding terms accompanying the illustration on the following page.

divisione – individuo – bando – benda – lardo – lordo – lindo – sandalo – falda – mordere – sordo – fondo – vendere – verde – mondo – affondare – difendere.”¹¹¹ Positive qualities, “assiduo” (“diligent”), “fedele” (“faithful”), obbedire (“obey”)], juxtapose with the negative “diminuire,” “divisione,” “individuo,” and “bando.”¹¹² Together these terms make reference to ideas of collectivity, which regime propaganda has *pointed to* and advocated.¹¹³ Mussolini often labeled and cast blame on presumably selfish individuals, who refused to embrace and comply with the regime’s projects.¹¹⁴ This group of presumed dissidents threatened Italy’s unity with discordance and “divisione.” “Benda” (“band” or “bandage”), by contrast, implies solidarity. It stands in opposition to the perhaps selfish “individuo,” whom the regime seeks to “ban” (“bando”) from the country.

Appearing alongside Cambellotti’s illustration, Marcucci’s lexicon exhibits a musical quality. Repeating the sound of the letter “d,” the terms display cacophonous alliteration. Pronouncing the dental consonant, the reader enunciates each word consistently with clenched teeth. Consequently, he or she appears tense and manifests the ideas of struggle and hostility revealed by the vocabulary. Complimenting Marcucci’s technique of alliteration, “sudore,” “debole,” and “dolore,” display the effects of a “lavoro pesante” or a “grande fatica.”¹¹⁵ Terms

¹¹¹ Marcucci, *Sillabario* 49.

¹¹² Among these terms, *obbedire* and *difendere* reappear several times throughout Marcucci’s text. See *Sillabario* 57, 119, 120, and 123.

¹¹³ In addition to referring to a member of a “disbanded” group or army, *sbandato* signifies one, “chi ha perso i contatti col proprio gruppo sociale o è confuso, disorientato moralmente, ideologicamente; anche, che, chi è un po’ squilibrato o conduce una vita disordinata, irregolare.” It thus suggests a morally compromised person. Refer to “Sbandato,” *Dizionario Garzanti Linguistica*, De Agostini Scuola, 2016, 16 May 2016
<http://www.garzantilinguistica.it/en/search/?q=sbandato>.

¹¹⁴ See Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 22, 239-241 and also *Opera omnia*, vol. 26, 401-402.

¹¹⁵ The *Dizionario Garzanti Linguistica* defines *sudore* as both perspiration and strife. See “Sudore,” *Dizionario Garzanti Linguistica*, De Agostini Scuola, 2016, 3 May 2016
<http://www.garzantilinguistica.it/en/search/?q=sud%C3%B3re>.

such as “biada” (“feed given to stable or farm animals”), “verde” (“green”), “vendere” (“to sell”), “denaro” (“money”) qualify “sudore” as they refer to the upkeep of livestock as well as the production and sale of agricultural foodstuffs.¹¹⁶ Placed next to the noun “difesa,” “sudore” makes reference to the agricultural “battaglia” that would “defend” Italy from its presumed selfish adversaries. Highlighted in red, such preceding phrases as “Il popolo d’Italia è forte e laborioso” reemphasize ideas of a united, strong, and hardworking Italy (see fig. 3.5).¹¹⁷ Marcucci’s use of cacophonous alliteration hence once more provides the technique by which students might associate themselves corporeally with, internalize, and practice the Fascist values conveyed in their textbooks. His lexicon, moreover, provides readers with a reason why agriculture is an important vocation for the Fascist regime. The products, which farmers produce, not only regulate the economy but also establish group solidarity among Italians. Here again, Marcucci echoes the ideas of an “educazione guerriera.”

Ready to Advance, Ready to Defend: Recapitulating Key Terms for the Battaglie della Vita

By the end of his *Sillabario*, Marcucci recapitulates key vocabulary in sentences that express nationalist ideas of hard work. Using dashes to separate words or sentences from one another, he implements the phrases into memorable chunks. As the dashes serve as caesuras, Marcucci administers the exercise at a steady pace. Allowing one to pause and reflect on the reading, he seeks to ensure that the values have registered in mind. Choosing to employ the more legible print typescript rather than the usual cursive print of the *Sillabario*, Marcucci lists:

¹¹⁶ As Marcucci highlights in his *Il programma didattico*, he seeks to train readers for a “vita [...] del lavoro e della produzione.” See p. 32.

¹¹⁷ Marcucci, *Sillabario* 86.

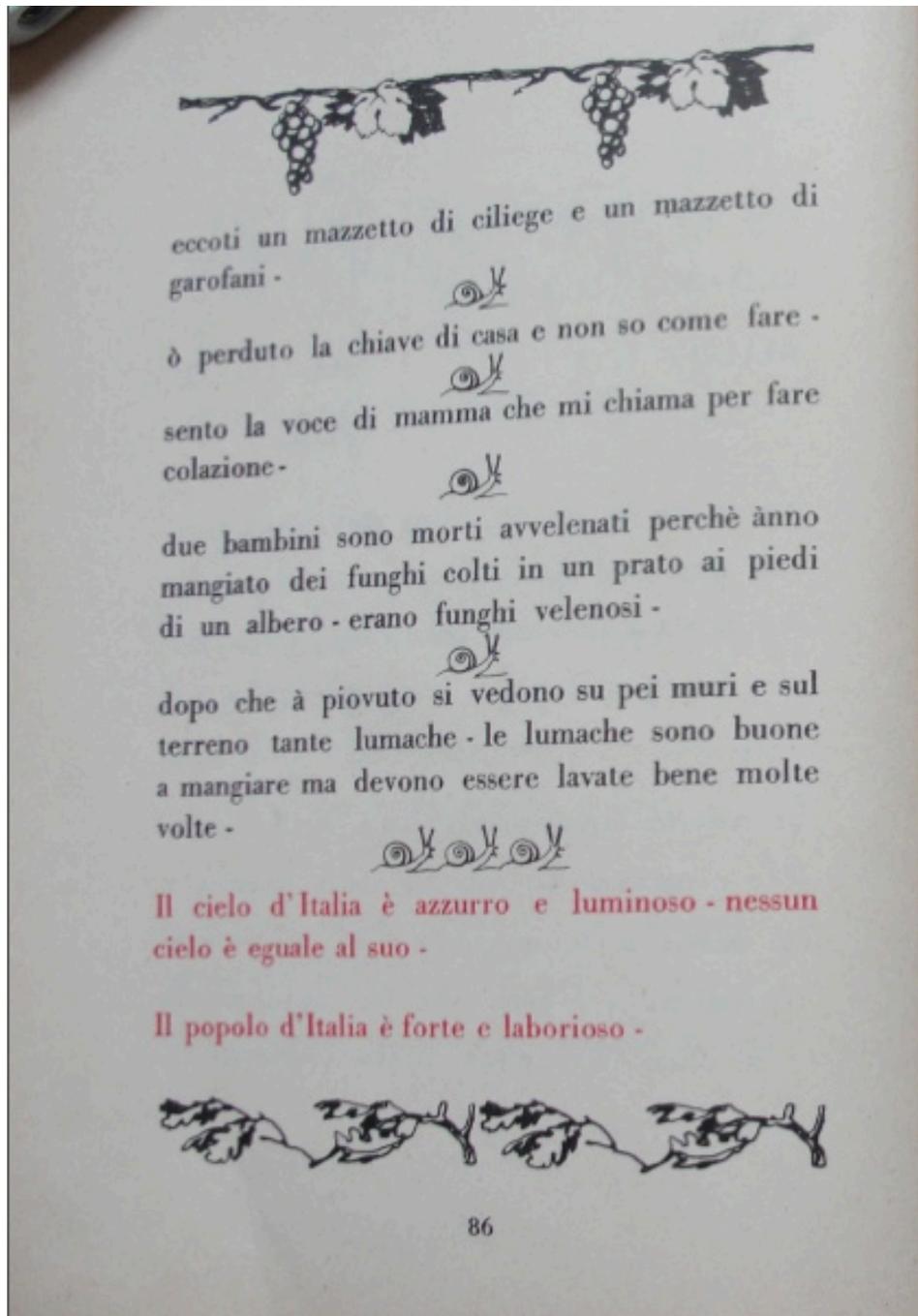


Fig. 3.5. Highlighted in red, such a phrase as “Il popolo d’Italia è forte e laborioso,” catches the reader’s eye as it stands out from the black and white text. It reminds students of the sense of discipline and struggle conveyed in the vocabulary listed under the consonant “d.” Marcucci, *Sillabario* 86.

Il contadino – il pastore – il pescatore ci procurano col lavoro il cibo e le vesti – il minatore lavora sotto terra per cavare i materiali che servono alla nostra vita – il muratore – il fabbro – il falegname ci fabbricano le case – tanti altri operai lavorano nelle officine – nelle botteghe – guidano veicoli che trasportano i prodotti del lavoro – accanto a questi operai tanti e tanti altri – ingegneri – medici – maestri – artisti – sacerdoti – studiano e lavorano per bene di tutti – Tutti in Italia lavorano senza odiarsi in pace e in concordia – Prima non era così – ma è venuto un uomo che sente nel cuore tutte le gioie, tutti i dolori degli italiani – che vuole la Patria ricca e sicura in pace – forte e vittoriosa in guerra – BENITO MUSSOLINI

Egli à dato pace all'Italia – à dato lavoro e bene agli Italiani.¹¹⁸

Relisting key terms, Marcucci once more provides the image of a bonded Italy. According to the textbook author, no Italian—children or adults—toils for his or her own individual benefit. Though diverse, the tasks accomplished by the country's citizens, prove useful to the whole community (e.g., “studiano e lavorano per bene di tutti”). Offering a utopian vision through the phrase, “Tutti in Italia lavorano senza odiarsi in pace e in concordia,” he furthermore ascribes values of brotherhood and fraternity.¹¹⁹ Suggesting that Italy's laborers display solidarity in their objective to sustain their fellow citizens, he recalls ideas of “fedele” and “benda” introduced in

¹¹⁸ Marcucci, *Sillabario* 112.

¹¹⁹ As I will discuss in Chapter Four, such notions of unity will ironically contrast with the hierarchy established between rural and urban children in fifth-grade textbooks compiled for the *scuole urbani* and trigger a failure in the regime's effort to subject children into Fascists.

his reading exercises on the consonant “d.” Their collective strife and battle in the form of ubiquitous work once more represents the means for establishing economic stability and “peace” (“pace”) across Italy.¹²⁰

Marcucci’s sense of collectivity is reinforced in Cambellotti’s illustration of the *fascio*—the Fascist insignia of unity—below as well as on the adjacent page (see fig. 3.6).¹²¹ The red color of the band or “benda” holding the *fascio* together converges with that highlighting the *Duce*’s name. Cambellotti’s hue stands out from the black and white text, catching the reader’s eye. It links the reading and illustration together. Penned in red typescript, “Benito Mussolini” appears not only the author of the *fascio*, as the caption, “Ecco il nuovo segno che BENITO MUSSOLINI ha dato all’Italia,” suggests.¹²² Rather, he also becomes the source and sign of the presumedly new, peaceful, and prosperous, united Italy, (“Egli à dato pace all’Italia – à dato lavoro e bene agli Italiani”). As Italy’s leader, Mussolini’s presence within the text would hence authorize and call on children to participate as players within the *battaglie della vita*.

Watch Them as They Grow into Farmers: Rural Textbooks across the Second & Fifth-Grade Visions of “Fanciulli Utopisti” in Marcucci’s Il libro per la seconda classe

As the regime required students to internalize their reading material, themes of a utopian working community recur and persist in Marcucci’s subsequent *Libro unico*. Structured as a novella, Marcucci’s *Il libro per la seconda classe, scuole rurali*, employs the same key

¹²⁰ This idea of battle and peace brings us back to Padellaro’s notion of the “fanciulli utopisti” and a child’s instinctive predilection toward revolution. Work here primarily serves as the means by which children may contribute to a revolution, whose aim is to construct a peaceful, ordered, and disciplined Fascist nation. On Padellaro’s “fanciulli utopisti,” cfr. p. 24-25, n. 56.

¹²¹ Marcucci, *Sillabario* 112-113.

¹²² Marcucci, *Sillabario* 113.



- Il contadino - il pastore - il pescatore ci procurano col loro lavoro il cibo e le vesti -
- il minatore lavora sotto terra per cavare i materiali che servono alla nostra vita -
- il muratore - il fabbro - il falegname ci fabbricano le case -
- tanti altri operai lavorano nelle officine - nelle botteghe - guidano veicoli che trasportano i prodotti del lavoro -
- accanto a questi operai tanti e tanti altri - ingegneri - medici - maestri - artisti - sacerdoti - studiano e lavorano per il bene di tutti - Tutti in Italia lavorano senza odiarsi in pace e in concordia -
Prima non era così - ma è venuto un uomo che sente nel cuore tutte le gioie, tutti i dolori degli Italiani - che vuole la Patria ricca e sicura in pace - forte e vittoriosa in guerra -

BENITO MUSSOLINI

Egli à dato pace all'Italia - à dato lavoro e bene agl'Italiani -



112

IL FASCIO.



Ecco il nuovo segno che
BENITO MUSSOLINI
ha dato all'Italia.

113

Fig. 3.6. Duilio Cambellotti. 1933. "Il fascio." Color illustration. Marcucci, *Sillabario* 112-113. Note the use of the color red in the full-page illustration facing the text. The hue distinguishes the *fascio* and highlights Mussolini's name. A smaller, black and white image of the *fascio* appears as well at the bottom of page 112. Both Mussolini's name and the illustrations symbolize and reinforce the utopian ideas of collectivity offered by Marcucci's reading exercise.

vocabulary from his *sillabario* into his narrative. As the pedagogue himself insists, the repetition of such a body of terms ought to be “conosciuto da ogni italiano; abbia perciò fine educativo e patriottico; e contenuto morale, geografico e storico.”¹²³ For Marcucci, this lexicon continues to instruct the skills and the sense of efficiency, economy, and proper time management needed to become an *agricoltore*. The narrative recounts the tale of a young boy named Marco and his best friend, Stefano, who notably, like their readers, attend the second grade. Marco’s father, Giacomo, is a farmer and builder by trade. He is hired by Stefano’s dad, *l’ingegnere* Mario, to help build the town bridge that will facilitate transportation between their unnamed village and the city nearby. As passive bystanders, Marco and Stefano pass a great deal of time observing their fathers and visually consuming the sights and sounds of the constant labor surrounding them. Discussions on tilling soil and preparing the foundations for roadways and architectural structures fascinate the protagonist and his friend. The narrative habitually describes and highlights their gaze as they look upon with wonder at the farming and construction work. Doing so, it reveals the characters’ desires to participate as laborers and thus teaches the ideals of an “educazione guerriera.”

Serving as an envoy, Marco represents the reader, who through the protagonist’s eyes attends the discussion at hand and learns how to face the “battaglie della vita.” Listening to Giacomo’s conversation with the *ingegnere* on the occasion of the “Festa del Lavoro,” he relays information about the tasks set out by their community. The following dialogue ensues between Giacomo and Mario:

¹²³ Marcucci, *Il programma didattico* 62. Similar to their distribution of the author’s primer, the Ministry of Education allocated *Il libro per la seconda classe, scuole rurali* between 1930 and 1933. Cambellotti provides the illustrations for this volume as well. For publication dates on Marcucci’s second grade *Libro unico*, refer to Bacigalupi 196-197.

L'avvenire d'Italia [...] dell'Italia di Benito Mussolini, non permette che si perda nè tempo, nè denaro, nè salute! Non le pare, ingegnere?

Hai ragione Giacomo [...] E tempo non se ne perde. Vedi quanti lavori? Solo il Fascismo è stato capace di ordinarli e di farli eseguire [...] Da quanti anni c'era bisogno di sistemare queste terre, di aprire strade, di regolare le acque? Ebbene, come abbiamo vinto in guerra, vinceremo in pace!

Adesso è un piacere lavorare. Ognuno ha il fatto suo. Grazie a Dio sono finiti i scioperi e i tumulti. E ogni paese, anche fra i più lontani, comincia a sentire questa nuova vita di civiltà e di benessere. Si porta l'acqua, si aprono le scuole, si fanno strade. Vedi, fra poco, con mezz'ora andremo in città. Pensate quale vantaggio ne avranno i nostri prodotti, che, caricati alla stazione, arriveranno dovunque. [...]

Il 21 aprile è vicino, se Dio vuole, e quella sarà veramente la festa del lavoro. [...] Ma del lavoro serio, ordinato; del lavoro come l'intende, come vuole il Fascismo [...] E poi, i lavori non si arresteranno qui. Ci sono tanti progetti in giro!¹²⁴

Imperative phrases, “Vedi quanti lavori?” and “Vedi, fra poco, con mezz'ora andremo in città,” order the protagonist and, thereby readers, to observe and acknowledge the conveniences, which neighborhood projects have produced. Positive attributes in such lines as “Adesso è un piacere lavorare” and “Grazie a Dio” illustrate work as a godsend and pleasurable experience. No one in

¹²⁴ Marcucci, *Il libro per la seconda classe* 43-44.

Italy encounters a miserable or idle life in light of the new regime, and every commune collectively benefits from each individual's toil and expertise. Utilizing generic pronouns and adjectives, the phrases, "Ognuno ha il fatto suo" and "E ogni paese, anche fra i più lontani, comincia a sentire questa nuova vita di civiltà e di benessere" echo the ideas of collectivity prescribed in Marcucci's *Sillabario*. They urge the extent to which one's individual achievements are no pettier than another's and contribute equally to Italy's welfare. While polysyndetons in the sentence, "di sistemare queste terre, di aprire strade, di regolare le acque," and "Si porta l'acqua, si aprono le scuole, si fanno strade," elaborate results, the reproduction of "lavoro" or "lavorare" six times in the dialogue emphasizes the process by which such progress transpired. Finally, Mario's use of "vincere" ("to conquer") in the *passato prossimo* (e.g., "abbiamo vinto") and *futuro* (e.g., "vinceremo") describes the successes achieved not only in war ("in guerra"), but also in peace ("in pace"). As "pace" refers to Italy's state of order, the soldier's work parallels the citizen's and elides the worker. Raising the stakes by way of his language, the *ingegnere* interprets domestic labor as a metaphoric battle crucial for constructing an economically productive Fascist nation free from civil discord.

The juxtaposition between the soldier and laborer materializes within not only Marcucci's narrative but also Cambellotti's accompanying illustrations. Located next to the dialogue is an image of a farmer marching forth with a shovel in hand and a bag slung over his shoulder (see fig. 3.7).¹²⁵ The illustration particularly corresponds with another previous one situated about twenty pages earlier in the chapter "Il babbo soldato" (see fig. 3.8).¹²⁶ Moving in the same direction as the *contadino* illustrated in figure 3.7, another soldier marches forth with a

¹²⁵ Marcucci, *Il libro per la seconda classe* 44.

¹²⁶ Marcucci, *Il libro per la seconda classe* 20.

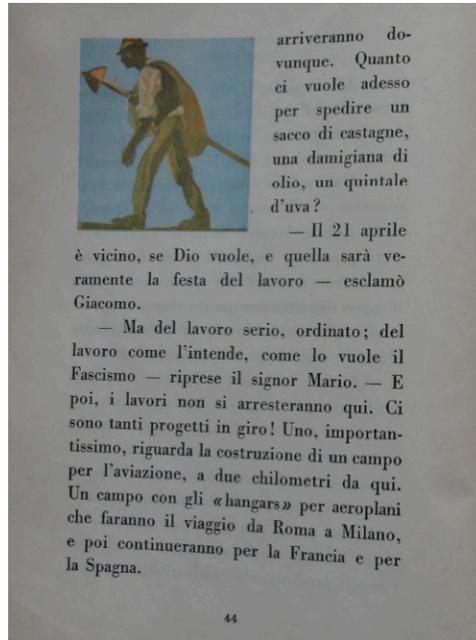


Fig. 3.7. Duilio Cambellotti. 1933. “Il contadino.” Color illustration of a farmer going off to work. Marcucci, *Il libro per la seconda classe* 44. His facial features here appear indistinguishable.

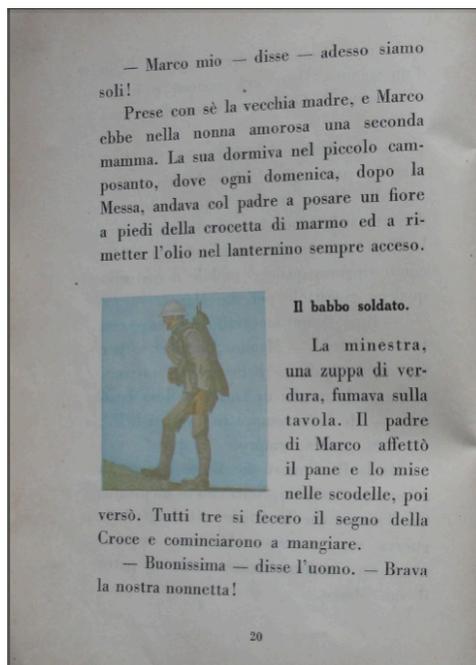


Fig. 3.8. Duilio Cambellotti. 1933. “Il babbo soldato.” Color illustration of a soldier marching in war. Marcucci, *Il libro per la seconda classe* 20. Compare the figure of the “babbo soldato” here to the “contadino” in figure 3.7. Note the same posture and forward movement. Both carry shovels in their hand. Their faces appear indistinguishable from one another and thus seem to be the same person.

bag and shovel in hand.¹²⁷ As the physical features of the men in the two pictures are not distinct, they emerge one and the same. Slouched forth, the farmer resembles the soldier; and his tools compare with the soldier's weapons. To apply Barthes' term, Mario's phrase, "Ebbene, come abbiamo vinto in guerra, vinceremo in pace," hence relays and establishes a parallel relationship between Cambellotti's two illustrated men. Reinforcing the idea of the "battaglie della vita," the text further likens farmers to soldiers. Through his everyday work, the *contadino* appears to defend Italy's infrastructure at the national level and hence gains an importance, which readers might not have realized before.

Romantic Battlefields of Crop: Marcucci's Farmers as Soldati-contadini

Harvesting their crop with strife, such *contadini* conduct themselves with the same "rules of respect" as soldiers. As Marco observes the local *contadini*, the narrator describes the local landscape and notes:

I contadini lavoravano contenti e pieni di speranza a pulire il grano che, con le sue pianticelle a ciuffetti, s'allineava nei larghi appezzamenti giù nelle valli e sulle colline.

¹²⁷ On the next page, Cambellotti reemphasizes these two illustrations with another depicting a group of World War I soldiers marching forth with shovels slung over their shoulders and guns in their hands. As in the previous two, Cambellotti does not differentiate one soldier from the next with a distinct countenance. They hence compare with the *contadino* and *babbo soldato*. See Marcucci, *Il libro per la seconda classe* 22.

Quante maggese s'era fatta! E la semina era finita a tempo. S'erano scelti con cura i grani da seme, e s'erano bene erpicati i terreni. Il signor Mario aveva tanto insistito perché si seminasse molto e bene.

In alcuni poderi i contadini, coi bovi e con l'aratro, rompevano i prati da due anni per seminarvi il granturco, e la terra rotta e rinvoltata appariva dove d'un bel bruno cupo, dove rossiccia, dove giallastra, secondo la qualità del terreno. Da quasi due settimane si sentivano, dall'alba al tramonto, i colpi secchi del pennato sugli alberi per potarli; e la sera s'incontravano per la salita del paese asinelli e muli e contadine coi fasci di legna sul dorso o sulla testa. Ogni famiglia cercava di aumentare le provviste per il fuoco, sapendo che il vero freddo sarebbe venuto; marzo poteva serbare qualche brutta sorpresa! I ragazzi del paese se le godevano quelle belle giornate.¹²⁸

The farmers, which Marco tirelessly observes, engage in a demanding activity. With no mention of threshing machinery to “clean” (“pulire”) or separate the wheat from the chaff, one might wonder whether they carry out the work by hand. Lines such as “coi bovi e con l'aratro, rompevano,” “i colpi secchi del pennato sugli alberi per potarli,” and “coi fasci di legna sul dorso o sulla testa,” on the one hand, employ adverbial phrases that suggest the length of time and effort the “contadini” have invested. Working “con cura” (“with care”), “molto e bene” (“a great deal and well”), the farmers have toiled with diligence. Yet, they still managed to work efficiently enough to finish “a tempo” (“on time”). Plowing and sowing wheat by breaking

¹²⁸ Marcucci, *Il libro per la seconda classe* 81-83.

(“rompevano”) and turning (“rivoltata”) the soil manually with an ox and plow for two years (“di due anni”) in addition to working night and day for two weeks (“dall’alba al tramonto,” “da due settimane”) without any presumed breaks imply the amount of time and work they invested. Key terms—“aratro” and “fasci”—resonate the themes within Marcucci’s *Sillabario*: they convene on not only the agricultural work being carried out, but also the sense of community and shared responsibility felt among the laborers. As the narrative claims, “Ogni famiglia cercava di aumentare le provviste per il fuoco.” Each family committed themselves to the same exploit for the same reasons. Despite such taxing work, the narrative romanticizes and esteems their particular “battaglia” as pleasurable and effortless.¹²⁹

The description of the landscape, on the other hand, emerges as bucolic and idealizes the country life of the *contadini*. Doing so, it entices readers to form their own desires for such rural work. Working contentedly and filled with hope (“lavoravano contenti e pieni di speranza”), the farmers show no signs of tiredness. Characterized by the diminutive suffixes, “-elle” and “etti,” the line, “pianticelle a ciuffetti,” ascribes qualities of affection to the wheat that they gather and clean. Euphonic alliteration and repetition of the liquid consonant “l” (e.g., “s’allineava,” “sulle valli e sulle colline”) engender a pleasant tone to the description of the wheat fields. Displaying hues—“bruno,” “rossiccia,” “giallastra”—that characterize a person’s hair color or complexion, the wheat fields attain anthropomorphic traits. Finally the allusion to wheat in the form of nouns

¹²⁹ According to Giovanna Alatri, Marcucci and Cambellotti both idolized Italy’s rural population and believed that its student body ought to embrace and appreciate the country’s *paese* and lifestyle. She notes: “Marcucci chiamò Duilio Cambellotti; entrambi amanti e profondi conoscitori della Campagna romana, sensibili non solo alla bellezza della natura ma anche ai bisogni e ai diritti dei miseri “guitti” che l’abitavano, erano convinti, come Giovanni Cena, che la scuola fosse lo strumento necessario per aiutarli a ritrovare la coscienza di sé.” See Alatri, “Il caso di Alessandro Marcucci” 28.

(“grano,” “seme,” and “semina”) and verbs (“seminasse,” “seminarvi”) stresses the product, which brings the workers content and joy.

Marcucci insists that readers hold onto this particular vision as it corresponds with Cambellotti’s illustration of golden wheat fields (see fig. 3.9). Offering a colorful sketch of a farmed landscape, Cambellotti depicts no laborer, animals, or machinery. Rather, he portrays the results of a completed task: an evenly shaped and beautifully cultivated pasture that will provide Italians with food. Giving no insight into Marcucci’s account of farmers at work, the image instead makes reference to the characters’ object of allure and joy. It thereby insists on the idea that agriculture yields the crop that will bring about economic peace, stability, and order. Marco’s visual perspective of a rustic agricultural scene becomes the reader’s and serves to entice desire for Italy’s countryside and farming work.

Farmlands and Construction Sites: Comparing Scenes of Strife in Marcucci’s Libro unico

To insist that readers recognize the value of farming work, Marcucci’s description of planting and harvesting wheat significantly becomes a sign that contrasts with the ventures of “lavoratori” in the “cantiere.” While the main character gazes with interest, he deems the “cantiere” less pleasant than the agricultural scene above. The narrator notes:

Poco prima d’arrivare al cantiere, la strada era ingombra di carri carichi di pietre, di mattoni, di legnami, di ferramenta; al di là dallo staccato, che chiudeva il cantiere, era un movimento continuo di centinaia di persone che lavoravano a squadre, a gruppi, in mezzo a mille rumori.



Fig. 3.9. Duilio Cambellotti. 1933. "Il campo." Color illustration of a farmed landscape. Marcucci, *Il libro per la seconda classe* 83. Note the lack of farmers, animals, or tools. The reader's focus lies on the cultivated land, which symbolizes the satisfaction and happiness experienced by Marcucci's characters.

V'erano scalpellini a picchiare con martelli tozzi e pesanti su grandi massi di pietra, manovali che spingevano carrioli traboccanti di calce liquida e bianca come latte, tolta da una larga buca; altri in fila tiravano una grossa fune, dandosi la voce per trascinare un enorme blocco di pietra. Da una parte i fabbri scaldavano su fucinette portatili lunghe aste di ferro, e, quando sui carboni ardenti erano divenute rosse, le piegavano come fossero fucelli. Più lontano, sopra alte impalcature, carpentieri e muratori costruivano castelli con lunghe travi, e inalzavano muri.

I ragazzi guardavano con meraviglia. Non sapevano dove mettere i piedi su quel terreno ingombro di cataste di legnami, di mattoni, di pietre, di travi di ferro, di binari, di carri. Tutto li interessava, e si stupivano che in quel disordine ognuno potesse badare al proprio lavoro.¹³⁰

Unlike the simpler rendition of the wheat fields, the narrative's portrayal of the "cantiere" appears rather chaotic and serves to disincentivize readers from finding such manual labor attractive. Whereas the previous exhibits short, succinct lines, the entire passage here spans across five long sentences. The first three bear a series of enjambments, characterized by relative clauses and prepositional phrases that begin with "di." Linguistically manifesting the chaos of the scene, caesuras in the form of commas and semicolons disrupt the flow of reading.

Cacophonous alliteration produced by the repetition of /k/ and /d/ sounds in such phrases as "Poco

¹³⁰ Marcucci, *Il libro per la seconda classe* 95-96.

prima d'arrivare al cantiere, la strada era ingombra di carri carichi di pietre, di mattoni, di legnami, di ferramenta; al di là dallo staccato, che chiudeva il cantiere, era un movimento continuo di centinaia di persone che lavoravano,” moreover, characterize the narrative with discordant aural imagery. The repetition of such consonants mimics the sounds of a drill or hammer at use. Whereas Marcucci’s account of the wheat fields extends across two neatly divided paragraphs that center solely on two tasks—harvesting wheat and pruning trees—the present passage is less organized. Arranged into one long paragraph, the account demands that readers imagine multiple events at the same time. The second sentence, for example, simultaneously provides the image of three men performing different tasks: a stonecutter at work, a “manovale” hauling a large stone as well as a laborer pulling a cable and calling for help. While the observant characters could participate and enter into the realm of the wheat fields, Stefano and Marco cannot penetrate the blockades of “legnami,” “mattoni,” and “pietre.” They are in fact unable to set foot (“Non sapevano dove mettere i piedi”) in the “cantiere.”¹³¹ This distinction, which appears between the *campo* and the *cantiere*, in effect, notably makes the former appear more pleasant and accessible to the main character and perhaps to readers, who at the end of the tale will also be reminded of their duty to pursue farming.

Stefano and Marco admire the life of a manual worker as they watch with great “interest” and fascination. But while Stefano longs to follow in his father’s footsteps, (e.g., “Quanto mi piacerebbe comandare, tanti uomini che lavorano così [...] e fare tante case, strade, ponti grandi come questo”), Marco prefers to stay within his rank and pursue the life of a *contadino*.¹³² Here

¹³¹ Marco and Stefano, for instance, visited and brought Giacomo his lunch, while he tended his wheat fields. Spending the day at the “campo,” the boys “all’Ave Maria tornavano sull’asinello o sul mulo.” See, Marcucci, *Il libro per la seconda classe* 83.

¹³² On Stefano’s dream of becoming an “ingegnere,” see Marcucci, *Il libro per la seconda classe* 100.

the text spares no room in identifying the protagonist's bias toward agriculture and aims at steering his rural readers toward careers in farming. Describing the main character's admiration of Nonno Silvestro, a local *contadino*, the narrator repeats Marco's desire for an agricultural lifestyle. He states: "Marco avrebbe voluto trattenersi, seguirlo; avrebbe voluto lavorare anche lui con quella zappetta. Gli pareva che quel buon vecchio sapesse tutto, fosse abile a tutto, a quell'affabilità, quella pazienza che aveva con loro, che erano ragazzi, glielo facevano considerare come un vecchio amico."¹³³ Capturing Marco's wish to be a farmer by means of the twice-used conditional verb "avrebbe voluto," Marcucci emphasizes the high value, which his protagonist ascribes to the presumed attractive vocation and in turn entices readers' own esteem. Stimulating such a response would vivify, to use Padellaro's term, and make a reality of the concept of such an idealized farming life. This connection between Marcucci's narrative and readers further emerges in the concluding pages of his second-grade textbook.

As the novella concludes, the textbook compiler reassures that Marco will indeed become a farmer who merits such high regard. Yet, Marco does not model himself after Nonno Silvestro. "Di buon contadinello," the protagonist by the end of the narrative instead heeds the example of General Giuseppe Garibaldi. According to the text, Garibaldi retired to the island of Caprera after liberating Italy in the *Risorgimento* and spent the rest of his life as a farmer.¹³⁴ Marcucci's choice in modeling the elder Marco after Garibaldi, rather than Nonno Silvestro is significant. Whereas Nonno Silvestro is fictional, Garibaldi embodies a concrete example of a *soldato-contadino* armed with an *aratro* and *prora*. Having fought against Italy's foreign enemies, he and

¹³³ Marcucci, *Il libro per la seconda classe* 94-95.

¹³⁴ Marcucci, *Il libro per la seconda classe* 122, 130-132. Garibaldi issues forth as a *soldato-contadino* in both Padellaro's and Grazia Deledda's *Libri unici*. See Padellaro, *Il libro della terza classe* 219 and Deledda, *Il libro della terza classe elementare: letture, religione, storia, geografia, aritmetica*, illus. Pio Pullini (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1931) 79-80.

his compatriots “assicuravano all’Italia il lavoro e la pace.”¹³⁵ Through Garibaldi’s persona, Cambellotti’s previous illustrations of soldiers and farmers hereby attain a distinct image for the audience. Garibaldi mediates the divide between the fictional world offered by Marcucci’s narrative and the historical reality in which readers find themselves. As the military general returned from war and assumed agrarian work like many other Italian veterans, he progresses into an everyman who similarly contributes to the “battaglie della vita.” Working to establish economic peace on the home front, he embodies a *contadino* that not only Marco, but also the readers can emulate. Here we see in powerful fashion how much Marcucci’s textbook depends upon emulation as a means by which his rural readers might pursue the occupations prescribed by the regime. Yet, as Bottai’s curricular reforms have shown us, the purpose of representing the ideal farmer through such a historical figure as Garibaldi was not only to make the material appear real to students.¹³⁶ Rather it also served to emphasize the readers’ own cultural and social ties with the historical character and rural themes at hand. Fascist rural children are Garibaldi’s successors and as such have a duty to carry on his legacy as a *soldato-contadino*. By way of this teleological relationship, agriculture becomes an extension of who readers are as Italians and specifies their roles within the Fascist regime.

Sowing the Pathway to Subjection, Bringing Fascist History to Life: Ero’s Belloni’s Il libro per la seconda classe delle scuole dei centri rurali

Placing children in this teleology was an important technique by which the regime felt it could efficiently subject children. As such it gets reemphasized in subsequent editions of the

¹³⁵ Marcucci, *Il libro per la seconda classe* 129.

¹³⁶ Cfr. ch. 2, pp. 52-53.

Libro unico. In reapplying this technique, however, schoolbook compilers no longer depict such historical figures as Garibaldi. Rather they rely on textual representations of readers themselves in order to model them into *soldati-contadini*. Eros Belloni's *Il libro per la seconda classe delle scuole dei centri rurali* provides several prime examples of this, among which include the tale "Il Natale di Roma" as well as an illustration on the front cover of his manual.¹³⁷

In "Il Natale di Roma," the simple act of sowing seeds becomes a representation of one's rural *italianità*.¹³⁸ This everyday activity, which students themselves presumably practice, indeed defines the readers' own historical and cultural roots and thus implies their destiny to become *contadinelli*. Within this tale, examples of an ancestral "seminatore" in the figure of the legendary and no less godlike Romulus particularly underscore agriculture as a profession innate to Italian readers.¹³⁹ Belloni's vision of this presumably historical "seminatore," serves to highlight and extol Italy's ties to ancient Rome in its relation to farming.¹⁴⁰ Here, Romulus and

¹³⁷ Issuing it under the Bottai administration, the Education Ministry administered Belloni's textbook in the *scuole rurali* between 1941 and 1944. See article one of *Decreto Ministeriale 19 luglio 1941-XIX- Norme e modalità per la stampa e la vendita dei testi unici di Stato per l'anno scolastico 1941-42, Il libro per la scuola nel ventennio fascista: La normativa sui libri di testo dalla Riforma Gentile alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale (1923-1945)*, ed. Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani (Macerata: Alfabetica, 2009) 281; article 1, Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, *Decreto Ministeriale 10 agosto 1942-XX—Norme e modalità per la stampa e la vendita dei testi unici di Stato per l'anno scolastico 1942-43, Il libro per la scuola nel ventennio fascista: La normativa sui libri di testo dalla Riforma Gentile alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale (1923-1945)*, ed. Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani (Macerata: Alfabetica, 2009) 289; and also Bacigalupi 197.

¹³⁸ Belloni trades Marcucci's poetic, pastoral, and literary language for a more simpler and straightforward one. His schoolbook does not follow the structure of a novella and instead features a series of short anecdotes that focus on themes of agriculture.

¹³⁹ According to legend, Romulus and Remus are the descendents of the pagan god, Mars. See "Romulus," *New Oxford American Dictionary* 2011 ed.

¹⁴⁰ This is not the first time in which Belloni takes the "seminatore" as his main protagonist. Taken from the *Vangelo*, Belloni's tale titled, "Il seminatore" re-presents the biblical allegory of the *Parable of the Sower* according to his own Fascist values. Within the story, sowing seeds becomes synonymous with performing righteous deeds and thus represents the practice of certain socially accepted ethical and moral beliefs. Though offered through a Christian framework,

his brother Remus appear as readers' agricultural ancestors and, therefore, model *soldati-contadini*. "Obeying" the order entrusted to them from the "heavens" ("il cielo"), the two brothers find the capital city, which Belloni's Italian audience has inherited. The task of building Rome is an agricultural one. Distinguished by Piero Bernardini's drawing of a toga-clad Romulus driving a plow pulled by two oxen, Belloni describes the way in which the protagonist "volle seguire il confine della città e con l'aratro fece un solco profondo tutto intorno al terreno, dove la città doveva sorgere" (see fig. 3.10).¹⁴¹ Here the act of sowing seeds produces the nation that cradles a celebrated culture, ancient past, and imperial conquests. Once more, Belloni adds new meaning to the idea of farming that might "remote-control" one's interpretation of the mythic tale. Nestled alongside the narrative, Bernardini's image of the plow and prow not only

sowing does not represent one's devotion to God. Rather, it becomes a means of demonstrating one's devotion to one's fellow compatriots and thereby the Italian Fascist *patria*. Belloni's anecdote reminds the audience that farming empowers the child with a means to make a difference for the Italian people and represents one's loyalty to the Fascist nation. Here again, as in Marcucci's two textbooks, Belloni's narrative provides an avenue for teaching an "educazione guerriera." Compare Belloni 15 to *The Parable of the Sower* in Luke 8:1-15, Mark 4:1-20, and Matt. 13:1-23. Belloni's edition cited above rivals that in Luke 8:1-15. Giuseppe Gravante compares the three Italian versions of the parable in the article, "La Parabola del Semiatore (Mt 13,3-9.18-23): dai fondamenti del metodo parabolico alla sua attuazione pastorale," working paper, Academia.edu, 2013, 16 June 2016

<[http://www.academia.edu/10164752/La Parabola del Semiatore Mt 13 3-9.18-23 dai fondamenti del metodo parabolico alla sua attuazione pastorale-escatologica](http://www.academia.edu/10164752/La_Parabola_del_Semiatore_Mt_13_3-9.18-23_dai_fondamenti_del_metodo_parabolico_alla_sua_attuazione_pastorale-escatologica)>. For an Italian translation, see *La Sacra Bibbia: Nuova Riveduta sui Testi originali* (Ginevra: Società biblica, 2000). For the English translation provided of the parable, refer to *The Twentieth Century New Testament* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1904).

¹⁴¹ Belloni 92. A motif in this edition as well as in other rural *Libri di Stato*, the plow and prow recur in Belloni's allegorical tale, "I due aratri." Here, the author tells the tale of two anthropomorphic plows, who happen to meet one day. As they discuss their lives, the narrative reveals their character traits. Among the two, one plow is industrious, while the other is lazy. After some time passes, the pristine plow happens to meet his idle colleague once again. Surprised, it finds that its friend has rusted. When the indolent plow asks why its friend is "lucido, bello e splendente," the attractive plow replies: "[Col] lavoro sono divenuto sempre più bello." Here Belloni offers the *aratro* as an emblem of hard work and a strategy for living a happy, healthy, and fruitful life. See Belloni 17. This same story reappears in Petrucci's, *L'aratro e la spada* 57-58.

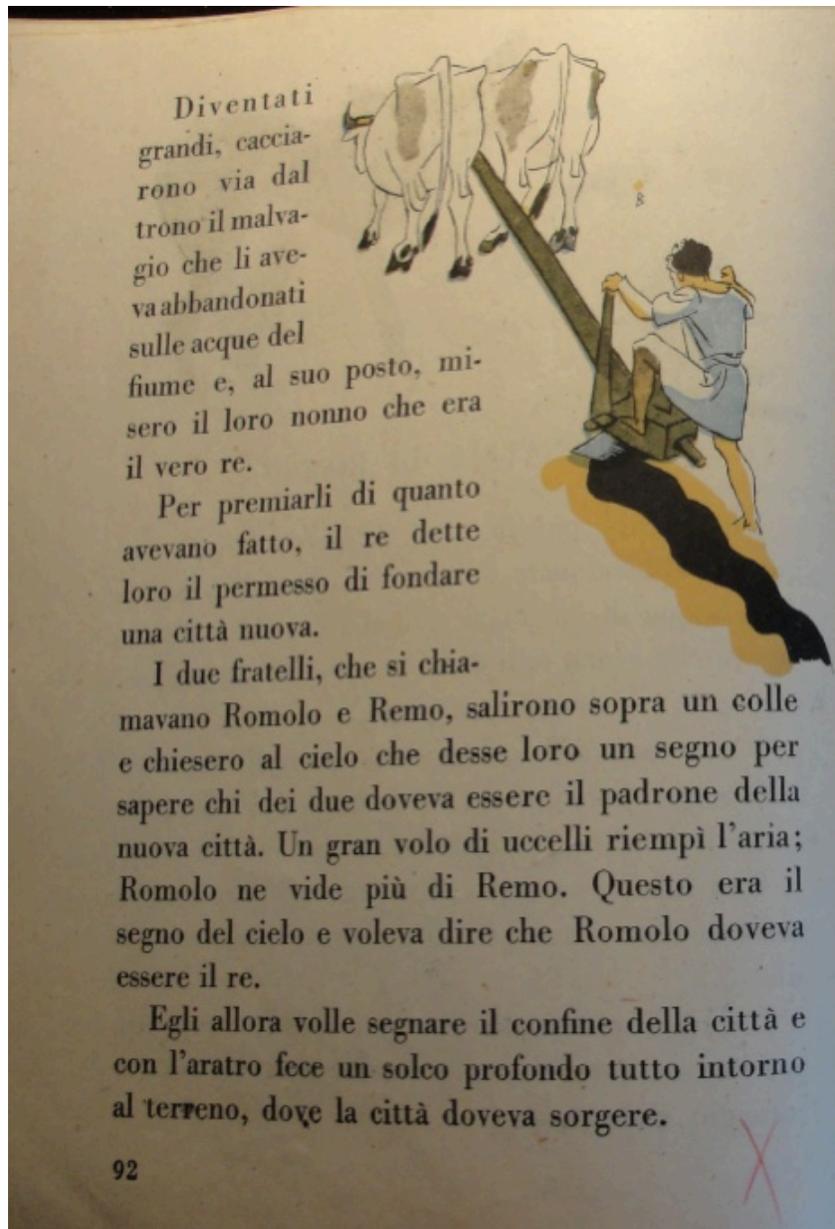


Fig. 3.10. Piero Bernardini. 1941. "Il Natale di Roma." Color illustration of Romulus pushing the *aratro* and *prora*. Belloni 92. The plow and prow together constitute a familiar sign that similarly appears on the cover of Belloni's textbook.

emphasizes the deed by which Rome was established. It also becomes the mnemonic device that links the familiar *balilla* on the cover of Belloni's textbook to the mythical founders of Rome.

Belloni's cover indeed features two, uniformed *balilla* standing before two cows attached to an *aratro* (see fig. 3.11). Trailed by a trough, the boys on the one hand farm the land surrounding them. With their hands upon the handle of the plow, they till the soil. Their posture, on the other hand, communicates another, simultaneous exploit. One holds an Italian flag, while the other remains with his arm behind his back. Standing easy, with their legs positioned slightly apart in a "v-like" form, the boys enact a military drill.¹⁴² As they carry out the two deeds, farming work and military exercises juxtapose with one another. Plowing a field becomes synonymous with fulfilling military duties and expressing national pride. The *aratro*, correspondingly, refers to the artillery with which the boys complete their tasks. The illustration hence offers the framework for reading the signs, which Belloni adopts in the tales of his state-issued schoolbook. Utilizing agricultural and national emblems—plow and flag—Belloni's cover conveys and teaches farming as a domestic "battaglia della vita." At the same time, the *balilla* on Belloni's cover here notably represent the readers, who themselves wear military style uniforms, live in rural areas of Italy, and perhaps already work by helping their peasant families on their farms. These children—illustrated *balilla* and readers alike—in other words perform the same activities as Romulus and Remus. Such an illustration thus brings readers' everyday tasks into perspective, making them understand how their own, agricultural responsibilities may likewise defend, as Marcucci has put it, Fascist Italy's economic infrastructure.

Signifying agronomy, the *aratro* and *prora* imply the means by which the grandeur of Italy's ancient past may manifest itself within the Fascist period in a "vivid" way. Manipulating a

¹⁴² For an overview of a child's physical position and movements when performing military drills as *Balilla* and *Piccole italiane*, see Galeotti, *Saluto al Duce!* 36-40, 82-87.



Fig. 3.11. Piero Bernardini. 1941. Cover illustration of Eros Belloni's *Il libro per la seconda classe delle scuole dei centri rurali*. Note the *aratro* and Italian flag held by the two *balilla* boys. Notions of patriotism here juxtapose with farming. Together, they frame the overall theme of Belloni's textbook and emphasize the job, which readers ought to take.

plow and prow means that *balilla* children maintain and practice the same rural habits and customs that built Italy. Marking ties with Romulus and Remus, agriculture becomes an expression of their ancient past and a lens by which children may understand their cultural heritage and national identity. It is a part of what makes them Italian; and children cannot escape from it. When acknowledging this ideological interpretation of their *italianità*, readers, as Althusser would say, could “freely accept [their] subjection” and thus willingly consent to becoming farmers.¹⁴³ This future generation of *italiani nuovi* notably is thus shaped not according to values of virility and strength as Gentile, Mosse and others have argued, but rather by their hard work as future *contadinelli*. Through their toil, they not only pay their respects for the contributions, which their presumed ancestors have made to Italy’s civilization and culture. Interpellating themselves into farmers, they realize the destiny which their presumed ancestors set out for them, and, in doing so, they carry out their duties to preserve their country’s agricultural traditions, history, and economy.

Reading for Autarchy: Belloni’s “Piero Pieruccio e il Mago Merlino”

Though they may appear too young to follow in Romulus and Remus’ footsteps, Belloni ensures that readers may already live up to the grandeur of Italy’s Roman past by continuing their practice of such simple agricultural activities as planting seeds. Sowing for Belloni allows readers to reproduce the glories of their ancient past, as it specifically strengthens Italy’s economic infrastructure and allows for the education of the country’s future generation of workers. In the short tale titled, “Piero Pieruccio e il Mago Merlino,” the compiler identifies

¹⁴³ Althusser 118.

flaxseed as the basis for producing books as well as readers' own autarchic *Libro unico*.¹⁴⁴ The plot recounts the story of a boy, Piero Pieruccio, who loses his hoe. Finding the “zappa,” Mago Merlino, a wizard, strikes a deal with Piero Pieruccio. He tells the protagonist that he will return the tool on condition that the latter help the former find his “libro degli incanti.” Enlisted on a journey to find Mago Merlino's book of spells, Piero meets and inquires with several human and anthropomorphic persona. Each of these characters—a “libraio” (“bookseller”), a “cartiera” (“papermaker”), a “negoziante di stoffa” (“draper”), a local “campo” (“field”), and, finally, a “contadino” (“farmer”)—produces the materials necessary for making the wizard's book. Structuring the narrative in the form of a “cumulative sequence,” Belloni repeats the story's past events as new ones are introduced.¹⁴⁵ Nonetheless, he outlines the steps to producing Mago Merlino's book in retrograde. Tracing the book's origins from its point of sale back to the principal material from which it was manufactured—flax plant—the tale ends and lays focus on the primal gesture of sowing seeds. The simple manner, in which this first step is carried out invites readers to perform the same agricultural feat memorized in the course of their reading and hence invest in Italy's economic future, as their mythical ancestors Romulus and Remus did.

In turning to a discussion of the tale here, I will first analyze its repetitive narrative structure. In line with Padellaro's recommendation that such a reading incorporate rhythmic and musical qualities, the tale's layout particularly resembles that of a game of telephone.¹⁴⁶ Its amusing structure builds an incentive for readers to rely habitually on memory, or in this case the text to internalize the events and themes of the plot. Reciting the same narrative over and over again, readers first learn the “know-how” needed to produce autarchic books. This “know-how”

¹⁴⁴ Belloni 113-116.

¹⁴⁵ By “cumulative sequence,” I am again referring to Baskwill's study of “memorable structures” in children's literature. Cfr. above pp. 32-33.

¹⁴⁶ Cfr. above p. 27.

consists of the following information: the book on sale at one's local newsstand is made of several pieces of paper tied together by cloth and string. The materials making the book—paper, cloth, and string—in turn are made of the plant, which germinates from flaxseed. The flaxseed itself, moreover, is sown in the fields belonging to the farmer. Yet, is it really the farmer, who plants the flaxseed that will makeup the books one reads? The answer might come as a surprise.

Habitually emphasizing the “know-how” of book making in memorizable chunks, the tale begins at the bookstore. Assuming that Mago's “libro” is in its final shape and ready to be sold, Piero Pieruccio first inquires with the “libraio.” Asking him to fetch some paper, the bookseller sends Piero to see the local “cartiera,” who then tells the protagonist to see the “negoziante di stoffa.”¹⁴⁷ Visiting the “negoziante,” Piero asks for some “tela” (“cloth”) that would bind the papers he obtained from the local papermaker. Despite his request, the “negoziante” recommends that Pieruccio inquire with the anthropomorphic “campo” first about getting some “piante di lino” (“flax plant”). Discussing with the “campo,” Pieruccio demands: “Dammi un po' di piante di lino per farne poi la tela che deve servire a far la carta per farne poi il libro degli incanti da portare al Mago Merlino affinché mi restituisca la mia zappa.”¹⁴⁸

Growing impatient in light of the field's reply, “Va dal contadino e di' che ti dia il seme,” Pieruccio finally visits the farmer. Addressing him with desperation, he bids his last request. Repeating the events that came before, he asks: “O contadino, non farmi più girare. Dammi il seme perché io lo porti al campo che mi dia il lino per farne la tela che deve servire a far la carta che deve servire a fare il libro degli incanti da portare al Mago Merlino perché mi restituisca la mia zappa.”¹⁴⁹ As Pieruccio successfully obtains the last materials necessary to make Mago

¹⁴⁷ Belloni 114.

¹⁴⁸ Belloni 115.

¹⁴⁹ Belloni 115.

Merlino's "libro degli incanti," Belloni restates the steps needed to make books, testing the reader's memory one last time. The narrator recapitulates: "Il contadino gli diede il seme che Piero Pieruccio portò al campo, il quale gli diede il lino, che Piero Pieruccio portò alla cartiera che gli dette la carta, che Piero Pieruccio portò al libraio, che gli diede il libro degli incanti, che Piero Pieruccio portò al Mago Merlino, il quale finalmente gli restituì la sua zappa."¹⁵⁰

With its repetitive content and structure, we can see how readers can memorize the information, which the author provides on autarchic book making. Belloni's formulaic prose renders itself much like an "incanto" ("chant," "spell," "incantation"). Repeating verbs—"dammi," "portò," "deve servire"—at the addition of each new event, the prose lacks variation and harbors a monotonous rhythm. Dependent clauses beginning with the relative pronoun "che" characterize its long sentences. As the story lacks punctuation marks or caesuras in the form of commas, semicolons, and colons, the reader seldom pauses. Methodically repeating the events without any break, students perhaps pass into a trance-like state: enraptured by the text in light of its long sentences, one cannot pull one's gaze away. The simple prose accordingly heartens the child to memorize the content in chunks over a determined period of time. He or she thus learns the steps necessary to make autarchic books in an efficient manner. Yet repetition here represents only one means by which Belloni seeks to encourage memorization of such information.

The story's repetitive narrative structure likewise incorporates and relies on four illustrations to ensure that the steps needed to make the Mago's book are efficiently learned and reproduced. Bernardini's first three visual cues of Mago Merlino, the "libraio," and a "pianta di lino," (see fig. 3.12 and 3.13), for one, regard key characters and events. Working with the text to reemphasize the plot, the three images function as mnemonic devices that refer to the book's

¹⁵⁰ Belloni 115-116.



Fig. 3.12. Piero Bernardini. 1941. “Piero Pieruccio e il Mago Merlino.” Color illustration of story’s protagonists. Belloni 113.

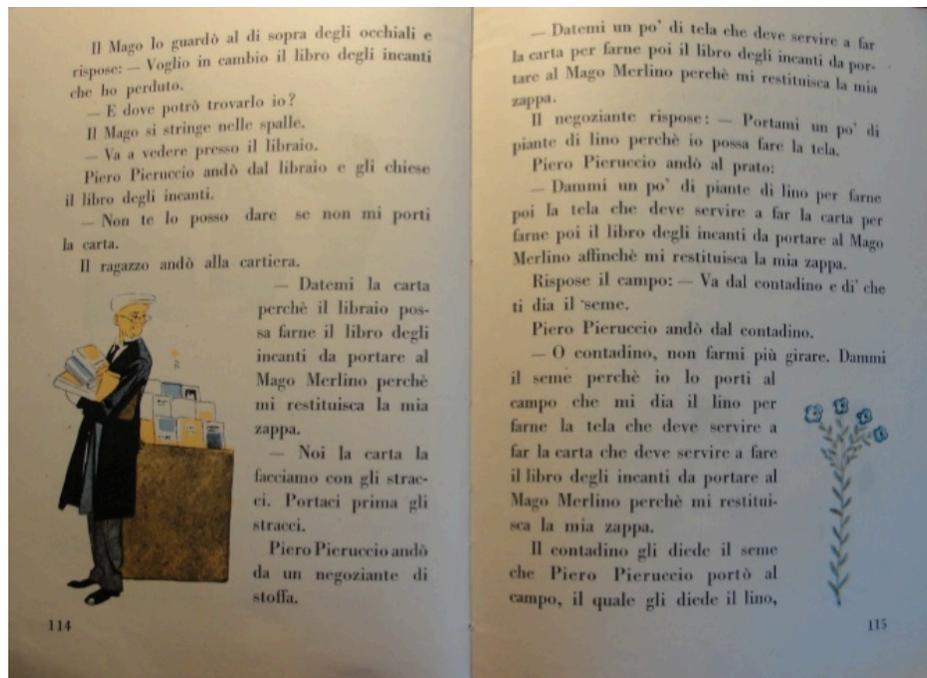


Fig. 3.13. Piero Bernardini. 1941. “Il libraio” and “La pianta di lino.” Color illustration of a bookseller and a flax plant. Belloni 114-115. Together the images serve as mnemonic devices that call to mind the autarchic materials needed to make a book.

owner, point of sale, and makeup. They thus refer to all but one of the steps needed to make a book. Indeed, we still do not know who plants and grows the flaxseed. To uncover this information, we turn to the fourth and final image of Pieruccio tilling the soil with his hoe (see fig. 3.14). This last illustration contrasts in scope with Bernardini's previous three drawings. It specifies the ambiguous manner in which the main character interacts with the "campo" and contributes to producing the book of spells. Relaying new information about the tale, the sketch reveals that the main character does not solely gather the appropriate materials to make the Mago's book. By "bringing" (e.g., "portò") the "seme di lino" to the field, he sows and yields the basic substance (e.g., "pianta di lino") necessary for book making. We are here reminded of how Piero Pieruccio himself now practices the same agricultural activities as Romulus and Remus. As Bernardini illustration suggests, it is not the farmer per se who founds the narrative's chain of events. Through the simple gesture of planting a seed, Pieruccio himself rather becomes the "seminatore," a direct participant in the regime's project to build an autarchic economy. But that's not all to be said.

Bernardini's illustration of Pieruccio sowing seeds particularly compares with the image of the "libraio" and suggests how *accessible* the production of basic materials for bookmaking may be. Glancing at the illustrations once more, we recognize a significant difference in age between the "libraio" and the main character. Compared to Pieruccio, the "libraio" with his white hair, glasses, and wrinkled face, is a working adult. He has presumably received formal training to become a businessman and bookseller. Pieruccio by contrast is an underage minor, who cannot legally be employed as the other character is. Yet, despite his age, the young protagonist himself at once develops into a farmer, able to participate in the manufacture of books. Indeed, his rural elementary school education has perhaps already given him the skills he needs to plant

che Piero Pieruccio portò alla cartiera che gli dette la carta, che Piero Pieruccio portò al libraio che gli diede il libro degli incanti, che Piero Pieruccio portò al Mago Merlino, il quale finalmente gli restituì la sua zappa.



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Fig. 3.14. Piero Bernardini. 1941. "Piero Pieruccio e la sua zappa." Color illustration. Belloni 116. Bernardini concludes Belloni's tale with a sketch of Piero Pieruccio using his newly recovered hoe. It elucidates the narrative's ambiguous description of the main character's interaction with the "campo." It suggests that Piero Pieruccio furnishes the material for Mago Merlino's book by sowing the "seme di lino."

flaxseed and therefore grow the primary material necessary to make books. Surpassing the age requirements and training that would prevent him from taking a job as, say, a bookseller or perhaps even a papermaker or draper, Pieruccio, and, by extension his readers, may thus already contribute to Italy's autarchic economy.

By way of its images and text, the tale's narrative structure furthermore enlightens readers on a relationship between Mago Merlino's "libro degli incanti" and Belloni's own *Libro unico*. Piero Pieruccio produces Merlino's book of spells with the same autarchic materials as those used to manufacture Belloni's textbook.¹⁵¹ In light of its allusion to the composition of Belloni's volume, (e.g., "su carta fabbricata [...] con materie prime nazionali"), the makeup of Mago Merlino's "book" takes a specific and tangible shape. His account of Pieruccio's farming activities hence permits his audience to visualize one possible, concrete outcome of Fascist policies of autarchy, which they themselves can contribute to and similarly benefit from.¹⁵² The simple act of sowing seeds has the potential to make history once more, as it contributes to Fascist Italy's economic well-being and produces the books that educate Italian children.¹⁵³ Yet, Pieruccio's tale consists of one means by which Belloni seeks to communicate the value of agriculture and, thereby, motivate readers into taking up farming. As readers have to feel emotionally invested in the work they will carry out as future *contanelli*, Belloni likewise seeks to construct a "memoria affettiva" through his *Libro unico*. Fashioning a child's sense of

¹⁵¹ On the autarchic make up of the *Libro unico dello Stato*, cfr. ch. 2, pp. 47-48 and above p. 31.

¹⁵² Ratified on the 15th of March 1926 by Minister Fedele, circular n. 19 titled, *Preferenza ai prodotti delle industrie nazionali negli acquisti da parte delle Amministrazioni dello Stato, degli enti autarchici, degli Enti sottoposti alla tutela e vigilanza dello Stato* decreed that the country's student body, academic faculty, and staff utilize autarchic materials at school. By 1927 and 1929, the Ministry of Education reissued the same normative with modifications. See Del Nero 85 and 103.

¹⁵³ Through the term "making history," I am again referring to Romulus and the act of sowing seeds in Belloni's "Il Natale di Roma."

patriotism toward Italy's *paese*, Belloni notably invokes the figure of an affectionate and maternal *contadina*.

Internalizing Fascist Economic Policies through the Counsel of the Maternal Contadina

Up to this point, I have analyzed repetitive anecdotes from rural *Libri unici* that have predominantly employed male characters in their discussion of agrarian labor.¹⁵⁴ I would now like to turn to an example within Belloni's text, in which a woman takes a critical role in shaping the sensibilities of both female *and* male readers toward assuming an agriculture lifestyle. Employing the memorable narrative structure of a question and answer dialogue in the later chapter, "Ritorno da Roma," Belloni selects the *contadina* and motherhood as a means to cast light upon contemporary Fascist emigration policies, autarchy, and agrarian work.¹⁵⁵ As a peasant farmer, Belloni's female protagonist here comes to light not so much through the physical work that she carries out on her farm but rather as a loving and nurturing mother who maintains a thriving family and rural homestead. Her particular presence as a maternal *contadina* serves to emotionally disincentivize readers from abandoning their rural communities for the city. Rurality here signifies a mother's "battaglia" to maintain Italy's long-standing agricultural traditions and practices and construct a generation of farmers out of her children.

¹⁵⁴ In light of his use of masculine pronouns and characters throughout his textbook, Belloni like many of the *Libro unico*'s compilers principally addresses a male audience of readers. Though much less frequent, examples in which the bodies of working artisan women become the focus of one's reading in the *Libro di Stato* may be found in Saponi's *Amor di Patria*. Saponi particularly glorifies the contours of women who engage in ceramic work, jewelry, and needlework. See *Amor di Patria: Il libro della quinta classe testo di letture per le alunne*, illus., Carlo Testi (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1935) 75-77, 143-147.

¹⁵⁵ Belloni 145-148.

Within the tale, the textbook compiler specifically presents a conversation between an unnamed mother and her children, Mario and Annetta. Quite inquisitive, the two latter protagonists pose a series of questions to their mother about her recent trip to Italy's capital, Rome. As the discussion unravels, key phrases and illustrations relay clues that will help one decipher the mother's predilection of Rome before Mario and Annetta ask any questions. They learn in advance that the mother prefers the country to the city and wishes to remain a *contadina*. Belloni's approach here from the get-go is to communicate and stress the expected morals and behaviors of a rural *uomo nuovo* devoted to farming work.

While the simple title provides no indication, the initial drawing hints at the mother's first impressions of the city. Taking up a little over half of the page, Bernardini illustrates the mother dressed in the traditional garb of a *contadina* as she stands before a traffic officer (see fig. 3.15).¹⁵⁶ Clutching a suitcase in her hand, she does not look happy. With lowered, furrowed eyebrows, flared nostrils, and wide-eyes, her facial expression exhibits anger and frustration. Her countenance foils the policeman's, who, with the side of his mouth raised and the corner of his eyebrows pulled down, by contrast, smiles and holds a kinder disposition. Bernardini's placement of the illustration is noteworthy. Located at the top left of the page, just below the title, the illustration parallels the text. Its bright colors of yellow and light blue, on the one hand, stand out from the black typescript of the text and attract the readers' gaze. Its location on the left side of the page, on the other hand, avails itself of the way in which one directs his or her view when reading. Accustomed to such a sinistrodextal text as Italian, the audience may perhaps orient their eyes toward the left side of the page immediately after scanning the title. Having first seen the illustration, readers may understand the mother's discontent before beginning the story.

¹⁵⁶ Belloni 145.

RITORNO DA ROMA



La mamma di Mario e Annetta è andata a Roma per qualche giorno. Sono stati dei giorni lunghi lunghi per i due bambini che non sono abituati a star senza la mamma.

— Mi sento come sperduto — diceva Mario, e Annetta, che aveva sempre un faccino serio serio, a queste parole si faceva forza per non piangere, e qualche

volta i lacrimoni scappavano anche senza volere.

Finalmente la mamma è tornata e ora tutti sono allegri.

Quante cose ha da raccontare la mamma! Naturalmente la prima domanda che le ha rivolto Mario è stata: — Hai visto il Duce?

Fig. 3.15. Piero Bernardini. 1941. "La mamma a Roma." Color illustration of Mario and Annetta's mother speaking to a traffic officer. Belloni 145. Note the mother's frustrated expression as indicated by her furrowed eyebrows, wide-eyes, and flared nostrils.

As the dialogue begins, key phrases remind, qualify, and reinforce one's initial perception of Annetta and Mario's mother. After she responds to her children's queries about seeing the *Duce*, Annetta expresses curiosity concerning the city's buildings and traffic. Addressing her mother, she asks: "Vi sono palazzi grandi più della scuola?"¹⁵⁷ Responding with a term of endearment, the mother says: "Cara la mia Anna, sono così grandi che ti fanno venire il capogiro. Pieni di zeppi di finestre, di balconi, porte, sembrano alveari, tanto più che la gente ne entra e ne esce continuamente proprio come fanno le api. Io credo che uno soltanto di quei palazzoni basterebbe per tutti gli abitanti del nostro paese."¹⁵⁸ With the endearing phrase, "Cara la mia Anna," the mother's language calls her daughter's attention in an affectionate way. Imparting fondness, the phrase reinforces the familial bond between her and her daughter. The mother's language and tone invites Annetta to have faith in her opinions on the chaos of Rome.¹⁵⁹ Here, the pejorative suffix ("–oni") in the word "palazzoni" indicates the mother's irritation with the size of the buildings. As she feels weak and feeble, the architecture of the city overwhelms her. With lines such as "pieni di zeppi di finestre" and "come fanno le api," she portrays Rome as an overpopulated city, "swarming" with people. While juxtaposing the city with the countryside in the phrase, "Io credo che uno soltanto di quei palazzoni basterebbe per tutti gli abitanti del nostro paese," she reiterates the idea of Rome as a chaotic and cramped place. The number of inhabitants ("abitanti") in the countryside, she adds, appears much lower than in the city. One building would suffice to shelter the entire population of the "paese," from which Annetta's mother originates.

¹⁵⁷ Belloni 146.

¹⁵⁸ Belloni 146.

¹⁵⁹ On terms of endearment in literature see Cynthia Gordon, *Making Meaning, Creating Family: Intertextuality and Framing in Family Interactions* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009) 65.

As the topic of the dialogue shifts onto a discussion of Rome's traffic condition, the text relays the information depicted in Bernardini's illustration. It offers an explanation for the mother's frustration. Responding to Annetta's question, "È vero che ci sono tante automobile e tanti tranvai che corrono sempre," she begins to describe her inability to traverse and escape oncoming traffic. Describing the sense of confusion felt when arriving in the middle of a large square, she notes: "Ne sono ancora stordita. Anzi, vi dirò che un giorno mi sono trovata in mezzo a una piazza così grande e così rumorosa, che mi ha preso la paura e sono rimasta lì in mezzo, senza sapere andare nè avanti nè indietro. / [...] / È venuto una guardia molto gentile che mi ha aiutato ad attraversare. Altrimenti, forse, sarei ancora lì"¹⁶⁰ Vocabulary such as "rumorosa," "stordita," and "paura" further contextualize Bernardini's illustration. Offering such aural imagery, the city is not only loud but also disorienting and dangerous.

At this moment in the tale, Bernardini provides another illustration to complement Belloni's text. Yet instead of tracing a chaotic scene of traffic, the illustrator offers a full-page drawing of the protagonists' home in the rural countryside (see fig. 3.16).¹⁶¹ As it is interposed within her dialogue, readers consume the image, as the text asks them to recall the previous one. As a result, Bernardini implicitly bids his audience to have the two illustrations simultaneously in mind. The urbane to follow foils the rural, and, we begin to see how the countryside is appreciated through the harmful effects of city life. Depicting the *contadina* and her husband plowing a wheat field, the latter drawing emerges as the antithesis to the former. With cows and a large country villa situated in the background, the picture exhibits qualities of spaciousness. The *contadina* in the foreground appears much larger than her spouse, indicating a large depth of field between the two. As the villa in the background presumably belongs to the two personae, it

¹⁶⁰ Belloni 146-147.

¹⁶¹ Belloni 147.

— No — risponde la mamma, — ma ho veduto il palazzo dove lavora e vi dico la verità, ne avrei baciato le pietre.

— Vi sono dei palazzi grandi più della scuola? — chiede Annetta.

— Cara la mia Anna, sono così grandi che ti fanno venire il capogiro. Pieni zeppi di finestre, di balconi, di porte, sembrano alveari, tanto più che la gente ne entra e ne esce continuamente proprio come fanno le api. Io credo che uno soltanto di quei palazzoni basterebbe per tutti gli abitanti del nostro paese.

— E i monumenti, mamma?

— Io non me ne intendo, ragazzo mio, perchè sono una contadina e non ho studiato, ma ti so dire che davanti al Colosseo, a San Pietro e a tanti altri, ti senti rimanere senza fiato, e pare persino impossibile che siano stati gli uomini a tirar su quelle costruzioni così belle e così grandi.

— È vero che ci sono tante automobili e tanti tranvai che corrono sempre?

— Ne sono ancora stordita. Anzi, vi dirò che un giorno mi sono trovata in mezzo a una piazza così grande e così rumorosa, che mi ha preso la paura e sono rimasta lì in mezzo, senza sapere andare nè avanti nè indietro.

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— Allora come hai fatto?

— È venuta una guardia molto gentile che mi ha aiutato ad attraversare. Altrimenti, forse, sarei ancora lì.

I ragazzi ridono.

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Fig. 3.16. Piero Bernardini. 1941. "Il paese." Color illustration of Belloni's *contadina* working the fields alongside her husband. Belloni 147. Bernardini's image of a quiet and peaceful countryside contrasts with the mother's disapproving depiction of the city. Note the compiler's placement of Bernardini's illustration within the mother's discourse on her experience in the "piazza grande e rumorosa."

contrasts with Rome's "palazzoni." Whereas the "palazzoni" house a number of families, the villa shelters only one. Surrounded solely by livestock and a rich field of wheat, the country scene lacks any traffic circulation and supervenes as a symbol for a productive and tranquil hearth. Bernardini's pastoral illustration dominates the chaotic traffic scene described and becomes the resolution to her battle against the chaos of the city.

In light of such visual and textual cues, readers by the end, are prepared to provide the moral of the tale in answer to Annetta's yes or no question: "Ci staresti sempre a Roma, mamma?"¹⁶² The mother, as the audience may have already guessed, responds with a "no":

Senti, la città è tanto bella, ci sono tante cose da vedere che mi sarebbe dispiaciuto di morire senza averle guardate con questi occhi, eppure, vedi, quando ho rivisto i nostri campi e ho sentito di nuovo il suono delle campane della nostra chiesa, mi sono sentito il cuore pieno di allegria.

Roma è tanto bella, ma chi nasce contadino ama sempre la sua terra e non sa distaccarsene.¹⁶³

Describing her happiness with the concluding phrase, "Sul suo viso c'è tanta felicità," the narrative complements the mother's response by concentrating on her facial expression one last time.¹⁶⁴ One can imagine her smiling instead of frowning at the landscape she views. As such the text establishes the mother's emotional attachment to her home in the countryside. Allowing

¹⁶² Belloni 148.

¹⁶³ Belloni 148.

¹⁶⁴ Belloni 148.

them to reference Bernardini's first illustration, readers understand the mother's contentment in returning to the extensive, tranquil, and beautiful "campagna rigogliosa e fertile." As she recapitulates and reemphasizes the moral of the tale with the phrase, "Roma è tanto bella, ma chi nasce contadino ama sempre la sua terra e non sa distaccarsene," the mother defines the behaviors of the *contadino*. Italian farmers are patriotic (e.g., "ama sempre la terra") and devoted completely ("non sa distaccarsene") to their land and work. Like the mother, the rural child's future struggle will consist of preserving the Fascist nation by remaining within and adopting the farming work available in his or her *paese*.

Belloni's question and answer tale between an authoritative peasant mother and her children is noteworthy in the way in which it constructs a "memoria affettiva." Through their emotional attachment, Belloni's character will obey the attitudes and "rules of respect," which the mother expresses for the countryside and farming work. Indeed, Annetta and Mario's mother functions as a loving and affectionate parent without whom the protagonists feel "sperduto" ("lost").¹⁶⁵ As their loving advisor and guide, she is able to persuade the protagonists to invest a great deal of trust and confidence in her perspective of the city and the country. Reappearing in such later chapters as "Ringraziare il Signore," Mario and Annetta, in fact, are so taken by their mother's words that they themselves embrace farming (see fig. 3.17). Noting his enthusiasm, Mario notes: "Fra qualche anno, avrò anch'io il mio campo, potrò usare la zappa, la falce, l'aratro e anch'io, lavorando, potrò ringraziare il Signore."¹⁶⁶ He and his sister do not question, but accept her thoughts on Rome like the *soldati-contadinelli* they are expected to be.

Yet for Belloni, the mother flourishes as the driving force that would encourage not only the protagonists but also male and female readers to remain in the countryside as *contadini*. Just

¹⁶⁵ Belloni 145.

¹⁶⁶ Belloni 165.

— Vedete come l'opera del Signore si manifesta in tutte le sue creature, che, nella loro maniera, ringraziano il Creatore.

Mario si sente felice. Guarda la campagna verde, gli alberi fronzuti, i bei campi di messe e dice fra sè: — Fra qualche anno avrò anch'io il mio campo, potrò usare la zappa, la falce, l'aratro, e anch'io, lavorando, potrò ringraziare il Signore.



Fig. 3.17. Piero Bernardini. 1941. "Mario and Annetta." Color illustration. Belloni 167. Characters, Mario and Annetta, from the tale "Ritorno da Roma," reappear with a shovel and pickaxe in hand, as they both participate as little "contadini" in the chapter "Ringraziare il Signore."

below the concluding paragraph of “Ritorno da Roma,” the reader finds the short poem, “Mamma bella,” by E. Fiorentino.¹⁶⁷ It reveres the matriarch, who enriches the hearth with her radiance. Metaphors such as “La casa senza mamma / è fuoco senza fiamma” compare with and reinforce Annetta and Mario’s sense of longing for their absent mother. At the same time, it asks its addressees to recall and reflect on the love, which their own mothers bear for them. Fiorentino’s mother romanticizes the hearth with bucolic qualities. Exemplifying visual, tactile, and olfactory imagery, the lines “un prato senza viole, / un cielo senza sole,” maintains that a home without a mother lacks the fragrance, warmth, comfort, and beauty that one may find in the countryside. In virtue of the poem, Belloni establishes an empathetic relationship between his protagonist and students. Its memorable form, in turn, aspires to create what Padellaro has deemed a “memoria affettiva.”¹⁶⁸ Reminding them of their own emotional attachment, the arcadian mother becomes a persuasive means through which Belloni’s addressees may also share a preference for the countryside as well as the vocation associated with it. As powerful as this narrative may have been for Belloni’s readership, however, the affectionate mother does not reappear in subsequent textbooks. The *Libri unici* in fact begin to rely on violence in order to emotionally entice children to become *soldati-contadini* in the *battaglie della vita*.

Violence Overcomes All: The Economy of Agricultural War in Rural Libri unici

Whereas Belloni associates parental affection with the pastoral through his portrayal of a maternal *contadina*, proceeding third grade textbooks thematically evolve. Placing focus instead on the assiduous and bellicose *contadino*, the schoolbooks adopt a rather aggressive tone, which

¹⁶⁷ Belloni 148.

¹⁶⁸ Cfr. above p. 28.

the regime perhaps felt was better suited for shaping their growing elementary school readers into workers. As Pezzé Pascolato's review on stories of pampered children have allowed us to see, the *Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale* indeed mistrusted the use of possibly overindulgent tales in forming children into *uomini nuovi*.¹⁶⁹ Here we recognize the multiple strides, which compilers take in order to make children efficiently participate as steadfast players within the regime's project to build an autarchic economy.

In contrast to Marcucci and Belloni, Alfredo Petrucci more rigorously employs bellicose terminology in his anecdotes on farming in his *L'aratro e la spada: letture per la III classe elementare dei centri rurali*.¹⁷⁰ Within Petrucci's work, Italian soil particularly alters into a *terreno* ("terrain, territory") or battleground, in which the farmer's tasks represent a battle for Fascist Italy's growing economy. Contributing to the country's economic growth by means of such presumed successful regime policies as the *bonifica integrale*, the *battaglia del grano*, and colonial expansion, the farmer raises Italy's international prestige and once more recalls Melchiori's ideas of an "educazione guerriera." The text thus entices students to embrace and reproduce the presumably glorious deeds carried out within their rural surroundings.

Militaristic representations of farming are initially conveyed within the front cover of Petrucci's schoolbook by means of the tools used to cultivate Italian soil. Indeed, these instruments constitute not only valuable agricultural tools, but also pieces of artillery with which Italian *contadini* may fight a domestic *battaglia*. Designed by Pio Pullini, Petrucci's front cover

¹⁶⁹ Cfr. Ch. 1, pp. 32-34.

¹⁷⁰ Belloni, like Marcucci, only subtly portrays farming as a *battaglia* in his *Libro di Stato*. In the chapter titled, "Il babbo vanga," for instance, we find illustrations of Annetta and Mario's father dressed in the blue, green, and black hues typical of a Fascist military uniform as he tends his fields. Similarly in the chapter titled, "La battaglia," the main characters' father, a WWI veteran, identifies farming as an "altra battaglia" fought domestically in Italy. Describing his tools with bellicose language, he notes: "Ma le mie armi per questa battaglia sono l'aratro e la vanga." See Belloni 23-24 and 112.

displays a lone farmer plowing with an *aratro* (see fig. 3.18).¹⁷¹ Located on the left side of foreground, three *fasci* protrude before the field. Toward the bottom right, three blades of a bayonet, aligned at about a 45-degree angle point at the plowed landscape. The title of Petrucci's book, "L'aratro e la spada," consisting of large grey typographic script in capital letters, lies above the *fasci* directing one's attention to the tools displayed. The conjunction "e" ("and") associates and suggests a syntagmatic relationship between the titled plow and bayonet.¹⁷² Each of these tools on Petrucci's cover possesses "anthropological" and "cultural meaning" for his pupils.¹⁷³ Students, for one, have already learned that the *fasci* signify Fascism and collectivity.¹⁷⁴ The *spada* distinguishes the arms of infantrymen in battle and suggests ideas of war and combat. As the cover makes clear, the *aratro* is the tool with which one plows fields.¹⁷⁵ While the cover does not elaborate on the exact relationship between the plow, sword, and "fascio," the textbook's front matter relays the information that will allow readers to infer meaning and understand agriculture as a strife necessary to "defend" Italy's infrastructure.

Upon opening the textbook to its title page, the addressee finds the following epigraph endorsed by Mussolini, "L'aratro traccia il solco e la spada lo difende" (see fig. 3.19). Spoken by the *Duce* himself, these words addressed the rural community of the Pontine Marshes in honor of

¹⁷¹ A well-known painter and illustrator, Pio Pullini designed children's novels and often caricatured various aspects of Italian society in his paintings. On Pullini's work, see Maria Tittoni et al., *Pio Pullini e Roma: Venticinque anni di storia illustrata, 1920-1945* (Rome: Gangemi, 2010); and also Fabiola Brugiamolina et al., *Retrospettiva di Pio Pullini (Ancona 1887-Roma 1955)* (Ancona: Trifogli, 1989).

¹⁷² In alluding to the term syntagmatic, I am making reference to the third category of signs defined by Barthes in his essay, "The Imagination of the Sign." Cfr. above p. 14, note 32.

¹⁷³ By terms, "anthropological" and "cultural meaning," I am again referring to Barthes' "Rhetoric of the Image." Cfr. ch.3, pp. 14-15.

¹⁷⁴ Cfr. ch.3, pp. 40-41.

¹⁷⁵ Cfr. ch. 3, pp. 53-54.

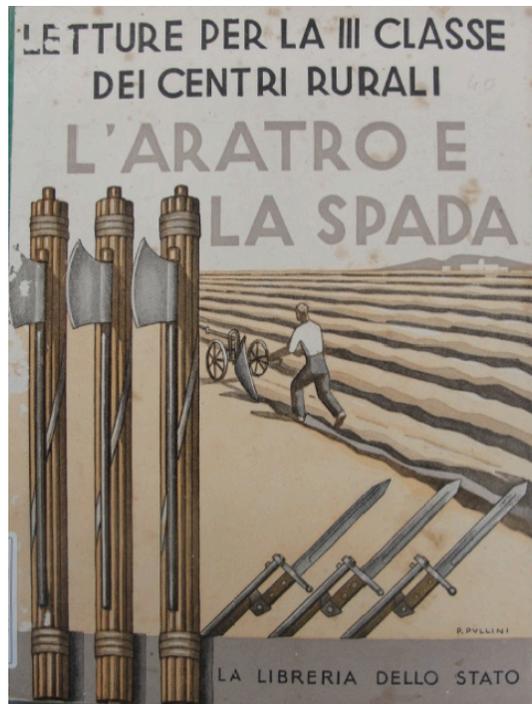


Fig. 3.18. Pio Pullini. 1940. Front cover of Alfredo Petrucci's *L'aratro e la spada: letture per la III classe dei centri rurali*. Color illustration.

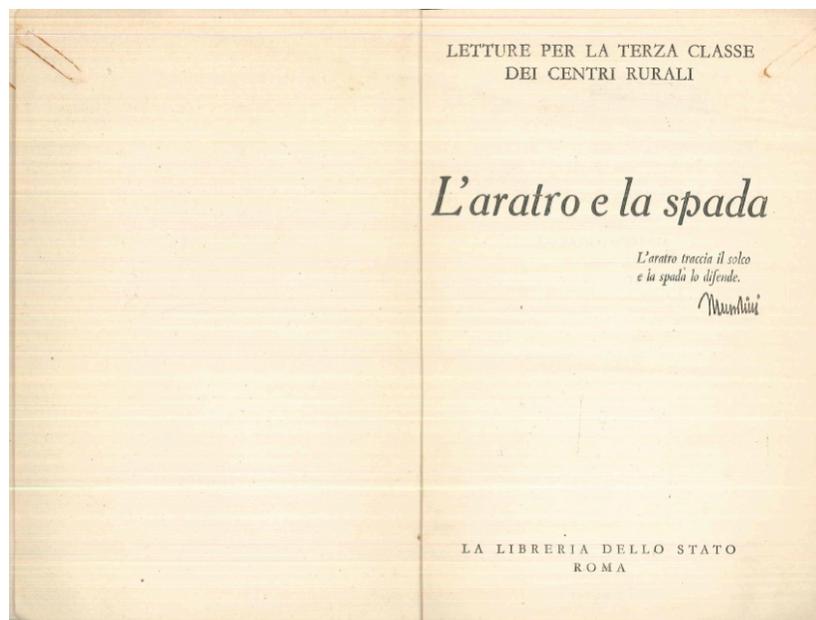


Fig. 3.19. 1940. Front matter of Petrucci's *L'aratro e la spada*. Black and white text. Note the cited quote, "L'aratro traccia il solco e la spada lo difende," with Mussolini's signature underneath. It elucidates the meaning of the signs used in Pullini's cover illustration of Petrucci's textbook.

the “inaugurazione della Provincia di Littoria” on the 19th of December 1934.¹⁷⁶ Sharing the same title as Petrucci’s book, Mussolini’s speech sheds light on the relationship between the tools, which Pullini illustrates. Using bellicose language, the Fascist leader presents farming as a battle. Referring to the “lotta durissima” of draining and cultivating the *Agro pontino* on which the regime established Littoria, Mussolini notes:

Avevamo di fronte la natura, le cose, ed oltre a ciò lo scetticismo, l’inerzia mentale, la poltroneria morale di coloro i quali prima di iniziare il combattimento vogliono essere matematicamente sicuri di avere la vittoria, mentre per noi fascisti più ancora della vittoria ha importanza il combattimento. Poiché quando esso è impregnato con sicurissima volontà, è coronato immancabilmente dalla vittoria.¹⁷⁷

As the repetition of “combattimento” twice and “vittoria” three times suggests, Mussolini imparts the founding of Littoria as a “battaglia.” The enemy, however, consists not of an antagonistic nation or army. Rather, it distinguishes a hostile territory as well as fellow countrymen, who are presumably inimical to such a Fascist project. Against the so-called lazy (“l’inerzia mentale”), skeptical (“lo scetticismo”), and doubtful citizen, Mussolini employs bellicose language to formulate the industrious model Italian worker or *uomo nuovo*.

Within this speech, Mussolini maintains that the model citizen consists not of a virile soldier per se but rather of a farmer, whose “weapons” encompass those used on a daily basis to finish one’s tasks and chores. His speech thus makes reference to and compares with Melchiori’s above discussion of the “educazione guerriera.” This follows: “Perché questa gigantesca opera

¹⁷⁶ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 26, 401-402.

¹⁷⁷ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 26, 402.

non sia turbata o interrotta, è necessario, o camicie nere, o combattenti, è necessario che la nazione sia fortissima nelle sue armi. Poiché è l'aratro che traccia il solco, ma è la spada che lo difende. E il vomere e lama sono entrambi di acciaio temperato, come la fede dei nostri cuori.”¹⁷⁸ As his concluding remarks argue, farming tools—“l'aratro” and “il vomere”—together juxtapose with the “spada” and “lama.” They are a metaphor for the arms that will build and defend Italy’s economic infrastructure. Reproducing Mussolini’s words both in the form of images and text in his third grade textbook, Petrucci avails himself of the agricultural symbols that would further develop the reader’s ideological understanding of farming.

Framed by Mussolini’s speech, Petrucci’s text habitually insists on the symptomatic meaning of terms like *aratro*. Italicized textual references for one either restate or reference the quoted citation included in the front matter of Petrucci’s schoolbook.¹⁷⁹ While visual cues of the plow and prow saturate the textbook, the tools similarly constitute the anthropomorphic protagonists of such stories as “L’aratura.”¹⁸⁰ Yet, and perhaps more importantly, in employing these agricultural signs, Petrucci, in a move similar to both Marcucci and Belloni, evokes and draws attention to historical and contemporary events and activities making the “battaglia della vita,” as Padellaro suggests, “come cosa viva”—tangible, credible, and accessible.

¹⁷⁸ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 26, 402.

¹⁷⁹ Petrucci restates Mussolini’s aphorism, “*L’aratro traccia il solco e la spada lo difende*,” for instance, in the chapter, “L’aratro e la spada.” See *L’aratro e la spada* 10.

¹⁸⁰ Illustrations of the plow and prow as well as such other tools as the shovel and pickaxe may be found in Petrucci 11, 79, 117, 125, 140, and 179.

Interpreting the Ordinary as the Extraordinary: Fascist Reclamation Projects, the Child-reader, and the Battaglia della vita

Within his *Libro unico*, Petrucci shifts between and at times elides the fictional and non-fictional when alluding specifically to the Agro Pontino. Doing so, the author returns to Marcucci's and Belloni's teleological representations of Italian children and their peasant ancestors. Emphasizing a rural *italianità*, this approach likewise becomes a means for Petrucci to interpellate readers into Fascist *contadinelli*. In the chapter titled, "Un'opera da leggenda: la bonifica integrale," for instance, the textbook author personifies the farmer of the Pontine Marshes as a mythical "Mago."¹⁸¹ While the reference to a *magico* may make one recall the fictional protagonist of Belloni's "Piero Pieruccio e Mago Merlino," the author nonetheless demands that readers re-interpret his "magico" as non-fictional.¹⁸² The compiler begins:

Nell'avvenire si parlerà della bonifica dell'Agro Pontino e della Campagna Romana come di una cosa leggendaria. «Forse, diranno gli uomini, fu un Mago, e non un uomo come noi, a concepire quest'opera, forse un popolo di giganti vi pose mano».

¹⁸¹ Petrucci, *L'aratro e la spada* 11-12.

¹⁸² According to the *Dizionario Sabatini Coletti*, the term "magico" refers not only to a person who practices magic, but also to a "personaggio di leggende e fiabe dotato di poteri soprannaturali." It may thus also allude to Romulus, son of a pagan god and the legendary founder of Rome. For a definition of "magico," see *Il Sabatini Coletti: Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*, Milan: RCS, 2011, 24 Feb 2017 <http://dizionari.corriere.it/dizionario_italiano/M/magico.shtml>.

Pensate, figliuoli: prima del Fascismo quella grande estensione di terreno, a poca distanza da Roma, altro non era che una palude squallida.¹⁸³

Marked with quotation marks, Petrucci's opening sentence, "«Forse, diranno gli uomini, fu un Mago, e non un uomo come noi, a concepire quest'opera, forse un popolo di giganti vi pose mano»,” articulates an answer to the implied question, “Chi ha concepito e compiuto quest'opera dell'Agro Pontino?” According to the reply, the agents of the Agro Pontino impersonate mythical figures. A supernatural wizard (“un mago”) devised the project (“[concepito] quest'opera”), while a group of titans (“un popolo di giganti”) carried it out (“vi pose mano”). The remark finds its rationale in the assumption that the “bonifica” represents an extraordinary feat (“una cosa leggendaria”). Speaking on behalf of “uomini,” the narrator conjectures that the task of draining and cultivating the Agro Pontino is so great that only a sorcerer or titan could undertake it. Nonetheless, the term “forse” voices doubt. It prompts readers to react to and contradict the narrative's hypothesis. Addressing them with the second personal plural imperative, “Pensate,” Petrucci invites his audience to reflect on the “bonifica” as a historical rather than fictional event. Linguistically, the adverbial phrase “prima del Fascismo” indicates a specific period in which the Agro Pontino had not yet developed from a marsh into habitable land. Hinting at the familiar epoch in which readers find themselves, the text suggests that Petrucci's students understand and recognize the extraordinary value of the work carried out in their own rural communities everyday.

Pullini's accompanying illustration of a farmer gazing at the Pontine Marshes from the threshold of his home simultaneously emphasizes and encourages the audience to ascertain a

¹⁸³ Petrucci, *L'aratro e la spada* 11.

relationship between their own time period and their reading (see fig. 3.20). An ordinary *contadino* tills the soil of the Agro Pontino in Pullini's drawing. He comes forth as one among the presumed "popolo di giganti" that has carried out the tasks associated with the "bonifica." The picture of the *Duce* hanging in the home of the illustrated farmer additionally provides clues to the textual allusions, "un uomo come noi" and "mago." Together with the story's title, it recalls Petrucci's reference to Mussolini's speech on the founding of Littoria in the front matter of the textbook. The referent of the wizard or architect of the "bonifica" thus becomes Mussolini, who in turn compares with the mythical Romulus as well as the historical Garibaldi.

Having transposed the presumed "legend" of the Agro Pontino into a historical fact, Petrucci next elaborates on the persona of the so-called titan under Mussolini's tutelage. His proceeding account reinforces the farmer not as an imaginary but as a present and real figure. Recounting the events comprising the *Agro Pontino* and the "*bonifica integrale*," Petrucci writes:

Mussolini invece vide il programma in tutti i suoi aspetti e tracciò un programma di *bonifica integrale*, la cui esecuzione fu affidata all'Opera Nazionale Combattenti. Si videro così i nostri fanti, coloro stessi, cioè, che avevano fatto la Grande Guerra, impugnare i badili, i picconi, le zappe e dare l'assalto alla terra, per liberarla dagli sterpi, dagli acquitrini, dalle zanzare.

Sulla terra rinnovata, pronta a ricevere la sementa, sorsero così le prime abitazioni coloniche, si formarono i primi paesi. I contadini-soldati vi si stabilirono [...]



Fig. 3.20. Pio Pullini. 1940. "Un opera da leggenda: la bonifica integrale." Color illustration of a farmer gazing at the Agro Pontino from the threshold of his home. Petrucci, *L'aratro e la spada* 11. Note the picture of Mussolini hanging on the wall to his right. It provides readers the clue to the identity of the "Mago" of the "bonifiche." Just behind stands a farmer plowing fields with an "aratro."

Né l'opera doveva limitarsi al solo Agro Pontino e alle Campagna Romana. Lavori dello stesso genere si vanno compiendo nella Calabria, nella Puglia, nella Campania, in Toscana, alle foci del Po, nelle isole di Sardegna; dovunque cioè, vi sia terra da risanare e da coltivare.¹⁸⁴

Having fought in the *Grande Guerra*, the *contadini* remain soldiers as they look after their fields. Cultivating the land with “badili,” “picconi,” and “zappe” becomes synonymous with carrying out “assaults.” Making the soil fertile moreover signifies an act of liberation (e.g., “liberarla”). Freeing the land from the presumed “despotism” of the inimical “acquittrini” and “zanzare” ascribes the ordinary “contadino” with qualities of militaristic grandeur. In their strife to bring about economic peace through their work in the Agro Pontino, these everymen hence no less appear the descendents of Garibaldi, who likewise returned home from war and became a farmer. Here again Petrucci strives to present agriculture as the basis of an Italian rural identity.

Verbs similarly aggrandize the activities mentioned above. In light of terms—“vide,” “si videro,” “sorsero,” “si formarono,” and “si stabilirono”—his main tense consists of the indicative *passato remoto*. Often used to narrate historical events, the preterit reports completed past events that have not had any consequences on the present.¹⁸⁵ As such, the grammatical form carries temporal qualities that convey a far-reaching and distant past. Prevailing outside present time, the *soldato-contadino* and the “*bonifica integrale*” purport Petrucci’s tale back into a myth or legend. Yet, the author’s periphrastic verbal construction “si vanno compiendo” in the final paragraph of the tale undermines the temporal attributes offered by the *passato remoto*.

¹⁸⁴ Petrucci, *L’aratro e la spada* 12.

¹⁸⁵ Annamaria de Nicolais Napolitano and Maria Tesson Devine, *Manuale di grammatica italiana* (Saratoga: Anma, 1979) 116.

Combining the present indicative form of the infinitive, “andare,” with the gerund of “compiere,” the grammatical construction expresses an action occurring in the present continuous tense. It suggests that the “*bonifica*” not only persists but also continues into the future. Spanning across the various regions of Italy, the mythic distinction of the *soldato-contadino* becomes a present fact, one which students themselves may register and experience. Petrucci’s text hence compliments both Marcucci’s and Belloni’s in the way in which it shifts between the fictional and nonfictional. And indeed as we will see, Petrucci adopts this teleological approach purposefully in a move to interpellate his audience members into becoming the future Fascist working-class farmers to which his text alludes.

Envisioning oneself as a Soldato-Contadino: Rural Scholastic Activities and Play

In the above discussion, I have demonstrated how Petrucci orients his audience so that they may recognize the presumed concurrent political and economic impact of the *battaglie della vita* on their own lives. Now, I want to turn to the way in which the textbook author raises the stakes by establishing a direct connection between *soldati-contadini* and the readers themselves. His purpose is to make his students acknowledge themselves as interpellated subjects already on the pathway to adopt the guise of the *uomo nuovo* in the *battaglie della vita*. Like Marcucci and Belloni, Petrucci seeks to subject readers into practicing agricultural work for Fascist Italy’s economic benefit. Here as before, the mediating figure between Petrucci’s young readers and the soldier-farmer happens to be the *balilla*.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ Cfr. above pp. 59-62.

Once he establishes a temporal relationship between the *soldato-contadino* and the *balilla* reader, Petrucci projects the latter into the role of a worker through the intervention of his young protagonists at school. Guided by their “maestro, che indossa l’uniforme di Comandante della GIL,” communities of schoolchildren in Petrucci’s schoolbook, emerge in fields known as the *campicello sperimentale*.¹⁸⁷ A public school garden officially mandated by Gentile’s 1923 *Riforma*, the *campicello* consists of a microcosmic space in which both characters and audience members perform the agricultural duties carried out by adults: they till fields and plant crop.¹⁸⁸ As the protagonists wear the regalia of *balilla*, their agricultural tasks in the *campicello* thereto resemble militaristic exercises. Alluding to this academic turf, Petrucci contextualizes such previous depictions of *balilla* as that found on the cover of Belloni’s *Libro unico*.¹⁸⁹ Recurring often in Petrucci’s work, the *campicello* represents readers’ own familiar scholastic training as a *battaglia* that contributes to Fascist Italy’s economic welfare. Let me now turn to three reading exercises portraying *balilla* in their *campicello sperimentale*.

Providing a tour of the fictional school grounds in his *Libro unico*, Petrucci describes the *campicello* for the first time in the chapter, “S’è capovolto il mondo.” Characterizing the gardens, the textbook compiler alludes to readers’ own farming exercises at school. He states: “Aule spaziose, finestre aperte sulla campagna, arredi comodi ed acconci, e fuori, attaccato all’edificio, perfino un campicello sperimentale. In quel campicello i ragazzi, a certe ore, con le maniche rimboccate, zappano, vangano, sarchiano, sotto la guida del maestro.”¹⁹⁰ While he aims at providing an overview of the school grounds, Petrucci’s focus in this initial passage gives precedence to the “campicello.” Lacking any detail, the first phrase, “Aule spaziose, finestre

¹⁸⁷ Petrucci, *L’aratro e la spada* 30.

¹⁸⁸ See Lombardi 389 and Marcucci, *Il programma didattico* 7.

¹⁸⁹ Cfr. above, pp. 53-54.

¹⁹⁰ Petrucci, *L’aratro e la spada* 30.

aperte sulla campagna, arredi comodi ed acconci, e fuori, attaccato all'edificio, perfino un campicello sperimentale," offers no insight into the activities, which students engage within the classroom. It rather serves as a vantage point from which one may peer into the undertakings of the school garden. By contrast, the following phrase, "In quel campicello i ragazzi, a certe ore, con le maniche rimboccate, zappano, vangano, sarchiano, sotto la guida del maestro," specifies the protagonist's and, by extension, readers' academic training. Within the gardens, children akin to the adult *soldati-contadini* mentioned above hoe ("zappano"), dig ("vangano"), and weed ("sarchiano") the ground under the supervision of their *maestro*.

About ten pages further in the chapter, "Il lavoro dei campi," Petrucci reemphasizes a militaristic interpretation of fieldwork through another, second reference to the *campicello*. Here, the protagonists attend a film spectacle provided by a *cinema ambulante*.¹⁹¹ As it discusses the propaganda campaign, the *battaglia del grano*, the film particularly draws a parallel between adult farmers and school children, who till fields and plant crop. Describing the interest with which the schoolchildren watch the movie, Petrucci writes: "Ma anche i nostri scolaretti stanno attenti. L'argomento li riguarda, e come! Non hanno anche loro un campicello sperimentale da coltivare?"¹⁹² The interjection "L'argomento li riguarda, e come!" in addition to the comparative adverb "anche" ("also") highlights the link between Petrucci's young protagonists and the adult farmers, who plant and harvest wheat. Like the adults accompanying them, the children benefit from the film as they obtain information with which they will cultivate their "campicello" well. However, as the film also teaches the agricultural methods that will ensure, what the film says,

¹⁹¹ Petrucci, *L'aratro e la spada* 38-39. The *cinema ambulante* was a propaganda machine administered within the more isolated rural areas of Italy during the Fascist *ventennio*. Refer to Mabel Berezin, "Cultural Form and Political Meaning: State-subsidized Theater, Ideology, and the Language of Style in Fascist Italy," *The American Journal of Sociology* 99.5 (1994): 1237-1286.

¹⁹² Petrucci, *L'aratro e la spada* 39.

“*la nostra indipendenza economica*,” the characters learn that their deeds contribute to the country’s Fascist autarchic policies.¹⁹³ Namely, they understand not only how to correctly grow wheat in their *campicello sperimentale*, but also how to interpret their own work as a patriotic *battaglia*. Though on a much smaller scale, Petrucci’s protagonists and thereby readers emerge as *soldati-contadini*, worthy of the prestige bestowed upon not only the peasant adults accompanying them but also such mythic and historical figures as Romulus, Garibaldi, and Mussolini. Through agriculture, all these figures follow an “educazione guerriera” and display the rural national identity that ties them together.¹⁹⁴

As a result of their training in *campicelli sperimentali*, Petrucci by the end of his *Libro* thirdly offers his protagonists as the readers’ frame of reference for practicing manual work beyond the training ground of *campicelli sperimentali*. As battle qualifies agriculture, the theme infiltrates into moments of play in which Petrucci’s young *balilla* envisage themselves as rural adult men. In the two-and-a-half-page chapter, “I nostri piccoli colonizzatori,” character Leonetto and his friends play a game of pretend and imagine themselves as rural adult men.¹⁹⁵ Casting themselves into the role of the *soldato-contadino*, the boys first reckon themselves as soldiers fighting in Italy’s colonial wars in Ethiopia. Doing so, they transform the “aia” or farmyard in which they play into an imaginary “campo di battaglia eccellente.”¹⁹⁶ Once winning their imagined “military battle,” their guise as soldiers evolves into that of workers. As the

¹⁹³ Petrucci, *L’aratro e la spada* 38.

¹⁹⁴ This teleological approach indeed reminds us here of Althusser’s treatise on ideology and subjection. According to Althusser, “[The] score of Ideology of the current ruling class which integrates into its music the great themes of the Humanism of the Great Forefathers, who produced the Greek Miracle even before Christianity, and afterwards the Glory of Rome, the Eternal City, and the themes of Interest, particular and general, etc. nationalism, moralism and economism” “[contributes] to the same result: the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation.” See Althusser 104.

¹⁹⁵ Petrucci, *L’aratro e la spada* 202-204.

¹⁹⁶ Petrucci, *L’aratro e la spada* 202.

narrator notes, the boys immediately “trasformano a un tratto in ingegneri, in pontieri, in selciatori, in contadini. Le loro sciabolette di legno, i loro moschetti di latta, le loro pistole, diventano picconi, zappe, badili.”¹⁹⁷ While Leonetto trades his “insegne di generale” for that of the *contadino*, Bruno, one of the main character’s playmates, becomes a *fattore*. Managing his employees, Bruno states: “Figliuoli, non basta aver conquistato l’Etiopia; bisogna adesso colonizzarla. Su, aprite strade, alzate ponti, dissodate terre.”¹⁹⁸ The game of pretend blurs the distinction between actual battle and work as the boys easily shift roles between the soldier and farmer. Armed with the familiar “picconi, zappe, badili,” the “piccoli colonizzatori” possess the same tools as the *soldati-contadini* of Petrucci’s tale on the *bonifica integrale*.¹⁹⁹ Conquering and colonizing becomes synonymous once again with digging the land and building roads and bridges. These boys, in other words, fortify Italy’s infrastructure through their farming work.

Once Leonetto and his mates evolve from soldiers into farmers, they enter into a world governed by the rules and norms of the adult Fascist world. The roles, which they take, require them to work as adults do. Appearing disciplined, they complete their tasks quickly and

¹⁹⁷ Petrucci, *L’aratro e la spada* 204.

¹⁹⁸ Petrucci, *L’aratro e la spada* 204.

¹⁹⁹ Despite the game, which Leonetto and his friends play, I want to point out here that the child protagonist never actually engages in any battle or war in any edition of the *Libro unico dello Stato*. Only adult men—fathers, elder brothers, uncles, and grandfathers—recount their experiences in war. Women, as expected, are generally elided from this discourse. The young protagonists of the Fascist era textbooks contrast with De Amicis’ *ragazzo lombardo* and *tamburino sardo*. While De Amicis’ characters participate and suffer injuries in battle, children—protagonists as well as readers—are discouraged from taking up actual arms in the *Libro unico dello Stato*. They are told that being responsible, hard workers will permit them to become soldiers. Explaining the meaning of the *decalogo*—*credere, obbedire, combattere*—Belloni, for instance, addresses his students and notes: “Tu non hai ancora un’arma; le tue mani sono troppo tenere e piccole per impugnarla, ma se ti batterai valorosamente contro i tuoi difetti e farai in modo di essere un bravo Balilla, combatterai anche tu, la tua brava battaglia. Se obbedirai a queste tre parole, diventerai un vero italiano, un vero Fascista, un vero soldato.” Compare De Amicis, *Cuore* 46-51, 89-98 to Belloni 8.

efficiently, (e.g., “i nostri soldatini fanno più presto”).²⁰⁰ Bruno’s imperatives, “aprite,” “alzate,” and “dissodate,” moreover characterize the fictitious realm with qualities of hierarchy and, therefore, “rules of respect.” Bruno gives orders, as the others obey. Returning home from war, the boys imagine themselves thus fighting a domestic “battaglia.” They appear mobilized by Mussolini’s speech proclaiming Italy as an “Impero” following the annexation of Ethiopia in 1936.²⁰¹ Indeed, Bruno acquires Mussolini’s guise, as he demands Leonetto and his friends to work. As he proposes the *Duce*’s words in the narrative, Petrucci writes: “Una voce in quel punto sembra giungere all’orecchio dei nostri soldatini, come portata dal vento. È la voce che tutti conoscono, la voce che viene da Roma e al cui suono ogni cuore sobbalza. / *Il popolo italiano*—diceva quella voce—*ha creato col suo sangue l’impero. Lo feconderà col suo lavoro e lo difenderà contro chiunque con le sue armi.*”²⁰² Inspired by their leader’s words, the protagonists answer the regime’s call for a future generation of workers that will develop (e.g., “feconderà”) and safeguard (e.g., “difenderà”) the Fascist nation’s imperial and economic conquests as their presumed ancestors have done. Here we again see the teleology at work: such characters as Bruno *can* legitimately emulate Mussolini, as they are both defined by and practice the agricultural activities of their ancestors.

Expressed through a game of make-believe, Leonetto’s academic training has enabled him to interpellate himself willingly into the Fascist adult world of strife. By the end of Petrucci’s textbook, the main character has indeed graduated from his *campicello sperimentale* and plows his family’s fields. As the narrator in the chapter, “La trebbiatura,” notes, the protagonist “prende posto accanto alla macchina [di trebbiatura] ed aiuta Ornella a disporre i

²⁰⁰ Petrucci, *L’aratro e la spada* 204.

²⁰¹ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 27, 268-269.

²⁰² Compare Petrucci, *L’aratro e la spada* 203 to Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 27, 269.

sacchi sotto la bocchetta.”²⁰³ Leonetto no longer plays pretend. By helping his sister, Ornella, and father plow the “aia,” he pronounces a “voglia” to contribute to the “battaglia del grano.”²⁰⁴ While he does not engage in any physical fight, his commitment to the “battle of wheat” converts him into a *soldato-contadino* worthy of the valor ascribed to Romulus and Remus, Garibaldi as well as the *Duce*. He heeds the Mussolini’s call, echoed previously by his friend Bruno. Through such a narrative shift in which an imaginary act of play becomes a reality for the protagonist, Petrucci draws a picture by which readers can fathom their own future as *italiani nuovi*. They like Leonetto need not play pretend. Recognizing their own work in *campicelli sperimentali*, these readers already appear as interpellated subjects, as they practice the “know-how,” needed to become a Fascist *soldato-contadino*.²⁰⁵ Provided that they continue to train themselves to obey Mussolini, discipline themselves, and respect the hierarchy in place within their Fascist society, they too will progress from their *campicelli* and help their families in their utopian agricultural “battle” to sustain Italy’s economic future.

Forging a Devout Path to a Fascist Economic Utopia: Deification of the Soldier-Farmer

In Petrucci’s work, child-readers find themselves *already* on the pathway to becoming *uomini nuovi* thanks to their agricultural training as *balilla*. In such proceeding fourth grade texts as Angiolo Silvio Novaro’s *Il libro della quarta classe elementare, letture*, however, this is not

²⁰³ Petrucci, *L’aratro e la spada* 206.

²⁰⁴ Petrucci, *L’aratro e la spada* 207.

²⁰⁵ In my reference to ideological *praxis* and the idea of individuals as “*always already* subjects,” I am recalling Althusser 117.

the case.²⁰⁶ Assuming the role of the *uomo nuovo* in Novaro becomes much more challenging, as it requires one to reflect on and rectify one's immorally selfish and lazy attitude. Novaro perhaps does this intentionally in an attempt to adapt his work to the growing age of the child, whom he no longer considers pure and innocent. Asking readers to take agency for their misdeeds, the schoolbook author particularly depicts the road to becoming the ideal *soldato-contadino* through a Christian theological framework. He thus helps us understand the stakes of such previous *Libri unici* in which the farmer represents the sublime.²⁰⁷ Building on students' interpretive framework, Novaro deifies agriculture. He continues to employ war and battle, as previous authors have, in his religious characterization of the *soldato-contadino*. Adopting a bombastic tone, nonetheless, he seeks to build a "memoria affettiva" that would compel readers to admit their disobedience and adopt instead the behaviors of the utopian *soldato-contadino*. Through Novaro's book, we can see how various editions of the *Libro unico* work together to build an education that would coherently and consistently shape its rural audience into Fascist *contadini*.

An excerpt from Alfredo Panzini's 1929 novel, *I giorni del sole e del grano*, Novaro's chapter titled, "La trebbiatura," for instance, recalls Petrucci's work as it interprets wheat harvesting and threshing as a violent yet religious war of sacrifice.²⁰⁸ Describing men and women returning home from gathering wheat from the fields, the narrator begins:

²⁰⁶ The Ministry of Education disseminated Novaro's textbook in both rural and urban schools between 1930-1937. In 1938, Bottai replaced it with Bargellini's. See Bacigalupi 197 and also "Ripartizione della vendita delle rimanenze del Libro di Stato per l'anno scolastico 1932-1933," *Giornale della Libreria* 2-9 July 1932: 190-195.

²⁰⁷ I am here referring specifically to Marcucci's romanticized depiction of farmers harvesting wheat in his second grade textbook as well as to Belloni's anecdotes "Il seminatore" and "Il Natale di Roma." Cfr. above pp. 47-49, 57-61.

²⁰⁸ Novaro 41-42. Joining Fascist sympathizers Giovanni Gentile and Luigi Pirandello, Panzini signed the *Manifesto degli intellettuali fascisti* in 1925. See Emilio R. Papa, *Fascismo e cultura* (Padua: Marsilio, 1974) 139-142.

La squadra, ecco, dei braccianti, uomini e donne, con le forche, con le bisacce, con le biciclette: arriva di corsa nell'aja precedendo la trebbiatrice. Scamiciati, discinti, qualche gamba fasciata, ubriachi di caldo, di fatica, di sudore. Cappello piantato in testa. Sembra un'orda di occupazione armata.

No, vengono soltanto per trebbiare.

--'Dove, piantiamo la bandiera?

Piantano la bandiera tricolore su la siepe.

Le facce di questi lavoratori sono interessanti. Le facce dei contadini sono pacate, aperte, e se ne trova qualcuna anche molto intelligente: le facce di costoro sono torve, aggrondate, chiuse.

È vero che è dall'alba che queste genti lavorano nel polverone, sotto il sole implacabile, dietro la trebbiatrice; e finito un podere si riversano come un ciclone sopra un altro podere.

Ma come si sono messi al lavoro, diventano buoni figliuoli.

Interrogati, rispondono anche.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ Novaro 41.

Described as an “occupazione armata” and “squadra,” the narrative reminds its addressees that the *contadino* or *contadina* signifies a soldier. Characterizing the collective group of “armed” farmers with the third person singular verb “arriva,” the author’s language does not differentiate one laborer from the next. They move in unison as one body. As the phrase “Interrogati, rispondono anche” implies, each member “responds” when “questioned” and displays the typical traits of an obedient soldier. While previous tales have illustrated the *soldato-contadino* working in an agricultural “battlefield” (“aja”), the “squadra” in contrast has concluded its tasks. Centering on their bodies, the narrative discloses the outcome of their hard work. With torn and worn-out clothes, the farmers arrive at the fields “scamicciati” (“shirtless”) and “discinti” (“scantily dressed”). As they are “ubriachi di caldo, di fatica, di sudore,” their toil represents strenuous exercise. Marked moreover with a “gamba fasciata,” the *contadino* appears to have “battle wounds.” The pejorative suffix, “-one,” in “polverone” (“dust”) in addition to the negative adjective “implacabile” (“merciless”) ascribed to the sun suggests nature as a hostile enemy.²¹⁰ Though tired and fatigued, their gesture of planting the Italian flag suggests victory. Their work has empowered them to conquer the land.

Yet, as one battle has ended, another begins. The narrative shifts focus off the farmer onto the “macchina di trebbiatrice.” Like the *contadino*, the threshing machinery obtains qualities that typify military equipment. Describing the “trebbiatrice,” the narrator notes:

Fischia la macchina, il motore dà alcuni scoppi, accelera come una mitragliatrice:
in cime al barco del grano s’affaccia il primo lavoratore che toglie la croce, e
butterà il primo corone nella trebbiatrice.

²¹⁰ The idea of a hostile environment echoes Mussolini’s language in his address to the rural community of Littoria. Cfr. ch. 3 pp. 67-68.

La trebbiatrice si scuote, si squassa: cominciano a ballare i telai, eruttano fiotti di paglia. La gente accorre ai posti di combattimento.²¹¹

Novaro's portrayal of the "trebbiatrice" is a violent one. Nouns such as "scoppi" ("blasts") as well as verbs "si scuote" ("rocks"), "si squasse" ("shakes violently"), and "eruttano" ("erupt") attribute the wheat thresher with aural and visual imagery that allude to the blasts of bombs. Used often to describe liquids, "fiotto" suggests the image of spurting or gushing blood.²¹² The memorable rhyme offered by the repeated suffix "-trice," moreover, associates the "trebbiatrice" with the "mitragliatrice." Its brutal "machine-gun-like" characteristics juxtapose with the religious imagery offered by such vocabulary as "croce" and "corone." Marked by a "croce," the production of grain alludes to Christ's sacrifice and suffering. Hence the "battle" of harvesting and threshing wheat attains a divine and spiritual purpose that deserves reverence and following.²¹³ The author's use of apotheosis here to deify *contadini* thus associates the *mietitura* with symbols of religious martyrdom. His fervent terminology serves to entice one's sense of indebtedness to Fascist Italy's rural workers as well as to remind that the path to becoming an *agricoltore* involves adopting notions of selflessness, hard work, devotion, and discipline.

²¹¹ Novaro 41-42.

²¹² See "Fiotto," *Il Sabattini Coletti: Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*, (Milan: RCS, 2011), 13 May 2016 <http://dizionari.corriere.it/dizionario_italiano/F/fiotto.shtml>.

²¹³ Novaro's personification of Christian values in the stacks of wheat recalls and reinforces once more Belloni's use of similar religious imagery in "Il seminatore." See above p. 61, n. 140.

Purging the Anti-uomo Nuovo, Purifying One's Rural Soul: Novaro's Insufferable Fortunato

In order that one may forge a path to assuming the role of the *contadino-soldato*, Novaro's *Libro di Stato* follows Panzini's tale with the anecdote, "Fortunato in città," which foregrounds the deeds and traits of an anti-hero. Doing so, Novaro applies Marcucci's original lexicon on selfish "sbandati," who refuse to work. Indeed, serving as an antithesis to the *uomo nuovo*, Novaro's disgraceful character emerges as an indolent and immoral male worker discontent with his life. Engaging the reader through the use of a repetitive narrative structure, the textbook compiler incites his students to reproduce the values they learned in the first grade, condemn the protagonist of the tale, and embrace the ideal conditions of living and working in Italy's rural countryside as morally upright *contadini*.

Located a third of the way in Novaro's schoolbook, the tale, "Fortunato in città," adopts the narrative structure of a circular story.²¹⁴ Organized in a manner similar to Belloni's "Piero Pieruccio e Mago Merlino," it aims at arousing discontent for such behaviors as disobedience, lack of self-discipline, and selfishness. Embodying these negative traits, Fortunato, Novaro's main character, serves to arouse ire. While the title offers no information other than the name of the story's protagonist, the opening paragraph provides the lens by which the audience might discern Fortunato's despicable persona. A *contadino* discontent with his country life and job, Fortunato longs to move to the city. Describing his character traits, Novaro begins: "Or sono alcuni anni, in un paese dell'Appenino, fra quattro biche alte come monumenti che attorniano una bella cascina, stava di casa di un certo Fortunato, un contadino che sarebbe stato fortunato davvero, se non avesse sortito da natura un carattere di scontentaccio e brontolone che non ce

²¹⁴ Novaro 54-60. We know nothing about the author of this tale, who is only listed by the acronym, I.M.C.

n'era un altro."²¹⁵ Pejorative and augmentative suffixes (“-one” and “-accio”) in the descriptive nouns “brontolone” and “scontentaccio” furnish a negative impression of Fortunato, whose judgments to leave the countryside serve to arouse skepticism for the main character. With the simile “come monumenti,” the narrator likens the “quattro biche” (“heaps,” “piles,” “stacks of produce”) surrounding Fortunato with favorable qualities. As a “monument,” the stacks of crop ensue as exemplary objects worthy of commemoration. Marking the rural territory, these so-called “monuments” make Fortunato’s land worthy of praise. They insinuate the basis of the protagonist’s fortune, prosperity, comfort, and happiness. In light of the beauty ascribed to his *paese*, the narrator offers no reason for Fortunato to leave his home. His complaints thus emerge ironic, and the main character consequently proves ungrateful at the very onset of the tale.

Foreshadowing the events of the story by way of the relative clause and conditional phrase, “che sarebbe stato fortunato davvero, se non avesse sortito da natura un carattere di scontentaccio e brontolone,” Novaro’s text relays the information that will stimulate readers to interpret the story’s title and plot: Fortunato will leave the countryside and perhaps hate the city. But will he return to his previous life with regret? Though an anti-*uomo nuovo*, will Fortunato find the way to rectify his misdeeds and finally embrace the life of *soldato-contadino*? Novaro calls upon readers’ to answer these questions as he implicitly asks them to reflect upon Fortunato’s deeds.

As the tale progresses, Fortunato’s tendency to be a “brontolaccio” further reveals itself and reinforces readers’ hostility toward his character. His complaints particularly prove ironic as they contrast with the tale’s bucolic illustrations of Fortunato’s home. The narrator notes:

²¹⁵ Novaro 54.

A Maggio il grano spigava; a giugno era d'oro; e a San Giovanni brillavano le falci. La mietitura arrivava come una sagra. Si udivan voci di bimbi e cinguetti di passeri che facevan festa al grano nuovo; e di sera, sull'aia, canti e musiche d'organetti.

Ma Fortunato non era contento. Si asciugava il sudore della fronte e brontolava:--
Goccioliamo come candele. Che voglia han di cantare, con questo caldo, quella gente?²¹⁶

Celebrations surround Fortunato in the countryside. Terms such as “d'oro” (“of gold”) and “brillavano” (“shine”) contribute pleasant visual imagery to the wheat. As “bimbi” and “passeri” carouse in joy from the newly collected grain, they venerate the stacks of wheat with “canti e musiche d'organetti” (“chants and barrel organ music”). The narrator hence associates Fortunato's *podere* with ecclesiastical music and reveals the heaps once more as idolized monuments in a religious “sagra” or festival. By way of this narrative description, Novaro calls readers' attention back to the religious imagery he used in portraying *contadini* in “La trebbiatura.” He contrasts the contemptible Fortunato with the ideal and righteous *agricoltore*, reminding readers of the model, which they themselves ought to emulate.

Novaro's pastoral characterization of the wheat fields relays Bruno Bramanti's black and white illustration of Fortunato, carrying a basket of apples (see fig. 3.21). Behind in the background lies the protagonist's neatly tilled field. Holding two baskets full of apples, Fortunato has succeeded in producing a large crop of fruit. His villa sits at the foothills of the

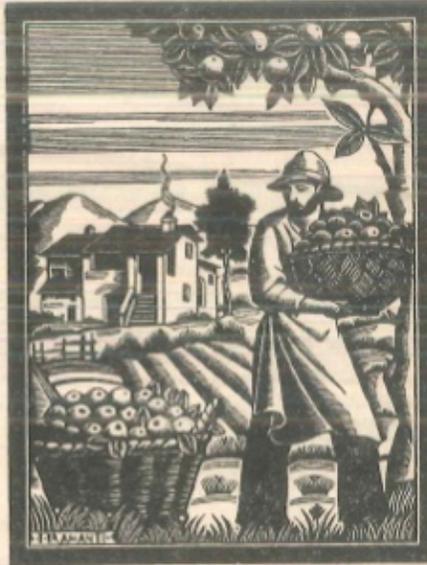
²¹⁶ Novaro 54.

A` ottobre l'uva era matura. Se a settembre Iddio aveva mandato una scossetta di pioggia, i tralci parevano spezzarsi, carichi di grappoli sí grossi che ogni forbiciata colmava una cesta, e poche ceste un tino.

Tutti gli uomini del contado, con i calzoni rimboccati sopra il ginocchio, e le mani impiastriate di mosto, pigiavano; e piú c'era da faticare, piú eran contenti.

Ma Fortunato brontolava sempre. — Questo non è davvero un ballo da signori! Bella fortuna nascere in campagna! Di giugno consumarsi in tant'acqua, d'ottobre rompersi le gambe, e di novembre affondare nel pantano. Ma se Dio vuole, non si morrà dove s'è nati.

Il chiodo di Fortunato era di volersene andare in città.



Fortunato ha una visita

L'inverno seguente passò da quelle parti un operaio della città, al quale Fortunato offerse un bicchiere di vin nuovo. Bevendo, si fecero delle confidenze, e il contadino brontolò ancora che la vita in campagna non gli piaceva e che, se l'avessero aiutato un tantino, se ne sarebbe volentieri andato in città.

Fig. 3.21. Bruno Bramanti. 1931. "Fortunato." Black and white drawing of the insufferable Fortunato gathering apples in his field. Novaro 55. The image visually captures and emphasizes the tranquility of the rural life that Fortunato abandoned for the chaotic city. Fortunato's furrowed brows here suggest his discontent with rural life.

mountains nearby. With no one else in sight, the pastoral landscape looks tranquil. The serenity of the fertile countryside ironically juxtaposes Fortunato's countenance. Staring at his crop with furrowed eyebrows, the character emerges dissatisfied and unhappy with the results of his toil. Bramanti's illustration thus reemphasizes the character's insufferable persona and misjudgments, making him the object of readers' mistrust once more.

Though having the potential to be a productive and successful *agricoltore*, Fortunato nevertheless renounces his rural life for an urban one. Yet as the reader may have predicted, life in the city does not please Fortunato and rather exacerbates his grumbling behavior. Here, his resentment to the city proves significant to the thematic scope of the tale. Within the three-page account on Fortunato's new life, the narrative depicts the *città* not through an illustration but through a series of complaints made by not only the main protagonist but also other supporting characters, who disapprove of Fortunato's disposition. The text thus voices the readers' frustration, providing them with a sense of satisfaction for their own repudiation of the character's bad qualities. Providing an avenue of relief, the text converges once more upon the more honorable traits of a rural *italiano nuovo* that students themselves ought to model. The first complaints come from Fortunato's wife, who denounces the city on several occasions. Finding fault with its level of cleanliness, she notes: "La città mi pare un bell'imbrogliaio [...] Belle strade, non c'è che dire, e bei palazzi anche, a vederli di fuori; mentre da noi vi sono pessime strade e case bruttine. Ma di dentro non c'è paragone: da noi aria e pulizia in abbondanza, mentre qui si respira appena. La bellezza della città, vorrei sbagliarmi, dev'essere tutta nell'apparenza."²¹⁷ A page later, she again observes with regret: "Oh, i nostri bei sarmenti della vigna che s'è venduta! [...] Oh, le nostre fiammate di paradiso! Qui non si fa che spendere, e farebbero pagare fin l'aria

²¹⁷ Novaro 56.

che si respira.²¹⁸ Marked by loud traffic, small living spaces, uncontrollable weather, low wages, and disease, urban life contrasts with the spaciousness, peace, and happiness associated with the countryside.²¹⁹ As they have read such similar tales as Belloni's "Ritorno da Roma," in previous editions of *Libri unici*, this information on the detriments of city life is not something new to readers. Rather, it serves to repeat the values they have already learned. In this way, students might compare their own principles to that of the main character and, in their resentment of Fortunato, strive for the pathway to become *italiani nuovi*. Yet, Novaro does not stop here.

Offering further complaints through his characters' dialogue, Novaro reveals new information about the detriments of the city and more importantly the life of the "operaio." Doing so, he seeks to not only restrain students within the countryside, as Belloni did, he likewise seeks to ensure that his students overcome any temptation of renouncing farming for an urban occupation. This next complaint comes from Fortunato himself. Though content at first, Fortunato quickly begins to hate city life. Like his wife, he feels contrite for their new urban locale in addition to his new vocation as an "operaio" in a "fonderia."²²⁰ Suffocating from the heat of the "officina" where he works, he quits his position and decides instead to be a "fattorino di bottega." Changing his job, however, Fortunato earns a great deal less than before and has difficulty sustaining his family. Lamenting his decision, he observes: "Oh, lassù [...] lassù, in campagna, d'inverno la terra riposava, e riposavo anch'io; ma qui non c'è requie per nessuno. Bel guadagno venirsene in città con sette bocche, e due braccia soltanto che lavorino. Cresca, almeno, in fretta il primo figliuolo, che abbia un aiuto anch'io!"²²¹ The structure of Fortunato's complaint parallels that of his wife. Both begin with the mourning interjection "Oh" and remind

²¹⁸ Novaro 57.

²¹⁹ Novaro 57-59.

²²⁰ Novaro 57.

²²¹ Novaro 58.

readers of the beauty and tranquility of the countryside. Combining the *si impersonale* construction with the adverbial phrase, “Qui non,” Fortunato and his wife make sweeping statements about the negative effects of urban life. While the protagonist’s spouse criticizes the level of pollution surrounding them, Fortunato compares the responsibilities of a *contadino* and an *impiegato*. According to the main character, the former enjoys a lighter workload than the latter. Whereas the *contadino* has time to rest, the *impiegato* does not. While Fortunato alone could maintain his family through farming, his salary in the city remains inadequate. He needs his eldest son to contribute to the family income. However, as his boy grows ill from the poor living conditions of the city, Fortunato finds himself in dire circumstances. City life thus not only proves detrimental to one’s morale, but also can potentially kill a person. It is this new and threatening aspect of the city, which prompts both the main character’s transformation and underscores the readers’ appreciation of the rural through the urban.

Fortunato’s change in character notably conveys a religious undertone and raises the readers’ own stakes in pursuing farming. Perturbed by the failing health of his child, Fortunato and his wife receive the following advice from their doctor: “Che maledetto miraggio è questo che vi tira in città? Tornate in campagna, lavorate la terra ch’è tanta salute e tanta ricchezza!”²²² In a terse statement, the doctor offers Fortunato the final complaint of the story using religious terminology. Echoing the wife’s previous statement of the city’s alluring “apparenza,” he reinterprets the appeal of urban life as a temptation (“maledetto miraggio”). His language thus draws attention to the risk in renouncing rural life once more. As a temptation, abandoning his agricultural career signifies a sin that engenders life-threatening consequences as well as social indignation transpiring in the form of not only the doctor’s but also readers’ own critique.

²²² Novaro 59.

It is worthwhile here to note that in contrast to the narrative's description of the tranquil *paese*, audience members find no illustration or detailed account of the city. Their biased judgments on the stubborn Fortunato's choice to move to the city rather are corroborated by the characters' complaints and the narrative's religious terminology. With the second person plural, direct object pronoun "vi" the doctor's rhetorical question seems to address not only Fortunato and his family, but also anyone who may have been tempted by the city. Yet, the narrative structure as well as the series of misfortunes that have befallen Fortunato has prepared the reader not only to think twice about idealizing city life, but also to renounce it. The doctor's repudiation of Fortunato's decision to leave the country has thus become the addressee's. As his return recapitulates the splendor of the countryside with the repeated phrases, ("le belle sagre del grano e dell'uva, i canti sull'aia di sera, e le danze del tino, con i piedi nel mosto e il gorgoglio del vin nuovo in un rivolo porporino"), Fortunato's satisfaction in having reclaimed his rural life indicates a significant moment of catharsis within the tale. Rurality perhaps not only reconciles and resolves the audience's frustration with the main character.²²³ It likewise provides a model by which readers may reevaluate their own preferences for the city and learn like Fortunato to appreciate their own rural lives. The changes within their own attitudes thus similarly result in a religious transformation and mark the moment in which they too recognize themselves on the path to becoming rural workers venerated by their Fascist society.²²⁴

²²³ Novaro 60. Rurality as the answer to overcoming the "battaglia della vita" here calls us back to Belloni's maternal *contadina* in "Ritorno da Roma." Cfr. above p. 69.

²²⁴ Within Novaro's *Libro di Stato*, Fortunato appears not the only errant character, whose choices and achievements are left to the judgments of the reader. Divided into four parallel accounts, the pattern story titled, "Pionieri," for example compares the trials and tribulations of four Italian working men—an "industriale," an "insegnante," an "aviatore," and an "agricoltore"—who meet randomly aboard a ship headed toward Italy from South America. Having left their native country to seek fortune, the characters successfully contribute to making Italy's economy or culture flourish abroad. Among the tales told by the "viaggiatori," the

Projecting Readers into Textbook Characters: One Last Effort to Interpellate Rural Children into Fascist “Contadinelli”

A last installment to the series of rural state-issued textbooks, Luigi Rinaldi's *Il libro della quinta classe, letture*, functions, on the one hand, to summarize and synthesize the themes of agriculture available in Marcucci's, Belloni's, Petrucci's and Novaro's work. Within this schoolbook, farming continues to symbolize and relay the economic triumphs and successes of the Fascist regime. In repeating this theme, it strives in a final attempt to mobilize readers to select an agricultural vocation in light of their last year of studies at the elementary school. Yet in order to achieve this goal, the textbook notably diverges from other *Libri unici* by adopting a markedly didactic tone. Its language as a result dictates and urges students to respond and participate directly in the “battaglie della vita” as farmers. Within this next section, I will discuss the use of such didactic language with an analysis of two specific reading exercises.

The first of such anecdotes is Ezio Maria Gray's, “Emigranti italiani di Tunisia.”²²⁵ Here Gray recounts the achievements of Italian peasant immigrants as a means to discuss the country's economic growth. Doing so it recapitulates a utopian vision of cultivating autarchic foodstuffs

farmer's nonetheless is the most suggestive. An errant individual, the “terzo viaggiatore” develops into a prodigal son who notably finds redemption in agriculture. Proving a farmer's career more versatile than a lawyer's in light of the fact that his jurisprudence degree remains unrecognized outside of his country, the character's narrative here frowns upon university education and by contrast characterizes farming as both easy and gratifying. Farming, Novaro in turn demonstrates, caters to not only the character's financial wealth but also his religious, moral, and ethical transformation. Developing into a rural *uomo nuovo*, the traveller serves as a model that would encourage readers to remain in their rural communities. Like “Fortunato in città,” “Pionieri” is authored by I.M.C. See Novaro 151-159.

²²⁵ See Rinaldi 125-126. A staunch supporter of Fascism, Gray was a member of the Fascist *Camera dei deputati* as well as a journalist. Collaborating with the *Ministero delle Colonie* and the *Ministero degli Affari Esteri*, Gray helped devise Fascist textbooks for Italian schools abroad. See “Ezio Maria Gray,” *Camera dei Deputati Portale Storico*, 2016, 17 May 2016 <<http://storia.camera.it/deputato/ezio-maria-gray-18851009#nav>>.

that would sustain Fascist Italy in the future. As the narrative consists of an observation rather than a fictional tale, however, Gray's method of communicating the ideological value of work adopts a direct and straightforward tone that would engage readers. Gray writes:

Come è avvenuto questo ininterrotto afflusso italiano nei riguardi della terra che li ha accolti? Secondo il sistema tradizionale attuato dagli emigranti italiani, in qualunque continente in qualunque secolo fino all'alba del Regime Fascista. Approdare inermi e poveri: nessun preconconcetto di simpatia o di ostilità per il paese e la gente che incontreranno. Sbarcati, guardarsi attorno non per stupirsi, ma per orientarsi. Non lasciarsi entusiasmare da immediati sogni di grandezza, né scoraggiare da ostacoli imprevisti, né corrodere da abitudini forestiere. Un programma solo: lavorare, lavorare, lavorare. Per gli altri costruire strade, lanciare ponti, innalzare dighe: per sé riscattare dalla steppa il campo di grano e radicare il vignette negli interstizi del terreno roccioso. Lavorare e poi risparmiare, non contare le ore di lavoro, ma impiegare ogni soldo che lo sfamarsi e il coprirsi richiedono. Istinto italiano del risparmio: per ritornare più presto se l'Italia è lontana, per chiamare a sé la famiglia se la terra è vicina. E con la famiglia e per essa crearsi mattone su mattone, zolla su zolla, la casa, l'orto, il podere; tesoreggiare senza vantarsi, valutare con cautela e pazienza il campo da allargare, il vigneto da anettere, scegliere il luogo e dare l'offerta alla chiesa, la scuola, e crearsi una Patria piccola, ma precisa a simiglianza di quella grande e lontana

verso la quale il cuore dell'emigrante è poi sempre in ascolto, per rispondere presente se il suo appello gli giunga.²²⁶

As the twice repeated “campo” (“field”) and “vignette” (“vineyards”) in the three phrases— [“(crearsi mattone su mattone, zolla su zolla, la casa, l’orto, il podere”), (“campo da allargare, il vigneto da anettere”), and (“per sé riscattare dalla steppa il campo di grano e radicare il vignette negli interstizi del terreno roccioso”)]—suggest, Gray’s immigrants travelled abroad to seek their fortune via agriculture.²²⁷ Their jobs particularly consisted of growing wheat and grapes. As Gray suggests, the immigrants moreover invested their earnings in either repatriating to Italy, (“per ritornare più presto se l’Italia è lontana”) or establishing Italian communities abroad. Their endeavors by consequence emboldened them to “crearsi una Patria piccola, ma precisa a simiglianza di quella grande e lontana verso la quale il cuore dell'emigrante è poi sempre in ascolto.”²²⁸ Thus the communities Italians established abroad mimicked those found in their native country. Here, Italian expats strove toward realizing the regime’s expansionist policies and contributed toward developing an autarchic Italian economy. “Armata insomma del lavoro,” these men and women once more remind readers of the *soldati-contadini* mentioned in previous *Libri di Stato*.²²⁹ Cultivating land implies their struggle or *battaglia* against other foreign countries in developing a more competitive Italian economy.

²²⁶ Rinaldi 125-126.

²²⁷ Gray’s immigrants here in fact resemble Novaro’s “terzo viaggiatore.” See above p. 101, n. 224.

²²⁸ Gray’s line here compares with the traveller’s in “Pionieri”: “Noi faremo sorgere laggiù villaggi interamente italiani. Fonderemo prosperose fattorie. Quella colonia sarà presto una regione meno ricca dell’altre della più grande Italia.” Both Gray’s immigrant and Novaro’s “viaggiatore” seek to build Italian towns and cities abroad.

²²⁹ Rinaldi 125.

Yet while Gray begins his account with the *passato prossimo* in the rhetorical question, (“Come è avvenuto questo ininterrotto afflusso italiano nei riguardi della terra che li ha accolti?”), he employs the present infinitive form (i.e., “approdare,” “guardarsi,” “non lasciarsi,” “lavorare, lavorare, lavorare,” “costruire,” “lanciare,” “innalzare,” “riscattare,” “radicare,” “risparmiare,” “impiegare,” “crearsi,” “scegliere,” “tesoreggiare”) within virtually every subsequent sentence. It is with this particular verb tense that Gray seeks to encourage readers to adopt a rural vocation. His infinitives here resemble a generic form of verb that does not possess any particular grammatical subject.²³⁰ They imply an abstract agent, who may *potentially* realize the activities Gray lists. Such verbs not only transpose Italy’s past achievements into the present, but also suggest an expectation and recommendation for a future action.²³¹ Gray makes this clear when using the verb, “incontreranno,” (“they will meet”), in the *tempo futuro*. He no longer speaks of completed past events but rather deeds that may be assumed in the time ahead.

Employing infinitives, the author advises readers to seize the role of little pioneers.²³² Repeating the “lavorare” four times, he anticipates that his students will acquire a job, remain prudent, and maintain a steady work pace. Warning against the threat of assimilation, his phrase, “Non lasciarsi entusiasmare da immediati sogni di grandezza, né scoraggiare da ostacoli imprevisti, né corrodere da abitudini forestiere,” advises against the adoption of the unscrupulous culture of the foreign country in which these children may one day find themselves. He implies that Italians maintain their traditions while abroad. Finally, recommending that they “approdare

²³⁰ de Nicolais Napolitano 134.

²³¹ The *Treccani* defines such infinitives as *desiderativi* or *ottativi*. See “Infinito,” *Treccani, La grammatica italiana*, 2012, 16 May 2016 <[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/infinito_\(La_grammatica_italiana\)/>](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/infinito_(La_grammatica_italiana)/>).

²³² By using this term, I am again referring to Novaro’s tale. See above p. 101, n. 224. For a useful definition of the term “pioniere,” see also “Pioniere,” *Dizionario Treccani: vocabolario on line*, 2016, 13 May 2016 <<http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/pioniere/>>.

inermi e poveri: nessun preconetto di simpatia o di ostilità,” he reminds his students to be stoic or “disinteressato.”²³³ Demanding that they be abstemious, that they “defend” the Italian culture and maintain a “stoic” disposition, Gray requests his audience to attain the guise of the Fascist *uomo nuovo* and hence become working *agricoltori*.

Fearing Urban Decay: A Hegemonic Pathway to Rural Fascist Subjection

Shaped according to the model *soldato-contadino*, Gray’s itinerant Fascist *uomo nuovo* reappears in a second, subsequent tale compiled by Luigi Rinaldi and continues to elaborate how children were to face the “battaglie della vita” as adult *soldati-contadini*. Imagining a dialogue between a narrator and readers in the brief tale, “L’urbanesimo,” Gray once more considers the topic of agriculture and immigration.²³⁴ Yet, as his title might suggest, the immigrants he studies do not relocate themselves in other countries. Rather, they migrate internally. Thematically similar to Novaro’s “Fortunato in città” and Belloni’s “Ritorno da Roma,” Gray’s brief anecdote offers another glimpse into the presumed horrors of city. Doing so, it aims at restraining young rural students within the ranks of the peasant class. Unlike Novaro and Belloni, Rinaldi offers no accompanying illustration that would relay one’s attention onto the themes of Gray’s text. The text itself becomes a means of self-reflection and therefore directs students’ attention upon their own thoughts and judgments. Employing a didactic tone once more, the author compels audience members to imagine themselves in presumedly deplorable urban living conditions. Here again we return to the urban space as a means of understanding and appreciating the rural one.

²³³ By way of the adjective “disinteressato,” I compare and link Gray’s terminology with Mussolini’s in his speeches on the Fascist *uomo nuovo*. Mussolini, for one, adopts this specific term when describing syndicalist, Filippo Corridoni. See *Opera omnia*, vol. 21, 413-414.

²³⁴ Rinaldi 239-240.

Beginning the account with a definition of *urbanesimo*, the narrator states: “Urbanesimo significa, in parole semplici, tendenze della popolazione rurale a trasferirsi nella città. / Forse tu abiti in una metropoli e sei tentato di sorridere. /—Come?—pensi—io sogno la bella campagna e il mare senza fine, e c’è invece chi vorrebbe venire a rinchiudersi nella città? / Ciò ti sembra irragionevole e non hai torto. Ma purtroppo il fatto esiste.”²³⁵ Laying out the meaning of *urbanesimo* and the overall motif of his narrative, Gray first delineates the proper appellation for identifying a community’s tendency to emigrate from the country to city. Addressing readers with the second person singular designation, “tu,” he directs their attention to their own geographical location and elicits a conversation on their own temptation to move to the city.²³⁶

Though Gray considers his students *cittadini* with the phrase, “Forse tu abiti in una metropoli,” his claim comes forth ironic. His audience consists of not only urban, but also rural children.²³⁷ The author’s curious assertion begs the question: why might Gray presume an audience of urban readers? His strategic address, in my view, is rhetorical as it praises urban students with an appreciation for the Italian *paese*. Prompting a negative response from these readers, Gray transforms the meaning of *urbanesimo*. Interpreting it according to the “cultural”

²³⁵ Rinaldi 239.

²³⁶ Employing imperatives and the second person singular “tu” throughout his textbook, Rinaldi maintains Gray’s use of the direct address to entice interest in agricultural labor. Examples include: “Tempo di vendemmia” pp. 3-4; “Famiglia e nazione,” p. 51; “Primavera nei campi,” pp. 121-122; “*Bonifiche*: Italia romana e fascista,” pp. 163-164; “Ritornano!” pp. 225-226.

²³⁷ Replacing Forges Davanzati’s *Il balilla Vittorio*, Rinaldi’s *Libro unico* was first published for urban schools in 1939. However, by 1940, the regime decided to disseminate the textbook in rural schools as well. Two years after, the Ministry of Education modified this mandate and commanded urban schools to replace Rinaldi’s textbook with Piero Bargellini’s *Lecture per la quinta classe dei centri urbani*. Rural schools, by contrast, continued to employ Rinaldi’s schoolbook until 1944. The edition I am using here originates from 1940 and thus addresses both urban and rural students. See article 1, Italy, Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale, *Decreto interministeriale 14 agosto 1940-XVIII, n. 28684* 221; and also article 1, Italy, Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale, *Decreto Ministeriale 10 agosto 1942-XX—Norme e modalità per la stampa e la vendita dei testi unici di Stato per l’anno scolastico 1942-43* 289.

knowledge he provides, the writer deciphers *urbanesimo* into a pejorative term and discriminates against those rural students who find city life interesting. Through such intimidation, the author could in turn entice his rural audience to embrace the work of an ideal *soldato-contadino*.

As Gray's anecdote progresses forth, the rural reader indeed develops into the narrator's as well as urban students' object of criticism. The response, ("Come? [...] io sogno la bella campagna e il mare senza fine, e c'è invece chi vorrebbe venire a rinchiudersi nella città?"), presumes a sense of astonishment and disbelief on the urban child's part. He or she is appalled by the fact that Italy's rural youth seeks an urban lifestyle. With the phrase, "Ma purtroppo il fatto esiste," the narrator similarly intimates that *urbanesimo* and the desire for the city is an "unfortunate" phenomenon. The narrator's reaction qualifies the awe of urban readers. Together their censure marginalizes rural students.

Resisting one's demographic status and geographic location implies a refusal of Fascist social norms and a lack of patriotism. Allured by the temptation of city life, the rural child develops qualities that diametrically oppose that of the restrained and industrious Fascist *uomo nuovo*. Highlighting the presumed faults and naiveté of rural children, Gray continues:

È il giovane contadino che qualche volta vuol lasciare i campi santificati dal lavoro dei suoi padri per stabilirsi in un grande centro. Egli non ha mai imparato ad amare veramente la terra ed è questo il suo castigo. Rompere la zolla, lavorarla, affidarla il seme prezioso, gli sembra fatica troppo dura. Ha veduto la città. È rimasto attonito davanti a palazzo superbi e a monumenti solenni [...] e ha pensato: -- Qui c'è da divertirsi. -- Ha assistito per caso all'uscita di schiere e

schiere di operai dai portoni di un'officina e si è detto: -- Qui c'è lavoro e guadagno per tutti.

Il male insidioso dell'urbanesimo lo ha colto [...] Errore grave e imperdonabile! Chi, nato contadino, lascia la sua terra è perduto! La città gli è nemica; egli ne ha visto i miraggi, ma non ne conosce le insidie. Il lavoro dei campi è duro, ma lieto e sano. Quello delle officine è assai spesso penoso.²³⁸

Whereas the reader of Novaro's "Fortunato in città" was set up to criticize the main character, here the audience takes Fortunato's role. Appearing inappreciative of his or her land ("non ha mai imparato ad amare veramente la terra"), deeming his or her job too difficult ("gli sembra fatica troppo dura"), and seduced by the idea that a position in an *officina* is easier than that of a *contadino*, the imagined rural pupil has the aspect of an unpatriotic, unsatisfied, and ungrateful "brontolone."²³⁹ Like Novaro's protagonist, Fortunato, this rural reader develops as the antithesis to Mussolini's *uomo nuovo*. As the narrator warns, such behaviors and beliefs engender an "[errore] grave e imperdonabile!" It procures social shame and ostracism. Parallel to the mother's final utterance in Belloni's "Ritorno da Roma," the line, "Chi, nato contadino, lascia la sua terra è perduto!" advises that one's penchant for the city will result in a squandered life.²⁴⁰

Threatening social exclusion with such demagogic language, Gray entices students to correct their attitudes and embrace their rural community. He facilitates a change by offering an alternate interpretation of life in rural Italy. Addressing his audience once more, he notes:

²³⁸ Rinaldi 239.

²³⁹ Cfr. above pp. 80-81.

²⁴⁰ Cfr. above p. 64.

[II] lavoro dei campi è pieno di poesia e di bellezza, come gli orizzonti aperti, i buoi pazienti nella dirittura dei solchi, le liete veglie d'inverno al caldo delle stalle, e la gioia dei raccolti, quando il volto benediente di Dio sembra più vicino al cuore degli onesti coloni.

Balilla contadino, «Piccola italiana» che vivi in campagna, amate sempre la vostra vita, siatene fieri, consideratela come un privilegio e un onore.»²⁴¹

With the second person plural imperatives—“amate,” “siatene,” and “consideratela”—the narrator now addresses rural rather than urban students. Suggesting that they “consider” the countryside as “un privilegio e un onore,” he provides a romanticized image of the “campagna” that both the narrator and rural audience can share. Anthropomorphic traits of patience ascribed to the livestock make farming a satisfying job. With the phrase, “volto benediente di Dio” (“God’s blessing”), the narrator moreover ascribes religious qualities that augments the “honorable” traits ascribed to agriculture. Recognizing its beauty (i.e., “gli orizzonti aperti” and “buoi pazienti nella dirittura dei solchi”) and taking pleasure in its fecundity (e.g., “la gioia dei raccolti”) would validate their sense of belonging as Fascist Italian *balilla contadini*.

Ending the chapter with the italicized phrase, “*Io mi vanto soprattutto di essere un rurale*,” Gray provides his rural addressees one final incentive for renouncing their preferences for the city.²⁴² An excerpt of a speech addressing “i rurali italiani” on the foundation of Pomezia, the fifth city of the Agro Pontino,” the author cites another figure, who appreciates and covets

²⁴¹ Rinaldi 240.

²⁴² Rinaldi 240.

country life: Benito Mussolini.²⁴³ Asking them to modify their outlook on agriculture, the author's text affords not only his, but also Mussolini's admiration. Alluding to the leader of the country to which the audience belongs, the aphorism communicates a means for attaining social belonging. Gaining the favor of such a well-esteemed authoritarian as Mussolini would warrant the respect of one's compatriots and provide a stimulus for participating in the "battaglie della vita." Adhering to Mussolini's "rules of respect" for agriculture, in other words, will likewise reward students with respect and social recognition.

Prelude to an Introduction: Tracing Differences between Rural and Urban Libri unici

Summarizing the theme and structure of the Libro unico per le scuole rurali

By way of such anecdotes, Rinaldi, like fellow textbook compilers Marcucci, Belloni, Petrucci, and Novaro, in sum, sought to instruct rural elementary school children according to an "educazione guerriera." This latter term, as I have shown, delineates an ideology by which one understands one's everyday tasks as "battaglie della vita" and contributes to the welfare of the Fascist nation. Though appearing bellicose in nature, such instruction aimed not at shaping pupils into actual soldiers. Rather it sought to form them into farmers, who possess both the "know-how" and the "rules of respect" necessary to pursue agriculture. Blindly obedient, hard working, disciplined, and determined, this utopian *uomo nuovo* held the responsibility of developing, defending, and maintaining Fascist Italy's economy through agriculture.

Volumes of the *Libro unico* I have discussed in this chapter shaped students according to the regime's "educazione guerriera" in the following way: it built and taught a lexicon based on

²⁴³ See Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 29, 94.

everyday objects, events, people and characters familiar to the life of the rural student. It then introduced these terms as signs that reference and denote the presumed attractive agricultural work and behaviors that typify the rural *uomo nuovo*. Insisting that their addressees internalize and read these terms in an ideological way, the textbook in turn largely utilized repetition.

Despite addressing students of both genders, compilers of the *Libro unico dello Stato per le scuole rurali* likewise employed the masculine rhetoric adopted by Melchiori and thus privileged and primarily addressed a male audience of readers. This of course is not to say that the *Libro unico*'s female readers were not expected to become farmers. On the contrary, the *Libro di Stato* portrayed women as *contadine* albeit intermittently. When it did so, the text sketched these characters in relation to the social and behavioral norms expected of girls within the *ventennio*. Cultivating farmland coincided with and demonstrated not only the rural *contadina*'s ability to maintain her homestead alongside her peasant husband, but also to raise children, defend her hearth, and be a productive housewife. In this way, she too plays a prime role in regulating Fascist Italy's autarchic economy.

Notwithstanding the ways in which the *Libro unico per le scuole rurali* addressed children of both genders, practicing an "educazione guerriera" offered boys and girls a means of gaining social favor, respect, and high esteem from not only one's fellow community members but also the *Duce*. In this way, the *Libro unico* serves as an ideological apparatus able to mobilize students to consistently understand agricultural labor as a battle, engage in such toil, and ensure the economic success of the country. The Fascist subjection of rural children into *soldati-contadini*, in this respect, would appear possible.

Yet, even though these texts were thematically consistent in their portrayal of agriculture, we still know that Fascist subjection failed. The question remains: how might we understand the

regime's failures in their ideological education of children? The answer in my view lies in a comparative analysis of urban *Libri unici*. Indeed, keeping in mind Rinaldi's compilation of Gray's tale on the detriments of city life, I wonder: does Mussolini grant the same kind of admiration that would stimulate urban students to practice manufacturing work? Could the urban *Libro unico* likewise have the potential to subject children into *soldati-operai*? These are the questions that I want to explore in the concluding pages of this chapter. As I will show, the answer to the questions surprisingly lies in the relationship between the regime's textbooks, *Ministro Gentile's obbligo scolastico*, and Child Labor Laws. Examining the ties between these three aspects of Fascist education, I will highlight an important difference between the ways in which the *Libro unico per le scuole rurali* and *urbani* discuss themes of work. As I conclude the chapter, my discussion in turn will serve to frame my upcoming study of the *Libro unico per le scuole urbani* and signal to the failures inherent within the Fascist subjection of children.

Empowering the Rural, Disenfranchizing the Urban: Child Labor Reforms and Textbooks

If I were to respond with one single remark, my answer to the above question on Mussolini would be a brusque, "no." Despite Mussolini's goal to teach elementary school children the jobs that would benefit their demographic status, legislation and education reforms limited the way in which the *Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale* could depict and endorse industrial labor in the *Libro unico dello Stato per le scuole urbane*. Child labor acts, for one, deterred and discouraged minors in urban areas from pursuing employment in manufacturing.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁴ With the rise of the industrial revolution, Italian manufacturing businesses in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries experienced an increase in the number of employed minors. Considered as a source of cheap labor, children often as young as four or five years of

They prohibited children up to the age of fifteen from working specifically in such industries as “cave,” “miniere,” and other “stabilimenti” where they might carry out “lavori insalubri e pericolosi.”²⁴⁵ In addition to prohibiting minors from assembly lines, the 1934 Child Labor Act, for one, banned Italy’s youth from accomplishing other kinds of physical activity. Examples varied from hauling and carrying large freight and heavy cargo to serving alcoholic beverages to assisting with public spectacles. Article six of the 1934 Child Labor Act specifies: “È vietato adibire: [...] i minori di 16 anni nel sollevamento di pesi e nel trasporto di pesi, su carriole e su carretti a braccia a due ruote, quando tali lavori si svolgono in condizioni di speciale disagio o pericolo; [...] i minori di 16 anni nelle sale cinematografiche, nella preparazione di spettacoli cinematografiche od in rappresentazioni date in qualunque luogo pubblico od esposto al pubblico, escluso i teatri per rappresentazioni di opera liriche o drammatiche aventi scopi

age took employment in factories, mills, and coal mines. Long hours, little pay, and tiring conditions, however, made children vulnerable to accidents, disease, and death. Seeking to remedy the high mortality rate of its young workers, the *Camera dei deputati* ratified the very first of such laws, *Regio Decreto*, n. 2657, “*Lavoro delle donne e dei fanciulli*,” on the 11th of February 1886. Following this date, the *Camera* introduced and adopted several modifications to this decree in 1902, 1907, 1923, and 1934, well into the 20th century and the Fascist *ventennio*. See, Italy, Parliament, *Legge 11 febbraio 1886*, n. 2657, *Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* 40 (1886): 816; Italy, Parliament, *Legge 17 dicembre 1886*, n. 4082, *Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* 226 (1886): 5424-5425; Italy, Parliament, *Legge 19 giugno 1902*, n. 242, *Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* 157 (1902): 3145-3148; Italy, Parliament, *Legge 7 luglio 1907*, n. 416, *Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* 163 (1907): 4106-4018; Italy, Parliament, *Regio Decreto*, *Legge 15 marzo 1923*, n. 748, *Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* 102 (1923): 3478-3479; Italy, Parliament, *Legge 26 aprile 1934*, n. 653, *Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* 99 (1934): 2149-2153. For further reading on Italy’s child labor laws between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, see Christopher Duggan, *A Concise History of Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006) 151-153 and also Charnitsky, *Fascismo e scuola* 229-240.

²⁴⁵ According to the 1886 law, the above jobs required the manipulation and handling of such toxic and flammable materials as “sulphuric and nitric acids,” “chloride,” “lead,” “vernici grasse,” “materiali di collodio,” “della doratura e argentatura,” “del petrolio.” Refer to Article seven, *Tabella A and B*, Italy, Parliament, *Legge n. 4082* 5424-5425. Proceeding legislation issued between 1902 and 1934 largely maintained and added to this list.

educativi”; “i minori degli anni 18 nella somministrazione al minuto di bevande alcoliche”; and “i minori degli anni 18 nella manovra e nel traino dei vagonetti.”²⁴⁶

Such regulations notably reflected the behavioral norms expected of boys and girls in the *ventennio*. While sanctioning the domestic, administrative, and religious jobs (e.g., mothers, housekeepers, secretaries, and missionaries) that stereotypically befit the female gender, the 1934 Labor Act made it unlawful for boys to handle material (e.g., alcoholic beverages and films with no “instructive purpose”) that might morally and ethically corrupt them.²⁴⁷ Among legislation passed and modified in 1934, moreover, none regulated or deterred children of any age or gender from being employed in any agricultural work. Article One, for instance, made it clear that the government did not forbid women or children “addetti a lavori agricoli.”²⁴⁸ Existing labor laws, hence, not only validated Fascist social conventions but also offered rules that would primarily regulate an urban rather than rural demography of child workers.

Further exacerbating the rate at which minors living in urban areas could pursue employment under the Fascist period were the regime’s education reforms.²⁴⁹ While labor laws granted permission, Gentile’s 1923 *Riforma* and *obbligo scolastico* provided obstacles that would deter children from holding industrial jobs.²⁵⁰ As they were obliged to go to school for

²⁴⁶ See Italy, Parliament, *Legge 26 aprile 1934, n. 653* 2150.

²⁴⁷ Article one of the 1934 law for instance permitted “delle donne e dei fanciulli addetti a lavori domestici inerenti al normale svolgimento della vita della famiglia”; “delle donne e dei fanciulli lavoranti al proprio domicilio”; “delle donne e dei fanciulli occupati in aziende dello Stato”; and “del personale femminile religioso agli Istituti pubblici di assistenza e di beneficenza.” See Italy, Parliament, *Legge 26 aprile 1934* 2149.

²⁴⁸ See articles one and eleven, Italy, Parliament, *Legge 26 aprile 1934* 2150-2151.

²⁴⁹ Charnitzky, *Fascismo e scuola* 234.

²⁵⁰ While Charnitzky cautions that labor regulations took a great deal of time to take effect and for the most part were neither respected nor strictly enforced, he notes that the number of registered working children between 1926 and 1931 decreased in light of the *obbligo scolastico*. He estimates that 62% of minors were employed in agriculture, while 28% were employed in

five hours a day or twenty-five hours per week throughout the first and fourth grades and four hours per day or twenty hours per week in total in the fifth grade, students in urban schools did not have much time to seek employment even if they met the minimum age requirement.²⁵¹ Attending school up to the age of fourteen by law, they moreover had to meet “requisiti di istruzioni” *before* getting a job.²⁵² In light of these regulations, children had to provide their potential employers with documentation certifying the completion of their elementary education. Article Seven of the 1934 labor law states:

Nei casi suddetti per essere ammessi al lavoro i fanciulli, oltre ai requisiti fisici di cui all'articolo seguente, devono avere ottenuto la promozione dalla quinta classe elementare o dalla classe elementare più elevate esistente nel Comune o nella frazione in cui abbiano residenza, salvo il caso di incapacità intellettuale certificato dall'ispettore scolastico e del direttore didattico e salva autorizzazione del Ministro per le corporazioni, sentito il Ministro per l'educazione nazionale, nel caso di occupazioni limitate ai periodi delle vacanze scolastiche.²⁵³

Stipulating conditions for applying the law, (e.g., “dalla classe elementare più elevate esistente nel Comune o nella frazione in cui abbiano residenza,”), by way of the conjunction “o” (“or”), Article Seven nonetheless provided exceptions to “requisiti di istruzioni.” Underprivileged children who did not have access to a full elementary school education could work without

industries. 17.2% of children meanwhile exercised “un attività lavorativa illegale.” See *Fascismo e scuola* 238-240.

²⁵¹ Lombardi 319.

²⁵² See Article seven, Italy, Parliament, *Legge 26 aprile 1934, n. 653* 2150.

²⁵³ See Italy, Parliament, *Legge 26 aprile 1934, n. 653* 2150.

finishing the fifth grade. This group of minors under legal consideration principally resided in rural areas of Italy.

In its correspondence with Italy's Child Labor Act, Gentile's academic requirements did not universally apply the *obbligo scolastico* and demanded much less from students in elementary schools located in *centri rurali*. In contrast to the policies stipulated for urban schools, the Ministry of Education expected rural pupils to attend classes only up to the third grade and for a fewer number of hours per day.²⁵⁴ The first grade entailed twelve-and-a-half hours of studies per week or two-and-a-half hours per day of attendance. Second and third grade classes comprised a total of seventeen-and-a-half hours per week or three-and-a-half hours of attendance per day.²⁵⁵ Spending twelve-and-a-half hours less in the first grade and seven-and-a-half hours less in the second and third grades, rural students in comparison to their urban peers had much more time to work while in school.

Reasons for such differences in urban and rural education lay in the MPE's regard for the economic conditions affecting Italy's rural communities. Lacking the proper funds to hire teachers and maintain facilities, rural schools could not offer the same number of courses or material to their student body.²⁵⁶ Making provisions for parents who could not afford to send their children to school, the Education Ministry limited the number of hours at the *scuole rurali*.

²⁵⁴ See Lombardi 385. This expectation, I believe, may also explain the lack of a specific rural edition of the *Libro unico* for the fourth and fifth grades.

²⁵⁵ The academic calendar in both rural and urban schools extended across a ten-month period that began in October and ended in July. Each school week consisted of a five-day period. A subcategory of rural schools known as the *scuole rurali miste*, however, lacked enough teachers to conduct individual classes for groups of students in the first, second, and third grades. Providing lessons to all three classes at the same time, this rural school consisted of a shorter eight rather than ten-month period. As the weekly schedule at this institution spanned across a six rather than five-day period, the total number of hours spent in attendance nevertheless remained unchanged. See Lombardi 385-387.

²⁵⁶ Lombardi 385.

Doing so allowed children to contribute to their household income. Laying out the academic calendar in his “Programma di studio nelle scuole elementari uniche miste (rurali),” Gentile comments on the conditions effecting rural schools. He notes:

Per ciò si allega un quadro di orientamento delle ore di lezione, riferendolo alla durata normale dell'anno scolastico che sarà *sempre composto di 180 lezioni* e si svolgerà o in 10 mesi, come nelle scuole urbane, o in circa 8 mesi, come può essere talvolta più consono alle esigenze di centri rurali, che richiedono, in determinate epoche dell'anno, la disponibilità anche della mano d'opera infantile, o nei quali il clima rende difficile se non impossibile l'assiduità degli alunni alla scuola, in qualche periodo dell'anno.²⁵⁷

As the Ministry of Education expected rural students to assist their families with their agricultural responsibilities, their reading and school curricula thus worked together to develop their training as future “contadini.”

Held up to different standards in light of the regime’s education policies and labor laws, urban children were not expected to work while pursuing their studies. Thus, their textbooks do not represent their young protagonists as the *Libri unici delle scuole rurali* do. As I will show in the following chapter, characters do not appear as employees in factories, mills, or mines.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Fedele and Bottai both maintained Gentile’s addendum and made no changes to the hours and attendance requirements at rural schools in their scholastic reforms. See Lombardi 385 and 416.

²⁵⁸ Compiler Francesco Saponi, for one, reiterates the restrictions placed on working women in his *Amor di Patria*, noting: “La donna è sottratta ai lavori insalubri e gravosi, a quelli sotterranei nelle miniere, all’orario notturno nelle aziende industriali. La tutela sanitaria delle lavoratrici nelle risaie ha ispirato precise norme per quanto concerne la sémina, la mondatura, la raccolta.”

Moreover, they do not accompany or assist their parents as they buy and sell products, conduct trains, drive automobiles, or manipulate heavy machinery.²⁵⁹ Rather than teaching a specific skill-set (e.g., the use of threshing machinery, making autarchic books with flax, choosing and planting wheat), the *Libro di Stato per le scuole urbane* instructs the behavior expected of such workers as *operai industriali*. Doing so, it offers symbols that teach obedience, self-restraint, and dedication. Yet, a question remains: how might this thematic difference complicate the Fascist regime's utopian project of subjecting readers into workers? Might the *Libro unico per le scuole urbani* succeed in interpellating readers into Fascist urban workers even when the texts do not teach them any specific "know-how"?

Providing an analysis of the urban textbooks in relation to the *Libri unici delle scuole rurali*, I aim at answering these questions in the next installment of this work. The lack of thematic specificity in the urban schoolbooks, as I will argue, allows for multiple interpretations of the text and in turn undermines the regime's overall project to shape both urban *and* rural children by way of Fascist ideological schooling.

In light of these labor laws, Saponi notes, women can focus their attention on having a family and maintaining the hearth. See Saponi 257.

²⁵⁹ This comes in exception to four tales. The first consists specifically of Grazia Deledda's "L'officina" in her *Il libro della terza classe elementare, letture*. Here, Deledda's character, Signor Goffredo, takes his students on a field trip to a needle-making factory. The group observes bare-chested "operai" as they grind away in the "inferno" of an unnamed workshop. The second example comprises three brief tales in Luigi Rinaldi's textbook. The first, "L'officina FIAT," informs and describes the car manufacturer's "stabilimento" from an omniscient narrator's point of view. The second and third, "Nasce la città di Carbonia" and "Lavoro: Nella Miniera," do not enlist any child protagonist. They rather espouse nationalist appreciation for the adult Italian men, who travail in the regime's newly constructed towns of Arsia and Carbonia. Both Deledda's and Rinaldi's texts contrast with De Amicis' *Cuore* in which characters such as Garoffi, Coretti and Precossi help their fathers carry out their tasks as "commercianti," "fabbricanti," or "rivenditori di legna." Compare Deledda 139-143; Rinaldi 72-74, 108-109, 184-188; and De Amicis 35-38, 83, 126-128.

Chapter Four

Lunchpail Laborers, Child-Consumers: Conflicting Narratives of Italianità and Economic Autarchy in the Libro unico per le scuole urbani

Introduction

What defines the *operaio* in the *Libro unico*, and why did this model fail to make Fascist workers out of urban children such as Umberto Eco?¹ Mussolini himself surprisingly hints at an answer as he addresses fellow Fascist dignitaries in the *Camera dei deputati* on December 11, 1925.² Providing an analysis of Russian factory workers at the onset of the communist regime, Mussolini seeks to define the *operaio* but only vaguely observes:

Gli operai sono dei soldati e quindi sottoposti alla disciplina dei soldati ed hanno un salario fissato dal Governo così come i soldati, hanno una cinquina fissata dal Governo, hanno cioè non dei contratti collettivi, ma un regolamento vero e proprio di disciplina. Tutti in questo primo periodo del comunismo militare e militante avevano anche l'obbligo di lavorare e quindi la assenza dalle officine era considerata come una diserzione vera e propria.³

In a series of metaphors, Mussolini here imagines the *operaio* as a disciplined soldier blindly obedient to his military superiors.⁴ Using the term “sottoposti” to compare the *operaio*'s and

¹ In addition to his essay on Fascist schooling in *Cinque scritti morali*, Eco caustically refers to the idea of being a *balilla* and reading the *Libro unico* in his novel, *La misteriosa fiamma della regina Loana* (Milan: RCS Libri, 2009). See 178-210.

² Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 22, 29-38.

³ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 22, 33.

⁴ Like Melchiori, Mussolini employs masculine terminology in his speech and primarily elides the example of female industrial laborers and their relationship to soldiers. On the PNF

soldier's behavior and responsibilities, the Fascist leader understands the manual worker as one under complete submission to the government. Insisting on the "reproduction of labour power," this government accordingly dictates and *forcefully* subjects its urban citizen to provide the services that would prove beneficial to the economic growth of an autarchic nation.⁵ Obliging one to work ("obbligo di lavorare"), it demands strict obedience from the *operaio* as a general would from a *soldato*. Repeating "disciplina" twice, Mussolini commands that the *operaio* resist any impulse to refuse or delay the tasks entrusted to him. Like the soldier, the laborer *must* exert self-control and complete his duties without question. Yet bound by a "social contract" ("contratti collettivi"), the manual laborer appears obliged not only to one's government, but also to one's fellow citizens—urban *and* rural. Quitting a job, Mussolini warns, is similar to a soldier's act of "diserzione" ("desertion"). Likening soldiers and laborers in this way, the Fascist leader raises the stakes and reminds the latter of their moral imperative to obey this system of order and work. Without any legitimate excuse to abandon his post, the *operaio*, like a soldier, appears a coward or traitor to the nation. Lacking commitment to one's fellow citizens, the laborer may be formally punished ("vera e propria") and merits total social exclusion.

By way of this speech, Mussolini offers a set of behaviors for turning oneself into a model, working-class Fascist *manovale*. Applying Althusser to our reading of Mussolini, the speech in particular lays out the "rules of respect" or "the attitude that should be observed by

secretary's use of masculine phraseology, see ch. 3, p.1 note 3. The use of such similar rhetoric may also be found in Mussolini's *Opera omnia*, vol. 23, 85-86.

⁵ Mussolini's own use of "sottoposti" indicates a hegemonic relationship between the manual laborer and his government and calls us back to Althusser's treatise on subjection and the practice of ruling ideology. By means of the term "reproduction of labour power," I am again referring to Althusser's seminal essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus." See ch. 1, p. 5-11.

every agent in the division of labor, according to the job he is ‘destined’ for.”⁶ Yet, while the description allows us to see the *operaio* as an obedient soldier-like figure, Mussolini fails to place this manual worker within a specific Italian context. His account begs the question: what does the Italian *operaio* really look like in the flesh? What “know-how” does he possess, and what skill-based labor does this person particularly perform?⁷ In what exact line of work might he prove capable enough to fulfill the regime’s expectation to be a soldier-like laborer and contribute to the nation’s autarchic economy?

Mussolini’s idea of the *operaio* here appears puzzling, especially as we consider the *Libro unico*’s numerous references to the Fascist leader’s notion of the rural *contadino*. As we have seen in such textbooks as those compiled by Petrucci and Rinaldi, the *Duce* often defines the peasant *contadino* as a farmer who grows such presumed Italian foodstuffs as wheat, grapes, and olives.⁸ Quoting Mussolini, these rural texts in turn offer students a chance to gain the Fascist leader’s favor by inviting them to participate in the *battaglie della vita* as future *contadinelli*. Thus they do not subject readers by force to adopt an agricultural vocation. Among these editions of the *Libro unico*, only Rinaldi’s textbook appears the exception, as we find rural children under compulsion to take up farming. Namely, they are ostracized and emotionally punished when refusing Mussolini’s call to build a nation of *soldati-contadini*.⁹

Yet, the *Duce*’s particular discussion above, by contrast, neither specifies the industry, in which this model urban worker toils, nor the products and services, he provides. Revealing nothing about the worker’s “know-how,” skills, or expertise, it offers no concrete definition of

⁶ Althusser 89.

⁷ By “know-how,” I again refer to Althusser’s notion of a skill-based education designed for the “reproduction of labour power.” Refer to ch. 1, pp. 8-9.

⁸ Cfr. ch. 3, pp. 74-76, 84-85, and 112-113.

⁹ Cfr. ch. 3, pp. 107-113.

the *soldato-operaio*. This makes me wonder whether the *Libri di testo per le scuole urbane* might likewise lay out a vague definition of the urban laborer and consist chiefly of reading material that would intimidate students into adopting values prescribed by the regime. This raises the question as to how Mussolini's notion of a subjected, militant industrial worker might translate into the textbooks of urban elementary school pupils. If the *Libri unici* elide teaching children the "know-how" for becoming manual laborers, is teaching the proper "rules of respect" enough to subject them instead? What might it mean to *compel* and not *motivate* young urban Italian children to undertake a presumably urban occupation by way of their textbooks, especially when it is unclear what jobs these students should take? Lastly, how might this representation of work in turn complicate the regime's goal to subject children into a utopian class of Fascist *operai*?¹⁰

Arguing for the Failures of Fascist Subjection: A New Way of Reading the Libro unico

And so, how do the compilers of the *Libro unico* respond to Mussolini's ambivalent description of the *soldato-operaio* above? Instead of working together—as the rural authors had—compilers of urban *Libri unici* in my view work *against* each other. In this chapter, I show how authors of the state-issued schoolbook confound the regime's project to construct a robust and autarchic economy, as they struggle to make sense of and convey Mussolini's notion of this *soldato-operaio*. Inconsistent in their portrayal of this worker, compilers lack a discussion of any specific product or service that will allow for commerce to take place within Fascist Italy.

¹⁰ According to Frederic Jameson, the utopia functions by way of ideology or "ruling class-consciousness" that defines both "oppositional" as well as "oppressed classes." As such, these utopias do not function by way of "ethical categories" (e.g., "right or wrong," "good or bad") that exclude one group from an "other." Cfr. ch. 1, p. 39, n. 116.

Tracing these inconsistencies, I demonstrate the ways in which the authors are unable to “remote-control” a child’s reading of the text, as the Ministry of Fascist Education intended.¹¹ Allowing for multiple interpretations of the reading material, these authors fail to coherently turn their young audience into urban Fascist laborers.

Selecting a few definitive examples of anecdotes and poems, I examine editions of the schoolbook heretofore under-analyzed. By way of my study, I respond to recent critical literature on the *Libro unico* (e.g., the work of Koon, Colin, and Foss, to name a few) that has retained the practice of cataloguing the Fascist elements within only a few state-issued schoolbooks.¹² These sources as well as those that came before have served to confirm what we already generally know about Fascism as a dictatorial regime.¹³ They neither provide a theoretical framework for reading these texts nor attempt at understanding the stakes of teaching children Fascist behaviors by way of schoolbooks. While Liliano Faenza and Davide Montino, by contrast, have provided a more detailed and rigorous analysis of the *Libro unico*, the validity of their thesis is limited by the number of editions they study.¹⁴ Faenza, for instance, only studies the three texts compiled by Deledda, Novaro, and Davanzati and thus focuses solely on distinct editions of the *Libro unico* published for the third, fourth, and fifth grade. In addition to looking at the the texts analyzed by Faenza, Montino examines Nerina Oddi’s first grade *Libro unico* as well as Saponi and Bargellini’s respective fifth grade texts. He thus altogether elides an analysis of the second grade

¹¹ By means of the term “remote-control,” I am framing my analysis of the structure of the *Libro unico per le scuole urbane* on Barthes’ notion of image and text in his seminal essay, “Rhetoric of the Image.” For an analysis of Barthes, cfr. ch. 3, pp. 16-25.

¹² Cfr. ch. 1, pp. 3-4.

¹³ These authors, for instance, recognize themes of nationalism, colonialism, and *romanità* within their reading of the state-issued textbooks. They also identify messages regarding such Fascist propaganda campaigns as the *battaglia del grano*; they point to the *Libro unico*’s large use of Fascist iconography and references to the *Duce*; and they define Fascist society as a patriarchal one. See Koon 74-83, Colin 185-212, and Foss 6-29.

¹⁴ Cfr. ch. 1, p. 3 and ch. 2, p. 64.

Libro unico, which I will do here. In addition, both Faenza and Montino do not offer a comparative study of rural *and* urban editions of the *Libro unico*. They rather pick and choose various rural and urban texts and discuss them together without taking into account the differences of each. Adopting Althusser's notion of ideology and the "reproduction of labour power" in my analysis of all first through fifth grade editions of the *Libri unici per le scuole urbane* in this chapter, I instead reveal the fundamental problems Fascism had in subjecting Italians into workers, and hence I provide a new approach to current studies on the use of textbooks as an apparatus of education and nation-building.

Methodology and Layout of Chapter

As in Chapter Three, my method for understanding the failure of Fascist education across these pages involves tracing a genealogy of the textbook compilers' representations of the urban laborer and the use of manufacturing work to teach an "educazione guerriera." Sharing the *Duce's* vision, these authors indeed aim at forming readers in line with the "ruling class-consciousness" set forth by the Fascist regime.¹⁵ They seek to shape children into a disciplined and obedient group of young blue-collar factory workers, who together would manufacture the products and provide the services necessary to sustain the Fascist regime's autarchic economy.¹⁶ Yet bound by the conscripts of Child Labor Acts, compilers have difficulty in consistently describing the *operaio* as an employee of a certain industry. They thus satisfy their objective not by teaching the specific skills or "know-how" appropriate to manufacturing as one might expect.

¹⁵ With the phrase "ruling class-consciousness," I am once more referring to Jameson's notion of utopia. Cfr. ch. 1, p. 39, n. 116.

¹⁶ See Bottai 80.

Lacking a model for a specific *operaio*, they only superficially depict a broad array of low-end jobs in construction, craftwork, and homemaking. By often mimicking Mussolini's coercive language in his speech on the *operaio*, the authors, moreover, force children to follow this ambiguous model, risking the possibility that the latter will do what they are told without conviction for the regime's Fascist ideologies.

Mussolini's ideas of punishment, "desertion," and social ostracism first make their way into the *Libri unici* as compilers highlight the duties and behavior of the militaristic *balilla* in relation to themes of work. Utilizing the *balilla* uniform as a mnemonic device in their text and images, authors of the urban *Libri unici* convey the social norms that would *necessitate* a child's practice of the obedience, discipline, and toil expected of both the soldier and manual laborer.¹⁷ Wearing the paramilitary *divisa*, in other words, marks the moment in which urban children ought to accordingly repudiate their disobedient conduct, respect authority, work tirelessly, and, thereby, gain social approval. Overcoming their struggles or *battaglie*, these young readers not only train for the role they will play as future *operai*. They also "defend," to use the *Duce's* term, and solidify the militaristic values upon which Fascist Italy was built.

Focusing on this relationship between the *balilla* and the model *soldato-operaio* in the first part of my analysis, I study selections of tales and poems from the following volumes published for the first, second, third, and fourth grades: Ornella Quercia Tanzarella's *Sillabario e prime letture*; Alfredo Petrucci's *L'italiano nuovo, letture della 2a classe elementare*; Pina Ballario's *Quartiere Corridoni: libro di lettura per la 2a classe della scuola dei centri urbani*; Maria Zanetti's *Patria: Il libro di lettura per la IIIa classe dei centri urbani*; Piero Bargellini's *Il*

¹⁷ By "text" and "image" I refer to Barthes' "Rhetoric of the Image" as the framework for my analysis of the urban *Libri unici* in this chapter. For an outline of Barthes' seminal essay, see ch. 4, pp. 12-19.

libro della IV classe elementare: letture.¹⁸ As with the rural textbooks, notions of struggle and toil within these urban *Libri unici* define the interpretive framework for understanding Fascist “rules of respect,” (e.g., one’s proper social behavior and conduct, one’s moral imperative to the nation as well as one’s position within a hierarchy).¹⁹ While the robust physique of such tireless workers as *fabbrì, costruttori, and legnaioli* defines the valor of such blue-collar work for *balilla* boys in Zanetti and Bargellini, motherhood once more enters into Petrucci’s *Libro unico* and determines the means by which *piccole italiane* ought to contribute to the regime’s *battaglia demografica* and autarchic economy.²⁰ Becoming mothers, they procreate a generation of boys who will likewise take up industrial work. Through their reading of the *Libro unico*, urban

¹⁸ Ornella Quercia Tanzarella, *Sillabario e prime letture*, illus. Mario Pompei (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1929); Alfredo Petrucci, *L’italiano nuovo, letture della 2a classe elementare*, illus. Piero Bernardini (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1939); Pina Ballario, *Quartiere Corridoni: libro di lettura per la 2a classe della scuola dei centri urbani*, illus. Bruno Angoletta (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1942); Maria Zanetti, *Patria: Il libro di lettura per la IIIa classe dei centri urbani*, illus. Mario Pompei (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1942); Piero Bargellini, *Il libro della IV classe elementare: letture*, illus. Angelo della Torre (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1938).

¹⁹ The *Libri di Stato* above represent a general sample of urban editions that I will analyze in the course of the chapter. The following titles correspond to the volumes I have chosen not to discuss here: Dina Belardinelli-Bucciarelli, *Il libro della prima classe*, illus. Pio Pullini (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1935); Maria Zanetti, *Il libro della prima classe* illus. Enrico Pinocchi (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1938); Nerina Oddi and Vera Cottarelli Gaiba, *Il libro della prima classe*, illus. Roberto Sgrilli (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1941); Dina Belardinelli-Bucciarelli, *Il libro della seconda classe: letture*, illus. Pio Pullini (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1930); Ornella Quercia Tanzarella, *Il libro della IIa classe: letture*, illus. Mario Pompei (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1932); Grazia Deledda, *Il libro della terza classe elementare: letture, religione, storia, geografia, aritmetica*, illus. Pio Pullini (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1931); Nazareno Padellaro, *Il libro della terza classe elementare*, illus. Carlo Testi (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1938); Francesco Saponi, *Amor di Patria: il libro della quinta classe. Testo di letture per le alunne*, illus., Carlo Testi (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1935).

²⁰ By definition, *piccola italiana* is the term used to describe the female equivalent of the male *balilla*. Oftentimes when the textbooks describe *balilla*, they nonetheless refer to the responsibilities and tasks of both boys and girls. This is yet another example of the regime’s use of gendered rhetoric. On the *piccola italiana*, see Galeotti, *Saluto al Duce!* 64-118, and also Davide Montino, “Educazione femminile,” *La scuola fascista: istituzioni, parole d’ordine e luoghi dell’immaginario*, ed. Gianluca Gabrielli and Davide Montino (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2009) 60-65.

students of both genders might orient themselves and find acceptance within their nation.

Yet, because compilers rely chiefly on the figure of the *balilla* as a reference point for subjecting urban students into workers, their textbooks largely fall short in laying out the specific “know-how” that children can assume after they have finished their studies. This diverges pedagogically from the rural texts that identify the *contadino* as one who cultivates wheat, grapes, and olives, owns livestock, maintains a country estate, and has a large family. Despite Ballario’s efforts to offer children the model of celebrated syndicate Filippo Corridoni in her second grade *Libro unico*, the first through fourth grade texts typically lack the framework that would define the ideal urban worker and the environment in which he or she lives and toils. Subsequent allegorical interpretations of anthropomorphic animals at work in *officine* likewise prove inadequate in directly addressing readers as future industrial laborers and steering them toward fulfilling specific jobs that would economically benefit Fascist Italy. This thematic choice downplays urban student participation in the *battaglie della vita* as readers have no proper model to emulate. As compilers struggle to fulfill this need for a model worker, they unexpectedly resort to the figure of the farmer and draw attention to rural themes that conflict with the utopian urban working community they were meant to convey in their textbooks. This brings me to the second part of my analysis in which I take a look at the fifth-grade textbooks.

The shift between agriculture and manufacturing, or the rural and urban, within the *Libro unico per le scuole urbane* proves constant. Appearing especially within Piero Bargellini’s fifth grade *Lecture per la V classe dei centri urbani* and Roberto Forges Davanzati’s *Il balilla Vittorio*, this thematic shift pushes compilers to ultimately modify the role of urban students in order to

better fit them within the Fascist regime's economic project.²¹ Here, the regime's failure to "remote-control" children in their reading of the *Libro unico* reaches an apex. In the texts compiled by Bargellini and Forges Davanzati, the urban citizen, no longer appears a worker per se. He or she evolves and arises primarily as a consumer indebted to Italy's farmers. Obligated to consume local, rural agricultural products, he or she, therefore, does not contribute to the *battaglie della vita* by way of his or her own will or labor. His or her value to the nation as a result is undermined as urban citizens within these fifth-grade *Libri unici* in fact appear decadent without the sustenance of rural peasants and need taming.

Yet, just as the model urban worker evolves in Davanzati's and Bargellini's *Libri unici*, so too does the archetypal rural worker. The farmer in the above fifth grade texts becomes the urban consumer's "sovereign" who subdues and forces the latter to purchase and consume his products for the benefit of the nation. The language of Davanzati and Bargellini's texts thus develops a tension between the ideal *soldato-cittadino* and the *solato-contadino*. It reveals, as I will show, not only a system of hierarchy in place between the urban child and government. It notably subjects the urban *cittadino* to the rural *contadino*. It is at this point that I examine the MPE's problematic attempts at educating primary students according to the demographic area in which they live. I ask: how might have Italian urban children internalized the ideology that would make them follow the life of an industrial worker, considering the equal emphasis their distinct editions of the *Libro unico di Stato* placed on the farmer?

Answering this question in a final analysis, I demonstrate that the failure of the Fascist subjection of children via the *Libro unico* lay in the two different, urban and rural subjects that

²¹ Piero Bargellini, *Lecture per la V classe dei centri urbani*, illus. Piero Bernardini (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1942); Roberto Forges Davanzati's *Il balilla Vittorio* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1938). Among the editions of the *Libro di Stato* I have cited, only Davanzati's contains black and white photographs taken from the LUCE archives.

the various editions ultimately served to produce. By establishing a power play between urban and rural readers, Davanzati's and Bargellini's texts essentially offer a narrative that contradicts the Fascist rhetoric of national unity found in preceding *Libri unici*. Upon reaching the fifth grade, urban students could not subject themselves to the *soldato-contadino*, as they had learned to view their rural counterpart not as their "sovereign" but as their peers. They were thus not only being made to follow a model of an urban worker that was obscure and hence unconvincing, but also they were being ironically belittled with respect to rural students.

Looking beyond the content of the *Libro unico per le scuole urbani*, I ultimately show how the regime itself provoked this failure, as it had problems with defining the criteria that would determine Italian children as rural or urban, workers or consumers. Ambiguities within the legal categorization of Italy's student body underscored Mussolini's unsuccessful attempt at producing consistent schoolbooks. The vague texts produced by these policies allowed for multiple and conflicting interpretations of the *Libro unico* that undermined and, hence, foiled the regime's own ideological subjection of primary school children.

But there is more to the problems and inconsistencies that distinguish the failures of Fascist schooling, and, in concluding this chapter, I look at the broader implications of the regime's insistence on categorizing and subcategorizing Italian primary school children. The challenges of making children into Fascist subjects in addition to producing legislation that would divide the *scuola elementare*, I argue, reflects the regimes own struggle with what it means to be Italian in light of the country's strong regional differences.

Growing into a Fascist Worker: The Urban Libro unico for the First through Fourth Grades

Save the Hammer for the Man: Workplace Etiquette and “Rules of Respect” in Ornella Quercia Tanzarella’s Sillabario e prime letture

Aiming at the “reproduction of labour power,” the *Libro unico per le scuole dei centri urbani* serves to teach the etiquette or “rules of respect” that will make elementary school students not only good children but also good *operai*. Doing what they are told by way of their textbooks, urban children learn to respect various figures of authority—parents, teachers, government leaders as well as employers. Obediently carrying out their assigned tasks within a desired time frame, these children, moreover, ensure a steady rate of productivity not only within their classrooms, but also potentially at the workplace. Through their education and reading exercises, these students in sum acknowledge their place within a rigid hierarchy and practice the behavior conducive to the efficient production of materials, goods, and services.

Nowhere do we see the instruction of such workplace etiquette than in Ornella Quercia Tanzarella’s regular use of *balilla* pictograms in her first grade *Sillabario e prime letture*.²² Formulating her grammar and reading drills as novice exercises “di nomenclatura,” Tanzarella avails herself of images that feature young boys not only wearing the familiar uniform but also performing typical paramilitary drills.²³ Utilizing such pictorial icons—“figure a cui si può dare

²² On the distribution Tanzarella’s *Sillabario e prime letture*, see ch. 2 pp. 37-38.

²³ Ornella Quercia Tanzarella, “Premessa necessaria,” *Sillabario e prime letture* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1929) n. pag. Primarily employing the male *balilla* as opposed to the female *piccola italiana* in her textbook, Tanzarella like other compilers of the urban *Libro unico dello Stato* privileges and addresses a male audience of readers. Restricted from acquiring employment within certain industrial sectors in light of child labor acts passed within this time period, urban schoolgirls, in contrast to their male counterpart, are primarily enlisted in the State-issued

subito un nome”—the textbook compiler draws on children’s own knowledge and experience as *balilla* as a means to help them face the *battaglie della vita*.²⁴ Applying such methods of elicitation, she first offers these grammar tasks as a “serie di giuochi piacevoli” or guessing games that would initially attract readers to their studies.²⁵ As she notes: “Bisogna che i bimbi, per apprendere bene, apprendono in letizia; poichè nulla rende tanto ottusa la mente infantile quanto la noia.”²⁶ Providing a positive learning environment with this approach, the textbook author aims at facilitating language learning and, as a result, motivating student involvement. As they build confidence in their existing knowledge of the reading material, Tanzarella notes that students achieve a “soddisfazione di poter leggere immediatamente nel [loro] primo libro delle piccole frasi che hanno un significato e non le solite sillabe senza senso.”²⁷ Amused, her audience, in turn, might willfully reflect on and learn the literal and connotative meanings implied by her ideograms. Once gaining student attention, however, Tanzarella takes a more authoritative tone and requires her students to adopt the practices illustrated by her *balilla*. By way of her subsequent grammar exercises, as we will see, readers begin to articulate and perform their own “primi doveri infantili” to be well-behaved, obedient, and industrious working children.²⁸ But are Tanzarella’s methods enough to ensure that her readers practice these behaviors out of conviction for the regime’s ideologies? The answer might come as a surprise.

With the objective to gain student interest, the textbook compiler introduces the *regalia* in

schoolbooks as *operaie* of a domestic kind. These latter consist largely of mothers and artisans who produce and manufacture goods that may be consumed in a domestic sphere. While depicted according to the social standards prescribed by the regime, both female and male laborers emerge within the *Libro unico* equally as soldier-like figures as they fulfill their “battaglie della vita.”

²⁴ Tanzarella, “Premessa necessaria” n. pag.

²⁵ Tanzarella, “Premessa necessaria” n. pag.

²⁶ Tanzarella, “Premessa necessaria” n. pag.

²⁷ Tanzarella, “Premessa necessaria” n. pag.

²⁸ Tanzarella, “Premessa necessaria” n. pag.

a guessing game on the very first page of her alphabet book (see fig. 4.1).²⁹ At first glance, the *balilla* appears among a group of objects that includes a flower, a donkey, and two *soldatini*. As the page lacks any specific text that would relay student attention upon any one specific illustration, the image of the *balilla* here does not yet stand out. Tanzarella only offers her addressees a fleeting glimpse of the uniformed boy as a warm-up for the exercise to follow. Indeed proceeding with a lesson on the definite article, “I,” the textbook author gradually transitions upon and builds the *balilla* into her very first reading and grammar exercise.³⁰

Step-by step, Tanzarella builds meaning into the illustration of the *balilla* in an effort to make the learning process an efficient one.³¹ In one of her first grammar tasks, she places the letter “I” next to a pictogram of two boys in paramilitary attire. Here, Tanzarella asks readers to identify the grammatical expression by having them focus on the boys’ clothing. Familiar to those children, who wear it on a daily basis, the uniform alludes to the source of anthropological knowledge that will help furnish a name to the illustrated figures.³² Comprised of shorts, a black shirt, draped handkerchief, and an *arditi* cap, the uniform, in other words, becomes an object of self-reflection that prevents the audience from interpreting the pictogram with the more general expression, “I ragazzi.” Evoking the specific nomenclature, “I balilla,” Tanzarella’s pictorial icon denotes the first of a series of literal messages (e.g., “Boys who wear the regalia are *balilla*”) that seeks to establish a relationship between readers and their text. The author’s goal is

²⁹ Tanzarella, *Sillabario e prime letture* 8.

³⁰ Tanzarella, *Sillabario e prime letture* 9.

³¹ See Padellaro’s notion of “*retentività*,” cfr. ch. 3, pp. 28-29.

³² Alluding to Barthes’ “Rhetoric of the Image,” here, I am employing the term “anthropological knowledge” as the source of information gained through sensory perception. It consists of a set of facts that would help the child provide a name to and identify the uniform illustrated in Tanzarella’s textbook. As I see it, the child at this particular moment does not interpret any “cultural” or Fascist meaning from the regalia in his or her exercise. On “anthropological knowledge,” cfr. ch. 3 pp. 13-14.

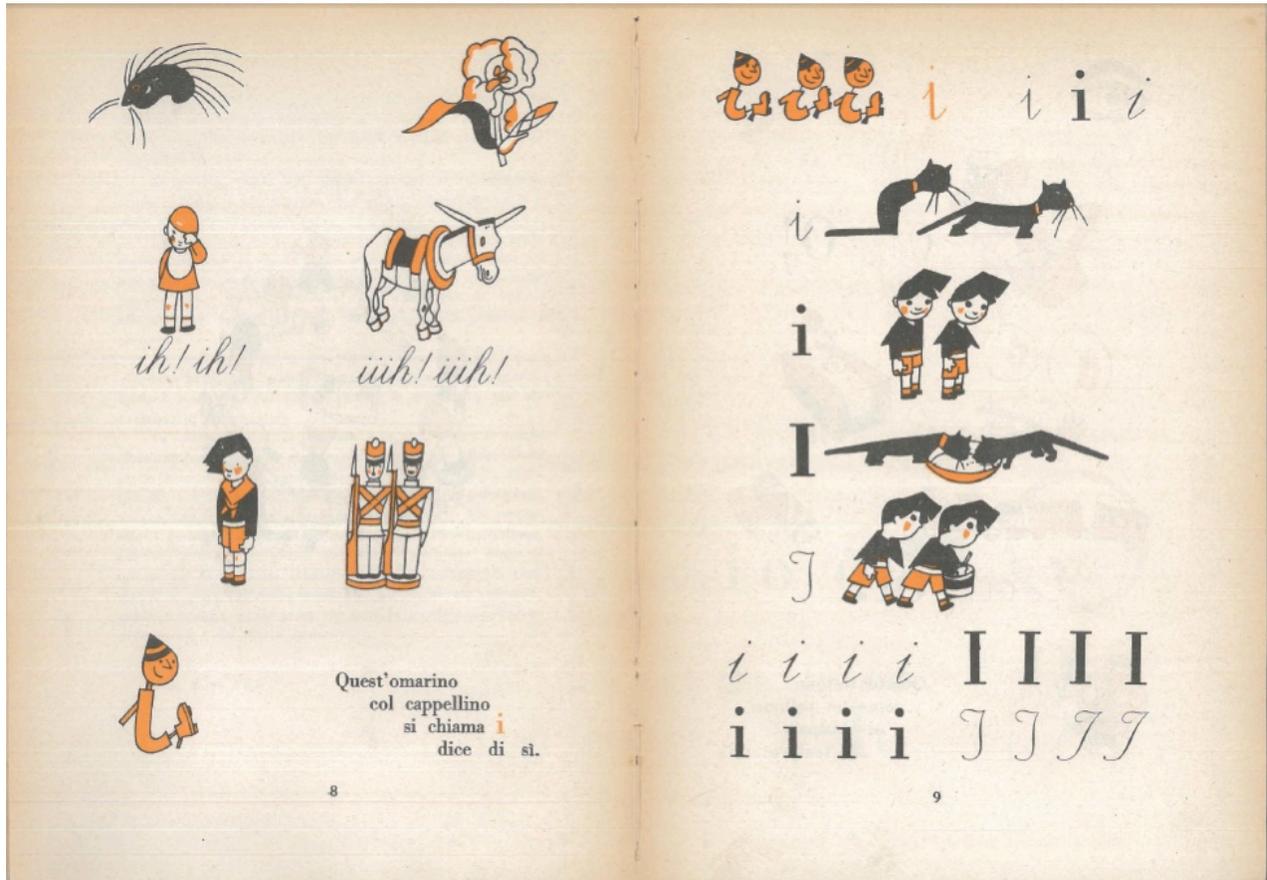


Fig. 4.1. Mario Pompei. 1929. “Balilla.” Color drawing. Tanzarella, *Sillabario e prime letture* 8-9. Among the first words that children learn to read, the term *balilla* becomes a means of teaching syntactical agreement as well as the definite masculine article, “i.” Compare the author’s use of a *balilla* pictogram on pages 8 and 9. In the first instance, she exposes readers to the image alongside other pictograms. To follow, she uses the icons specifically as objects of her first grammar lesson.

to prepare the audience to adopt the Fascist behaviors, which the pictograms ultimately illustrate.

As the guessing games continue on that same page, Mario Pompei, the *Sillbario*'s illustrator, next modifies his earlier drawings, placing attention on the *balilla*'s physique. Lining the uniformed *balilla* up in a row, Pompei depicts his characters on the move. Leaning forward, the boy at the front of the procession carries and plays a set of drums. Placing the same definite article, "I," in front of Pompei's altered pictogram, Tanzarella, to follow, asks her students to recognize not only the figures themselves but also the action, which they are carrying out. Instructing them to provide a verb, Tanzarella makes the *balilla* the grammatical subject of the readers' first full sentence. With the percussion instrument in the hands of the boy leading forth, the textbook evokes the musical fanfare typical of a marching band. She thus thwarts her audience from interpreting their first sentence as, "I balilla camminano." Drawing on children's own experience of participating in such military processions at school, Tanzarella instead elicits the specific third person plural verb, "marciano."³³ Teaching them subject-verb agreement, the ideogram expresses a second literal message: it asks students to recognize and name the march, which they themselves perform at school. With this new phrase, Tanzarella accordingly reinforces her previous attempt at asking readers to identify themselves with the illustrated figures. As the textbook compiler builds on her lexicon and offers more advanced and varied sentence structures moving forth, the *balilla* subsequently develops into a tacit vehicle for making children realize how they ought to behave. By way of these following exercises, Tanzarella no longer *asks* students to identify with, but rather *commands* that they practice the

³³ Incorporated into the elementary school curricula in 1928 by *Ministro* Belluzzo, "formazione di marcia" were performed "sia nelle pubbliche passeggiate o cerimonie, sia nelle esercitazioni ginnastiche ordinarie." Refer to Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, *Circolare ministeriale, n. 56, Ordine di Marcia ternario per gli alunni delle scuole elementari* in Del Nero 114.

same tasks and responsibilities of the illustrated *balilla*. Doing so, she seeks to interpellate her readers into obedient Fascists.

Hail to the Chief, Become a Fascist Subject: The Saluto Romano in Tanzarella's Libro unico

Appearing at about halfway through the *Sillabario*, the first of such exercises depicts two *balilla* boys with their arms raised (see fig. 4.2).³⁴ An italicized phrase in cursive typescript, “I [balilla] salutano romanamente la bandiera: / ‘Per l’Italia, à là là,’” accompanies and elucidates one’s reading of the modified ideogram. The phrase, at first glance, names the specific gesture and cry of respect, which readers themselves rehearse at school (e.g., “salutano romanamente”).³⁵ Drawing a third similarity between readers and their illustrated *balilla*, the reading exercise thus conveys another new literal message (e.g., children, who wear the *balilla* uniform, perform the *saluto romano*). Be that as it may, the meaning of the phrase changes with the addition of the line, “Per Mussolini, eia! eia! alalà! salutate sempre romanamente” on the facing page.³⁶ Written out in the same cursive script, the phrase transforms the indicative tone of the previous sentence. Combining the second person plural imperative of “salutate” with the temporal adverb “sempre” (“always”), Tanzarella no longer refers to any *balilla*. Addressing readers directly, rather, she orders them to do that which the pictogram exemplifies.

³⁴ Tanzarella, *Sillabario e prime letture* 30.

³⁵ Making the *saluto romano* a commonplace drill at elementary schools, ministerial circular no. 90, titled, *Saluto alla bandiera*, passed on October 26, 1923, served to teach respect and patriotism. It mandated that children and teachers salute the flag in an effort to display “la cortesia, la dignità, il virile rispetto alla autorità della legge.” Modifying it a year later with another ministerial decree passed on 7th of January 1924, the “sottosegretario di Stato per l’istruzione,” Dario Lupi, ordered that children pay tribute to the flag not only within the classroom but also when carrying out their marching exercises in P.E. classes. See Del Nero 49-50.

³⁶ Tanzarella, *Sillabario e prime letture* 31.



Fig. 4.2. Mario Pompei. 1929. "I balilla salutano romanamente." Color sketch. Tanzarella, *Sillabario e prime lettere* 30-31. Text in cursive writing identifies the name of the specific practice of respect and reverence displayed in the modified *balilla* ideogram. The author's use of the imperative phrase, "Per Mussolini, eia! eia! alalà! salutate sempre romanamente," on the following page, moreover, makes reference to the pictogram and reveals the symbolic meaning of the "saluto romano" as a patriotic duty. Like the previous phrase, this latter utilizes the same cursive typescript.

Tanzarella's particular language here notably deserves analysis as it underscores a major difference between her first-grade textbook and Marcucci's *Sillabario per le scuole rurali*. Marcucci in fact only mentions the *saluto romano* once in his schoolbook by means of the phrase: "Passano i soldati d'Italia – la loro bandiera à tante medaglie prese in guerra – levati il capello e saluta romanamente."³⁷ Though using an imperative, his message regarding the *saluto romano* is fundamentally different than Tanzarella's. Focusing on the medals distinguishing the soldiers, Marcucci provides a specific context within which he strongly recommends that children perform the *saluto*. Within this reading exercise, the gesture specifically represents an acknowledgement of the soldiers' achievements in war. Tanzarella's phrase on the *saluto romano*, by contrast, does not prescribe a behavior for any one single incident, but rather a general norm or rule of conduct.³⁸ As Mussolini and the Italian "bandiera" are the recipients of the *saluto romano*, Tanzarella's prose communicates children's responsibility to "always" respect their nation's authority. Using such commanding language, Tanzarella unlike Marcucci defines the audience's subservient position within a strict hierarchy and thus interpellates them *against* their own will. This represents a major divergence from the pedagogical practices outlined by Gentile and Padellaro and hence raises the question of how successful Tanzarella might be, in comparison to Marcucci, in her attempt at subjecting readers into Fascists.³⁹

To uncover the answer to this problem, we need to examine other similar examples

³⁷ See Marcucci, *Sillabario* 106.

³⁸ While Marcucci perhaps would agree with Tanzarella that education serves to inscribe children within a system of order, he insists that the experience of learning consist of "una *conquista*, a cui [lo studente] partecipi con soddisfazione, e non un *imparaticcio* ottenuto passivamente per via di costrizioni." Marcucci thus did not rely chiefly on language that would directly force or compel children to practice their studies. See Marcucci, *Il programma didattico* 41.

³⁹ On Gentile's and Padellaro's notion of *spirito* and *volontà* with respect to Italian Fascist pedagogy and reading exercises, see ch. 1, pp. 1-2, 13-14 and ch. 3, pp. 24-28.

involving the *saluto romano* in Tanzarella's textbook. Reappearing on several occasions throughout her *Sillabario*, the *saluto romano* becomes a mnemonic device by which children may corporeally and linguistically practice deference toward Mussolini and the Fascist nation as interpellated subjects. Adopting images that stand out within the text, Tanzarella once more stresses the child's duties as a *balilla* with the phrase, "La [bandiera] sventola al bel sole, salutiamola romanamente" (see fig. 4.3).⁴⁰ Placing an ideogram of the Italian flag in the reading exercise, Tanzarella emphasizes the object of the paramilitary salute. She therefore re-presents the schemata that would recall and dictate the act of paying homage to Italy.⁴¹ Making reference to its location, waving and hovering over ("sventola al bel sole"), Tanzarella likewise spotlights her pupils' subordinate body position relative to the flag. She accentuates not only their obligation to show esteem by lifting their gaze and arms. She also stresses their stature within the lower ranks of the Fascist social hierarchy. These children, in other words, are subjected to the authority symbolized by the Italian flag and Mussolini. Though Tanzarella uses the same verb "salutiamola" as in the exercise above, the form, which it takes, is notably different. Whereas in the previous line, the verb took the second person plural imperative form "salutate," here it takes the first person plural cohortative form.⁴² With this form of verb, Tanzarella lowers the register of formality and authority between herself (i.e., the narrator) and her readers. Instead of

⁴⁰ Tanzarella, *Sillabario e prime letture* 35.

⁴¹ An explanation of the *saluto romano* reappears in Padellaro, *Il libro della terza classe* 13-14. Structured in the form of memorable *catechismi*, a series of aphorisms reinforce the significance of the "saluto" highlighted in Tanzarella's *Sillabario*. These terse lines—"gesto di nobiltà," "gesto di soldato," "gesto di forza," "gesto di lealtà," "gesto di marcia," "gesto di obbedienza," "gesto fascista," and "gesto italiano"—identify not only elementary school military practices but also the behaviors and *doveri* expected of *balilla*. As the repetition of the term "gesto" here implies, the *saluto romano* in Padellaro's textbook likewise identifies the student's body as means for practicing Fascist ideology.

⁴² On the cohortative mood, see Frank Robert Palmer, *Mood and Modality* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986) 10.

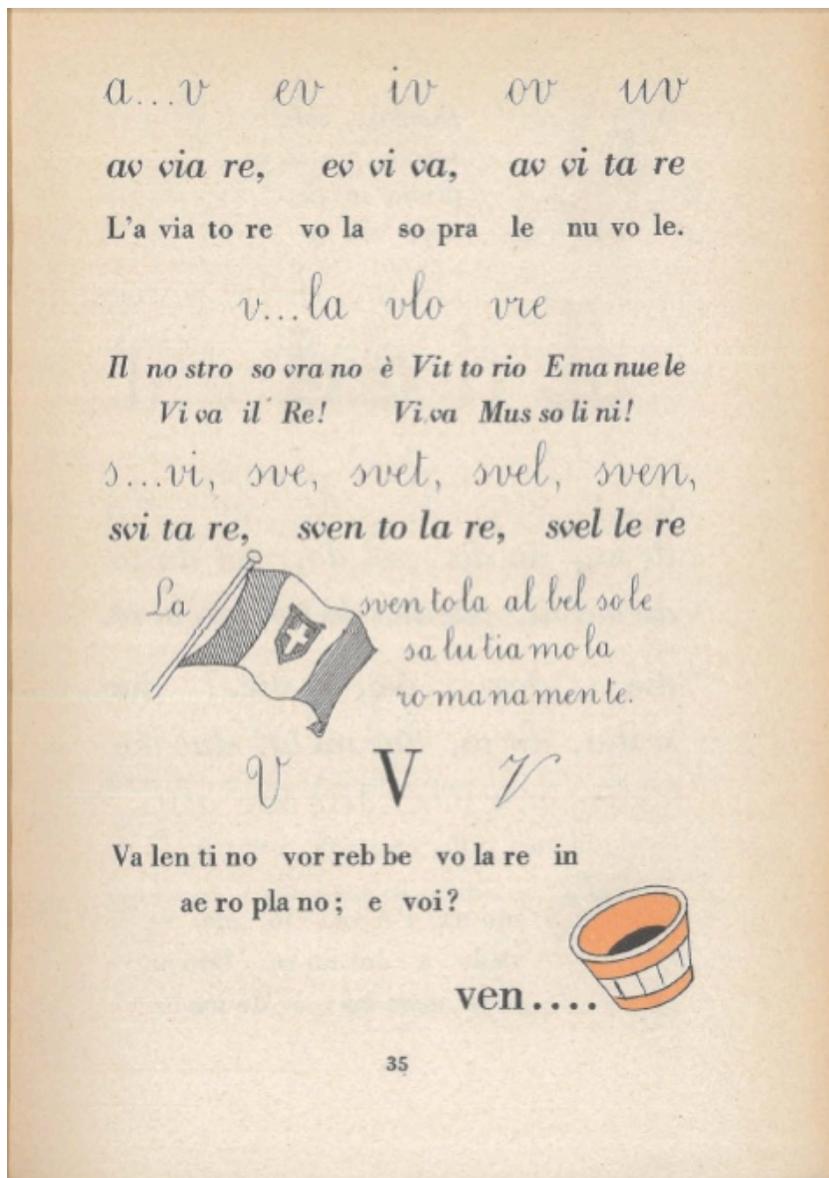


Fig. 4.3. Mario Pompei. 1929. "La bandiera." Black and white sketch. Tanzarella, *Sillabario e prime letture* 35. As in the previous example, the pictogram of the "bandiera" stands out within the text and focuses the reader's gaze upon the phrases that communicate the child's duties and responsibilities to respect his or her nation.

expressing a strict command or order, “salutiamola” expresses “mutual encouragement” and *invites* students to practice the *saluto romano*.⁴³ If Tanzarella has already placed readers onto the path to becoming Fascist subjects, then according to Althusser, they will no doubt “freely accept” their narrator’s suggestion here.⁴⁴ Yet as Tanzarella continues to use forceful terminology within her prose, we begin to wonder to what extent her readers might actually appear as interpellated subjects, who *willingly* fulfill the duties required of them.

Transitioning her audience from deciphering pictograms to reading actual text, Tanzarella curiously expands on the meaning of the *saluto romano* in a way which perhaps might seem counterintuitive to the regime’s project of subjecting children. For the author, the *saluto romano* signifies a gesture of love and devotion. This meaning appears not only within the phrase, “Il primo dovere del bambino italiano è di amare Iddio e la Patria,” but also within the passage: “Passa la bandiera del reggimento. È la bandiera gloriosa che ha sventolato sui campi di lotta e ha visto le vittorie dell’esercito italiano: salutiamola romanamente. Diciamo così: / ‘Siamo bimbi e ti amiamo; da grandi ti difenderemo e ti faremo rispettare da tutti. Viva l’Italia!’”⁴⁵ These two

⁴³ According to Peter Ives’ reading of Antonio Gramsci’s *Quaderni del carcere*, language is a tool by which one group can dominate over another and as such may be defined as hegemonic. Though hegemonic, the language one uses might *not* necessarily be forceful or aggressive in tone. Ives rather suggests that “[people] select vocabulary by gauging their audience and use the style and conventions that they hope will most effectively communicate their message or achieve their desired results. Sometimes this means indicating deference, understanding or camaraderie with listeners.” Applying our reading of Ives to Tanzarella here, we thus find examples of both commanding and cohortative language that serve to hegemonically subject children to Fascist ideology. On Ives’ reading of Gramsci and language, see Ives, *Language and Hegemony in Gramsci* (Winnipeg: Fernwood, 2004) 6-7. For further reading on Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, see ch. 1, pp. 11-12, n. 21.

⁴⁴ Althusser 123. For further reading on Althusser’s notion of repressive force in relation to ISA’s, see Ronald Strickland, “The Western Marxist Concept of Ideology Critique,” *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 28.5 (2012): 48, and also Matthew Lampert, “Resisting Ideology: On Butler’s Critique of Althusser,” *Diacritics* 43.2 (2015): 138.

⁴⁵ These latter two examples employ no pictogram and represent two different scenarios in which the *saluto romano* may be performed. See Tanzarella, *Sillabario e prime letture* 37, 58.

examples consist of key terms—“la bandiera,” “ha sventolato,” “salutiamola romanamente”—that Tanzarella has previously employed in her *Sillabario*. Here Tanzarella offers no pictogram. Rather, keywords within her text recall the images (e.g., a waving Italian flag and saluting *balilla*) with which they associate and the messages which they have come to communicate. Introducing the verbs, “amare” and “amiamo,” however, the text adds to the connotative meanings of these keywords and images. Performing one’s obligations, according to this new phrase, becomes a declaration of patriotism and “love.” Using the cohortative mood once more when repeating the collective first person plural “salutiamola” and “diciamo,” Tanzarella *suggests* that students fulfill the duties incumbent upon them as Fascist Italian citizens. Yet, the textbook compiler’s curious use of the term “dovere” to describe the *saluto romano* implies that one’s willingness to show affection is nonetheless inspired by a sense of compulsion. Hence, the question: how might it be possible to force a child to love one’s country?

Tanzarella’s excerpt notably depicts an oath. Saluting the flag, children reading and pronouncing the phrase aloud make a declaration promising to defend and honor Italy. As they employ the future tense in the line, “da grandi ti difenderemo e ti faremo rispettare da tutti,” they promise to fulfill certain obligations as adults (“da grandi”). Together their tasks will “defend” their country and make it worthy of others’ respect. Articulated as an oath, the *saluto romano* determines the “social contract” by which Tanzarella’s urban readers are compelled to support the Fascist government.⁴⁶ The stakes are high for these children, as breaking this solemn promise or “dovere” might have severe repercussions. It would mean that a child is not only unpatriotic but also unworthy of being a Fascist citizen as Mussolini has declared.⁴⁷ The fear of social

⁴⁶ By way of “social contract,” I am referring to Mussolini’s speech above on *operaio*. Cfr. ch. 4, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Compare Tanzarella’s language here to Mussolini’s above, pp. 1-2.

ostracism or the need to belong would therefore become one possible motive for fulfilling one's vow to protect and defend Fascist Italy. As students might undertake their duties out of fear, Tanzarella in effect undermines Giovanni Gentile's desire to make children adhere to the regime's Fascist values out of their own *volontà* and risks intellectual rebellion.⁴⁸ Here, the inconsistency between *Libro unico*'s content and the Education Ministry's curricula signals one possible shortcoming in the Fascist government's will to educate and subject urban students into workers via textbooks. As we will see, the use of commanding language represents a major trope in the *Libro unico per le scuole urbane* and foreshadows the failures of Fascist subjection.

Transforming the Ragazzo Monello into a Balilla Modello: the Figure of Bruno in Tanzarella's Prime Letture

As she progresses onto the second half of her first grade textbook, Tanzarella's writing continues to indicate her struggle with enticing students to adopt the guise of a *soldato-operaio*. Similar in structure to Marcucci's second grade textbook, this next part of Tanzarella's textbook, subtitled *prime letture*, comprises a collection of stories that follows the siblings Bruno and Mariolina. Like their addressees, the two characters are in their first year of studies at the elementary school and have just finished their *Sillabario*. Nothing short of a *monello*, Bruno, who often picks on his sister, repeatedly hankers after the *divisa balilla*. His desire for the uniform particularly fuels the protagonists' behavioral transformation as he grows and matures into an adolescent participating in Fascist society. Through Bruno's change in character, the paramilitary uniform comes to signify a means of social acceptance and once more raises

⁴⁸ Cfr. ch. 1, p. 15.

questions about a child's willingness to adopt the guise of the ideal Fascist *soldato-operaio*.⁴⁹

The main character's conversion into a good boy occurs on the evening of a celebrated Fascist holiday, the *Natale di Roma*, and notably reveals the social significance behind the emblematic *balilla* uniform. Seeing his authoritarian father, a former participant of the *March on Rome*, arrive home dressed in a "camicia nera" and marked with "decorazioni di Guerra," Bruno renounces his naughty ways. He evolves into a "ragazzo modello: serio, obbediente, e composto" much to the surprise of his grandfather.⁵⁰ As his *nonno* demands an explanation for his grandson's sudden and astonishing change of behavior, Bruno confesses his aspiration to be a *balilla*. Addressing his grandfather, Bruno states:

È per la faccenda dei Balilla. [...] Ecco io voglio essere Balilla [...] ma non ho ancora l'età. Ci vogliono otto anni compiuti, lo sai? [...] Ma la camicia nera col berrettino a fiocco e la cravatta azzurra la vorrei lo stesso...subito! [...] Ebbene, il babbo me l'ha promesso per l'anniversario della guerra, il 24 maggio, se sarò bravo, se saprò meritarmela [...] O nonno! [...] io non fingo affatto. Io voglio essere Balilla, io voglio essere bravo, io voglio meritare la mia camicia nera!⁵¹

Bruno's conversation with his grandfather establishes the magnitude of his desire for the uniform. Repeating "volere," five times, once in the conditional form ("vorrei") and four times in

⁴⁹ Tanzarella's particular approach to the structure of the first grade urban *Libro unico* differs from Belardinelli-Bucciarelli's. While the former's schoolbook consists of a novella, the latter's constitutes a series of short, distinct anecdotes. Unlike Tanzarella, Belardinelli-Bucciarelli does not provide or focus on one single protagonist who might convey the traits of an ideal *soldato-cittadino*.

⁵⁰ Tanzarella, *Sillabario e prime letture* 76.

⁵¹ Tanzarella, *Sillabario e prime letture* 77.

the first person indicative (“voglio”), Bruno’s dialogue emphasizes his resolve. The adverb “subito” (“immediately”) in like manner suggests his impatience, eagerness, and enthusiasm to be a *balilla*. While the grandfather mistrusts the capricious Bruno, the exclamation, “O nonno,” and emphatic phrase, “io non fingo affatto,” denies the elder’s comments and expresses sincerity. The protagonist *truly* wishes to earn (“meritare”) his own “camicia nera” (“black shirt”). Perhaps eliciting the young reader’s curiosity, Bruno’s exaggerated exchange may make one wonder: why does the protagonist want the uniform so badly?

The *divisa balilla* becomes a means by which Bruno understands the rules and hence rewards for participating in Fascist society. Discussing this with his grandfather, the main character interprets being a good boy as a condition for receiving the *balilla* uniform from his father. The young protagonist says, “Ebbene, il babbo me l’ha promesso per l’anniversario della guerra, il 24 maggio, se sarò bravo, se saprò meritarmela.” For Bruno the paramilitary regalia signify one’s social responsibility to comply with the expectations established by one’s society.⁵² Showing moderation, demonstrating punctuality (“puntuale alle lezioni”), studying “tutto quello che spiegò la maestra,” and being “attento in iscuola, educato e gentile,” nonetheless, introduce the tasks that Bruno will *want* to do because of the incentives he will acquire.⁵³ Renouncing his naughty ways, Bruno will not only obtain the prized uniform but also the esteem of such authoritative figures as his father, grandfather, and teachers. Their recognition would concede the character merit (“meritarmela”) and, thereby, grant him permission to both wear a “camicia

⁵² Kathryn R. Wentzel defines the term “social responsibility” as the “adherence to social rules and role expectations. These rules exist by virtue of social roles that define group participation, as a reflection of broad social and cultural norms, or as a result of personal commitments to other individuals.” Children according to Wentzel understand their social responsibility as they learn the proper rules of conduct at school. See her article “Social Competence at School: Relation Between Social Responsibility and Academic Achievement,” *Review of Educational Research* 61.1 (1991): 2.

⁵³ Tanzarella, *Sillabario e prime letture* 114.

nera” and actively participate in such socially accepted and celebrated activities as the “anniversario della guerra.” Is this enough to motivate readers to accept the tasks of a *balilla*?

While the term “meritare” suggests reward, it may also indicate the possibility of punishment. Namely, one’s inability to live up to the socially accepted figure of the good Fascist *balilla* might “merit” negative consequences. For Bruno, choosing to remain a *monello* could mean abandoning his social responsibility. It would not only warrant exclusion from being a part of Fascist society but also prevent him from receiving the love, attention, and esteem of family members. In this respect, the character would appear as Mussolini’s socially marginalized *operaio* who “deserts” his job and renounces contributing to Italy’s autarchic economy. Avoiding the risk of feeling ignored or reprimanded, Bruno transforms into a *balilla* not out of conviction for the regime’s ideas, as one might expect, but rather out of an obligation to please and belong to the Fascist nation.

Demonstrating the means of earning respect and recognition in one’s Fascist social circles, Bruno emerges as the reader’s model much like Marcucci’s protagonist Marco or Petrucci’s Leonetto.⁵⁴ Yet, Tanzarella’s main character here differs from those found in the anecdotes of such rural texts as Marcucci’s *Il libro della seconda classe* or Petrucci’s *Aratro e la spada*. Whereas the latter texts envision their characters and hence readers already on the path to becoming the ideal *soldato-contadino* through their interests, work, and toil, here urban students like Bruno appear from the get-go as “bad” children. As he is obliged to transform his character, Bruno’s particular relation to Tanzarella’s readers as a model becomes problematic. It assumes that the audience likewise consists of disobedient *monelli*, who may or may not be able to

⁵⁴ Cfr. ch. 3, pp. 48-51, 78-80.

fashion themselves into exemplary *balilla* children and thereby *soldati-operai*.⁵⁵ By emphasizing the rewards of being a good Fascist boy, Tanzarella aims to make readers follow Bruno's example.⁵⁶ The character's transformation, on the one hand, might appear futile and ineffective to those children who have perhaps already proven themselves "bravi." On the other hand as he develops into a praiseworthy *balilla*, Bruno might well motivate Tanzarella's presumed naughty students in their own attempt at being good Fascists. Indeed, if such a *monello* as Bruno could be praised, then why not the readers? After all, they are the same age, receive the same kind of education, and are subject to the same expectations. Yet since the compiler suggests the possibility of punishment should children refuse their role as *balilla*, I wonder: does Bruno's change in character provide enough incentive to prompt her presumed mischievous readers into adopting the guise of a good Fascist? What is at stake for a child-reader to shape himself or herself after Tanzarella's protagonist especially if they are to defend and maintain Italy "da grandi"?⁵⁷ As Althusser maintains, the ideological subjection of children and the "reproduction of labour power" involve teaching not only "rules of respect" but also the "know-how" or expertise that would entice children to model themselves after *operai*.⁵⁸ As Bruno himself is not

⁵⁵ As I showed earlier in my analysis of the arguments exchanged between members of the Gentilian *Commissione central per l'esame dei libri di testo*, Tanzarella is not the first to make assumptions about the character of her elementary school readership. Cfr. ch. 1, pp. 29-39.

⁵⁶ The main character's development as a good *balilla* in this case marks Tanzarella's use of the power of suggestion. A clinical term in psychology, "power of suggestion" defines a cognitive stimulus that functions to produce a specific and intentional outcome. It is employed both in advertising as well as in learning and memory tasks. See Alan Branthwaite, "Investigating the Power of Imagery in Marketing Communications: Evidence-based Techniques," *Qualitative Market Research* 5.3 (2002): 164-171; and also Robert B. Michael et al., "Suggestion, Cognition, Behavior," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 21.3 (2012): 151-156.

⁵⁷ Within the body of critical literature on the *Libro unico*, it appears that only Colin has briefly analyzed Tanzarella's *Sillabario*. While she mentions Bruno and Mariolina in the course of her reading, she does not evoke fundamental questions, as I do here, on the significance of these two characters in shaping readers into *soldati-cittadini*. See Colin 192-193.

⁵⁸ On the terms "know-how" and "rules of respect" in Althusser, see above p. 3, 12.

a worker, he falls short of becoming a model that would demonstrate to readers exactly which industries they ought to find work in and the specific products they should manufacture. Bruno's stature as a good Fascist child therefore does not exemplify per se how a reader's own pursuit of an urban "lavoro" will allow him or her to contribute to an autarchic Italy. As Tanzarella's *Sillabario* does not teach any skill set, it remains to be seen whether a child's sense of obedience might determine one into a Fascist worker.

Rethinking the Model: The Figure of the Balilla in Petrucci's L'italiano nuovo: letture della seconda classe elementare

Despite providing amusing guessing games in her *Sillabario* and making the *divisa balilla* look attractive, Tanzarella clearly has difficulty motivating readers to willingly accept their social responsibilities as Fascist children.⁵⁹ With the goal to raise student interest in undertaking the guise of the *balilla*, Alfredo Petrucci tries to rectify Tanzarella's shortcoming and reinterprets the uniform's "cultural meaning" through a nationalist framework. In his urban state-issued textbook, *L'italiano nuovo: letture della seconda classe elementare*, Petrucci offers the paramilitary regalia as a symbol inextricably linked to Fascism and civic duty.⁶⁰ As he gradually unveils the meaning behind the uniform in his anecdotes and illustrations, the schoolbook compiler introduces the idea of toil as an attractive means of contributing to Fascist

⁵⁹ While the MPE reattributed her *Sillabario* within regions that could not afford newer editions of the *Libro unico*, it in fact officially abandoned Tanzarella's in favor of Dina Bellardinelli-Bucciarelli's first grade textbook by 1932. See ch. 2, pp. 37-38 and also "Ripartizione della vendita delle rimanenze del Libro di Stato per l'anno scolastico 1932-1933," *Giornale della Libreria* 2-9 July 1932: 190-195.

⁶⁰ Published between 1936 and 1941, Petrucci's textbook replaced Tanzarella's and Belardinelli-Bucciarelli's second grade *Libri unici*. See "Libro di Stato anno scolastico 1936-37" 528.

Italy's economic growth. In effect, he represents the civic responsibilities of the *balilla* in terms of the *battaglie della vita* and strives to mobilize readers into soldier-laborers.

To help readers identify with and memorize the *balilla* uniform as an insignia of nationalist duty and commitment, Petrucci first offers a set of illustrations. Appearing on the cover of his *Libro unico*, a *balilla* boy emerges forth as a liaison between Mussolini's regime and the Italian nation (see fig. 4.4). His green shorts, white sashes, and crimson complexion allude to the series of three *fasci* located behind him in the background. Illustrated in green, white, and red, the colors of both the *balilla* and the three *fasci* combine to form and exhibit the Italian *bandiera*—the object of praise in Tanzarella's *Sillabario e prime letture*. As his country's flag is embedded in his appearance, the *balilla* becomes a sign of *italianicity*, to use Barthes's term, and hence possesses an intrinsically nationalist value.⁶¹ In its relation to the three *fasci*, Petrucci's display of *italianicity*, nevertheless, is configured according to a militaristic framework. Wearing an army-style uniform, the boy emerges as a member of a hierarchical unit or rank and file in which one is subjected to certain expectations of behavior. With his mouth open wide, the boy seems to be making a battle cry. Hinting at Mussolini's famous dictum, "Libro e moschetto, Fascista perfetto," as he holds a book in one hand and a rifle in the other, Petrucci's *balilla*, moreover, strives to satisfy his obligations to his country by practicing military exercises and following his studies at school. He thus appears to be of value to his nation in light of the responsibilities he fulfills as a Fascist student-soldier. Yet, we know from Melchiori's discussion of the "educazione guerriera" that the regime did not aim at shaping children into actual soldiers. As the subtitle to his textbook suggests, the *balilla*'s schooling aims at forming him into the *italiano nuovo*. Might this mean that the urban student is destined like rural children to acquire

⁶¹ See Barthes 34.



Fig. 4.4. Piero Bernardini. 1939. Front and back cover of Alfredo Petrucci's, *L'Italiano nuovo, letture della 2a classe elementare*, compiled for the *scuole elementari dei centri urbani*. Color illustration. Note the three "fasces" in green, white, and red aligned in the background. They combine to form the Italian flag and mark the hues depicting the *balilla* child in the foreground.

the militaristic behaviors that would shape him or her not into a soldier per se, but rather into a devoted, patriotic, disciplined, obedient, and hard-working *soldier-like* laborer?

Petrucci answers yes to this question in the front matter of his *Libro unico* by reproducing Mussolini's following definition of the *italiano nuovo*: "Dovete voi cominciare a vivere secondo lo stile dell'italiano nuovo o nuovissimo. / Qual è questo stile? / Prima di tutto il lavoro, in secondo luogo la disciplina, poi il disinteresse, poi la probità della vita, poi la lealtà, la schiettezza, il coraggio."⁶² Addressing the *avanguardisti* of Lazio, Tuscany, Umbria, Marche, and the Abruzzi in front of Rome's Coliseum on the 28th of October 1926 with this speech, Mussolini identifies the *italiano nuovo* primarily as a worker.⁶³ Recalling Melchiori's discussion of "educazione guerriera," the "style" ("lo stile"), with which Italians—children as well as adults—ought to conduct their lives, outlines traits that parallel a soldier's. Associating them with qualities of "discipline" ("disciplina"), "indifference" ("disinteresse"), "loyalty" ("lealtà"), "uprightness" ("schiettezza"), and "courage" ("coraggio"), Mussolini's *italiano nuovo* is a figure, who renounces his or her personal interests and toils for the country's benefit. Envisioning Italians as an obedient group of laborers, the *Duce* thus imparts no plan to shape Italians into soldiers. The *soldato* rather frames the demeanor demanded of the ideal worker.

As their behavior and actions resemble that of the soldier, working Italians together share common traits and objectives. Differing not in purpose from one's fellow citizens, the country's population hence unites into a metaphoric army. Within that same speech, Mussolini notes:

Ma pur essendo delle nuove generazioni, grandi compiti vi attendono, poichè nel cantiere del regime fascista c'è un posto: c'è un lavoro e c'è gloria per tutti: per

⁶² Petrucci, *L'italiano nuovo* 3.

⁶³ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 22, 239-241.

coloro che sono al tramonto della vita e per coloro che sono all'alba, per gli intellettuali e per i lavoratori, per i soldati e per i contadini, per tutti quelli che lavorano con disciplina, con passione, con concordia di intenti e di spiriti intenti e di spiriti diretti a costruire la grande Italia.⁶⁴

Fulfilling one's obligations toward the welfare of the regime and country, no one Italian differs from the next.⁶⁵ Distinguished by a "concordia di intenti," these hard-working citizens are unified by means of the objectives they share. Italian intellectuals ("intellettuali"), workers ("lavoratori"), "contadini" ("farmers") as well as "soldati" ("soldiers") appear one and the same. Despite the different careers they choose, these Italians practice the ruling ideology of building a "grande Italia" through work. Equally investing their energy in order to fulfill this shared goal, they manifest a utopian class-consciousness and hence receive praise from Mussolini.

Employing this utopian idea of the *italiano nuovo* as the framework for his *Libro unico*, Petrucci seeks not only to entice his *balilla* students to follow their courses, but also to shape their sense of responsibility toward sustaining Fascist Italy through their hard work. The compiler places his students into the role of soldier-laborers and insists on their participation in the *battaglie della vita* in the chapter titled, "L'Italia nuova."⁶⁶ Addressing his young *balilla* pupils, Petrucci claims:

⁶⁴ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 22, 240.

⁶⁵ As we have seen in Chapter Three, Mussolini's image of a united Italy here of course excludes those presumed lazy, skeptical, and disinterested Italians who refuse their civic duty to sustain the autarchic Fascist nation through work. Cfr. ch. 3, p. 75 and 107.

⁶⁶ Petrucci, *L'italiano nuovo* 116-118. "L'Italia nuova" consists of only one example in which Petrucci urges students to adopt the guise of a soldier laborer. Another similar anecdote, "L'italiano nuovo," likewise calls readers back to Mussolini's aphorism on the *italiano nuovo* and conveys notions of strife and hard work. See Petrucci, *L'italiano nuovo* 188-191.

Ogni italiano è soldato, e ognuno lavora, nel nome del Re e del Imperatore, sotto la guida del Duce, a renderla sempre più grande, più bella, più rispettata.

Il mondo ci guarda stupito. Ma non per questo dobbiamo fermarci. Ricordatevi, fanciulli, che bisogna vincere ogni giorno, affinché la fiaccola mussoliniana della Rivoluzione fascista non si spenga più e diffonde sul mondo la luce di Roma.⁶⁷

With the parallel statement, “Ogni italiano è soldato, e ognuno lavora,” Petrucci relays Mussolini’s dictum on the *italiano nuovo*. Possessing the qualities of a soldier, this *new Italian* emerges as a worker. Using a sweeping generalization to suggest that *all* Italians—fathers *and* mothers, grandparents, children *and* babies—are *soldati* conveys that Mussolini’s army consists not of actual infantrymen. They are instead people—elementary school children and adults alike—who practice every day social and familial activities. By virtue of their status as Italians, they have intrinsic value to their country. Namely, as they strive to fulfill their familial and quotidian responsibilities, these Italians participate in the *battaglia della vita* and simultaneously work toward contributing and supporting the Fascist nation (e.g., “a renderla sempre più grande”).⁶⁸ In this respect, Petrucci envisions his readers already on the path to becoming *soldati-cittadini* and echoes Gentile’s notion of *spirito* and *volontà* in a much clearer way than Tanzarella. Through Petrucci’s description, we can understand then how a child’s will to perform a task might correspond to that of the State. Despite his attempt at providing such a utopian vision of a united Italy, Petrucci, like Tanzarella, unexpectedly employs a distinct vocabulary

⁶⁷ Petrucci, *L’italiano nuovo* 117-118.

⁶⁸ See ch. 1, p. 2, note 6.

and tone that might thwart students from willingly performing their duties as Fascist citizens.⁶⁹

Petrucci especially cues readers into adopting the guise of an *italiano nuovo* through the use of a commanding tone. Addressing his readers with the imperative “Ricordatevi” (“Remember”), the textbook compiler requires that students internalize and recall their own role as *soldati-cittadini*. With the following phrase “bisogna vincere,” Petrucci likewise provides urgency to readers’ participation in the *battaglie della vita*. He obliges them to overcome the obstacles that might perhaps undermine Mussolini’s ideological scope (“la fiaccola mussoliniana della Rivoluzione fascista”) for the country. Without such a work ethic, Petrucci warns, the Fascist regime and the Italian nation would cease to exist (e.g., “non si spenga più”). Petrucci’s catastrophic vision of a future Italy in decline here recalls Padellaro’s notion of an “Italia salvata” and an “Italia perduta.”⁷⁰ By thus illustrating Italy’s future decline or prosperity “come cosa viva,” the former seeks to engage his readers with a reason for adopting an “educazione guerriera.” Their future contribution to Italy’s economic infrastructure as workers proves of vital importance as it determines not only their country’s but also their own personal survival. The danger or peril of catastrophic conflict hence becomes the mechanism by which readers might form a “memoria affettiva” and thereby efficiently memorize their values in their reading.⁷¹ Here as in Tanzarella’s *Libro unico*, children do not accordingly turn into Fascists out of conviction for the ideological values laid out in their reading but rather out of fear.⁷² This lack of conviction for the regime’s ideas indeed likewise poses a problem for Petrucci as he introduces urban

⁶⁹ Cfr. above, pp. 14-15.

⁷⁰ Refer to ch. 3, pp. 27-28.

⁷¹ By “memoria affettiva,” I am referring to Padellaro’s pedagogical recommendation for the structure and content of the *Libro unico*. See ch. 3, pp. 30-33.

⁷² In its distinction from RSA’s, the function of an Ideological State Apparatus, according to Althusser, is not to subject the individual primarily by way of “repression” or force and, therefore, permits individuals to “freely [accept their] submission.” See Althusser 98, 123, and also above, pp. 17-19.

readers to the occupations they can assume as future workers.

Occupying the Urban Labor Force: Professions of the Soldato-Cittadino

While he illustrates manufacturing or service-based jobs in his *Libro unico*, Petrucci remains vague in the ways in which these professions offer the “know-how” that would specifically allow a child to contribute to the regime’s “battle” to construct an autarchic Fascist economy. As a result, he risks undermining his own objective in convincing readers on the value of the ideal *soldati-cittadini* to the nation. Turning to Petrucci’s account in this section, I will be analyzing three anecdotes—“Progetti e progettini,” “La casa nuova,” and “La guerra di Mussolini.” These three texts allow us to see how Petrucci fails to engage readers into embracing their studies out of their own will and firm support of the regime. As the compiler struggles to define the duties of a *soldato-cittadino*, moreover, we will find that he makes recourse to agriculture in its relationship to the *battaglie della vita*. It is here where I will introduce questions concerning the regime’s project of teaching children the jobs that befit their demographic status.

Examples of jobs suited to an urban demographic first emerge in the short tale titled, “Progetti e progettini.”⁷³ Within the story, a group of elementary school children discuss the careers they wish to take when they grow up. Here we comprehend Mussolini’s notion of shaping a “disinterested” laborer as one who particularly accepts the conscripts of his or her social status. Among the jobs that interest the children, Leonetto, the son of a “padre viaggiatore del commercio,” declares: “Io girerò il mondo.”⁷⁴ While Amelia “farà la ricamatrice” (“become an embroideress”) and Marcella “studierà da maestra” (“become a teacher”), Sarina “vorrebbe

⁷³ Petrucci, *L'italiano nuovo* 149-151.

⁷⁴ Petrucci, *L'italiano nuovo* 149.

poter frequentare l'Accademia Fascista di Orvieto e dedicarsi all'educazione fisica dei fanciulli” (“would like to be able to frequent the *Accademia Fascista di Orvieto* and dedicate herself to the physical education of children”).⁷⁵ Meuccio, another student, longs to be “the Vice Re dell’Etiopia,” while Lunella seeks a more traditional occupation.⁷⁶ She notes: “[Farò] quello che fa la mamma. Terrò la casa in ordine, accudirò al desinare, rammenderò la biancheria, e quando mi avanzerà un po’ di tempo leggerò qualche libro. Poi avrò dei bambini, molti bambini, e dedicherò loro tutte le mie cure, affinché crescano belli, sani, laboriosi, coraggiosi, degni della nostra grande Patria.”⁷⁷ None of the characters possess enough ambition to join the Fascist military or obtain a high-paying job. Rather, with the exception of Meuccio, they seek positions that appear suitable for their demographic status. Following in his father’s footsteps, Leonetto, for instance, will presumably become a merchant and thus enable himself to “tour the world.” Amelia, Marcella, and Lunella, conversely, desire jobs that stereotypically characterize women: they will be teachers, seamstresses, and mothers.⁷⁸ Here, Petrucci’s text shows us how the *Libro unico* serves to stratify and not unify Italian children, as regime rhetoric has suggested.⁷⁹

Petrucci’s language and narration suggest that these children will be unable to climb the social ladder. Meuccio’s wish to become a high deputy or viceroy of an Italian colony astonishes his peers and arouses a “risata generale.”⁸⁰ Making Meuccio an object of ridicule, the children’s reaction indicates that the boy could never acquire such a high-ranking position. Describing Sarina’s wish to become a Fascist P.E. instructor, the phrase “vorrebbe poter frequentare”

⁷⁵ Petrucci, *L’italiano nuovo* 149.

⁷⁶ Petrucci, *L’italiano nuovo* 150.

⁷⁷ Petrucci, *L’italiano nuovo* 151.

⁷⁸ Petrucci here entitles these female protagonists to assume the jobs authorized by the 1934 Child Labor Act. Cfr. ch. 3, p. 113.

⁷⁹ For further reading on the regime’s rhetoric of unity as it relates to textbooks, cfr. ch. 2, pp. 2-4, 38-39.

⁸⁰ Petrucci, *L’italiano nuovo* 150.

(“would like to be able to frequent”) makes recourse to the conditional tense. This use of the conditional insinuates that Sarina is being held back from achieving her goal. And, indeed, she lacks an important pre-requisite: she had to be a boy between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five.⁸¹ Petrucci’s verb choice thus implies Sarina’s inability to overcome the gender norms prescribed by the regime. Barred from pursuing the careers of their choice as a result of these social constraints, both Meuccio and Sarina are perhaps compelled instead to occupy vocations that might not seem particularly attractive to them. If they would allow the characters to answer Mussolini’s call for the *battaglie della vita*, perhaps Meuccio and Sarina would appear somewhat willing to assume such unappealing occupations. Nevertheless, none of the jobs here emerges as particularly desirable, as Petrucci does not reveal their usefulness to the Fascist nation or the “know-how” required for each.

Of course, so long as they pursue motherhood, the above social and gender norms do not appear to oppress women particularly in their ability to contribute to Fascist Italy’s economy. Juxtaposed with Sarina, Lunella emerges a domestic *operaia* as she embraces the conventional image of a housewife and mother. She understands her role as a matriarch as a pathway for sustaining Italy’s prosperity. Not only will Lunella help increase the population rate by having “many children” (“molti bambini”), she will also raise them in accordance with the model *italiano nuovo* prescribed by Mussolini. Echoing the *Duce*’s words, she indeed notes that her

⁸¹ Pursuing studies at the *Accademia Fascista* for the purpose of becoming a P.E. teacher demanded a set of rigorous prerequisites even for interested male candidates. Set by the *Opera Nazionale Balilla*, these requirements stipulated that students not only reach a certain age but also obtain a certain level of education, be sworn members of the PNF, and possess a particular family background. They recommend a “diploma di maturità classica o scientifica o di abilitazione magistrale o titolo equivalente,” ask students to have satisfied “gli obblighi militari col grado di ufficiale,” and be the “[figli] di caduto in guerra o per la causa fascista o di invalido per le stesse cause.” See *Opera Nazionale Balilla, Norme per l’ammissione alla Accademia Fascista di Educazione Fisica e Giovanile* (Rome: Libreria del Littorio, 1931) 9-10.

offspring will mature into “laborious” (“laboriosi”) and “courageous” (“coraggiosi”) individuals. A future mother, Lunella will develop into a *soldato italiano*. Her maternal responsibilities will permit her to support the Fascist regime by preparing her children into workers. Her role would thus appear valuable in its contribution to the nation. Yet as we are reminded of Belloni’s mother in the rural tale, “Ritorno da Roma” and the way in which she makes it clear how her children ought to stay in the countryside and become farmers, Petrucci’s language appears vague once more and begs the question: what kind of labor will Lunella, the urban mother, steer her children toward?⁸² What specific products will she encourage her children to produce in their contribution to building an autarchic economy? Petrucci unlike Belloni does not answer these questions in the course of his tale and once more undermines a female urban child’s understanding of motherhood as a means for establishing economic autarchy.

Lunella’s account, at any rate, solely addresses a female readership that may or may not be interested in becoming mothers. Sarina in comparison to Lunella provides a voice to those students who might not want to become mothers. Nevertheless, as her case has exemplified, these girls are discouraged from taking occupations that defy the gender norms of the Fascist period. Their social responsibilities hence compel them to remain within a domestic sphere whether or not they agree with the regime’s expectations of women. Here once again, we see how readers might become Fascists not out of conviction for the regime’s ideas but out of force. As “Progetti e progettini” discusses certain female occupations for the regime’s economic goals, Petrucci’s male readers by contrast have yet to find out how their jobs might contribute to the *battaglie della vita*.

Alluding back to and privileging a male audience of readers in his short tale “La casa

⁸² See ch. 3, pp. 72-74.

nuova,” Petrucci tries to redeem the shortcomings of his previous tale and next depicts construction work as one specific occupation that would allow urban boys to support the Fascist nation. Adopting a language similar to that found in rural editions of the *Libro unico*, Petrucci portrays construction work as a battle. His bellicose diction notably characterizes the tools and setting in which the laborers work.⁸³ Describing the construction of a new *Casa del Fascio*, an administrative building that will house the local branch of the PNF, the tale begins:

Sul viale XXIV Maggio sorge una nuova fabbrica. Gli sterratori, armati di picconi e di vanghe, hanno lavorato a scavare solchi profondi.

I muratori, con la cazzuola in pugno, alzano, pietra su pietra i muri maestri.

Intanto si vanno elevando i ponti, per la costruzione dei piani superiori: una selva di pali, per dritto e per traverso, circonda la fabbrica.

Giungono ogni giorno altri carichi di pietre, di legnami, di mattoni, di calce, di sabbia. Gli scaricatori trasportano il materiale nel cantiere; i barocchi e gli autocarri ripartono, fra schiocchi di fruste e rombi di motori.

L’ingegnere Frattini e il capomastro si fermano qua e là a dare consigli e ad impartire ordini.⁸⁴

Founded on the street marking the date of Italy’s entry into World War I, the *Casa del Fascio*, its

⁸³ Petrucci, *L’italiano nuovo* 23-24.

⁸⁴ Petrucci, *L’italiano nuovo* 23-24.

builders, and environment bear characteristics that reference battle.⁸⁵ As their tools—pickaxes and shovels—resemble artillery, the builders appear as soldiers. Digging “solchi profondi,” the constructors like the veterans of World War I find themselves in areas that resemble trenches. Cacophonous alliteration in light of plosives /k/, /b/, /p/ and fricatives /v/, /s/ provides discordant aural imagery to the description. When pronounced aloud, the onomatopoeic “rombi” associate the sounds of the “nuova fabbrica” with the harsh rolling and thunderous sounds of explosions in battle. As the focus of the scene transitions from the laborers to the raw materials, Petrucci informs the readers of the steps needed to build the *Casa*. Yet, even here, the author does not focus on highlighting a specific skill set. Rather ideas of obedience make their way into the narration. The presence of *L'ingegnere* Frattini and the *capomastro*, for instance, refers to the hierarchy in place. Figures of authority, Frattini and the *capomastro* give orders and manage their employees. The crack of the whip (“schiocchi di fruste”), moreover, suggests their authoritarian status. As it is an instrument of severe corporal punishment and torture, the whip threatens the risks of failure. It appears yet another minatory sign of violence that would control, compel, and demand that laborers work efficiently and not simply be interpellated.

Nonetheless deemed a “home,” the PNF building espouses ideas of nostalgia, protection, and shelter. Though a collective and public space, the *Casa* emerges at one and the same time a private one. Each individual builder, in addition to the locals, may consider the property his or her own. As Meuccio, the young child from “Progetti e progettini,” notes: “[La nuova Casa del Fascio] è anche la mia.”⁸⁶ Born out of the struggle of labor, the Fascist building manifests through the eyes of the “lavoratori” as a utopian space that unifies the nation’s inhabitants. Their

⁸⁵ This is the second time where we come across the anniversary of Italy’s entry into WWI on the 24th of May in the *Libro unico*. Bruno first alludes to the date in Tanzarella’s *Sillabario e prime letture* when discussing the *divisa balilla* with his grandfather. Cfr. above p. 16.

⁸⁶ Petrucci, *L'italiano nuovo* 24.

collective effort serves literally to edify, support, and buttress the Fascist project, which in turn might shelter, guard, and provide security to the Italian people. Despite the fear of corporal punishment, which *l'ingegnere* Frattini's whip might arouse, the laborers here are assured that their hard work no less contributes to their community and nation. It offers them an incentive to undertake such toil in the *cantiere*.

Though he does not specify any particular “know-how,” Petrucci insists on the manual worker's value to Fascist Italy not only by way of such tales of prose as the “La casa nuova.” Poetic odes such as “La guerra di Mussolini” similarly use bellicose language and rhyme to describe and re-present the manual worker as a figure essential to Fascist Italy's economic progress. Addressing the main character of the poem in an apostrophe, the author begins: “La zolla sgrètola / con la tua zappa, / o fante, rèduce / dal Monte Grappa. // Còlma la terra, / saldi i confini: / questa è la guerra di Mussolini. // Ma se l'estraneo, / presso alle porte, / minaccia «A morte!», / tu sorgi e impavido / grida: Alto là! // Eia, eia alalà!”⁸⁷ Accompanied by an illustration of a man with a pickaxe in hand, the addressee of Petrucci's poem appears a soldier (see fig. 4.5). As he is deemed a “fante” or infantryman, his toil to defend Italy from its enemies involves tilling the field and developing Italy's infrastructure much like the laborers of Petrucci's *Casa del Fascio*. The rhyme which ensues from vowel sounds in “zappa” / “Grappa,” “confini” / “Mussolini,” an “porte” / “morte” provide aural imagery to the poem's description of the “fante.” Such rhythmic sounds emphasize the keywords that designate the “fante” as a *soldato-operaio*. While “Grappa,” “confini” and “morte” allude to WWI and the battles of Monte Grappa, “zappa” makes reference to construction work. As Mussolini accordingly becomes the leader of both the soldier and the construction worker, the *fante* in turn gains national prestige. He benefits the

⁸⁷ Petrucci, *L'italiano nuovo* 59.



Fig. 4.5. Piero Bernardini. 1939. "Il fante e l'operaio." Color illustrations. Petrucci's, *L'Italiano nuovo* 23, 59. While both men perform the same physical action, the environment in which they work differs. The "fante" of "La guerra di Mussolini" appears a farmer, while the builder of "La casa nuova" emerges an "operaio."

Duce's Fascist nation through the work he carries out not only within the battlefields of WWI but also at home. With its repetitive and rhythmic language, Petrucci hence offers the schemata that would make the image of the worker a memorable and attractive one for readers and therefore aims at making readers into Fascist subjects without using any force.

A comparison of the illustration of the laborers in "La guerra di Mussolini" and "La casa nuova," however, reveals a discrepancy that undermines Petrucci's own previous description of the urban laborer toiling in the *battaglie della vita*. The men in both illustrations appear to be performing the same action: holding up pickaxes, they are about to strike at the soil before them. Dressed in the same green-grey uniform with their backsides facing the reader, the two figures are indistinguishable. Nonetheless, they appear to be in different locations. The man in the previous tale, "La casa nuova" digs to make way for the cement foundation of the *Casa del Fascio* in an environment that appears rather urban. The laborer in "La guerra di Mussolini," in contrast, lacks the surrounding brick and mortar of the previous image. He rather emerges within a more agricultural setting encircled by trees, hills, and fields. In light of the poem's image, a reader may perhaps be inclined to reinterpret the phrase "Còlma la terra," as one, which specifies agricultural rather than construction work. Instead of digging the furrows that will foster the foundation of a building, the laborer perhaps prepares for the sowing of a crop. He will produce the autarchic foodstuffs that will curb Italy's dependence on foreign trade. As "La guerra di Mussolini" might unexpectedly cast the Italian worker back into the role of the *contadino* rather than the *operaio*, we need to ask: how might we interpret or understand these thematic inconsistencies within the *Libro unico per le scuole urbane* in light of the regime's project to

educate and turn children into Fascists?⁸⁸ What might have been the Education Ministry's objective in teaching urban children stories on agriculture?

Invoking Fascist Italy's «Apostolo del Lavoro, eroe della Patria»: Filippo Corridoni, the Model Soldato-operaio

Davide Montino and Liliano Faenza's previous analyses of the *Libro unico* have attempted at providing an answer to this anomaly. According to Montino, the dichotomy within the *Libro unico per le scuole urbani* symbolizes a tension between the "cultura contadina," considered "un mondo inalterato e rassicurante, patria di sani valori morali," and the "trasformazioni del mondo moderno."⁸⁹ He, for one, has interpreted the thematic "oscillazione," in the *Libro unico* as the regime's inability to bring together the progresses of modernity with tradition.⁹⁰ Liliano Faenza in like manner argues that ruralism is an expression of the regime's "la nostalgia del piccolo mondo antico."⁹¹ Ruralism, as Faenza suggests, marks Fascism's "legame alla terra" and designates "antiurbanesimo."⁹² Both Montino and Faenza notably do not explain the thematic inconsistencies within the *Libro unico* as a means for understanding Fascist labor practices and economic autarchy. Their approach rather is more anthropological. They interpret anecdotes and poems on farming and industry in the *Libro unico* as a reference for

⁸⁸ Petrucci indeed saturates his *Libro unico* with tales that allude to agriculture. Examples, in addition to the poem "La guerra di Mussolini," include the short stories "Mio caro babbo," "Il solco e la spada," "Gira la macina," and "Odor di pane," to name a few. Together they far exceed the number of tales and poems that focus on the *operaio*. See Petrucci, *L'italiano nuovo* 85-86, 146-147, 154, and 163-164.

⁸⁹ Montino, *Le parole educate* 16.

⁹⁰ Montino, *Le parole educate* 14.

⁹¹ Faenza 36.

⁹² Faenza 36, 39.

Italy's peasant culture, customs, and ritual practices and conclude that the Fascist textbook's fluctuation between the rural and urban demonstrated the regime's inability to synthesize Italy's past peasant culture with the modern one. Taking a look at the emigration rate between Italy's rural *paese* to the city helps us understand—albeit only up to a certain point—Montino and Faenza's argument.

In fear of urban overpopulation and “demographic decline,” Mussolini sought to realize the “ruralizzazione del paese.”⁹³ With this campaign the Fascist government could discourage its rural population from migrating to cities by exalting farming and investing in such land reclamation projects as those administered in the Pontine Marshes. This emigration policy hence would explain the Education Ministry's inclusion of such stories as Belloni's “Ritorno da Roma,” Novaro's “Fortunato in città,” or Rinaldi's “Urbanesimo” in the *Libro unico*. However, as these tales primarily address children living in the countryside, Montino and Faenza's criticism falls short in helping us understand why the regime revised and eventually cut such urban editions as Petrucci's out of the curriculum.

Certainly we know that the *Ministro dell'Educazione Nazionale* sought to remove agricultural stories from the *Libro di Stato per le scuole dei centri urbani* in favor of tales that would focus on the *operaio*.⁹⁴ Bottai's ninth and tenth *dichiarazione* in his *Carta della Scuola* for

⁹³ See Alatri, *Una vita per educare* 148-153; Federico Caprotti, “Destructive Creation: Fascist Urban Planning, Architecture and New Towns in the Pontine Marshes,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 33 (2007): 655; and also Philip V. Cannistraro and Gianfausto Rosoli, “Fascist Emigration Policies in the 1920s: An Interpretive Framework,” *The International Migration Review* 13.4 (1979): 675.

⁹⁴ The Ministry of Education officially assigned Petrucci's *L'italiano nuovo* to both rural and urban schools in the 1940-1941 academic school year. The next year, Bottai eradicated the Petrucci's book from urban schools in favor of Pina Ballario's *Quartiere Corridoni*. See article one, Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, *Decreto Interministeriale 14 agosto 1940-XVIII, n. 28684* 221; and also article one of *Decreto Ministeriale 19 luglio 1941-XIX- Norme e*

instance commissioned school materials that would convey a “coscienza del lavoro manuale” and correspond with “le caratteristiche dell’economia locale.”⁹⁵ Moreover, the Ministry of Education reattributed such texts as Petrucci’s *L’italiano nuovo* to rural schools, while compiling newer editions that would better suit their urban demographic. Issued under the Bottai administration in 1942, Pina Ballario’s schoolbook titled, *Quartiere Corridoni: libro di lettura per la II classe delle scuole dei centri urbani*, for instance, aims at rectifying Petrucci’s earlier emphasis on farming. The textbook’s focal point does not extend beyond the boundaries of the city, and its characters consist mainly of a group of manual laborers.

Since neither Faenza nor Montino studies Ballario’s *Libro unico* and such other proceeding Bottai era textbooks as Maria Zanetti’s *Il libro della terza classe*, I remain unconvinced by the scholars’ argument. Ballario’s as well as Zanetti’s schoolbook indeed is not characterized by any thematic “oscillazione.” If it were a matter of the regime’s general inability to synthesize modernity with tradition, as Montino and Faenza suggest, why would that tension not develop in *all* urban editions of the *Libro unico dello Stato*? I believe that the thematic shift between the rural and the urban lies instead in the regime’s own vague idea of what it means to be an urban *soldato-operaio*.

With the publication of Ballario’s schoolbook, the regime indeed tries to produce a clearer definition of the *soldato-operaio*. As the title to her textbook suggests, the MPE’s answer to providing a model lies in the figure of the celebrated historical persona Filippo Corridoni. Emphasizing manual labor, the titled *Quartiere* of Ballario’s textbook indeed takes its name from

modalità per la stampa e la vendita dei testi unici di Stato per l’anno scolastico 1941-42 281-282.

⁹⁵ See Bottai 80.

syndicalist Filippo Corridoni.⁹⁶ Described within her *Libro unico* as an “operaio,” Corridoni represents an Italian “[chi] amò gli operai, li protesse; patì per essi l’esilio.”⁹⁷ Considered the patron and protector of the “operaio,” Corridoni, as we will see, symbolizes industrial work and the urban demographic of the fictional city in which Ballario sets the narrative of her textbook. He serves as the model that would allow the author to turn readers into *operai*. Nevertheless, a question still remains: how effective might Corridoni be as a model for urban children to follow?

In her reference to Mussolini’s impression of Corridoni as the country’s «Apostolo del Lavoro, eroe della Patria», Ballario notably frames her *Libro unico* on the regime’s public admiration of the historical figure’s compliance with certain “rules of respect.”⁹⁸ Describing Fascism’s infatuation with Corridoni, scholar Corrado Scibilia, in fact, notes: “La grandezza di Corridoni [...] nell’aver saputo coinvolgere l’aristocrazia operaia in uno sviluppo rivoluzionario che servendosi delle tipiche armi della lotta socialista, il sindacato e lo sciopero, in realtà si era mobilitata per l’affermazione di valori intrinsecamente legati al riscatto nazionale. [...] [Corridoni] rimanda al tòpos del sacrificio eroico.”⁹⁹ As one who sacrifices and “struggles” for the well-being of his country and fellow man, Corridoni emerges not only as an archetypal “hero,” but also as an exemplary *italiano nuovo* who would liberate industrial Italy from “political and moral servitude.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ For an overview on Corridoni’s career and relationship with the Fascist regime, see Corrado Scibilia, *Annali della Fondazione Ugo La Malfa XXIV-2009: Storia e politica* (Rome: Gangemi, 2009) 233-235, Alceo Riosa, “I miti del fascismo e le tante anime dell’apostolo Filippo Corridoni,” *Ricerche storiche* 13.1 (1983): 131-149, and also Alceste De Ambris, *Filippo Corridoni* (Brembio: Andreani, 2014) 13-16.

⁹⁷ Ballario 15.

⁹⁸ Ballario 15.

⁹⁹ Scibilia 234.

¹⁰⁰ Riosa 147. With the phrase “political and moral servitude,” I am referring to the *Corriere della Sera*’s definition of *riscatto*. See “Riscatto,” *Il Sabattini Coletti: Dizionario della Lingua*

Corridoni here serves as a national symbol, one who could inspire young Fascist readers to adopt the guise of the ideal *soldato-operaio* represented in Ballario's schoolbook. In this respect, Ballario's textbook foils Marcucci's second grade rural *Libro unico* in which the latter compiler offers Garibaldi as a model *soldato-contadino*.¹⁰¹ Corridoni's name and figure allude to and stress the regime's own esteem for industrial workers. Celebrating his endeavors as a unionist throughout the *ventennio*, the regime indeed dedicated monuments to Corridoni in such towns as Parma and Carso Goriziano, appointed such family members as his sister to the head of the "Direttorio dell'Associazione fascista della Scuola primaria," and publicly appealed to the *Camera* to increase the government's financial allowance to Corridoni's widowed mother. Changing the name of his hometown, Pausula, located in the Province of Macerata to Corridonia, the regime no less established its own *Quartiere Corridoni*.¹⁰² Mussolini, furthermore, evoked Corridoni's name and image as a model worker when addressing *operai* in his speeches.¹⁰³ Describing Corridoni's character when unveiling his statue in Parma on the 16th of October 1925,

Italiana (Milan: RCS, 2011), 25 May 2016

http://dizionari.corriere.it/dizionario_italiano/R/riscatto.shtml.

¹⁰¹ Cfr. ch. 3, pp. 50-51.

¹⁰² On the history of Corridonia, see "Da Montolmo e Corridonia," *Museo Corridoni*, Edicta, 2009, 12 May 2016 < <http://www.museocorridoni.it/pausula.html>>. Newsreels from the *Archivio Storico Istituto LUCE* likewise document the regime's commemoration of Filippo Corridoni in the province of Macerata. See "Corridonia," *Archivio Storico Istituto LUCE*, 28 Oct 1936, 5 Sept 2016

<http://www.archivioluca.com/archivio/jsp/schede/videoPlayer.jsp?tipologia=&id=&physDoc=12912&db=cinematograficoCINEGIORNALI&findIt=false§ion=/>; "Italia Corridonia," *LUCE*, 27 Oct 1937, 5 Sept 2016

<http://www.archivioluca.com/archivio/jsp/schede/videoPlayer.jsp?tipologia=&id=&physDoc=14831&db=cinematograficoCINEGIORNALI&findIt=false§ion=/>; and "Corridonia," *LUCE*, 26 Oct 1938, 5 Sept 2016

<http://www.archivioluca.com/archivio/jsp/schede/videoPlayer.jsp?tipologia=&id=&physDoc=16652&db=cinematograficoCINEGIORNALI&findIt=false§ion=/>.

¹⁰³ Despite the honor and recognition he received from the regime, Corridoni himself was never a Fascist. See Riosa 145-146. On the appointment of Corridoni's sister to the "Direttorio dell'Associazione fascista della Scuola primaria," see Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 22, 307-308. On the *Duce's* support of Corridoni's mother, refer to Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 24, 173.

the *Duce* declares:

Onoriamo in Filippo Corridoni l'amico delle classi laboriose, amico ardente e disinteressato; onoriamo in Filippo Corridoni l'intervista della vigilia, l'uomo che comprese la guerra come uno strappo, come una soluzione di continuità ad una polizia miserabile e vile [...]

Bisogna che attorno a questi simboli della nostra ricordanza perenne sia sempre ardente la nostra fede, sempre siamo sicuri e fermissimi i nostri propositi.¹⁰⁴

With the adjectives “disinteressato” and “ardente,” the Fascist leader gives Corridoni the same behavioral qualities as those he once attributed to the *italiano nuovo*.¹⁰⁵ In the phrase, “Bisogna che attorno a questi simboli della nostra ricordanza perenne sia sempre ardente la nostra fede, sempre siamo sicuri e fermissimi i nostri propositi,” Mussolini calls on Italians to internalize Corridoni’s image and reflect on the latter’s honorable values. As the moniker for Ballario’s *Libro unico*, Corridoni’s name carries a sense of reality and calls to mind Mussolini’s plea for a nation of workers. A model for young *balilla* as well as Italian adults, Corridoni’s name evokes the ideas of strife, self-discipline, and laboriousness that would allow one to face the *battaglie della vita* in an urban milieu. And it is especially this sense of Corridoni’s industriousness in Ballario’s textbook that serves to subject urban children into working Fascists and not necessarily his expertise in being a presumably skillful *operaio*. Despite his presumed ties to

¹⁰⁴ On the unveiling of Corridoni’s statue in Parma, see Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 21, 413-414. For examples of speeches in which Mussolini alludes to Corridoni when speaking to *operai*, refer to *Opera omnia*, vol. 25, 145 and 158.

¹⁰⁵ Cfr. Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 26, 401-402.

Italy's manufacturing industry, Corridoni's image will thus still fall short in describing *how* the *operaio* will offer the products and services that would benefit Fascist Italy's economy.

Striving for an Urban Utopia: Ballario's "Operaio" and his Quartiere Corridoni

From the book's cover illustration to its very first chapter, Ballario at once calls attention to the *Quartiere* as a utopian worker society shaped by Corridoni's industriousness. Designed by Bruno Angoletta, the textbook's cover depicts an urban landscape featuring a *balilla* on his way to school (see fig. 4.6). Emerging as Corridoni's young disciple, the *balilla* exemplifies the latter's character traits and connotes ideas of hard work. With his schoolbag perched against a wall, the young child writes the infinitive "vincere" upon a building he passes by. His paramilitary regalia contrive the lens by which we may understand the verb. Connoting a sense of militarism, "vincere" takes the form of a command and suggests the boy's tasks within the *battaglie della vita*.¹⁰⁶ Defined by its literal meaning as "superare" or "battere qualcuno in uno scontro armato," the word, on one hand, identifies the *balilla* as a fighting *soldato*.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, as it also refers figuratively to the concepts "controllare, dominare qualcosa," "vincere" refers to the boy's own qualities of discipline and self-restraint.¹⁰⁸ He is an interpellated figure who adheres to the regime on his own.¹⁰⁹ As he is "armed" with a schoolbag,

¹⁰⁶ This is the second time where we find the term "vincere" used in the *Libro unico*. Petrucci uses the term when describing the *battaglie della vita* to his students in the anecdote "L'Italia nuova." Cfr. pp. 21-22. On the use of the infinitive as a form of command, see ch. 3, p. 106-107.

¹⁰⁷ See "Vincere," *Il Sabattini Coletti: Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* (Milan: RCS, 2011), 25 May 2016 http://dizionari.corriere.it/dizionario_italiano/V/vincere.shtml.

¹⁰⁸ Within *Quartiere Corridoni*, Ballario herself defines "disciplina" as "vincere se stessi." See the chapter, "Disciplina" 78-79.

¹⁰⁹ To be clear again Ballario here represents the regime's own interpretation of Corridoni. The unionist himself, as I mention above, was never a Fascist subject. See p. 43, n. 98.



Fig. 4.6. Bruno Angoletta. 1942. Cover of Pina Ballario's *Quartiere Corridoni: Il libro per la II classe delle scuole dei centri urbani*. Color illustration. Note the boy dressed in a *balilla*'s uniform as he writes the term, "vincere," on a wall. In the background lies a series of buildings typical of an urban setting. The lack of traffic and pedestrians suggests a tranquil district.

his “struggle” consists not of going off to any physical battle but rather attending and performing well at school much like Tanzarella’s protagonist Bruno. “Vincere” combined with the image of the uniform hence alludes to the traits of the *italiano nuovo* that would remind the boy to model himself after Corridoni. Resolute in completing his studies successfully, the child has willingly acquired the attitude and discipline necessary to attain a job that would establish a prosperous nation. But what kind of a job could this *balilla* take? The illustration here remains vague.

The term “vincere” here likewise characterizes the qualities of the district illustrated on Ballario’s cover. Peace, order, stability, and solitude distinguish the outcome of the community’s strife and characterize the *Quartiere*. A high-rise building consisting of four floors lies behind, signaling an urban rather than rural environment. Lacking any decorative carvings, moldings or place markers, it appears streamlined. As the boy stands alone without the company of any adult or peer, Angoletta’s urban scene appears tranquil. The lack of cars, pedestrians, and traffic contrasts with the rather chaotic descriptions of the cities in rural editions of the *Libro unico*.

The systematic architecture of the industrial city compares with those who live in the buildings. As the opening chapter of Ballario’s schoolbook suggests, their lives conform to a set and organized pace of life. Relaying the student’s attention back to the textbook’s cover illustration, chapter one, similarly titled, “Quartiere Corridoni,” begins:

“Il Quartiere Corridoni” è un quartiere operaio. Due strade tranquille, via Cordarina e via Damina, lo attraversano. Quattro caseggiati popolari da una parte e dell’altra di esse. Ogni casa ha dietro un cortile e un orto giardino.

Quattro piani ciascuna, cinque famiglie per primo.

E quanti bambini! Quei bambini con i genitori, i nonni, gli zii formano una vera colonia operaia dentro la città.

Sul corso vanno e vengono biciclette, autocarri, autotreni, automobili.

Ogni tanto si fermano al passaggio a livello perchè deve passare il treno.¹¹⁰

Just as Angoletta's cover suggests, the urban *Quartiere* consists of a group of industrial laborers, who work hard, much like their idol, Corridoni. As each building stands adjacent to the two main intersecting streets, the city's architectural arrangement is quadratic and symmetric. No building differs from the next, since each possesses the same number of floors, a "cortile," and an "orto giardino." As the buildings resemble one another, so too does the description of the families living in them. Coming from the same working-class background, each family of *operai* consists of a large number of relatives that live under one roof. A steady pace of life distinguishes the movements of its people. The comings and goings ("vanno e vengono") of the surrounding traffic is only occasionally ("ogni tanto") interrupted by the trains that pass by. While they may belong to the working class, the people of the *Quartiere* are not poor: they live a pleasant as well as prolific life. Ballario's interjection, ("E quanti bambini!"), suggests that each family has a significant number of children. With the emphasis placed on the *Quartiere*'s invariant qualities, symmetry, and ordered way of life, Ballario makes the urban environment as well as the lifestyle of the *operaio* appear utopian. Yet, is this vision sufficient enough to remind and then force

¹¹⁰ Ballario 3.

students to practice the work and behaviors illustrated by Corridoni? Can Corridoni offer the regime a model urban worker whom students can follow as they endeavor to contribute to the regime's economic program of autarchy?

Allegories of Insect Colonies: An Approach to Recalling Corridoni's Utopia

In spite of the ideal urban neighborhood she conveys in her *Libro unico*, Ballario provides no insight into the exact industrial activities that have made the *Quartiere* into such a tranquil and prolific space. Here Ballario's work diverges in scope from and contrasts with such rural *Libri unici* as Marcucci's *Il libro della seconda classe: scuole rurali*, Petrucci's *L'aratro e la spada*, and Novaro's *Il libro della quarta classe: letture*. The utopian farmlands within the stories of the latter three compilers earn their value and importance in virtue of the farmers who work hard to cultivate them.¹¹¹ Rural children within these tales actively assist their families with growing crops and hence contribute to the regime's battle to create and sustain an autarchic economy.¹¹² Constrained by the 1934 Child Labor Act, Ballario by contrast neither depicts workers in actual *officine*, nor describes urban children as workers. This makes it difficult for the textbook compiler to offer texts and images that would contextualize and remind children to practice the behaviors expected of hard working *operai*. Obligated to shape her readers according

¹¹¹ I am here alluding specifically to Marco's observation of the *contadini* harvesting wheat and pruning trees in Marcucci's *Il libro della seconda classe*; to Petrucci's description of the *contadino* cultivating the Agro Pontino in accordance with the regime's land reclamation projects; and to Novaro's violent description of wounded farmers carrying out the *mietitura*. Cfr. ch. 2, pp. 44-48, 74-78, and 84-87.

¹¹² Refer here to Belloni's protagonist's Mario and Annetta, who follow their mother's advice to refrain from the temptations of the city and pursue the life of *contadini* as well as Petrucci's Leonetto in "Il cinema ambulante" and "La trebbiatura." After practicing agricultural exercises in his *campicello sperimentale*, Leonetto by the end of Petrucci's tale graduates from school and likewise helps his family on their farm. Cfr. ch. 2, pp. 69, 79-80, 83-83.

to the figure of the *italiano nuovo*, nevertheless, Ballario aims at depicting industrial labor through the use of allegory.

Quotidian objects employed in Ballario's *Libro unico* serve to communicate the discipline and "know-how" that could subject readers into Fascist manual laborers. In the chapter titled, "Colloquio con la formica," for instance, the textbook author provides an allegorical discussion between a boy, Nino, and an ant. The insect develops into a sign that alludes to the *operaio*.¹¹³ The tale begins this way:

Nino è sdraiato in cortile ai piedi del susino ed osserva una processione di formiche.

Il loro regno è sotterra; sbucano, si intanano le radici dell'albero. Sembrano operai di uno stabilimento all'entrata e all'uscita del lavoro.

Infatti sono esse le operaie che escono a fare provviste per riempire le magazzini.

Eccone una che trascina un grosso fardello; ogni tanto si ferma a riposare. Una compagna accorre in suo aiuto; le dice:—Dai qui; l'unione fa forza.—Altre due si fermano a conversare o a scambiarsi un'ordine. Una quarta è venuta a portare il pranzo alla compagna perché non perda tempo e la imbocca. Un insetto che Nino non conosce, si mette tra le due formiche e cerca di prendere la sua parte di cibo.

¹¹³ Woolen objects—clothes and books—likewise represent industrial manufacturing and Fascist policies of autarchy in an anthropomorphic dialogue between a "vestina" and a pair of "scarpe" in "Le voci delle cose." See Ballario 110-111.

—Se fosse la formichina della favola, direbbe come alla cicala imprevedente: «Il cibo bisogna guadagnarselo», ma questa formichina è più buona e non negherà l'elemosina all'affamato.

Nino, consolato da questo pensiero, sorride.¹¹⁴

Ballario's allegory of anthropomorphic ants represents a microcosm of Italy's manual laborers. The narrative twice identifies the insects as "operaie" within the first four lines of the tale. Their territory, moreover, springs forth as an industrialized country. Employing "regno," Ballario alludes to Italy's own kingdom. Marked with "stabilimenti" and "magazzini," the workplace of the ant colony consists of commercial structures. The constant "entrata" and "uscita" of the ants call one's attention to and parallels the coming and going of the people who live in the *Quartiere Corridoni*. As they exchange orders ("scambiarsi un'ordine"), the ant society appears hierarchical and serves to remind readers of the ordered system in which the latter group lives. Helping each other so as not to lose time ("non perda tempo"), the ants teach Nino workplace efficiency. Furthermore, the phrase, "l'unione fa forza," alludes to the *fascio*, whose individual sticks when bound together strengthen the whole. Not only does Nino recognize the division of labor but also identifies values of nationalism in the ants. Their tenacity for work brings about prosperity for the army of ants and by extension Italian society. By way of Ballario's allegory, such an ordinary insect as an ant becomes a way that might make one recall the values expected of a Fascist Italian subject or *italiano nuovo*. And yet, once more here, though readers finally get

¹¹⁴ Ballario 124.

a glimpse into the everyday practices of an *operaio*, the text neither specifies the skills that these working ants possess nor the products they manufacture. Readers are therefore left to interpret these ants' qualities on their own and as a result may have very dissimilar views on, who the *operaio* really is. But that's not all.

Though the relationship between the insect colony and the industrial *Quartiere* is clear by way of Ballario's language, the use of an ant might prove insubstantial as a mnemonic device in reminding children of proper "rules of respect." As Marcucci himself explains, while such objects may appear "comuni" or familiar to students, they are nonetheless "meno osservati."¹¹⁵ They may prove a sign or entity that one might take for granted despite the connotative meanings they may hold. In comparison to the rural textbooks' frequent insistence upon the symbolic meaning of such tools as the *aratro*, the ant only appears within urban textbooks sparingly.¹¹⁶ The insect does not appear enough times to allow students to memorize and reproduce the connotative meaning of this sign efficiently. On his or her own, a child would have to reflect on the suggestive meanings associated with the insect sufficiently enough to be able to recall habitually ideas of hard work. The use of the anthropomorphic ant as a metaphor hence demonstrates the Ministry of Education's failure to produce a quotidian object that would consistently serve to remind students of their duties to work hard in support of the nation. Once more, compilers of the urban *Libro unico* lack the strategies necessary that would make the acceptance of Fascist ideas on manual work here possible.

¹¹⁵ Marcucci, *Il programma didattico* 15.

¹¹⁶ Ballario was not the first to represent hard work, productivity, and militarism in an anthropomorphic ant. Rinaldi, Belardinelli-Bucciarelli, and Bargellini likewise employ similar allegories. See also Rinaldi 21-22; Belardinelli-Bucciarelli, *Il libro della prima classe* 122; and Bargellini, *Lecture per la V classe* 219-225.

Godsend for the Nation: the Urban Everyman in Maria Zanetti's Patria: il libro di lettura per la III^A classe dei centri urbani

One possible response to the shortfalls of Ballario's textbook appears within the pages of Maria Zanetti's third grade, *Patria: il libro di lettura per la III^A classe dei centri urbani*.¹¹⁷

Unlike Ballario, Zanetti profiles various urban working citizens and sheds light on the skill-based jobs that may be available to Italians living in the city.¹¹⁸ By way of her simple language and sentence structure, she seeks to emphasize the tasks and work ethic, which her *balilla* readers might themselves want to practice. Describing builders, blacksmiths, and carpenters in the chapter titled, "Lavoro," Zanetti writes:

Il terreno par tutto sconvolto. Il piccone e la vanga l'hanno inciso, solcato per lungo e per traverso. E dagl'incavi profondi salgono i muri, pietra su pietra, mattone su mattone, in una selva di pali, di ponti e scalette di legno.

Come paziente e febbrile il lavoro del muratore!

[...]

Dalla fucina, giungono sonori i ripetuti colpi del maglio. Il ferro rovente, torturato

¹¹⁷ Replacing Padellaro's third grade textbook, Bottai mandated Zanetti's *Libro unico* for the 1939 academic school year. Urban schools availed themselves of Zanetti's book up until the end of the regime. Refer to article one, Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, *Decreto interministeriale 14 agosto 1940* 221.

¹¹⁸ As I have mentioned above, neither Montino nor Faenza have studied Zanetti's schoolbook, which largely does not exemplify any "oscillazione" between rural and urban themes.

dalla possente mazza, sprizza scintille affocate, si torce, si piega.

Duro e forte il lavoro del fabbro, che riduce alla sua volontà la tenacia del ferro.
Ma il mantice soffia sul fuoco e il fuoco è il formidabile alleato dell'uomo. Lotta
di giganti.

Stride la sega del legnaiuolo: il movimento alterno delle braccia e lo sforzo
sull'asse dura arrossano la fronte dell'uomo. Ma la lama dentata penetra nel
legno, lo riduce, lo assottiglia in una pioggia di segatura.

E la piolla ne sfalda ancora mille trucioletti e lo lascia spianato, levigato,
lucente.¹¹⁹

Zanetti's use of alliteration here provides aural imagery to the various kinds of construction work she depicts. As she repeats certain consonant sounds, the author illustrates and emphasizes the body and skills of the "muratore," "fabbro," and "legnaiuolo." The /p/ in terms "piccone," "profondi," "pietra su pietra," "selva di pali e di ponti" lay focus on the builder's tools and construction materials and mimic the pounding sounds that he produces. Caesuras or commas disrupt one's flow of reading on the blacksmith and likewise stress the /r/, /s/, and /f/ phonemes in such phrases as "Il ferro rovente," "sprizza scintille affocate, si torce, si piega," "Duro e forte il lavoro del fabbro." While /s/ and /f/ detail the crepitation, crackling, and burning sounds of the fire, /r/ provides the ringing noises of the manipulated iron. Finally, the /s/ in "stride la sega,"

¹¹⁹ Zanetti 168-169.

“sforzo sull’asse,” and “segatura” induces the sound of wood being sawed. In each of these three examples, consonant sounds in the form of plosives (e.g., /p/) and fricatives (e.g., /s/ and /f/) when articulated exhibit a sense of force.¹²⁰ They highlight the laborer’s expertise and the amount of physical strain needed to carry out the tasks. Their toil accordingly invites students to admire the work carried out by these professionals, which is part of the project of making them workers.

Yet, Zanetti reiterates not only certain consonant sounds, but also vocabulary terms from previous editions of the *Libro unico* in order to make her text memorable. Zanetti, for one, characterizes the “fabbro” with the phrase “lotta di giganti.” Echoing Petrucci’s language in “Un opera da leggenda: la bonifica integrale,” she depicts the blacksmith as a “gigante.”¹²¹ The value of the *fabbro*’s tasks thus becomes homologous to that ventured in the Agro Pontino. Though undervalued in Marcucci’s and Belloni’s rural editions of the *Libro unico*, the blacksmith in Zanetti’s volume attains a mythical status thanks to her use of the word “gigante.”¹²² Adding to this is Zanetti’s insistence upon the robust features of the *muratore*. Repeating the phrases “pietra su pietra” and “mattone su mattone” used previously in Petrucci’s “La casa nuova,” Zanetti converges upon the builder’s body.¹²³ Calling readers’ attention upon the strength and force with which the “muratore” builds, Zanetti demonstrates that his feats are remarkable and yet ordinary enough to still be achievable. Employing “duro” twice in her passage, she moreover interprets the toil of all three characters— “muratore,” “fabbro,” and “legnaiuolo”—as a “lotta.”

¹²⁰ By definition, plosives are produced “by stopping the airflow using the lips, teeth, or palate, followed by a sudden release of air,” while fricatives are “made by the friction of breath in a narrow opening, producing a turbulent air flow.” See “Plosive,” *New Oxford American Dictionary*, 2011, ed; and also “Fricative,” *New Oxford American Dictionary*, 2011, ed.

¹²¹ See ch. 3, part 1, pp. 69-70.

¹²² Compare ch. 3, pp. 49-52 and 54-55.

¹²³ Ezio Maria Grey similarly employs “mattone su mattone” in his “Emigranti italiani di Tunisia.” Cfr. ch. 3, part 1, pp. 91-93.

They emerge as metaphoric *soldati* just like Marcucci's, Petrucci's, Belloni's and Rinaldi's *contadini*, who face the *battaglie della vita*. Step-by-step, Zanetti thus begins to offer readers a skillful *operaio*, who may finally compare with that put forward in rural textbooks.

Zanetti, nonetheless, does not seem content with offering students a reading exercise that solely profiles these three particular jobs. For the author, urban manual labor represents a broad category of work. Striving to introduce readers to a wide variety of jobs, her characterization of these laborers suffers, as it appears rather superficial and tedious. Zanetti's writing style itself, moreover, contributes to this problem, as she uses the same literary techniques and motifs of description. None of the jobs she depicts, as a result, stands out from any other, leaving readers unconvinced by the importance of such work to the well-being of the Fascist nation. Failing to "remote-control" a child's reading of these workers, Zanetti's characterization thus might allow for the possibility to escape from Fascist subjection.

Moving forth in the second part of her anecdote, Zanetti indeed profiles the "calzolaio," "fornaio," and "operaio." Similar to the "muratore," "fabbro," and "legnaiuolo," the three men within this section likewise appear as robust workers, whose jobs, though ordinary, buttress Italy's economy. She continues:

Il calzolaio, chino ore ed ore sul bischetto, tira lo spago e appunta i chiodini pazientemente e li batte, li ribatte, li rintuzza [...] Il fornaio intride la farina e impasta, e regola il forno infuocato per ore e ore, affinché il pane buono, fragrante, sia approntato a tempo per tutti i lavoratori.

Centinaia e centinaio di operai nelle fabbriche si alternano intorno alle machine. E

quel lavoro di attenzione sempre vigile, nel frastuono di motori, nel girar vorticoso di eliche, nell'ansimante va e vieni di bracci di ferro, stordisce ed estenua.¹²⁴

Using the same literary technique of alliteration as in the passages above, Zanetti here repeats the plosive /k/ in such terms as “calzolaio,” “chino,” “bischetti,” and “chiodini” and the fricative /f/ in “fornaio,” “farina,” “forno infuocato,” “fragrante.” Her repetition of certain consonants here does not solely highlight the skills and resoluteness of these workers. With the emphasis on terms “batte” (“hits”), “ansimante” (“panting”), and “bracci di ferro,” Zanetti in fact once more brings to mind the idea of combat. While one can envision the hammering sounds of the calzolaio’s sewing machine, one can also imagine the baker’s physique as he kneads bread by routinely pressing down on dough. The *operaio*’s work, moreover, associated with the “frastuono di motori” mimics the rumbling and deafening sounds of explosions in combat in a move worthy of the Futurists.¹²⁵ For Zanetti, these three men reveal themselves as soldier-workers who face the *battaglie della vita* and thus represent a group of Mussolini’s exemplary *italiano nuovo*. Zanetti’s consistent focus on the frame of these men makes them important and attractive, but is it enough to convince students to follow in their footsteps? What kind of a relationship does Zanetti establish between her audience and these workers? Does Zanetti envision her readers already on the pathway to taking up such manual work?

¹²⁴ Zanetti 169.

¹²⁵ Here, I am referring especially to such pieces of Futurist poetry as Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s “Zang Tumb Tuum.” For examples of such Futurist poetry, see Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Parole in libertà futuriste olfattive, tattili-termiche* (Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2012), and also Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Teoria e invenzione futurista* (Milan: Mondadori, 1983).

The answer to these questions does not seem very clear up to this point, and, in fact, as she continues her tale, Zanetti no longer uses descriptive language or alliteration to engage readers. Rather she strives to construct an argument that would directly force her students to adopt the themes of her text. Concluding her chapter with a series of rhetorical questions, Zanetti addresses her young *balilla* readers and notes:

Non sembra dunque il mondo un enorme cantiere, da cui si leva, si spande, incalza, la voce perenne del lavoro?

Il lavoro è un comando divino. Il buon Dio ha dato tutto all'uomo. Tutte le ricchezze che racchiude la terra sono sue, e dagli animali e dalle piante egli può trarre ciò che gli è necessario.

Ma senza il lavoro, tutto questo tesoro sarebbe inutile. C'è forse qualche cosa, di quanto occorre alla vita, che la natura ci offra senza il lavoro dell'uomo?

L'acqua, sì, ma solo quando la si attinge alla sorgente. Perché possa giungere a noi, nelle nostre città, nelle nostre case, quanto lavoro d'ingegneri e d'operai!

Del resto, pensiamo al pane, alle vesti, alla casa, ai libri, a tutti gli oggetti di cui facciamo uso e che, molto spesso, ci sono indispensabili. Nulla, nulla senza lavoro, e talvolta duro lavoro.

Il lavoro, dunque, è cosa santa.

Chi lavora opera per il bene degli uomini. Non vi sono, perciò, lavori belli o brutti, alti o meschini. Il lavoro è sempre bello, sempre nobile, sempre grande, anche se umile.¹²⁶

Within this passage, Zanetti like Rinaldi finally imagines a dialogue between herself and her students. Yet posing a series of loaded questions, she does not prompt any discussion of the material at hand and does not seek to critically engage her readers.¹²⁷ This question and answer dialogue, as a result, resembles a repetitive drill and subverts Zanetti's goal to turn readers into Fascist workers, who would agree with her viewpoint out of their own conviction.

Zanetti's first, ("Non sembra dunque il mondo un enorme cantiere, da cui si leva, si spande, incalza, la voce perenne del lavoro?"), is a negative yes or no question. Its answer is governed by the negative, "non," and hence does not require one to supply any particular set of information in response.¹²⁸ By way of her question, Zanetti orients readers to view the "world" ("il mondo") the way she does. According to the author, work defines the world ("il mondo") and, therefore, the lives and everyday activities of Italians. Through Zanetti's own reading, the *cantiere* here develops into an interpretive lens by which readers might perhaps understand an

¹²⁶ Zanetti 170-171.

¹²⁷ Per Douglas N. Walton, posing a *loaded* question entails forcing an already presumed answer upon a responder. The "yes-no" structure consists of one form, which *loaded* questions take. See Walton, "Question-Asking Fallacies" 198.

¹²⁸ Jim T. Dillon, "Questioning in Education," *Questions and Questioning*, ed. Roland Posner and Georg Meggle (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996) 103, 107; Douglas N. Walton, "Question-Asking Fallacies," *Questions and Questioning*, ed. Roland Posner and Georg Meggle (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996) 198-199; and Kathy Kellerman, "Persuasive Question-Asking: How Question Wording Influences Answers," Annual Meeting of the State Bar Association of California, Anaheim, 27 Sept. 2007, 28 June 2016, <http://www.kkcomcon.com/doc/KPQA.pdf>.

Italian's function and purpose as a worker. However, as her inquiry provokes no debate or thought, it may perhaps prevent readers from accepting Zanetti's viewpoint. As the author answers, "yes," to her own loaded question, she *wants* the audience to accept that manual work determines their society's course for survival. Her manner of interpellating the addressee, nonetheless, does not stop here.

Further below, Zanetti offers readers another similar yes or no question, ("C'è forse qualche cosa, di quanto occorre alla vita, che la natura ci offra senza il lavoro dell'uomo?"). On its own, the question can potentially spark debate, as it asks children to think about what the term "qualche cosa" might or might not refer to. Thus, at first glance, Zanetti seems to give readers the option of replying to her question with either a "yes" or "no." Nonetheless, as she immediately responds with the phrase "L'acqua, sì, [...]," Zanetti clearly does not want readers to reflect on the question. Having already had an answer in mind, she rather uses her response to interpellate readers once more. "Water" or "l'acqua" represents the unidentified object (e.g., "qualche cosa") from Zanetti's second yes or no question. As she explains with her brisk response, water is essential to life ("occorre alla vita") and, at the same time, is produced naturally without human intervention ("che la natura ci offra senza il lavoro dell'uomo"). Zanetti's following use of the conjunction "ma," however, may take readers aback, as it at once foils the common place opinion or cliché, (e.g., "Water is the source of life"), which people generally hold to be true.

Pitching Fascist ideas of work with the phrase—"Perchè possa giungere a noi, nelle nostre città, nelle nostre case, quanto lavoro d'ingegneri e d'operai!"—Zanetti suggests that man's labor power *exceeds* water as an essential source of life and therefore appears a godsend. Water, she explains, is not necessarily within one's immediate reach. Infrastructure in the form

of man-made plumbing systems establishes the means by which one may have access to that water. Through such a presumed logical explanation, Zanetti tells readers what they should believe about man's labor power. Yet, depending on how a child approaches his or her text and thinks about his or her reading will determine whether or not he or she accepts Zanetti's viewpoint. As Barthes notes, audience members may still interpret their reading multiple ways, despite being "remote-controlled."¹²⁹ And indeed, Zanetti's argument moving forth is characterized by certain fallacies, which once more might thwart her interpellation of readers.

With the mention of such objects as "pane," "vesti," "case," and "libri," Zanetti does not provide any information on the importance of such service-based jobs as that of a physician, scientist, teacher, or researcher. Her focus rather is on the production and purchase of foodstuffs, which regulate an economy. Characterizing the goods as "tutti gli oggetti di cui facciamo uso e che, molto spesso, ci sono indispensabili," Zanetti implies that the "humble" ("umile") manufacturing work undertaken by the laborers in her tale provide Italians with their daily resources and support Italy's autarchic economy.

It is worthwhile to note the *operaio's* overall importance to the survival of the Italian people and the Fascist economy at this point within Zanetti's *Libro unico*.¹³⁰ The *operaio's* skill-based job encapsulates the "lotta" and sacrifice that would in other words make Italy economically prosperous and independent. Here we recognize one fallacy in Zanetti's argument. One's access to such everyday objects cannot solely be ascribed to the person who manufactures them. In order for a child to consume books ("libri"), he or she first must learn how to read. Teaching children how to read, the instructor, as a result, would in turn appear more valuable

¹²⁹ Cfr. ch. 3, pp. 22-23.

¹³⁰ This essential value placed upon the *operaio* will fundamentally change as we get to the fifth grade *Libro unico* compiled by Davanzati and Bargellini.

than the *operaio*, who manufactures the books. The four examples of everyday objects which Zanetti cites here, moreover, represent only a small fraction of “tutti gli oggetti di cui facciamo uso e che, molto spesso, ci sono indispensabili.” Certainly such other “objects” manufactured for “everyday use” including vaccinations and prescription drugs are likewise indispensable. But as useful as the objects themselves are, they are the result of important medical research. Furthermore, they can only be administered by medical professionals. Here again, scientific research and medicine could appear equally important in their contribution to the production and access of these everyday objects. As Zanetti does not discuss such service-based jobs as teaching, medicine, and research, her argument on the sole importance of industrial labor for Italy’s economy is misleading and risks undermining her audience’s intelligence.

Despite the fallacies in her argument, Zanetti still seeks to interpellate readers with such maxims as “*Urban man’s labor power is the source of life*” and lays out a set of related aphorisms, which students should memorize. These include the following: “Il lavoro è un comando divino,” “Il lavoro, dunque, è cosa santa,” and “Il lavoro è sempre bello.” Their repetitive format not to mention their emphasis on the presumed divine properties and miraculous results of manufacturing work make Zanetti’s question and answer dialogue resemble a series of religious catechisms that is part of her ISA repertoire.¹³¹ Summarizing the author’s principles on work, its format prevents readers once more from adopting the ideas, which Zanetti prescribes. Notably, the aphorisms revert to the “boring” style of writing which Gentile, Lombardo-Radice, and the *Commissione centrale dei libri di testo* criticized.¹³² As the MPE suggested, the format of these short phrases are so mechanical that they fail to “stimolare la coscienza e l’esperienza didattica [...] delle esigenze del mondo dei fanciulli” to use Lombardo-

¹³¹ ISA is the acronym for Ideological State Apparatus. See Althusser 96.

¹³² Cfr. ch. 1, pp. 35-36.

Radice's own words.¹³³

Zanetti herself curiously still does not seem convinced by her own use of aphorisms. In a last attempt to persuade students to adopt her ideas on work, she reverts back to the style of writing, which she uses at the very beginning of her tale. Here, she seeks to appeal to her readers' emotions. Using militaristic terminology a third time, Zanetti reminds students to imagine once more the manual worker as a grandiose soldier. Describing the laborer one final time, she concludes:

Guardiamogli negli occhi: una fiamma, vi brulla, di gioia e di orgoglio.

È la stessa luce che splende negli occhi del soldato che ripone le armi a combattimento finito.

Anche i lavoratori danno tutta l'opera loro per la grandezza della Patria: sono militi che combattono per l'onore della loro terra.

Più si lavora, meglio si lavora, più tenacemente si lavora, e più la Patria diventa ricca e potente.

Ecco perchè il Fascismo, con le sue sapienti leggi, ha aiutato, protetto, ordinato, disciplinato il lavoro. Tutte le speranze per l'avvenire d'Italia, esso ripone nel

¹³³ Ascenzi, "Premessa" 11.

lavoro del popolo.¹³⁴

The compiler's use of emotional terms calls the reader's attention back to the laborer's physique as in the very beginning of the tale. Terms such as "fiamma" ("flame"), "gioia" ("joy"), and "orgoglio" ("pride") represent the emotions that would permit the child to recognize and appreciate the passion, which the laborer presumably has for his or her vocation. Employing such terminology in turn leads Zanetti to explain once more why Fascism places such importance upon work. Noting that they are "militi che combattono per l'onore della loro terra," laborers here again resemble soldiers not only by the instruments with which they work. The jobs they assume represent acts of admirable sacrifice. Strengthening the economy by way of the products they produce, Zanetti's workers propagate Italy's welfare as a nation just like soldiers do and, therefore, deserve the respect and esteem of all Italians including readers.

Using the imperative "Guardiamogli" ("Look at him"), the textbook compiler moreover hails or interpellates, to use Althusser's term, her audience to imagine her romanticized notion of the "lavoratore." Yet despite the order she conveys, a reader perhaps might not be so inclined to answer Zanetti's call to adopt, reproduce, and practice manual labor. Here the *operaio* appears solely an object of appreciation and not necessarily a convincing model to emulate. In her discussion of work, Zanetti, in comparison with Petrucci, neglects to establish a distinct relationship between readers and manual workers. Petrucci, as we have seen, reminds readers of their role as workers in the regime by way of such phrases as "Ogni italiano è soldato, e ognuno lavora." Imperative phrases such as "Ricordatevi, fanciulli, che bisogna vincere ogni giorno" allow Petrucci to express a child's duty to work. Zanetti never makes it clear how her readers

¹³⁴ Zanetti 171-173.

may themselves already possess the qualities of tenacity, hard work, and sacrifice that would define them as Fascist subjects on the path to becoming *soldati-operai*. Perhaps what is also missing from Zanetti's text here is a child protagonist like Marcucci's Marco or Petrucci's rural *balilla* who cultivate their fields in *campicelli sperimentali*. Characters such as these could serve to exemplify both the "know-how" and "rules of respect" that would help a reader recognize his or her own role as a Fascist worker. Yet, how might Zanetti, the compiler of a third grade, urban *Libro unico* be able to introduce such a character without violating existing Child Labor Acts? Piero Bargellini may in fact have the answer.

Child's Play and the Working Machine: Piero Bargellini's Michelaccio

In "Michelaccio," a short tale from his fourth grade textbook, *Il libro della IV classe elementare: letture*, Bargellini for the first time offers readers the model of an urban child, who engages in construction work.¹³⁵ Bargellini significantly sidesteps any possible violation of Child Labor Acts by cloaking construction work in the metaphor of a game. Bargellini, of course, is not the first compiler to represent manual labor in such a way. Petrucci, we might recall, depicts farming as a game in his rural tale, "I piccoli colonizzatori."¹³⁶ As in Petrucci's story, play in Bargellini's "Michelaccio" determines a space in which children can enter into the adult Fascist working world. The rules of play within the tale accordingly represent the norms of Fascist society. They dictate the way in which all Italians—adults and children alike—ought to

¹³⁵ Bargellini, *Il libro della IV classe elementare: letture* 48-51. Replacing Novaro's fourth grade textbook, the Ministry of Education disseminated Bargellini's edition of the *Libro unico* between 1938 and 1944 in both rural and urban schools. To be clear, the regime under Bottai never published a specific fourth grade *Libro unico* for the rural school. See Bacigalupi 197.

¹³⁶ Cfr. ch. 3, pp. 83-86.

contribute to the welfare of the regime by assuming certain jobs.¹³⁷ Bargellini's protagonist, as we will see, does not feel burdened by the "rules of respect" or toil of physical labor. Because construction work appears as a game, it becomes "enticing" and "captivating" for the main character and, as a result, ultimately determines his ideological subjection.¹³⁸ This choice of language and terminology notably sets readers up so that they might also associate certain physical labor practices with a sense of pleasure and thereby be interpellated into Fascist *soldati-operai*. Bargellini's characterization of Michelaccio, nevertheless, will lack the detail needed to show readers how exactly the protagonist's service-based labor might contribute to autarchy and Fascist Italy's economic welfare.

Bargellini begins to associate manual labor with notions of pleasure by emphasizing and focusing readers' attention on the effects, which the work might have on one's physical body. Physical labor in the form of construction work here seemingly perfects the body and mind of Bargellini's idle and lazy young protagonist, Michelaccio. It provides the persona with a means to not only transform his character but also overcome his status as a social outcast. As readers follow Michelaccio, they respond to his character traits and actions in accordance with

¹³⁷ Dutch historian, Johan Huizinga in fact has argued that play "creates order, *is* order," and as such inadvertently prepares children for their own role in society. On Huizinga's notion of play, see his seminal *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Kettering: Angelico, 2016) 4. Barthes and Benjamin, in like manner, have also argued that play fundamentally represents a child's desire to practice certain adult behaviors. See also Barthes, "Toys," *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1956) 53-55; Benjamin, "Old Toys," *Selected Writings: Volume 2, Part 1, 1927-1930*, ed. Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005) 98-102; "The Cultural History of Toys," *Selected Writings: Volume 2, Part 1, 1927-1930*, ed. Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005) 113-116; and "Toys and Play," *Selected Writings: Volume 2, Part 1, 1927-1930*, ed. Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005) 117-121.

¹³⁸ Huizinga indeed notes: "Inside the play-ground an absolute and peculiar order reigns. [...] [Play] creates order, *is* order. [...] The absolute affinity between play and order is perhaps the reason why play, as we noted in passing, seems to lie to such a large extent in the field of aesthetics. Play has a tendency to be beautiful. [...] Play casts a spell over us; it is 'enchanted', 'captivating.'" See Huizinga 10.

the biased views prescribed by Bargellini. When the protagonist appears physically unattractive as a result of his lazy disposition, readers thus learn to criticize his attitudes and conduct. At moments in which the character modifies his outlook on work, readers likewise learn to commend Michelaccio. Guided by the author, their response to the character's changes in this way would indicate their own practice or mental reproduction of Bargellini's notion of the idealized, physically beautiful industrial laborer.

Structuring his tale in a way that parallels Novaro's "Fortunato in città," Bargellini begins by offering readers a biased view of the protagonist's presumably unattractive persona. Doing so, he notably prepares the audience to reject Michelaccio before they begin their reading. Three elements within the text—the title, an illustration, and a subtitle—prepare readers. Named after the protagonist, the story's title, "Michelaccio," consists of the *spregiativo* or pejorative suffix, "-accio." Communicating contempt and scorn, Michelaccio's name substantiates the principal character as a bad child. Taking about a third of the page, Angelo della Torre's accompanying illustration to follow provides an idea of why Michelaccio has received such an unfavorable moniker (see fig. 4.7). Looking lethargic and carrying a sluggish posture, the protagonist sits at the steps of a building. With his eyes closed and gaze carried downward, Michelaccio rests his head on the palm of his hands as though he were feeling bored. Sober colors of gray, white, brown, and black offer no brightness and make the character languid, dull, and unattractive. Complementing della Torre's illustration with the subtitle "Una brutta arte" ("A bad skill"), Bargellini suggests a reason for the narrator's contempt of the main character: Michelaccio appears to have some bad habits.

Having furnished such clues, Bargellini next reveals Michelaccio's traits and begins his critique of the character's behaviors. He writes:



Fig. 4.7. Angelo della Torre. 1938. "Michelaccio." Color illustration. Bargellini, *Il libro della IV classe* 48. della Torre's use of sober colors—brown, gray, black, and white—in his sketch of Bargellini's protagonist accentuates the boy's disdainfully lazy character and sluggish demeanor.

Michelaccio era nato di domenica, a mezzogiorno. Pareva che per lui fosse sempre giorno di festa o ora di mangiare.

Si svegliava la mattina sbadigliando. Restava insonnolito a fissare i travicelli della camera e non sarebbe mai uscito dal caldo del letto. L'acqua gli faceva paura. La scuola lo annoiava. Le ore di lezioni non gli passavano mai. Contava i minuti con gli sbadigli. Aveva sempre fame, aveva sempre sonno.¹³⁹

Verifying the information which the audience may have inferred from della Torre's drawing, Bargellini's text ensures that one look upon Michelaccio's judgment and character unfavorably. As the narrator exaggerates Michelaccio's outlook on life, the main character appears as a lazy figure *par excellence*. He associates himself with times and days of the week that indicate a break or pause of activity. Yawning often, he demonstrates a physical lack of interest in schoolwork and recreation. Adding to his unattractive physique is the unpleasant olfactory imagery evoked by his aversion to taking baths ("L'acqua gli faceva paura"). Revolted, the reader can perhaps only imagine Michelaccio as a dirty and foul-smelling boy. Appearing as a "brontolone" much like Novaro's Fortunato, moreover, Michelaccio refuses to move about and neglects his scholastic responsibilities. He notes, "Mi stanco a non far nulla, figuratevi se non lavorassi!" As della Torre's illustration has suggested, the protagonist favors spending his days "seduto sopra un paracarro o uno scalino, e lì si faceva divorare la noia."¹⁴⁰ Lacking a proper sense of hygiene and work, Michelaccio emerges as the antithesis of the laborious, clean, and

¹³⁹ Bargellini, *Il libro della IV classe elementare* 48.

¹⁴⁰ Bargellini, *Il libro della IV classe elementare* 49.

appealing *italiano nuovo*.

As the story unfolds, however, Bargellini suggests that work can in fact be amusing and rejuvenating even for someone as lazy as Michelaccio. As the subtitle to the second section of the story suggests, work is “un nuovo giuoco.” Observing from his stoop one day, Michelaccio notices his schoolmates as they pass bricks from one to another. As the bricks reach a “posto di una casa in costruzione,” Michelaccio regards his peers not as laborers in a *cantiere*. Feeling an unexpected “voglia,” the character rather interprets the activity as a game. Seduced by this vision as his friends invite him to join the activity, Michelaccio appears magnetized and pulled by the work he sees. With a will to participate, the character responds to this call of desire and transforms from a dull, lethargic boy into an energetic and happy one. His change in persona by consequence signifies his own transformation into an interpellated subject. Narrating the character’s reaction, Bargellini notes:

Michelaccio, rosso in viso, con gli occhi lustrati e la fronte lucente, si lavò le mani alla fontana. Prese la giacca e se la buttò sulle spalle come un piccolo operaio.

Arrivò a casa, che la minestra era quasi fredda:

—Quanto hai lavorato!—gli disse la mamma.

—Lavorato?

—Ti ho visto in piazza a scaricare i mattoni.

—Era lavoro quello?—chiese sorpreso Michelaccio [...]—Ma io mi sono divertito.

—Lo credo. Il lavoro ricrea.

—Le ore son passate senza che me ne avvedessi.

—Lo so bene. Il lavoro distrae.

—Mi sento meglio degli altri giorni.

—È giusto il lavoro fa sani.

—Se questo è lavoro, —pensava Michelaccio, —non è brutto come credevo.¹⁴¹

Bargellini's narrator celebrates the main character's change. Qualified with such phrases as "rosso in viso," "con gli occhi lustri e la fronte lucente," Michelaccio calls to mind della Torre's previous illustration. The crimson color of his face suggests how animated he is now. Described as "lustri" and "lucente," he displays a sense of vigor and brightness and subsists no longer as a dull and unattractive boy. Compared to an "operaio," Michelaccio no longer appears as an immature child but rather has developed into an adult, who earns the food he eats. As his change in character helps him regain the favor of his friends and mother in the narrative, the protagonist renounces the guise of the social outcast. Practicing work through play, he earns a place in the society of which he is part.

Michelaccio's transformation by way of manual labor conveys Bargellini's notion of a working Italian society. Echoing Zanetti's language in the tale, "Lavoro," Michelaccio's mother utters three aphorisms—"Il lavoro ricrea," "Il lavoro distrae," and "Il lavoro fa sani." Articulating these statements in her dialogue, she, on the one hand, reproduces the ideological beliefs of the established order in which she finds herself. She believes that work rejuvenates, brings about pleasure and accord among members of her community, and contributes to one's health. On the other hand, as she refers to and summarizes the outcome of Michelaccio's contribution to the "passamano di mattoni," she likewise highlights her son's practice of those

¹⁴¹ Bargellini, *Il libro della IV classe elementare* 50.

ideological beliefs.¹⁴² Easy to memorize in light of their simple syntactic structure, these terse generic sentences appear as facts that would pertain to not only Michelaccio but also to readers.

Because he has set readers up to criticize Michelaccio for his bad habits and lazy disposition, Bargellini has likewise placed them on the pathway to practicing the same behaviors and principles. Indeed the compiler substantiates the mother's address by referencing the description of the *italiano nuovo* cited by Petrucci. Ending the story with the italicized, "*Prima di tutto il lavoro, in secondo luogo la disciplina, poi il disinteresse, poi la probità della vita, poi la lealtà, la schiettezza, il coraggio,*" the textbook compiler reproduces the mother's ideology by way of Mussolini's rhetoric, equating the two.¹⁴³ By way of his authority, Mussolini becomes "the agent of repression," to use Althusser's words, and orders Bargellini's readers to adopt and practice the same ideology as their protagonist, Michelaccio.¹⁴⁴

As methodical as Bargellini's tale might be in getting children to embrace the guise of a manual worker, however, it is not clear whether Michelaccio can finally serve as a model for readers to emulate. Taking up construction work, Michelaccio provides a service but not a product. How can readers be sure that the work he carries out can regulate an autarchic economy? Are the materials with which Michelaccio works, for instance, produced through autarchic means? Bargellini does not explain this and thus appears—as previous compilers

¹⁴² Unlike Zanetti, Bargellini does not particularly formulate the aphorisms here within the context of a question and answer dialogue. His passage, therefore, does not resemble the format of a religious catechism. In my mention of ideological practice, I am again reading Michelaccio's tale according to an Althusserian framework. Cfr. ch. 1, pp. 5-10.

¹⁴³ What is interesting about the way in which Bargellini quotes Mussolini here is the fact that he leaves out the imperative phrase, "Dovete voi cominciare a vivere secondo lo stile dell'italiano nuovo o nuovissimo." Avoiding the use of such coercive language, the author does not appear to *force* children to imitate Michelaccio. He perhaps instead wants to encourage readers to follow Michelaccio's example out of their own will. Compare Petrucci, *L'italiano nuovo* 3 and Bargellini, *Il libro della IV classe elementare* 51.

¹⁴⁴ Althusser 105.

have—to interpellate readers into *soldati-operai* solely by teaching them “rules of respect” and the value of hard work. Since he does not teach any specific skill set or lay out the way in which construction work benefits the regime’s project of autarchy, his text might likewise appear unconvincing. Bargellini strives to work against the flaws of previous compilers, and yet he continues to make the same mistakes as others have before. For these authors working under the Ministry of Education, it appears virtually impossible to get around the conscripts of the child labor acts. They are not able to discuss urban labor in a way that would encourage children to contribute to the Fascist *patria* out of their own will. In a last attempt to interpellate readers into Fascist subjects, fifth-grade compilers therefore make significant changes to thematic scope of the *Libro unico* and re-interpret the role of urban children under Fascism altogether. They no longer depict them as workers but as consumers. Might this change finally allow the regime to subject children in its effort to create economic autarchy?

Transforming Workers into Fascist Consumers: Fifth Grade Libri unici per le scuole urbani

The (Rural) Man is Keeping Me Down: Subjection in Forges Davanzati’s Il balilla Vittorio

Portraying urban children as consumers instead of workers appears as one possible means for the Ministry of Education to work toward establishing economic autarchy without violating any child labor act. Indeed, buying and consuming Italian-made products are activities, which urban children can do everyday. Participating in such activities of commerce, these children would not risk their lives as they would if they were to work in factories, mills, and mines or handle any hazardous material. As consumers, moreover, a child’s “know-how” would consist simply of learning how to handle money and becoming familiar with the proper products to

buy.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, a child-consumer's "rules of respect" would consist of having a patriotic sense of appreciation for the merchandise that he or she buys, the product's manufacturer as well as Fascist Italy's economy.¹⁴⁶ Becoming a consumer would thus appear less arduous than taking up manual labor and, in its simplicity, might appeal more to a child's willingness to contribute to Italy's economy. Fashioning a child into a consumer might therefore make him or her more vulnerable to Fascist subjection. Though portraying urban children as consumers might solve the problem of figuring out a way to show Fascist Italy's youth how to face the *battaglie della vita*, it nevertheless creates another problem especially as it regards the *Libro unico per le scuole urbani*.

In their depiction of Italy's youth as consumers, Fifth-grade editions of urban *Libri unici* in fact reintroduce readers to agriculture and establish a hierarchy between the *contadino* and the *cittadino*. The relationship between the two develops into one of obligation. Namely, the *cittadino* or urban resident appears under a debt of gratitude to the *contadino* by virtue of the products the latter produces. Because of the crop the *agricoltore* cultivates, in other words, he or she regulates not only the country's autarchic economy but also nourishes Fascist Italy's urban communities. The hierarchy, which results between the *contadino* and *cittadino* in fifth grade

¹⁴⁵ Belardinelli-Bucciarelli is one among the few compilers of the *Libro unico* who from the get-go seeks to teach her urban audience the proper means of spending and saving money. Examples of such reading includes one blank fill exercise, (e.g., Poldino à radunato nel suo.....tanti soldi. Li spenderà per la tessera di.....La desidera tanto!), in which she teaches children to spend the money they have saved in their piggy bank on a *tessera balilla*. She likewise instructs children the cost of purchasing certain agricultural foodstuffs. An example includes the anecdote, titled *Un uovo, due uova* in which she asks, "Volete le uova? Le ò prese stamattina. Nove soldi per un uovo." See Belardinelli-Bucciarelli, *Il libro della prima classe* 53, 55.

¹⁴⁶ Belardinelli-Bucciarelli likewise recommends that her audience have respect for the manufacturers, who produce the goods that children consume. These manufacturers, of course, consist of *agricoltori* and *pastori*. Describing a shepherd herding sheep, she asks, "Pensate mai a loro d'inverno, se indossate un vestito o un berretto di lana?" See Belardinelli-Bucciarelli, *Il libro della prima classe* 60.

Libri unici, in effect, undermines not only the utopian worker nation, which previous compilers seek to construct in their schoolbooks. It also elides the importance placed upon the tasks carried out by the *cittadino*. Becoming the *contadino*'s minion through his or her consumption of rural Italy's autarchic products, the urban *cittadino* is thus valued not by way of his or her toil in the *battaglie della vita*. Paying their debt by purchasing autarchic agricultural products out of compulsion, urban folk are subjected to farmers. It is here where the problem of Fascist subjection reaches a climax and reveals the overall failures in the regime's education of children.

An example of such a text will be found in Roberto Forges Davanzati's *Il balilla Vittorio: Il libro della quinta classe elementare*.¹⁴⁷ Structured as a novella akin to Marcucci's second grade *Libro unico*, Davanzati's narrative follows the life and scholastic adventures of the young and at times naughty fifth grade *balilla* student Vittorio Balestrieri.¹⁴⁸ Originally from Castelgiorgio in the region of Umbria, Vittorio moves and settles in Rome in the course of the tale. His father, Giacomo, a "segretario del Comune," receives a job promotion forcing the family to move from the country to the city.¹⁴⁹ As the Balestrieri family retains ties with their kin—Giacomo's brother, Francesco, and his wife Barberina—Vittorio travels often between the *città* and the *campagna*. Recounting the protagonist's travels as he grows from a *monello* into an

¹⁴⁷ Considered one of the better-liked elementary schoolbooks, Davanzati's *Il balilla Vittorio* was among the first *Libri unici* produced in 1930. While the *Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale* mainly administered Davanzati's in urban schools, it also mandated the text in rural schools. Modifying their decrees for the urban school, the regime replaced the schoolbook briefly with Rinaldi's in 1940, followed by Bargellini's in 1942. On the distribution of *Il balilla Vittorio* within urban and rural primary schools, see "Ripartizione della vendita delle rimanenze del *Libro di Stato* per l'anno scolastico 1932-33" 190-195. On public reception of Davanzati's textbook, see also Bacigalupi 207-208.

¹⁴⁸ While editions of Davanzati's textbook contain black and white photographs from the LUCE institute, its cover by contrast introduces full-color drawings of a *balilla* marching forth holding a rifle in his hand. Its shades—green, white, and red—reflect those, which appear in Italy's *bandiera*. See Davanzati's 1931 and 1939 edition of *Il balilla Vittorio* in fig. 4.8.

¹⁴⁹ Davanzati 20-21.

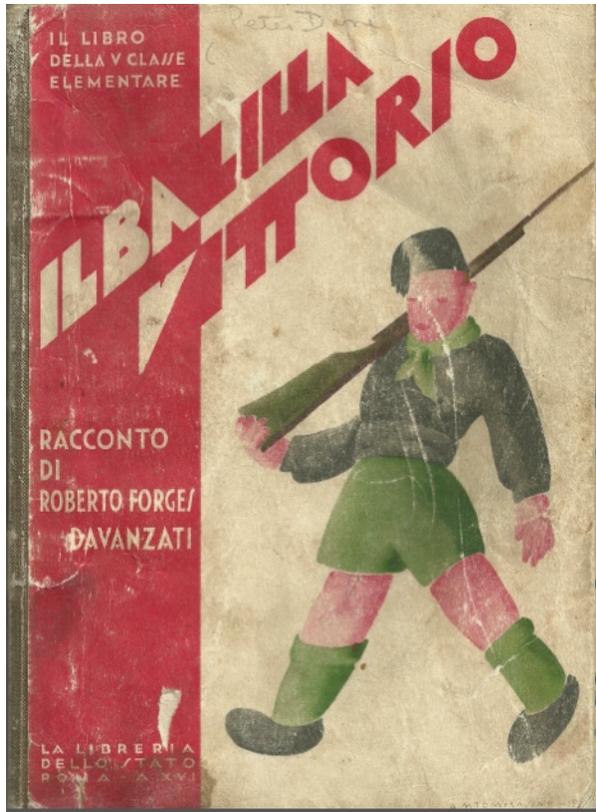


Fig. 4.8. Anonymous. 1931 and 1939. "Il balilla Vittorio." Color Illustration. On the left, the 1931 cover of Davanzati's *Il balilla Vittorio*. On the right, the 1939 edition of the same fifth grade *Libro di Stato*, modified with a quote by Mussolini as well as a map highlighting Italy's colonial conquests in Africa. The illustrator for both is not named.

italiano nuovo, Davanzati's omniscient narrator parallels life within these two areas.¹⁵⁰

Furnishing the pros and cons of the city and the countryside, he identifies a tension within the protagonist, who is expected to choose a career within one of these two localities by the end of his elementary studies. Eventually deciding on the life of a farmer, Vittorio diverts readers' attention from the industrial onto the agricultural. The esteem, which the character ascribed to farming, as a result, overshadows that placed upon industrial labor in previous editions of the *Libro unico* and lessens the role that urban students have as workers in the *battaglie della vita*.

The first trace of a tension between the *contadino* and *cittadino* appears when the narrator compares Giacomo and Francesco Balestrieri, each of whom, like Vittorio, retains predilections for both the city and country. Though born into an agricultural family, Giacomo on the one hand demonstrates the personality traits of an archetypal middle-class *cittadino*. Pursuing an education, he chooses an administrative career.¹⁵¹ Refusing a life of farming, the narrator describes his resolve for an urban lifestyle this way:

Giacomo maggiore di due anni, che aveva studiato volentieri e con profitto, s'aggiustò in un ufficio al Comune [...] sposato [...] e con quattro figli: Luigi, Maria, Fiammetta, Francesco. Le male annate e le necessità della famiglia lo avevano obbligato, per salvare il poco rimasto, a ridursi nella casetta in capo al paese, affittare il *Monticchio*, dove intorno alla casa grande e malandata c'era qualche buon podere, e continuare nel lavoro al Comune dove era divenuto

¹⁵⁰ Maturing into a respectable, good boy, Vittorio's character in this respect compares with Bruno's in Tanzarella's *Sillabario e prime letture*. Cfr. above pp. 19-24.

¹⁵¹ Davanzati 20.

segretario.¹⁵²

Able to rent his paternal home, *Monticchio*, in order to pay off his father's debts, Giacomo appears as a successful businessman.¹⁵³ Described as a "fattore," his job as a "segretario" consists of administratively managing the land occupied by surrounding families in their community of Castelgiorgio.¹⁵⁴ Earning a good salary, the laborious Giacomo pays off his father's debt and regains *Monticchio*. Conceding it to his brother, he provides Francesco's family shelter and work.¹⁵⁵ On account of his vocation, moreover, he is able to sustain a large family consisting of four children, not counting the main protagonist and his little brother Romano, born in the course of the tale. In light of his successes, Giacomo appears to have the traits of an urban *italiano nuovo*. Namely, Giacomo is a determined and disciplined hard-worker, who by building a large family contributes to the Fascist regime's *battaglia demografica*.

Despite his achievements, however, Giacomo grapples with his status as a businessman. He retains a sense of nostalgia for his paternal homeland and deems the city detrimental.¹⁵⁶ Encouraging his wife and family to "aver più forza a lasciare questa nostra casa e affrontare le pene della città," he accepts his job promotion with some hesitation. Appearing much like the imagined urban reader in Gray's tale "Urbanesimo," Giacomo's ambivalence in leaving *Monticchio* from the get-go sets readers up to compare the life and work undertaken in both the city and the country.¹⁵⁷ It surprisingly prepares readers to compare the urban *uomo nuovo* with a rural one. Doing so, it encourages esteem for the Italian *paese* as well as the *agricoltore* and, in

¹⁵² Davanzati 20-21.

¹⁵³ Davanzati 20.

¹⁵⁴ Davanzati 36.

¹⁵⁵ Davanzati 23.

¹⁵⁶ Davanzati 23.

¹⁵⁷ Cfr. ch. 3, pp. 108-110.

effect, serves to entice urban students' own sense of obligation toward farmers.

The narrative's predilection for the countryside culminates in the figure of Zio Francesco. In contrast to his brother, the impulsive Francesco appears at first glance the antithesis to Giacomo. Introducing Vittorio's uncle, the narrator describes Francesco as a young man who rejects country life in favor of city life. Describing his youth, the narrator notes: "Francesco di poco studio, con molta voglia di andare e senza alcuna disciplina di lavoro: domandò qualche migliaia di lire, e con risoluzione improvvisa, partì per l'Argentina."¹⁵⁸ Unlike his brother, the young Francesco did not care much for studying or working. Driven rather by a "sudden" ("risoluzione improvvisa") "will" ("voglia") to leave his country home, he lacks the sense of responsibility and obligation to maintain his father's *podere*. He travels instead to Rosario, Argentina, a growing metropolitan city in the province of Sante Fe.¹⁵⁹ Operating his own "buona azienda agricola" ("a good agricultural company"), Francesco himself ensues as a businessman who administers farmlands.¹⁶⁰ The character thus serves as a foil to Giacomo. Like his brother, Francesco held positions in business management and agriculture. While experiencing his youth in a city, Francesco nonetheless returns to Italy and grows up to embrace rural life fully. By the early 1920's, he settles in *Monticchio* and becomes a simple *contadino*.¹⁶¹ It is through the travels and experiences of Francesco that readers see a hierarchical relationship between the *contadino* and *cittadino*.

While Francesco might not exactly be the obedient Fascist *uomo nuovo*, his character

¹⁵⁸ Davanzati 21.

¹⁵⁹ Officially declared a city in 1852, Rosario today consists of the third most populous city in Argentina. Built on the Paraná River, the city historically played a critical role in developing the country's rate of agricultural and industrial commerce. See "Ciudad Rosario," *Ente Turístico Rosario*, 2016, 4 Apr 2016 <www.rosarioturismo.com/es/ciudad>.

¹⁶⁰ Davanzati 21.

¹⁶¹ Davanzati 24.

traits nonetheless garner more respect than Giacomo's in Davanzati's narrative and thereby make his career choice to become a farmer appear more significant. Describing Francesco's return to Italy from Argentina and his decision to take possession of and expand his father's *podere*, the narrator compares the personalities of the two brothers once more. As a result, he highlights Francesco's industriousness and presents him as a more autonomous, independent, and productive worker than Giacomo. Davanzati narrates:

[Poichè] proprio al *Monticchio* c'era un focolare di ribellione rossa [Zio Francesco] si impegnò a fondo per riprendere casa e terra, piantatosi nei due poderi finitimi che aveva comperati. Più libero del fratello Giacomo, ch'era vincolato dall'ufficio; più impetuoso e deciso, fu dei primi a riprendere l'animo e il costume dei combattenti e dare ascolto alla riscossa che Mussolini bandiva da Milano.

[...]

Ora, passati fra i poderi che s'erano allargati di altre terre comperate, ben lavorati e concimati, con le case dei contadini, fra le più belle dell'Alfina.¹⁶²

Confronted with the threat of a communist rebellion ("focolare di ribellione rossa"), Francesco, a *contadino*, advances forth within this passage as a *soldato*. While he adopts the "costume di combattenti," his manner of "defending" his country does not involve taking up any actual arms.

¹⁶² Davanzati 24.

Rather his manner of resisting supposed communist “adversaries” consists of expanding and maintaining an *Italian* territory through his farming. Francesco’s determination (e.g., “si impegnò”) to purchase and establish “due poderi finitimi” thus, on one the hand, parallels the “fante” of Monte Grappa in Petrucci’s poem “La guerra di Mussolini.”¹⁶³ He, like the *fante*, engages in a *battaglia* through farming. Compared to his brother, on the other hand, Francesco is free. His career as a farmer is flexible enough so that he may answer Mussolini’s call to “defend” the country both as a participant in the *Marcia su Roma* and as a farmer, who produces autarchic food. It does not “chain,” (e.g., “vincolato”), or oppress him in the way Giacomo’s position does. Described with the comparative adjectives, “Più libero” and “più impetuoso e deciso,” Francesco, in contrast to Giacomo, maintains his own schedule. Despite his vocation as a *contadino*, he likewise appears the more affluent. Producing a great deal of crop, he not only owns one of “the most beautiful homes” (“fra le più belle”) but also becomes one of the most respected people within his community. As a *fante*, Francesco in effect ranks above his brother Giacomo in his effort to contribute to the regime’s *battaglie della vita*.

Notwithstanding his social position, Zio Francesco does not have any children and lacks the large family built by Giacomo and his wife Anna.¹⁶⁴ Still, while he and Barberina are unable to have children and contribute to the regime’s *battaglia demografica*, farming allows Francesco to mature into a father figure no less and contribute to Fascist Italy’s economic policies of autarchy. He successfully yields a large crop of wheat that nourishes and provides for his community. Here we recognize the value of the farmer over the industrial worker as per Davanzati’s text. Discussing his large production, Francesco observes:

¹⁶³ Cfr. above pp. 17-18.

¹⁶⁴ Davanzati 22, 49.

Ma il premio già c'è, e per tutti, perchè abbiamo avuto più dello scorso anno, vincendo l'avversa stagione, proprio come ci ha detto il Duce, il quale vuole che ci siano i quintali di grano nostro, della nostra terra, per tutte le bocche dei figliuoli che Dio manda agl'italiani [...] Il grano è per le bocche dei nostri figli, e le braccia dei nostri figli sono per il pane della nostra terra, che ha il buon sapore di casa.¹⁶⁵

Participating in the *battaglia del grano*, Francesco bears the hallmarks of a *soldato-contadino*. He strives against the adversities of nature (“l'avversa stagione”) in order to maintain and grow a significant amount of crop. Emerging “victorious” (“vincendo”), Francesco is able to defend and sustain his Italian community. Utilizing “figli” or “figliuoli” three times in the course of this brief passage, Francesco identifies a patriarchal relationship between himself and his consumers. He metaphorically considers himself a father, who strives to attain the nourishment his “children” need. Yet, Francesco not only provides for his own rural community.

Referring to his consumers as “tutte le bocche dei figliuoli che Dio manda agl'italiani,” Francesco suggests that he provides for Italians living in metropolitan areas. Hence he overcomes the marginal boundaries between the city and country. By way of his occupation, he helps to establish a relationship between *contadini* and *cittadini*. He states: “Ecco un'altra libertà che ci ha dato Mussolini, la libertà di commerciare e di far arrivare più presto i prodotti della terra e del lavoro a chi ne ha bisogno, e unire meglio le città con le campagne e le campagne con le città.”¹⁶⁶ At first glance, his vocation allows Francesco to construct a system of mutual dependence between the country and the city. As one produces and the other buys, each sustains

¹⁶⁵ Davanzati 43-44.

¹⁶⁶ Davanzati 126.

the other and creates a prosperous and “unified” nation. Davanzati here notably elides any mention of industrial work. As farming and trade rather acquiesce to one’s common interest to support one’s fellow man or woman, the role of the urban *cittadino* as a worker transforms into that of a consumer. Introducing Zio Francesco as the patriarch of Italy’s rural and urban population, however, Davanzati analogously interprets the *cittadino* as a son: the farmer provides for the townsman out of a presumed paternal responsibility; the latter consumes and purchases the former’s products not only out of necessity but also out of moral obligation and mutual respect. Yet, because the farmer functions as a father over the “filial” consumer, he holds an authoritative status within their presumed “familial” relationship. Here again the theme of indebtedness between the *cittadino* and *contadino* comes into play.

Focusing on Zio Francesco’s character, Davanzati privileges the *contadino* over the *cittadino*, and, likewise, the country over the city. Life in the city by consequence unexpectedly appears detrimental to the health and well-being of the textbook’s protagonists and thereby to urban readers themselves. Arriving to their new apartment in Rome, Vittorio feels a sense of disappointment. His experience in the country’s capital does not live up to his high expectations. Expressing his disillusion, the narrator notes:

Vittorio, che s’era immaginato chi sa quali grandezze in una casa di città; che aveva veduto tutto così alto e largo e luccicante, entra nella cucina e guarda accanto al focolare angusto la tavola con i posti gomito a gomito; entra nelle stanze strette, tutte letti, passa attraverso un corridoio buio, s’affaccia alle finestre, guarda il cortile serrato e bucato di luci che illuminano altre cucine e altre stanze tutte uguali. Rivede improvvisamente, il *Monticchio* così ampio e sereno, il cielo

largo e pieno di stelle alla sera. Sente una stretta al cuore e gli pare come se da quella sbattuta di sportello alla stazione e questo arrivo in casa, fra tanta fretta, ci sia stata quasi una mano invisibile che lo abbia spinto, con violenza, come ad un gastigo.¹⁶⁷

Evaluating them on spaciousness and brightness, Vittorio compares the family's new apartment to *Monticchio*. Describing the layout of their new home with the terms "stretta" and "gomito a gomito," Vittorio deems their apartment small. The lack of space is oppressing for the main character. Employing the adjective "serrato" ("locked"), he portrays the building as an enclosed space, blockaded area, or jail that cannot be traversed. "Pushed" ("spinto") by an invisible hand ("mano invisibile"), almost as if he were being punished ("come ad un gastigo"), Vittorio imagines himself as a prisoner being led to a jail cell. The lack of light, moreover, depressed the protagonist. "[Stretta] al cuore," Vittorio feels sad. He like his father resents the "ugly" ("brutta") apartment in which they live and longs for *Monticchio*.¹⁶⁸ The family's country estate accordingly emerges the antipode to Vittorio's Roman apartment. Offering much more space and surrounded by a bright, open sky ("cielo largo"), *Monticchio* gives Vittorio peace of mind. Yet, such a description might take readers aback: Vittorio's dislike of the city here makes Davanzati's text seem as though it were written for rural students. As his text compares with Belloni's "Ritorno da Roma," Gray's "Urbanesimo," Novaro's "Fortunato in città," the author feeds his urban readers the same rhetoric that purports the city as a dark, dangerous, and depressing space. Why does the textbook compiler want to offer such a vision to urban students, who might very

¹⁶⁷ Davanzati 62.

¹⁶⁸ As in "Fortunato in città," "Ritorno da Roma," and "Urbanesimo," the city proves an expensive place to live in *Il balilla Vittorio*. Vittorio's mother complains, "Tanto si spende," as Giacomo's salary proves insufficient for his large family. See Davanzati 61-62 and 125.

well have a different perspective and experience of the city? The purpose, as we will see, is to make urban children recognize their dependence upon the rural for their everyday needs.

Providing the protagonist's unfavorable view of urban life, Davanzati makes it clear to the reader that Vittorio will leave the city and return to the country. While his classmates in Rome will follow in their fathers' footsteps and become either an "ingegnere Milanese," "[dirigente] di una fabbrica di macchine agricole," "funzionario delle finanze," "costruttore," or "impiegato postale," Vittorio admires and pursues the life of a "contadino."¹⁶⁹ "Content" with choosing the career of his role model, Zio Francesco, Vittorio, who never cared for school, now studies with diligence. Visiting don Cognata, a schoolteacher at the *Scuola di Agricoltura Don Bosco*, Vittorio receives his new textbooks with enthusiasm. Davanzati writes:

Tornato a casa, prese il libro che gli avevano regalato la mattina alla scuola di don Bosco: *L'abbicci dell'agricoltore* e cominciò a sfogliarlo, attentamente, e in calce alla prima lettura, che seguiva la spiegazione illustrata degli organi principali delle piante, lesse queste parole di Mussolini: *Ho voluto che l'agricoltura andasse al primo piano dell'economia nazionale italiana con fondate ragioni: i popoli che abbandonano la terra, sono condannati alla decadenza.*¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Davanzati 68.

¹⁷⁰ Davanzati 310, 332. For a full transcript of the *Duce's* speech, "Ai rurali d'Italia," see Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 23, 247. Davanzati's reference to don Bosco of the *scuola salesiana* in addition to the volume *L'abbicci dell'agricoltore* makes the tale seem more realistic and, therefore, believable. The *L'abbicci dell'agricoltore* (1930; Rome: Salesiana; Modena: Vincenzi, 1865; Turin: Paravia, 1975), for one, was an actual textbook first published in the late 19th century. It was put to use at agricultural schools until the 1970's. don Bosco himself was the founder of the *Scuola d'agricoltura* in Italy. An ecclesiastic, don Bosco was canonized as a Saint by Pope Pius XI in 1929 for his charitable work with the poor as well as for his mentorship of young children and adolescents. On don Bosco, see "Don Bosco e l'agricoltura, un legame

Describing the protagonist with the adverb “attentamente,” the author depicts Vittorio as a dedicated “allievo,” who willfully embraces his chosen “mestiere.” Davanzati validates Vittorio’s career choice, moreover, by invoking Mussolini’s bias toward agriculture.¹⁷¹ Conveying the *Duce*’s inclination for a national economy based primarily on agricultural produce, Davanzati concerns himself not only with his *balilla* protagonist but also with Italy’s youth. Like Rinaldi in his tale “Urbanesimo,” Davanzati on the one hand appears to offer Mussolini’s speech as an incentive for rural readers to follow in Vittorio’s footsteps. Pursuing farming, these students will obtain the approval and respect of Fascist Italy’s leader. Framed as a warning for Italy’s rural population, the phrase “i popoli che abbandonano la terra, sono condannati alla decadenza” suggests that those who refuse a country lifestyle will evolve into corrupt and “decadent” persons. As similar examples in other volumes of the *Libro unico* have shown, such a warning stigmatizes those who long for the city and threatens social ostracism. It seeks to restrain Italy’s rural population in the countryside and, by inducing fear, interpellates them into farmers. But how do urban students fit into Mussolini’s economic project here? The answer lies in the first part of his phrase, “*Ho voluto che l’agricoltura andasse al primo piano dell’economia nazionale italiana.*”

Making agriculture a focal point of Italy’s economy by way of the *Duce*’s speech, the text

profondo,” *Regione Piemonte*, 2012, 12 Apr 2016

<www.regione.piemonte.it/agri/comunicazione/quaderni/corrente/dwd/42_43donBosco.pdf>.

¹⁷¹ Davanzati esteems farming more than, for instance, medicine. Describing the case of a sickly orphan at the *Scuola d’agricoltura*, Dottor Vainardi, friend of Zio Francesco, describes the benefit of being an *agricoltore*. He critiques the boy’s mother who wanted his son to become a doctor. Addressing don Cognata, Vainardi notes: “E voi dite alla madre che un buon agricoltore vale un medico, e se il ragazzo profitta, tanto meglio perché profitterà in agricoltura, la quale anch’essa è una scienza, un’arte e una fede [...] Per parte mia direte alla madre che se vuole il figlio sano e forte, gli faccia lasciare le aule chiuse e lo metta a lavorare all’aperto. E sarà forte e degno di suo padre.” See Davanzati 303.

insists that that urban students contribute through a consumption of agricultural products. Buying local would demonstrate their appreciation for the sacrifice, which farmers make as they remain in countryside and grow essential crops. Yet, this insistence on the rural cannot help but make one wonder about the way in which it subordinates urban to rural children. The latter group indeed appears more privileged than the former. If urban students remain in city might they too be condemned to such decadence? What is at stake for urban students in contributing to the economy as consumers and not workers? Replacing Davanzati's textbook, Bargellini's fifth grade, *Lecture per la quinta classe dei centri urbani*, may give us an answer.

Consisting of a series of short tales inspired by various historical, geographical, architectural, social, and literary topics, Bargellini's fifth-grade textbook, much like Davanzati's, juxtaposes the *contadino* with the *cittadino*. As in *Il balilla Vittorio*, the *agricoltore* emerges a producer, and the *operaio* comes forth as a consumer, beholden to and reliant upon the former for sustenance. Yet within their hierarchical relationship, the farmer gains absolute authority and particularly becomes a person to be feared. As such notions of punishment in the form of hunger arise and particularly call us back to Mussolini's idea of "diserzione." Their relationship, as a result, gives way to issues concerning food shortage and hints at the mechanism behind Mussolini's attempt at shaping children into workers and consumers. It suggests the use of repression and force in the regime's project to interpellate urban children and once again raises questions about the failures inherent within Fascist subjection.¹⁷²

¹⁷² As Althusser notes, while ISAs function primarily by way of ideology, they may also function by way of repression. See Althusser 98.

Owe Your Soul to the Rural Store: Consumption and Food Shortage in Bargellini's Letture per la quinta classe dei centri urbani

Bargellini presents the theme of food shortage within the first few pages of his textbook in the chapter titled, "Il messaggio nel Rumine."¹⁷³ The tale recounts the history of an unnamed ancient Italian city. Ravaged and destroyed by war, the city's population has no food. As they lament their state, the townsfolk acknowledge agriculture as a necessity for their physical *and* psychological well-being. Describing the conditions under which they live, Bargellini writes:

Presto dentro la città si manifestavano i primi segni della carestia. Per quanto i capi della città avessero disposto perché si consumasse ogni giorno la razione di viveri strettamente necessaria, i magazzini non più alimentati dalle campagna, cominciarono a vuotarsi.

I cittadini si accorsero allora che cosa valesse quella verde campagna da loro contemplata tante volte oziosamente dalle mura della città. Capirono l'utilità del lavoro di quei forti contadini che ogni mattina, in tempo di pace, entrarono dalle porte, con gli asini carichi di ceste e di sacchi. Capirono la ricchezza di quei rozzi pastori avvolti di pelli ovine, che prima dell'alba introducevano latte e formaggi nella città.

[...]

¹⁷³ Bargellini, *Letture per la quinta classe* 8-13.

Ora non veniva più nulla della campagna ridotta un deserto fumigante. Bisognava economizzare anche un chicco di grano, anche una gocciola d'olio, anche una stilla di vino.

Le ristrettezze generavano in qualche cittadino il malumore [...] E intanto correivano tra il popolo le più strane dicerie.¹⁷⁴

As Mussolini's quote in *Il balilla Vittorio* has suggested, Bargellini's *cittadini* deservedly appear destined for ruin. Adverbs impart the narrator's contempt for the *cittadini* and their level of appreciation for the countryside. Having only "lazily" ("oziosamente") thought of the men and women who supply them with food, the *cittadini* manifest themselves as unconcerned, thoughtless, and inattentive. They have failed to appreciate and properly consume the nourishment provided by local *contadini* and *pastori*. Without any sustenance furnished by those living "fuori delle mura," ("living outside [the city] walls"), the *cittadini* fight to obtain the basic foods "strettamente necessaria." Stricken with "malumore," the lack of nourishment furthermore affects their physical and mental well-being. The sense of group solidarity among the *cittadini* dissolves as they develop into selfish individuals. The narrator adds: "Si mormorava di cittadini che avrebbero nascosto le vettovaglie in luoghi malsani, dove i cibi marcivano inutilmente. Si sussurrava di gente che, mentre gli altri dimagrivano facevano ingrassare le bestie"¹⁷⁵ As hunger affects one's physical and mental health, it likewise appears detrimental to one's ability to become an *italiano nuovo*. Helpless without the support of their local farmers, the "selfish" and "lazy" townspeople hence transpire into the "disinterested" folk, which Mussolini seeks to expel

¹⁷⁴ Bargellini, *Lecture per la quinta classe* 8-9.

¹⁷⁵ Bargellini, *Lecture per la quinta classe* 9.

from Italy.¹⁷⁶

A rebellious force to be dealt with, according to Bargellini, urban *cittadini* may become functioning members within Fascist society *only* when they buy and consume the foods that local farmers produce. Addressing his audience with an italicized preface to the chapter titled, “Il pensiero della campagna,” Bargellini asks that they contribute to the country’s welfare by paying their debt and gratitude to Italy’s *agricoltori*.¹⁷⁷ Describing urban folk this way, he insists that *cittadini* submit to the authority of farmers so that they become *uomini nuovi* and earn a place within Fascist society. He states:

Perciò, il contadino in questa stagione vide e piange, si rallegra e si dispera, secondo il sole e l’acqua, il vento e la nebbia.

E con lui prega e spera il cittadino, perchè la città non vivrebbe senza la campagna. Il grano per il pane, l’uva per il vino, le olive per l’olio, il granturco per la polenta, il riso per la minestra, i legumi, le verdure, le frutta, tutto viene dalla campagna, tutto è nato dalla terra, in virtù dell’acqua e sotto la luce del sole.

E la carne dei buoi, quella dei suini, quella degli agnelli, dei conigli, viene dalla campagna. E dalla campagna viene il pollame, la caccia, il latte, il burro.

La città è come un’immensa pianta, con fiori marmorei e stami ferrigni, una

¹⁷⁶ Cfr.

¹⁷⁷ Bargellini, *Lecture per la quinta classe* 193-194.

pianta che trae il suo nutrimento alla campagna circostante.

*Le strade e le viottole, che rigano la campagna, sono come i canali, lungo i quali la linfa nutritiva corre ininterrottamente a portar vita alla città, che prospera se la campagna è feconda, che langue se la campagna è squallida.*¹⁷⁸

The conjunction “e” (“and”) in the phrase, “*E con lui prega e spera il cittadino,*” at first glance, suggests a reciprocal relationship between the *cittadino* and the *contadino*. Subsequent phrases, however, extend literal and figurative descriptions that destabilize the level of equality presumed to exist between the two. The phrase, “*la città non vivrebbe senza la campagna,*” declares the former’s absolute dependency on the latter in a straightforward way. The parallel construction of the three preceding lines marked with the repeated verbal phrase, “*viene dalla campagna,*” sets the city into a state of submission. Its entire source of nourishment lies at the behest of surrounding farmland. Likened to a flower with the simile, “*La città è come un’immensa pianta,*” the city takes the form of an object produced by agriculture. Just as a flower cannot thrive without natural resources, the city cannot prosper without the products made available by local farms.

Emerging as a progenitor, the farmer has absolute authority over the *cittadino* and in turn becomes a person to be feared. In the chapter titled, “*Amedeo di Savoia Duca D’Aosta,*” the *contadino* indeed becomes juxtaposed with royalty. He appears to maintain peace and protect Italy from chaos in light of the autarchic products he produces. Commencing the anecdote, Bargellini maintains:

¹⁷⁸ Bargellini, *Lecture per la quinta classe* 194.

Nascere principe è come nascere contadino. Si pensi a una specie di paracadutista che scende dal cielo. Può trovarsi a un campo di grano o sui tetti di una città. Così, nascendo, si può entrare in una casa colonica. Qualcuno ha disposto per noi, prima di noi. E la volontà di questo Qualcuno è superiore a ogni altra volontà. Governa il destino degli uomini, come governa quello dei mondi.”¹⁷⁹

Here Bargellini likens two distinctly different figures—the prince and the farmer—who come from different educational and socio-economic backgrounds. Nonetheless phrases such as “E la volontà di questo Qualcuno è superiore a ogni altra volontà,” and “Governa il destino degli uomini,” attributes the farmer with the same political and economic terminology associated with a prince. As the city depends upon the country for food, the latter sustains the life of the country and ensures a prosperous future or “destiny” (“destino”). The verb, “governa,” moreover, describes the farmer’s authority over not only individual *cittadini* but also the country’s entire population. His crop may yield enough foodstuffs that would regulate an economy, allow for foreign trade, and deal with scarcity. But in order for the economy and therefore the country to exist in a state of equilibrium, *cittadini* are obliged to consume according to the demands placed upon them by the “governo,” or, in this case, the *contadino*.

Bargellini’s insists on this consumer-producer relationship and its effects upon Italy’s economy, on the one hand, by alluding to basic principles of supply and demand. Should *cittadini* refuse to purchase farm produce, it would cause a surplus and therefore a decrease in prices. Yet as this decrease in price would represent a financial loss for the farmer, the *contadino*

¹⁷⁹ Bargellini, *Lecture per la quinta classe* 199.

would in turn be inclined to produce less the following year and thereby increase prices.¹⁸⁰ Causing disequilibrium in the market, consumers in turn would be penalized by having to pay more. Yet as we have seen within Bargellini's tale "Il messaggio nel Rumine," rebelling against such high prices would bring about the possibility of scarcity as *cittadini* might hoard food and refuse the rations placed upon them. To avoid this threat of the possibility for hunger and chaos, therefore, urban folk are obliged to adhere to the authority of the *contadino* and consume according to demands, which the latter sets. The reading once more begs the question that I have posed not only across this chapter, but throughout this whole work: how might we understand Fascist subjection in light of the fact that the *Libro unico per le scuole urbane* privileges the agricultural over the industrial? What does it mean for an urban or rural child to be a Fascist subject by way of textbooks? To answer these questions, we first need to summarize and synthesize why the regime sought to subject children, and how this subjection generally played out through the apparatus of the textbook in both rural and urban elementary schools.

Conclusion

Stick It to the Man: Urban Subversion and the Meaning of Fascist Subjection

Published between 1929 and 1944, the *Libro unico della scuola elementare*, in sum, is an ideological apparatus, which serves to subject children for the political and economic support of Mussolini and the Fascist regime. To put it more broadly, the regime developed the *Libro unico* "at a given historical moment" as a means of "responding to an *urgent need*."¹⁸¹ This "*urgent*

¹⁸⁰ See Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, and Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2007) 37-38.

¹⁸¹ In "The Confession of the Flesh," Foucault in fact revisits the Althusserian notion of the "apparatus" and redefines it as a "formation which has as its major function at a given historical

need,” as Michel Foucault might have put it, can be defined, on the one hand, in terms of a political crisis brought about by the Matteotti affair.¹⁸² It characterizes Mussolini’s call to rid Fascist Italy of its political enemies, solidify his position as head of state at the very onset of his rise to power, and form a coherent body of regime supporters.¹⁸³ This “*urgent need*,” on the other hand, can also be defined by an “economic crisis” brought about by the deflation of the Italian lira in 1925-1926 as well as economic sanctions levied against the Fascist regime for its colonial pursuits in Africa.¹⁸⁴ Falling production especially within the agricultural sector, growing unemployment, rising cost of living, ban on imports, and a shortage of basic foodstuffs and commodities characterized Fascist Italy during this initial period and threatened further social and political unrest.¹⁸⁵ To build political support as well as combat this economic crisis, the government had to “fascisticize” the country and subject Italians to policies of autarchy.¹⁸⁶

Elementary school children were seen as immensely important to this ideological and economic project and became the reason for which the Fascist regime developed an “*educazione guerriera*.” As I have argued, Mussolini and the Ministry of Education across the *ventennio* valued children for their potential to produce and circulate without question the products and services necessary for maintaining an autarchic economy and serving the well-being of the nation. This idea was first set forth by Giovanni Gentile in his treatise on *spirito* and *volontà* and

moment that of responding to an *urgent need*. The apparatus has a dominant strategic function. This may have been, for example, the assimilation of a floating population found to be burdensome for an essentially mercantilist economy: there was a strategic imperative acting here as the matrix for an apparatus which gradually undertook the control or subjection of madness, mental illness and neurosis.” See Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh” 195.

¹⁸² Cfr. ch. 2, pp. 9-15.

¹⁸³ Refer to ch. 2, pp. 21, 29.

¹⁸⁴ Morgan 90, 104-105; de Grazia 96-97; and Sarti 97-98.

¹⁸⁵ de Grazia 94-126.

¹⁸⁶ Cfr. ch. 2, pp. 15-23.

revealed itself especially within his 1923 education and textbook reforms.¹⁸⁷ While Gentile and his *Commissione centrale per l'esame dei libri di testo* neither mandated that the State issue any single text nor prescribed plans to train students for any specific job, they sought to subject children into Fascists by preparing them for a future career in manual labor.¹⁸⁸ Doing so, they paved the way for Ministers Ercole and Bottai to publish the *Libro unico* between 1929 and 1944.¹⁸⁹

Issuing two distinct editions of the *Libro unico dello Stato*, the regime accordingly refashioned the curriculum once more and privileged the textbook as the primary apparatus for shaping children's sensibility toward contributing to the Fascist nation's economy. We saw how this played out in rural texts. Saturating Italian elementary school children with such repetitive tales as "Urbanesimo," "Ritorno da Roma," "Il Natale di Roma," and "S'è capovolto il mondo," the ideological *Libro unico dello Stato per le scuole rurali* aimed at interpellating readers into a rural class of peasant workers or farmers.¹⁹⁰ Pursuing this goal, the textbooks thus consistently "hailed" children as *contadinelli* and called attention to their own practice of agricultural work at home on their family's farms and at school in *campicelli sperimentali*. Restricting these students to their demographic areas, the textbooks discouraged the phenomenon of *urbanesimo* or the tendency of Italy's rural population to emigrate from the country to the city. Interpreting it as a godsend, the textbooks, moreover, encouraged students to adopt a career in farming and focused accordingly on the tools (e.g. *aratro*) and skills (e.g., identifying the parts of wheat, methods to properly germinate grain, handling of the *macchina di trebbiatrice*) needed for such work.

¹⁸⁷ See ch. 1, pp. 2, 13-14.

¹⁸⁸ Cfr. ch. 1, pp. 17-18, 23-24, 37.

¹⁸⁹ Cfr. ch. 2, pp. 51-60.

¹⁹⁰ Cfr. ch. 3, pp. 58-62, 66-71, 81-83, 107-113. For a definition of interpellation and hailing, see also, ch. 1, p. 2 and 5-10.

Prescribing the model *contadino-soldato*, these texts likewise taught children the behavioral norms (e.g., hard work, discipline, and blind obedience) that Mussolini envisioned in the ideal *agricoltore*. By teaching them such “know-how” and “rules of respect,” to quote Althusser, these *Libri unici* hence involved the “reproduction of [the] skills [of a rural] labour power” as well as the “reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology.”¹⁹¹ The rural textbooks thus fulfilled the two requirements necessary for making Fascist subjects out of their primary school readers.

Comparing the rural textbook to the urban one, however, we realize that the latter was perhaps not as successful in pursuing the regime’s goal of interpellating children into manual laborers. Similar to the schoolbook issued by the State for rural elementary school children, the *Libro unico dello Stato per le scuole urbani* certainly was compiled for the purpose of “the reproduction [an industrial] labour power.”¹⁹² As it uses the *balilla* uniform as a symbol of discipline and obedience—qualities that define both a submissive soldier as well as a worker—we have seen, for one, how the textbook teaches “rules of respect.” At the very least, it thereby serves as an ideological apparatus by fulfilling one of the requirements that Althusser lays out. Yet, unlike rural editions of the *Libro unico*, these textbooks could not teach a set of skills or “know-how” that would allow students to practice the ideologies the regime prescribed. Compilers of the *Libro unico per le scuole urbani* were constrained by Child Labor Laws and could not depict minors in such potentially hazardous working environments as mines or factories located within their demographic area.¹⁹³ The schoolbook, as a result, largely lacked one of the above requisites that would allow the regime to interpellate urban children into

¹⁹¹ Althusser in fact cites the “reproduction of [the] skills [of labor power]” and the “reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology” as the two requisites needed to build an Ideological State Apparatus. See Althusser 89.

¹⁹² Refer to ch. 4, p. 34.

¹⁹³ See ch. 3, pp. 115-121.

workers. Here we can ask: if the textbook apparatus is unable to teach the skill set necessary for the practice manual labor, can it still efficiently make urban readers into Fascist workers?

Analyzing the first through fourth grade editions of the *Libri unici* in the first part of this chapter, my response to this question has been “no.” Unable to represent a concrete model *operaio-soldato*, the textbooks only superficially depict a broad array of jobs (e.g., sales, construction work, motherhood, craftwork) and establish no clear relationship between adult workers and students. Neglecting to specify the skills needed for each, they create a sense of ambiguity for readers, who perhaps neither grasp the steps needed to realize the regime’s demand for an ideal “urban” worker, nor understand how their efforts in getting any low-level job would help maintain a Fascist autarchic nation.¹⁹⁴ Feeling uncertain about the themes in their reading books, children in effect may develop a sense of frustration or resistance for the regime’s presumed baseless ideas and values. I here conjure the example of Umberto Eco, the urban “Fascist child.”¹⁹⁵ Eco’s ironic account of his experience as an elementary school student expresses his own lack of conviction for Fascist ideology. Yet it is not solely the lack of a model worker that perhaps made children such as Eco into skeptics.

Aiming to thwart the limitations posed by Child Labor Laws, fifth grade editions of the *Libro unico per le scuole urbani* compiled by Davanzati and Bargellini redefine urban students by focusing particularly on their relationship to the rural. As we have seen, Davanzati and Bargellini no longer seek to fashion urban children into workers but rather into consumers, who rely *per forza* on local agricultural products in order to survive. Doing so, the compilers devise

¹⁹⁴ Examples of characters who raise such uncertainty include Bruno, the protagonist of Tanzarella’s *Il libro della seconda classe*, Sarina and Meuccio of Petrucci’s short story “Progetti e progettini,” and the *fante* of Petrucci’s poem “La guerra di Mussolini.” See ch. 4, pp. 17-19, 27-30, and 32-34.

¹⁹⁵ Cfr. ch. 1, pp. 1-2.

and then impose particular consumption habits (i.e., “know-how”) and behavioral norms (i.e., “rules of respect”) upon urban folk. Making these urban consumers appreciate the foodstuffs and the farmers who produce them, their narratives instill a power play between the two. As Bargellini has demonstrated in his fifth-grade anecdotes, the farmer becomes the urban consumer’s “sovereign” who oppresses and compels the latter to purchase and consume the former’s products for the benefit of the nation.¹⁹⁶ With the mention of a “razione di viveri strettamente necessaria,” as well as the phrases, “Bisognava economizzare” and “Si mormorava di cittadini che avrebbero nascosto le vettovaglie,” Bargellini’s text indeed echoes the social norms (e.g., consuming in rations, not being wasteful, and hoarding), which the regime’s policies of autarchy have enforced.¹⁹⁷ This thematic shift off the urban and onto the rural produces a tension that in my view does not represent a problem of synthesizing a new rising modern culture with a traditional one, as Montino and Faenza have argued. This tension, rather, grew out of a need to insert urban students into the regime’s economic program in a legitimate and concrete way. As the texts characterized urban *cittadini* as consumers through this power play, their tales consequently challenged the regime’s efforts to subject elementary school children into Fascists.

¹⁹⁶ Cfr. above p. 67-71.

¹⁹⁷ In *Security, Territory, and Population*, Foucault applies the term “apparatus” specifically to describe the methods used to curb and control “scarcity” or “food shortage.” These “apparatuses,” as Foucault defines them, function as a “system of constraints” that includes “price control, and especially the control of the right to store; the prohibition of hoarding,” “limits on export” as well as a “system of supervision [that] will enable stocks to be checked and prevent circulation between different countries and provinces.” With respect to the *ventennio*, we recognize this “system of supervision” for one in the regime’s strict control over the makeup, sale, and distribution of schoolbooks within zones. Another, perhaps more important example can be seen in the Fascist government’s policies to set prices for such goods as “bread, flour, rice, pasta, vegetables, meat, fish, fats, olive oil, sugar, coffee and coal” as well as its move to “control the supply and production of grain.” On Foucault’s notion of “food shortage,” See Foucault, *Security, Territory, and Population* 29-86; on the make up, sale, and distribution of the *Libro unico*, cfr. ch. 2, pp. 34-36; for an overview of the legislation which governed the regime’s policies of autarchy, see Morgan 90-91, 104-105.

Through Davanzati's and Bargellini's *Libri unici*, Fascist subjection begins to diverge and take on a different path. It thus appears perhaps a more complex process than what we or Althusser imagined. Unlike rural students, urban children curiously are not subjected directly to the regime. Rather, they are subjected to rural students, who gain a certain level of authority in their relation to the urban. In focusing on depicting the rural population as "sovereign," Bargellini in fact elides the idea of a higher Fascist authority. This, for one, points to a limitation in Althusser's theory that subjection is a unilateral process.¹⁹⁸ Subjection under Fascism indeed took not one, but two paths, as it created two distinct kinds of subjects, a rural one as well as an urban one. Fascist subjection thus depended on the demographic area in which one lived and involved two different relations of power (i.e., the regime as one Subject and the rural as another).¹⁹⁹ And so: how does the presence of this different relation of power within Davanzati's and Bargellini's texts undo the process of interpellation? In short, Davanzati's and Bargellini's *Libri unici* offer an alternate narrative on urban Fascist subjection that contradicts the rhetoric of previous first, second, third, and fourth grade textbooks.

¹⁹⁸ On the limitations of Althusser's notion of subjection and interpellation, see ch. 1, p. 10-11, n. 26.

¹⁹⁹ To be clear, Subject with a capital "S" here refers to the one who subjects. Yet as Althusser notes, the Subject is itself an interpellated entity. This is clear when we compare the *contadino-soldato* depicted in both the *Libri unici per le scuole rurali* and *scuole urbani*. The rural Subject of Bargellini's and Davanzati's textbooks is itself subjected to the higher authority of the Fascist regime within other rural *Libri unici*. Despite this interpretation, I want to make it clear that Althusser likens the Subject to the Christian theological entity of God and not to any particular social class of subjects. He accordingly defines the Subject-subject relationship as a process of "mirror-duplication" meaning that "all ideology is *centered*, that the Absolute Subject occupies the unique place of the Center and interpellates around it the infinity of individuals into subjects in a double mirror-connection such that it *subjects* the subjects to the Subject, while giving them in the Subject in which each subject can contemplate in its own image (present and future) the *guarantee* that this concerns them and Him, and that since everything takes place in the Family [...] those who have recognized God, and have recognized themselves in Him, will be saved." Having said this in light of my analysis of subjection in Davanzati and Bargellini's *Libri unici*, we can speculate that urban students could never consider themselves as individuals created in the image of a presumed rural "sovereign." For a definition of Subject, see Althusser 121-123.

Ideas of national superiority expressed through tales that depict Italy as the sole legitimate heir of Europe's ancient Roman past in addition to such lines as "Ogni italiano è soldato, e ognuno lavora, nel nome del Re e del Imperatore, sotto la guida del Duce, a renderla sempre più grande, più bella, più rispettata," conflict with Davanzati's and Bargellini's themes as they portray all Italians—both rural and urban folk—in the same light. According to these tales, all Italians deserve to feel this sense of national superiority and contribute equally to the presumed greatness of the Fascist nation by way of their work.²⁰⁰ In light of such previous reading material, urban students like Eco were perhaps unable to "freely" subject themselves to the rural population. Surrounded by such constant rhetoric of national unity, these urban citizens understood their rural counterpart not as their "sovereign" but as their peers. They were thus not only being forced to follow a model of an urban worker that was unclear and hence unconvincing, but also they were being paradoxically undervalued with respect to rural students.

This idea of an alternate narrative can also be extended to our understanding of the possible failures in the regime's subjection of rural children. Rural citizens are depicted as "sovereign," but did they really feel as such? We can speculate on this answer if we consider the fact that rural citizens, children as well as adults, lacked the material resources that would make them feel powerful or authoritarian.²⁰¹ Despite the regime's efforts to educate them, the illiteracy

²⁰⁰ Cfr. ch. 3, pp. 31-32, 61-62, and also ch. 4, pp. 22-24. For further reading on the Fascist myth of *romanità*, see Jan Nelis, "Constructing Fascist Identity: Benito Mussolini and the Myth of *Romanità*," *Classical World* 100.4 (2007): 391-415; and Romke Visser, "Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of the *Romanità*," *Journal of Contemporary History* 27.1 (1992): 5-22.

²⁰¹ Examining testimonies as well as rural elementary school children's notebooks under the *ventennio*, Fabiana Loparco's recent paper on Fascist education reveals that many students were in fact afraid of their teachers as well as other faculty members and thus like urban students did what they were told out of fear and not out of conviction for the regime's ideologies. See Loparco, "The Former Teachers and Pupils' Autobiographical Memories about the Use of the Punishments in the Past Primary Schools since the Second Half of the 19th Century," *School*

and poverty rates among rural as opposed to urban communities of Italy were in fact especially high.²⁰² Isolated within their demographic areas, as a result, rural citizens were thus far from representing the Fascist elite.

Having traced a genealogy of the content of these urban and rural textbooks, we now understand how Fascist subjection is neither uncontrollable nor inevitable. As Eco shows us, there is no guarantee that coming from a rural or urban milieu would interpellate one into a Fascist urban or rural subject. Rural and urban Italian children such as Eco indeed have controlled their subjection and expressed their own refusal to accept Fascist ideology.²⁰³ Looking beyond the *Libro unico dello Stato* at the policies that governed the distribution of the textbooks, we furthermore recognize that the regime thwarted its own ideological education of children as it had problems with defining the criteria that would distinguish its population and therefore its schools as either rural or urban. This process of categorizing and subcategorizing elementary school children first into rural and urban groups and then into workers and consumers in fact underscores the regime's paradoxical attempt to both produce coherent textbooks and also nationalize its people in light of the country's strong regional differences. It ironically led to further ambiguities and opened up possibilities for multiple and competing ideologies and hence competing subject positions. Let me now turn to a final analysis of the regime's categorization of the elementary school in order to understand the stakes of Fascist education as it pertains to the regime's notion of *italianità*.

Memories, New Trends in Historical Research into Education: Heuristic Perspectives and Methodological Issues, University of Seville, 22 September 2015.

²⁰² On the illiteracy and poverty rates in Italy during the *ventennio*, see Klein 27-54 and De Fort, *Scuola e analfabetismo* 241-319.

²⁰³ Responding to the limitations of Althusser's theory, Foucault maintains that individuals take active agency in the process of subjection. See Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh" 194-209.

Failing Mussolini: Reflections on the Fascist Curricula, Multiple Subjectivities, and Italian National Identity

In a 1929 circular published in the journal *La Nuova Scuola Italiana*, the *Commissione per il Libro di Stato* deliberates on the criteria for producing the proper textbook that will fit the urban or rural primary school, which children attended.²⁰⁴ Acknowledging the need for two different texts, the schoolbook compilers notably seem convinced that Fascist Italy's two elementary schools are without a doubt clearly distinguishable from one another. They observe:

Eppure la scuola rurale è ben diversa dalla cittadina e a parte il metodo,--un sillabario ottimo per le scuole di Roma, di Milano, di Napoli, non può essere molto adatto per le scuole dei contadinelli delle paludi Pontine, delle montagne d'Abruzzo dove gli alunni sono piccoli pecoroni, o conduttori di maialetti. E così dicasi per il libro di 2a e di 3a.

La scuola rurale, la scuola per i contadini ha ben altri bisogni e tutta l'opera educativa dev'essere altrimenti diretta. Lo ha compreso subito Augusto Turati che ha creato delle apposite scuole per la preparazione delle maestre, scuole che ci auguriamo sorgano con una certa larghezza per risolvere sul serio e non a chiacchiere, come fanno da trent'anni gli eterni brontoloni ripetendo gli stessi inconcludenti motivi, il problema della scuola rurale.

Secondo il nostro modesto avviso tutte le classi delle scuole di campagna, osiamo

²⁰⁴ "La complicata elaborazione dei libri di testo," *Giornale della Libreria* Jan 1929: 52.

dire, avrebbero bisogno di libri—siano pure testi unici—diversissimi dai testi unici per le scuole urbane, anche tenuto conto che ciascuna scuola rurale può assumere magari nell’ultima classe un carattere di orientamento professionale—sia pure più modesto delle scuole analoghe di città dotate di laboratori e di officine.²⁰⁵

Using the terms “scuola rurale” and “scuola cittadina,” the compilers unsurprisingly classify the elementary school into two categories based on distinct geographical criteria. Imagining the urban school within such major cities as Rome, Milan, and Naples and the rural school within the provincial areas surrounding these cities (e.g., the “paludi Pontine,” “delle montagne d’Abruzzo”), they argue that the textbook issued for one school is completely unsuitable for the other (“non può essere molto adatto”). They thus call on the Ministry of Education to produce two “very different” kinds of textbooks (“testi diversissimi”). Indeed, for the compilers, the textbooks ought to address the distinct needs (“ben altri bisogni”) and objectives of these two schools. Describing Italy’s young students as future *agricoltori* and *operai*, they believe that the purpose of these two primary schools is to teach the jobs (e.g., “un carattere di orientamento professionale”) that would serve their immediate communities and neighborhoods. This idea of two schools and textbooks is not something new to us. As we know, textbook authors in accordance with the *Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale* mandated two, rural and urban, editions of the *Libro unico dello Stato*. The purpose, at least initially, was to shape two different categories of workers—*agricoltori* and *operai*—out of the students in attendance. Perhaps unbeknownst to us, however, the compilers here seem to believe that the regime is well on-track

²⁰⁵ “La complicata elaborazione dei libri di testo” 52.

to splitting the elementary school and fashioning its children into rural and urban workers. As they suggest, Augusto Turati himself in accordance with this plan successfully established two separate *scuole magistrali*: one that would train teachers for urban schools and another that would prepare instructors to teach in rural schools (“*apposite scuole per la preparazione delle maestre*”). Yet, since we are well aware of the difficulties compilers had in producing urban textbooks, we ask: how clear was this distinction between the two types of schools, and how easy was it for the regime to compile and distribute its *Libro unico unico dello Stato per le scuole rurali e urbani* across the country?

During the *ventennio*, Mussolini and the *Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale* published several measures and decrees, certainly intended to divide Fascist Italy’s elementary school. Their resulting legislation, however, quite ironically conflated the two schools it presumably sought to produce. The problem indeed lay in the regime’s difficulty to set out the strict criteria that would clearly define the rural and urban school as two different institutions. Gentile’s and Bottai’s education reforms both attest to this problem. Within Gentile’s *Riforma*, the *scuole elementari del Regno*, for instance, were defined neither by the *type* of students in attendance nor by the *area* in which they were located. Rather, Italian elementary schools were classified primarily by the *number* of students in attendance.²⁰⁶ As mentioned in Chapter One, Gentile officially divided the elementary school not into the *scuole urbane* or *scuole rurali*, but rather into the *scuola classificata* and the *scuola non-classificata*.²⁰⁷ Providing subcategories, the Minister of Public Instruction accordingly split the *scuole non-classificate* into the *scuole*

²⁰⁶ Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Regio Decreto 31 ottobre 1923, n. 2410, Classificazione delle scuole elementari e trasformazione di scarso rendimento, Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* 271 (1923): 6803-6805; and also, Giovanazzi 30-31.

²⁰⁷ See ch. 1, p. 16.

sussidiate and *scuole provvisorie*.²⁰⁸ By definition, the *scuole classificate* encompassed schools in both urban *and* rural areas of Italy. The number enrolled at each consisted of a minimum of forty and a maximum of sixty students at a time.²⁰⁹ Article Three and Five of the Royal Decree, *Classificazione delle scuole elementari e trasformazione di scarso rendimento*, identify and locate such schools in “centri urbani,” “maggiori centri rurali,” “[capoluoghi] dei comuni,” or in “frazioni o borgate.”²¹⁰ Whether or not they consisted of all five grades or administered a certain number of hours of lessons per day, both rural and urban schools, for the most part, were classified under the same category.²¹¹ In the event that the number of enrolled pupils did not meet the stipulated criteria, the MPI could also reclassify urban or rural schools and modify the materials administered at each. Article Ten of the law declares: “La delega cessa, tuttavia, quando nel luogo della scuola provvisoria concorrano, da un biennio, le condizioni per le istituzioni di una scuola classificata.”²¹² In this case, the school could appear either under the designation of a *scuola classificata* or *non-classificata*.²¹³ Apart from their location and curriculum, by law, no difference existed between urban and rural *scuole classificate*.

²⁰⁸ Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Regio Decreto 31 ottobre 1923, n. 2410* 6803.

²⁰⁹ See Art. 3, Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Regio Decreto 31 ottobre 1923, n. 2410* 6803.

²¹⁰ Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Regio Decreto 31 ottobre 1923, n. 2410* 6803.

²¹¹ Both rural and urban schools under this category encompassed all five grades and taught a minimum of three hours of lessons per day. Nevertheless, article five of the same law categorizes “[scuole] dei minori centri rurali” as *scuole classificate*, despite the fact that they only entail the first, second, and third grades. Cfr. articles three and five, Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Regio Decreto 31 ottobre 1923, n. 2410* 6803.

²¹² See Article Ten and Eighteen, Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Regio Decreto 31 ottobre 1923, n. 2410* 6803-6804.

²¹³ According to Article Six, the *scuola provvisoria* consisted of a minimum of fifteen but maximum forty students. Cfr. Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Regio Decreto 31 ottobre 1923, n. 2410* 6803.

Bottai sought to rectify this legal ambiguity by officially dividing the *scuola elementare* into rural and urban categories with his *Carta della Scuola*.²¹⁴ Modifying Gentile's *Riforma*, Bottai revalues the minimum and maximum number of attendees at the regime's *scuole rurali*.²¹⁵ At the same, he provides a legal definition that would classify the demography of rural students attending the elementary school. Article One of his *Ordinamento delle scuole rurali* designates pupils as rural should the area in which they live cover "località abitate da popolazione prevalentemente dedita all'agricoltura."²¹⁶ As in Gentile's *Riforma*, the geographic location of these schools incorporates "capoluoghi di comuni, frazioni o borgate."²¹⁷ Yet, while such regulations aim at providing some clarity to the distinction between Italy's two elementary schools, Bottai's ordinance continued to conflate the *scuola urbana* and *scuola rurale*.²¹⁸ As I see it, the Ministry's legislation does not expound on the terms "dedita all'agricoltura" and does not specify the *kinds* of agricultural activities that this rural group would abide by.²¹⁹ The manner in which its population of students could be "dedita all'agricoltura" consequently appears

²¹⁴ Cfr. ch. 2, pp. 58-60.

²¹⁵ Bottai officially restricted the total number to a minimum of 220 and a maximum of 250 students. See Art. 1, Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, *Ordinamento delle scuole rurali, Regio decreto legge 14 ottobre 1938 – Anno XVI, n. 1771, Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia* 270 (1938): 4898.

²¹⁶ See Art. 1, Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, *Ordinamento delle scuole rurali* 4898.

²¹⁷ See Art. 1, Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, *Ordinamento delle scuole rurali* 4898.

²¹⁸ Teachers, pedagogues, and academic intellectuals continued to express confusion over Bottai's *Carta della Scuola* and its re-classification of the *scuola elementare*. Gentile himself furthermore remarked that Bottai's legislation largely resembled and maintained the former's *Riforma*. On public reception of Bottai's scholastic legislation, see De Fort, *La scuola elementare* 440-444 and Mazzatosta 80-81. For Gentile's views on Bottai's *Carta della Scuola*, see Koon 166-167.

²¹⁹ Mazzatosta observes that Bottai's definition of the "scuola rurale subì un graduale ampliamento." De Fort in like manner notes that under Bottai the "distinzione introdotta in seno alla scuola elementare suscitò numerose perplessità." In their effort to discuss its perplexities, however, neither scholar analyzes or compares in detail the legal wording chosen to define the rural school under Gentile's or Bottai's reforms. See Mazzatosta 80 and De Fort, *La scuola elementare* 440.

unclear. Bottai's administration, moreover, considered schools in "frazioni o borgate di città" as rural on condition that they remain within two kilometers from the city center.²²⁰ The distance, which the MPE affords is little and leaves room for exceptions. Given the ambiguities in Bottai's legislation, we can speculate that an educational institution cannot legally be considered rural if it is *less* than two kilometers from the inner city. This would come *in spite of* the possibility that its student body might consist largely of a "popolazione prevalentemente dedita all'agricoltura." As other academic establishments such as the "scuole per i contadini dell'Agro Romano" became parificate alle scuole di Stato," they by law emerged urban rather than rural.²²¹ Per Bottai's legislation, both urban and rural schools could likewise be reclassified should they lack or obtain the number of teachers required at each institution.²²² Thus as pedagogue Giuseppe Giovanazzi notes, "[Vi] sono ancora numerose scuole uniche di Stato che hanno organizzazione identica a quelle rurali."²²³

Despite Bottai's changes to Gentile's reforms, the Education Ministry's classification of Italy's primary schools into urban and rural categories remained vague and continued to complicate the regime's dissemination of the *Libro unico dello Stato*.²²⁴ Critics of the *Libro di Stato* could not agree more with Giovanazzi's analysis of the Ministry's division of the country's elementary schools. Teachers and intellectuals voiced apprehension over the MPE's publication of two *Libri unici*. Luigi Volpicelli, for example, could not comprehend the differences between the *scuola urbana* and *scuola rurale* and where exactly each specific edition of the *Libro di Stato*

²²⁰ See Art. 1, Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, *Ordinamento delle scuole rurali* 4898.

²²¹ See Art. 11, Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, *Ordinamento delle scuole rurali* 4899.

²²² See Art. 1, Italy, Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, *Ordinamento delle scuole rurali* 4898.

²²³ Giovanazzi 31.

²²⁴ Further complicating the regime's implementation of Bottai's *Carta della Scuola* was the lack of available funds as well as the onset of World War II. See De Fort, *La scuola elementare* 466; Mazzatosta 75, 81, and 87; and Koon 167.

had to be used. Frustrated and confused, Volpicelli writes:

Occorrono due testi, si è detto, uno per la città e uno per le scuole rurali, perché la popolazione scolastica, a cui il libro è destinato, è in queste due zone troppo diversa.

Punto primo: dove comincia la città e dove finisce la campagna? Il miglior giudice è il maestro, che caso per caso, si sceglie...in regime di libera concorrenza, il suo testo. [...] Punto secondo: Che cosa è *la città* e che cosa è *la campagna*? Roma è molto diversa da Palermo e Palermo da Milano, e Milano da Trento e Trento da Genova e Genova da Sassari; la campagna di Puglia è una cosa, ma quella romana un'altra; la vita delle popolazioni rurali nel Veneto è molto diversa da quella delle popolazioni rurali nella Basilicata. Una è la vita nelle regioni marine, altra in quelle montane. E via via. E se vogliono educare il fanciullo sul paradigma di quell'introvabile Pierino da cui abbiam sentito parlare tutti e che nessuno ha mai visto, occorre riferirsi alla realtà e alla concretezza della vita che si svolge intorno agli alunni, come vuole l'attuale ordinamento scolastico che bada molto alla diversa vita regionale.²²⁵

According to Volpicelli, rural and urban editions of the *Libro unico* ignored and undermined the differences, needs, and values of each individual student, school, region, and commune. The regime's publication of a textbook *suitable* for its readers, as a result, paradoxically revealed

²²⁵ "Libro di testo e giornale per ragazzi," *Giornale della Libreria* 3 Nov 1928: 645.

itself to be completely *unsuitable*. With this write-up, Volpicelli does not solely ridicule the regime's failure to classify the elementary school curricula. Rather, he raises some very crucial questions about the way in which Mussolini and his government viewed the Italian people.

Categorizing different schools meant that the regime categorized the identity of Italian children. An Italian child's national identity, in other words, was defined by his or her geographical location and stereotyped by the work believed to be carried out within those areas. Dividing the school, the regime established not one, but two polar definitions of Italian identity. In light of Volpicelli's article, however, we can gather that Italy is perhaps so pluralistic, that it cannot be reduced into or defined by two such broad and simple categories as rural or urban. These imagined categories could not correspond with Italy's multicultural "realità" and its "diversa vita regionale."²²⁶ We can see how Volpicelli himself grapples with the idea of an urban or rural Italian child with his sarcastic mention of "quell'introvabile Pierino da cui abbiamo sentito parlare tutti e che nessuno ha mai visto." The urban or rural child, a.k.a. Pierino, is so vague for Volpicelli that it simply does not exist. Yet, clearly it wasn't just Volpicelli who had problems with understanding Italian identity through these urban or rural categories. The challenges of making children into Fascist subjects in addition to producing legislation that would divide the *scuola elementare* reflects the regime's own problems to make sense of what it meant to be rural or urban. If the regime struggled with these categories, why then did they insist on them so much? Putting aside the economic motive to create an autarchic economy, we can perhaps wonder whether it reflected the government's motion to synthesize the regional and the

²²⁶ This idea of an imagined category of Italian Fascist children brings to mind Wolfgang Iser's seminal writing on the "imagined reader" and his reader-response theory. See Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987); *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987); and also, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993).

national in an effort to create a Fascist identity.²²⁷ Whatever the reason, we can conclude that the obstacles to define Italy's elementary school and to produce textbooks that would fit the audience who read them in effect reflect the regime's overall failure to construct an Italian national identity that would mobilize students to become Fascist citizen-subjects.

Requiring the *Libro unico*, in any case, the regime curiously left teachers to make sense of these vague categories of Italian national identity, the rural and the urban, workers and consumers.²²⁸ As teachers perhaps interpreted and instructed the themes in the schoolbooks according to their own ideologies, they helped determine a student body that would become further skeptical of the regime. By way of their instruction, these children could not ideologically identify with the themes offered within their reading exercises. If the content of the schoolbooks meant nothing to these pupils, as Padellaro repeatedly fought against, then its lack of variety would have furthermore caused "semantic satiation."²²⁹ Instead of embracing their studies out of own will, these students might very well have approached their schoolwork with resentment,

²²⁷ Roberto Dainotto has already indicated a dialectical tension between Gentile's notion of regionalism and nationalism in his conception of an Italian national identity. Nevertheless, given the results of my analysis, I would like to suggest that this tension extended beyond Gentile's tenure as a Minister of Education and represented a problem that the regime could never overcome. On Dainotto's study, cfr. ch. 1, pp. 45-46.

²²⁸ Despite the regime's surveillance of elementary school faculty, teachers under the *ventennio* were poorly trained and received little financial incentive for educating students according to the curricula. Many in any case considered themselves as Fascists only as means to acquiring a teaching job. They neither identified with nor supported the regime. Literature on teachers and teacher training under *ventennio* is vast. The following includes a sample: Antonietta Langiu and Liduina Durpetti, *Maestre & maestri fra i due conflitti mondiali* (Ancona: Consiglio Regionale, 2004); Ester De Fort, "La cultura dei maestri," *Cultura e società negli anni del fascismo*, ed. Luigi Ganapini and Camillo Brezzi (Milan: Cordanì, 1987): 221-249, and Antonio Santoni Rugiu, *La difficile storia degli insegnanti elementari* (Rome: Carocci, 2006).

²²⁹ "Semantic satiation" defines the phenomena of excessive repetition. It causes a word or phrase to lose meaning for the listener. On "semantic satiation," see Benjamin W. Mooneyham and Jonathan W. Schooler, "Mind Wandering Minimizes Mind Numbing: Reducing Semantic-Satiation Effects Through Absorptive Lapses of Attention," *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review* 23.4 (2016): 1273-1279; and also Xing Tian and David E. Huber, "Testing an Associative Account of Semantic Satiation," *Cognitive Psychology* 60 (2010): 267-290.

disinterest, and boredom.²³⁰ As Eco proved, these schoolchildren followed their curricula not because they believed in Fascism but only because they had to.

It remains to be seen how this relationship between Italian national identity, citizenship, and education played out in the years following the end of World War II and the dawn of the Italian Republic. Surprisingly, the Italian Republic maintained Gentile's education reforms despite Fascism's demise and continued to instruct children with the "know-how" and "rules of respect" that would allow them to pursue certain manual jobs following their primary and secondary school careers. Why was it so difficult for Italy to overcome such categories of *italianità* and the notion of the Italian worker? In the final few, brief concluding pages of this work, I will explore this topic further and point to concerns regarding our modern understanding of what it means to educate and form citizens not only within a dictatorship but also within a democracy.

²³⁰ Bottai himself uses sexist language to critique the way in which these students read. He deems such an uninterested manner of reading as "il leggere femminile [...] perdersi nella lettura [...] diventarvi altri che sé stessi." See "Il libro nella scuola—Letture individuali e letture collettive," *Giornale della Libreria* 25 Jan 1941: 14.

Chapter Five

You've Really Got a Hold On Me: Fascism's Grip on Democratic Education and Modern Class Division, A Conclusion

Introduction

Reflecting on his scholastic reforms, Bottai once claimed, “Ogni regime, qualunque sia la sua insegna, ha la *sua* scuola. Non esiste, non può esistere, una scuola apolitica.”¹ With this terse statement, the former *Ministro dell’Educazione nazionale* gets to the heart of the question our research on Fascist education has overall lead us to pose. Namely, is it possible to instruct children without any political or ideological bias? Answering this question in his statement, Bottai certainly doesn’t seem to think it possible. Expressing a sweeping generalization marked with generic adjectives and pronouns (e.g., “ogni” and “qualunque”), the Fascist minister believes that *no* political regime—authoritarian or democratic—can escape the grips of ideology. In fact, Bottai argues, an ideological education is *necessary* to establish any political state. He notes: “L’esigenza didattica, che si traduce in ordinamenti, in programmi, in metodi, deve corrispondere a questa fondamentale esigenza politica. Chi conosce la Scuola, così come oggi è nell’effettiva realtà delle cose, sa che il suo disfunzionamento, in questo o quel grado, dipende dalla contraddizione tra quelle sue esigenze. Si tratta di farle confluire in un indirizzo unitario.”² Bottai’s statement on political ideology and education resonates as we take one last brief look at the scholastic curricula and textbooks produced after the fall of the Fascist regime. To our surprise, we find that Fascism retained its influence on education despite Italy’s transformation into a democracy.

¹ “Riforma della Scuola in uno scritto di S.E. Bottai,” *Giornale della Liberia* 4 Feb 1939: 35.

² “Riforma della Scuola in uno scritto” 35.

With the demise of Fascism, Italian intellectuals after World War II sought to “purify” the country’s academic curricula of the totalitarian ideology set forth by Mussolini during the *ventennio*.³ Their aim was to construct an education system that would help establish a democratic society. Curiously, however, the curriculum and course materials issued after 1944 continued to emphasize manual work alongside Italian patriotism. Examples range from the so-called “defascisticized” *Libri unici* published by the Allied Commission in 1945 to the school program of the experimental *Convitti Scuola della Rinascita* established by the Italian Communist party between 1945 and 1955.⁴ These materials and curricula, in fact, were largely based on the pedagogical theories of John Dewey, Georg Kerschensteiner, and Célestin Freinet that considered “technical training and work” as a means of “training for civilian citizenship.”⁵

³ The Italian term used to describe the purge of Fascist ideology is “epurazione.” See Anna Ascenzi, “L’educazione alla democrazia nei libri di testo: il caso dei manuali di storia,” *L’educazione alla democrazia tra passato e presente*, ed. Michele Corsi and Roberto Sani (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2004) 65; Galfré, *Il regime* 179; Montino, *Le parole educate* 179; and Commissione Alleata, *Rassegna dell’attività del governo militare alleato e della commissione alleata in Italia, dal 10 luglio 1943, il giorno D in Sicilia, al 2 maggio 1945, giorno della resa tedesca in Italia* (Rome: Sezione delle relazioni pubbliche, Commissione alleata, 1945) 22-23.

⁴ See Ascenzi, “L’educazione alla democrazia” 63-86; Fabio Prunieri, “The *Convitti Scuola della Rinascita* (The Boarding Schools of Rebirth): An Innovative Pedagogy for Democracy in Post-war Italy (1945-1955),” *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education* 52.2 (2016): 188-200. Examples of vocational textbooks issued after the fall of Fascism also include Giuseppe Squarciapino’s fifth grade textbook, *Vigilia di lavoro: letture per gli alunni della quinta classe* (Rome: C.E.S.P., 1947), and also Giuseppe Gallo’s, *L’abc dell’agricoltura* (Turin: Paravia, 1975) used in agricultural vocational schools.

⁵ A celebrated pedagogue of the early 20th century, John Dewey writes that such instruction serves “to meet the needs of the new society” developing from the industrial revolution. Such training for Dewey is democratic in so far as it involves the equal participation of citizens in contributing to the greater good by means of the skills and arts they learn and the products they make. The note here on Dewey’s as well as Kerschensteiner’s, and Freinet’s seminal writing on work and education may be found in the following volumes: John Dewey, *The School and Society and The Child and the Curriculum* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990) 6-28, Georg Kerschensteiner, *The Idea of the Industrial School*, trans. Rudolf Pintner (Victoria: Leopold, 2015); and Célestin Freinet, *Oeuvres pédagogiques*, vol 1 (Paris: Seuil, 1994). On Dewey’s, Kerschensteiner’s, and Freinet’s influence on Italian pedagogy, see Steven F. White, *Progressive Renaissance: America and the Reconstruction of Italian Education, 1943-1962* (New York:

As these theories can be traced as far back as the 1861 period of the *Risorgimento* they are not unique to Fascism per se.⁶ This raises questions of how modern Italian society has broadly defined education in terms of national identity, citizenship, and nation building, as it has strived to overcome the vestiges of the curriculum from these historical time periods.

In these few brief pages to follow, I will conclude by providing a general overview of the primary school education, its textbooks, and courses of study at the dawn of the Italian Republic. This brief account does in no way serve to provide a thorough history of education in the post-war period. Rather, providing specific insight into the aftermath of Fascist education and textbooks following the end of WWII, it allows me to open up questions for further study. It is within these first few critical years of the post-war era (i.e., 1945-1965), indeed, where we especially recognize Fascism's continued influence in shaping the curricula of the Republic.⁷ As Gentile's 1923 reforms were largely maintained within this time period, the idea of an agricultural and industrial, rural and urban national identity continued to persist as the driving force behind what it meant to be an Italian citizen within the New Republic.⁸ These two competing notions of Italian national identity, I argue, once more undermined the democratic government's efforts to establish a sense of "solidarietà" that would help instill solid notions of

Garland, 1991) 1-2; and also Andrea Mariuzzo, "Dewey e la politica scolastica italiana: le proposte di riforma di *Scuola e città* (1950-1960)," *Espacio, Tiempo y Educación* 3.2 (2016): 225-251. On Gentile's ideas of *spirito* and *volontà*, cfr. ch. 1, pp. 1-2, n. 4 and 6. Cited here is Prunieri 194-195.

⁶ Kerschensteiner was especially influential in the late 19th century for his concept of the *scuola di lavoro*. See Charnitzky 229-230, 442-444. Among the Fascist pedagogues who write on the *scuola di lavoro*, Giuseppe Giovanazzi examines the theories of Kerschensteiner and Dewey, among others, in his volume *La scuola come comunità di lavoro* (Milan: Vallardi, 1933) 23-48.

⁷ See Franco V. Lombardi and Enrico M. Salati, *L'educazione a scuola: nuovi temi e problem di pedagogia per la scuola elementare* (Calvizzano: Il Girasole, 1994) 340-373; Galfré, *Il regime* 178-196.

⁸ Prunieri 196, Lombardi *L'educazione a scuola* 340-346.

citizenship among Italians.⁹ This leads me to discuss the broader implications of the Fascist regime's move to shape children into political subjects through primary school education. These questions follow: what does it mean to be educated into an Italian within the post-war era? What does it mean to educate for the purpose of forming worker-citizens not only within a dictatorship but also in a democracy?

Speculating on the answers to these questions within these few pages, I particularly engage with current, on going debates on education, citizenship, and democracy pertaining to not only the post-war era but also recent times.¹⁰ Within this historiography, scholars indicate the Italian Republic's difficulty in constructing and enforcing a curriculum that would conform to and promote the ideas of a democracy. In a comparative analysis between the education system in France and Italy, Alessandro Ferrari, for one, examines questions concerning *laïcité* and the non-secular as a means of forming group solidarity and promoting civic duty not only within the post-war era but also within the wake of globalization.¹¹ Giorgio Chiosso and Roberto Sani, in like manner, discuss the way in which political parties within post-war Italy hindered the process of building a new educational system, especially as they disagreed on what the term

⁹ According to Giorgio Chiosso "solidarietà" and "lealtà" determine one's sense of "cittadinanza." See Chiosso's article, "Educazione alla democrazia e cittadinanza," *L'educazione alla democrazia passato e presente*, ed. Michele Corsi and Roberto Sani (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2004) 19.

¹⁰ Current scholarship on questions concerning Italian education and democracy is vast. The following lists only a sample: Ferrari 533-550; Giorgio Chiosso, *Alfabeti d'Italia la lotta contro l'ignoranza nell'Italia unita* (Turin: SEI, 2011); Chiosso, "Educazione alla democrazia" 19-28; Roberto Sani, "La scuola e l'educazione alla democrazia negli anni del secondo dopoguerra," *L'educazione alla democrazia passato e presente*, ed. Michele Corsi and Roberto Sani (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2004) 43-62; Luciano Pazzaglia, "Il dibattito sulla scuola nei lavori dell'assemblea costituente," *Scuola e società nell'Italia unita: dalla Legge Casati al Centrosinistra*, ed. Luciano Pazzaglia and Roberto Sani (Brescia: La Scuola, 2008) 327-356; Lombardi, *L'educazione a scuola* 313-329; and also the more recent, Jamie A. Kowalczyk, "Homo pontem: Teachers as Bridges to a Multicultural Italy," *Paedagogica Historica* 52.5 (2016): 438-452.

¹¹ Ferrari 543-545. On the topic of *laïcité* in Italy, see also Chiosso, "Educazione alla democrazia" 22-23.

“democracy” meant.¹² Ferrari, Chiosso, and Sani, among others, have approached their study from a socio-political standpoint, as they analyze the effects of religion and neo-Fascist politics on post-war education in Italy. I would like to broaden this scope by focusing once more on the idea of a civic education based primarily on teaching children a specific trade within a post-war economy. This mode of instruction, in my view, ultimately reinforced the social barriers, gender norms, and class dynamics that Fascism instilled and prevented Italians from gaining a sense of civic duty or social solidarity in the New Republic. This kind of civic instruction and pedagogy contributed to the difficulties in both defining the term “democracy” as well as establishing an Italian democratic society from the get-go. It, furthermore, continues to have repercussions to this day not only in Italy but also abroad in countries such as France, where the focus on technical training has in effect overshadowed the importance of educating people on how to think critically about themselves and others, their values, and their evolving society.¹³

¹² See Chiosso, “Educazione alla democrazia” 19-28, and Sani, “La scuola e l’educazione alla democrazia” 43-46.

¹³ Literature on the effects of vocational schooling in Italy is vast. The following is a sample: Sauro Mocetti, “Educational Choices and the Selection Process: Before and After Compulsory Schooling,” *Education Economics* 20.2 (2012): 189-209; John Polesel, “Educational Outcomes, Policy Reform, and Cultural Capital in Italian Secondary Schools,” *Comparative Education* 46.2 (2010): 173-187; John Polesel, “Reform and Reaction: Creating New Education and Training Structures in Italy,” *Comparative Education* 42.4 (2006): 549-562; Nazareno Panichella and Moris Triventi, “Social Inequalities in the Choice of Secondary School: Long-term Trends During Educational Expansions and Reforms in Italy,” *European Societies* 16.5 (2014): 666-693; Gabriele Ballarino and Nazareno Panichella, “Social Stratification, Secondary School Tracking and University Enrolment in Italy,” *Contemporary Social Science: Journal of the Academic of Social Sciences* 11.2-3 (2016): 169-182; Paola Bonizzoni, et al., “Teachers’ Guidance, Family Participation and Track Choice: the Educational Disadvantage of Immigrant Students in Italy,” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 37.5 (2016): 702-720; and also Lombardi, *L’educazione a scuola* 313-340.

Transitioning to the New Republic with School Programs for Little Operai and Contadinelli

Fascism's particular hold on post-war instruction may be seen in two specific areas: the school programs published by the Allied Military Government's *Sottocommissione all'istruzione della Commissione Alleata* and the schoolbooks circulated between 1944-1946. Both the school programs and textbooks echo the Fascist regime's insistence on teaching children a specific trade, albeit with a few noteworthy differences. As I mentioned above, the purpose of modifying Italy's school programs was to establish a curricula that would uphold and teach the ideals of democracy.¹⁴ Based on the pedagogical theories of John Dewey and drawn up by none other than Dewey's own pupil, Carleton Washburne, an American pedagogue and head of the Allied Military Government's *Sottocommissione all'istruzione*, the 1945 programs modify the materials studied at school (e.g., religion, grammar, science, geography, math) in order to reflect Italy's new democratic ideals.¹⁵ These ideals are apparent particularly in the government's objective to combat illiteracy of a both literal and "spiritual" kind and to shape children into working citizens.¹⁶ The *Premessa* of the 1945 school programs, titled *Decreto Luogotenenziale 24 maggio 1945*, states:

¹⁴ Lombardi, *L'educazione a scuola* 341.

¹⁵ On the life and career of Carleton Washburne, see Carleton Washburne, "La riorganizzazione dell'istruzione in Italia," *Scuola e città* 6-7 (1970): 273-277; Antonio Gioia, "Guerra, Fascismo, Resistenza: avvenimenti e dibattito storiografico nei manuali di storia," diss., U of Salerno, 2011, 4; Sani, "La scuola e l'educazione alla democrazia" 49-50; White 4-5; and also Lombardi, *I programmi per la scuola elementare* 46-48. For the 1945 school programs see, Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Decreto Luogotenenziale 24 maggio 1945, n. 459, Programmi per le scuole elementari e materne*, *Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d'Italia* 100 (1945): 3-31. Lombardi likewise reproduces the 1945 school programs in full in *I programmi per la scuola elementare*. See pp. 477-518.

¹⁶ See Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Decreto Luogotenenziale 24 maggio 1945, n. 459 5*, and also Lombardi, *I programmi della scuola elementare* 47-48; Montino, *Parole educate* 186.

Condizione essenziale di tale rinascita è la formazione di una coscienza operante, che associ finalmente le forze della cultura a quelle del lavoro in modo che la cultura non si risolva in sterile apprendimento di nozioni e il lavoro non sia soltanto inconsapevole espressione di forza fisica. Questo principio, d'altra parte, si ricollega alla tradizione del nostro primo Risorgimento, quando pensiero e azione, fusi insieme, divennero simbolo e mezzo di educazione nazionale.

La scuola elementare, pertanto, non dovrà limitarsi a combattere solo l'analfabetismo strumentale, mentre assai più pernicioso è l'analfabetismo spirituale che si manifesta come immaturità civile, impreparazione alla vita politica, empirismo nel campo del lavoro, insensibilità verso i problemi sociali in genere. Essa ha il compito di combattere anche questa grave forma d'ignoranza, educando nel fanciullo l'uomo e il cittadino.

Nella nuova scuola elementare italiana dovranno dominare un vivo sentimento di fraternità umana che superi l'angusto limite dei nazionalismi, una serena volontà di lavorare e di servire il Paese con onestà di propositi. A ciò tendono i nuovi programmi con una chiara visione dei problemi etici, che trova sviluppo in ciascuna delle materie di studio, ma specialmente nella religione, nell'educazione morale, civile e fisica, nel lavoro, nella storia e geografia.¹⁷

¹⁷ See Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Decreto Luogotenenziale 24 maggio 1945, n. 4595*.

As the passage notes, the main aim of the 1945 curriculum was to make the tenets and institutions of the New Republic—the rights of man, democratic participation, civic duty—transparent to children. Two particular areas of primary school education served to achieve this objective. Combatting “analfabetismo,” language instruction, on the one hand, played an utmost role in allowing elementary school students to have access to such principles and hence served to set them on the pathway to becoming citizens. Work or, “lavoro,” on the other hand, integrated into the primary school’s “materie di studio” would provide the so-called “spiritual” medium through which children could contribute to the new democratic society. Following Dewey’s theory on education and citizenship, technical training here does not indicate a futile act of learning of facts (e.g., “sterile apprendimento di nozioni e il lavoro”) or making profit, but rather holds an ethical purpose. It serves to encourage “un vivo sentimento di fraternità umana” and “una serena volontà di lavorare e di servire il Paese con onestà di propositi.”¹⁸ Such a sense of brotherhood would empower the people to overcome any cultural or religious differences, unite, and serve their country and fellow countrymen and women sincerely without any latent opportunistic goals.

This notion of a democratic “fraternità” by way of work is further emphasized and

¹⁸ Freely contributing their ideas and ingenuities, children, according to Dewey, who undertake manual labor as adults, get their raw material from natural resources they study and, thereby, manufacture the items necessary to daily life. Dewey notes: “We must conceive of work in wood and metal, of weaving, sewing, and cooking, as methods of living and learning, not as distinct studies. We must conceive of them in their social significance, as types of the processes by which society keeps itself going, as agencies for bringing home to the child some of the primal necessities of community life.” As children recognize the value of such raw materials, work, and products to society as a whole, they adopt “a spirit of social co-operation and community life” and hence learn to become better citizens within a democracy. Dewey’s notion that one’s individual pursuits may contribute to social well being here, in my view, echoes Gentile’s ideas on *spirito* and *volontà*. Dewey of course does not talk about autarchy, “the economic value of the products,” or the idea of a Nation-state, and this is what sets him apart from Gentile and Fascism most certainly. Compare the passage above to Dewey’s notion on work and education in *The School and Society and the Child and the Curriculum* 6-28.

described with the addition of the section “Lavoro” in the 1945 programs.¹⁹ In addition to establishing a sense of brotherhood, technical training held fundamental importance for regulating the country’s economy and providing financial stability for all citizens. The 1945 program describes the value of manual work this way:

Il lavoro è fonte di vita morale e di benessere economico e deve avere nell’insegnamento un’adeguata importanza. È necessario che le nuove generazioni riconoscano nel lavoro la principale risorsa della nostra economia e il mezzo più efficace per la rinascita nazionale. Solo col lavoro si possono stabilire saldi e pacifici rapporti di collaborazione tra i popoli.²⁰

The term “collaborazione,” here in particular, is an interesting one, as it implies a sense of equality. Italians, in other words, work *together* in building and strengthening the country’s economy through their efforts. This new principle of “fraternità” and “collaborazione” within the school programs, as I see it, serves especially to topple the hierarchy, which Fascism established between Italians of various social classes and genders. In this respect, 1945 school programs differ from those published under the *ventennio*. Yet, taking a closer look at the kinds of jobs this new democratic training entailed, we find that the Allied Military Government’s school program

¹⁹ See Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Decreto Luogotenenziale 24 maggio 1945*, n. 459 8-9. Italy was not the first country to emphasize this notion of “fraternità.” Ideas of brotherhood here particularly echo the *devise* or national motto of France expressed with the three terms, “*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*.” France adopted this emblematic phrase of the 1789 *Révolution* as the official motto of the *République* in 1848. On the French *devise*, see “*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*,” *Présidence de la République française, Elysee.fr*, 2015, 13 Feb 2017 <<http://www.elysee.fr/la-presidence/liberte-egalite-fraternite/>>.

²⁰ See Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Decreto Luogotenenziale 24 maggio 1945*, n. 459 8.

unexpectedly maintained the very Fascist social conventions and divisions it sought to eradicate, despite its insistence on this new sense of “fraternità.”

While the *Sottocommissione* eliminated both Gentile’s and Bottai’s classification of the elementary school into two distinct categories, its programs recommended the same manual training exercises as those administered at the rural and urban schools under the *ventennio*.²¹ The *Sottocommissione*, in fact, defined manual training according to three very familiar categories: “a) lavoro artigiano; b) lavoro agricolo; c) lavoro femminile.”²² As under Fascism, this new sub-commission hence suggests that children train to become farmers or industrial laborers. It therefore neither encourages nor expects children to pursue their studies beyond the elementary or middle school level.²³ By virtue of the fact that the third category, “lavoro femminile,” stipulates a kind of work that only girls or women should carry out, we furthermore see how the school programs display the same gender norms that existed under Fascism.

Women within the post-war era were no less regarded primarily for their role as comforting and maternal *casalinghe*. Their education, as a result, served to prepare them for the *mestieri*, stereotypically ascribed to the female gender. As the 1945 program suggests:

Si consideri il lavoro femminile come mezzo per la formazione spirituale dell’alunna, non solo per quell’intimo senso di utilità della vita domestica che

²¹ Lombardi, *I programmi della scuola elementare* 50.

²² See Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Decreto Luogotenenziale 24 maggio 1945, n. 4598*.

²³ During this period, middle school children enrolled at technical school were barred from attending university. University entry in fact required a high school degree. This directive was established by Gentile’s 1923 *Riforma* and remained effective up until 1962, when middle schools across Italy were unified and decreed mandatory by the Ministry of Public Instruction. See Prunieri 196; Ascenzi, “L’educazione alla democrazia” 82; White 3; and also Lombardi, *L’educazione a scuola* 347, 351-352.

esso conferisce, ma anche per la sua funzione eminentemente rasserenatrice. Infatti i lavori di cucito, di maglieria, di ricamo e le faccende di economia domestica richiedono attenzione, cura e inducono alla calma.

La maestra non disdegni le forme di lavoro femminile più modeste, quali il rattoppo e il rammendo, perché sono di grande utilità nella vita familiare. Tenga inoltre presente che principalmente alle donne è affidata la economia della casa, che ha sempre grandissima importanza.²⁴

With the repetition of the words “domestica” in the terms “vita domestica” and “economia domestica,” in addition to the terms “vita familiare” and “la economia della casa,” it becomes clear that despite the new democratic system in place, women were given no option to find work outside of the home. They thus continued to acquire skills and training in “facili esercitazioni di economie domestiche” “con particolare riguardo per tutti gli accorgimenti atti alla conservazione e alla migliore utilizzazione dei prodotti agricoli ed alimentare in genere.”²⁵ Alas, the ambitious Sarina of Petrucci’s fictional urban tale “Progetti e progettini,” would have found no respite with the change of government following the end of Fascism, as girls continued to learn how to sew, knit, and wash clothes, maintain a clean house, and cook.²⁶

If girls in the post-war era were destined to become mothers and housewives, as under Fascism, boys were similarly set on the path to becoming *operai* or *contadini*. The difference, however, between Bottai’s and the *Sottocommissione*’s programs lay in the fact the latter allowed

²⁴ Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Decreto Luogotenenziale 24 maggio 1945, n. 4599*.

²⁵ Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Decreto Luogotenenziale 24 maggio 1945, n. 4599*.

²⁶ Cfr. ch. 4, pp. 31-33.

boys *to choose* between the two urban and rural *mestieri* made available to them. As the *Avvertenza* to the section “Lavoro” states, “Le esercitazioni di lavoro sono affidate all’iniziativa dell’insegnante, ma più ancora a quella degli alunni.”²⁷ Boys, in comparison to girls, were thus given—at least in part—more social mobility, since they had more choice in the kinds of careers they could assume. The 1945 program defines “lavoro artigiano” and “lavoro agricolo” this way:

Le esercitazioni di lavoro artigiano, che sarà attuato, ov’è possibile, in relazione all’artigianato locale, offriranno pratici sussidi agli altri insegnamenti, con la costruzione, la raccolta e la conservazione di materiale didattico vario. Sarà questa un’efficace difesa contro il facile rischio di cadere in esercitazioni vuote e formalistiche, quando non si riesca a concretare altri tipi di lavoro.

[...]

Per il lavoro agricolo si tenga presente che l’Italia è un paese essenzialmente rurale. Si deve perciò alimentare in tutti gli alunni, ma particolarmente in quelli dei centri rurali, l’amore per la sana e proficua fatica dei campi. Il lavoro nel terreno posto a disposizione della scuola deve tendere al raggiungimento di tale scopo. Non deve essere pesante e uggioso, nè ridursi a semplice fatica manuale: deve divenire, invece, mezzo di ricerca e di osservazione di quei fenomeni naturali ai quali, in genere, i contadini assistono senza sentire la necessità di spiegarceli. Possono essere effettuati anche utili esperimenti agricoli contenuti

²⁷ Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Decreto Luogotenenziale 24 maggio 1945, n. 4598*.

entro modesti limiti.²⁸

Under the precepts of the 1945 programs, boys, who settled on urban, manufacturing work obtained crafting skills and made “modesti giocattoli e [...] semplici oggetti di pratica utilità scolastica e domestica.”²⁹ However, as the passage above notes, one’s specific training in manufacturing nonetheless corresponded “all’artigianato locale.” Though free to assume a rural or urban job, the technical training that the child receives in the post-war era is still conditioned and informed by the work available in the demographic area in which he lives.³⁰ We thus can only wonder to what extent an urban child might be free to select from a variety of manufacturing work.

Similar to the kinds of urban work proposed, rural work likewise appears well-defined and offers a rather limited variety of technical skills and training under the 1945 programs. Rural work in the passage above, not surprisingly, corresponds to agriculture and lays focus on the “sana e proficua fatica dei campi.” It thus elides any mention of such other occupations as herding or fishing that were traditionally ascribed to peasants living in the seaside or in Italy’s mountainous areas. As under Fascism, boys, who decided on rural work in the post-war era engaged in “piccoli lavori di giardinaggio e di orticoltura,” the “[preparazione] del terreno per la semina di cereali e ortaggi; spargimento di fertilizzanti; semina e trapianti; irrigazione, zappatura, sarchiatura, scerbatura, diradamenti, ecc,” and not to mention the “lavorazione dell’uva e delle olive, alla trebbiatura del grano e alla pressatura del fieno.”³¹ Children here not

²⁸ Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Decreto Luogotenenziale 24 maggio 1945, n. 459 8.*

²⁹ Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Decreto Luogotenenziale 24 maggio 1945, n. 459 9.*

³⁰ Given the *Sottocommissione*’s gendered definition of the three “lavori” described in the 1945 programs, my use of the masculine pronoun “he” here is deliberate.

³¹ Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Decreto Luogotenenziale 24 maggio 1945, n. 459 9.*

only seem to reappear in *campicelli sperimentali* as they continue to practice “piccoli lavori di giardinaggio e di orticoltura” at school.³² They also seem to learn the “know-how” (e.g., cultivating wheat, grapes, and olives; methods to properly germinate grain; and the handling of the *macchina di trebbiatrice*) offered in the Fascist *Libro unico dello Stato*.³³

To ensure that children—boys and girls—follow this new, “democratic” course of manual training and adopt such “know-how,” the *Sottocommissione all’istruzione* insisted that children have proper textbooks.³⁴ Yet as Italy’s resources were devastated by the World War, the process of compiling new textbooks proved challenging for the Allied Military Government. As the government scrambled to provide Italy’s elementary schools with “purified” schoolbooks, we will find to our surprise, the return and use of a very familiar group of texts—the *Libro unico dello Stato*.

Making a Comeback: the Libro unico dello Stato (Defascistizzato) at the Wake of the New Republic

Tenuous financial circumstances brought on by WWII particularly made it difficult to compile new textbooks and led the *Sottocommissione all’istruzione* to reissue the *Libro unico dello Stato* at the very expense of teaching children Italy’s new democratic ideals.³⁵ Italy’s

³² On the *campicello sperimentale*, see ch. 3, pp. 81-83.

³³ Cfr. ch. 4 p. 89.

³⁴ See Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Circolare Ministeriale 24 ottobre 1944, n. 2190 – Libri di testo per l’anno scolastico 1944-45, Il libro per la scuola nel ventennio fascista: la normative sui libri di testo dalla riforma Gentile alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale (1923-1945)*, ed. Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani (Macerata: Alfabetica, 2009) 296-298; and also “Carta per i libri della scuola elementare e media,” *Giornale della Libreria* 31 Aug 1945: 80.

³⁵ See Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Circolare Ministeriale 24 ottobre 1944, n. 2190* 297, and also Ascenzi, “L’educazione alla democrazia nei libri di testo” 66-67.

economy and, more specifically, its editorial market indeed suffered a great deal following the end of WWII. Many publishing companies remained either closed or destroyed from aerial bombings, while those that were open lacked the materials and manpower necessary to produce paper.³⁶ This lack of resources, as a result, considerably increased the cost of paper and, hence, the very few books, which existing publishing companies were able to produce during the period.³⁷ As Italians were largely unable to afford these new publications, the *Sottocommissione all'istruzione* by consequence had to “[ridurre] al minimo l’acquisto di nuovi testi, e valorizzare, quant’è possibile, quelli dell’anno precedente, o, comunque, già posseduti dagli alunni, anche se non uguale per tutti, cercando con opportuni espedienti di ridurre ad unità didattica la varietà dei libri in uso nella classe.”³⁸ In the very short time they had to compile and distribute textbooks before the beginning of the 1944-1945 academic school year, the *Sottocommissione* was thus compelled to make the best use of the material that was already available to them.³⁹ This meant relying on a multitude of remaining Mussolini-era schoolbooks for instruction. Yet, how could the government re-distribute such material, especially when it sought to eliminate Fascist

³⁶ The Allied Military Government in fact sold rations of paper to editorial companies in order that they could produce textbooks for the 1944-1945 academic school year. See “Assegnazione carta agli editori di libri per le scuole elementari,” *Giornale della Libreria* 31 Dec 1945: 166. Washburne 274-275; Galfré, *Il regime* 179; Ascenzi, “L’educazione alla democrazia nei libri di testo” 67-68; Montino, *Parole educate* 179.

³⁷ See Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Circolare Ministeriale 24 ottobre 1944, n. 2190* 297. The *Giornale della Libreria*, for instance, reports that the price of paper was about 45 Lire per kilogram in 1945. An example of the rising cost of paper as well as the publication of books can also be seen in the increase in the cost of the *Libri unici* between 1942 and 1944. The price of Ballario’s second grade textbook, for instance, jumped from 6 to 32 Lire in 1944; Zanetti’s third grade textbook similarly went up from 6.50 to 31 Lire; Bargellini’s fourth grade from 6.50 to 30 Lire; and Bargellini’s fifth grade from 8 to 35 Lire. Here on average, the cost of the textbooks in 1944 represents a fivefold increase from the original price. On the high cost of paper, see “Assegnazione carta agli editori di libri per le scuole elementari” 166.

³⁸ See Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Circolare Ministeriale 24 ottobre 1944, n. 2190* 297.

³⁹ Washburne 274-275; Commissione Alleata 23; Galfré, *Il regime* 179.

ideology from the elementary school? The answer lies in the government's move to "defascisticize" primary schoolbooks.

This "defascistization," by which I mean to name the Allied Military Government's plan of action to remove "ogni parola, frase, o contenuto di propaganda," from Fascist schoolbooks, required that the interim Ministry of Public Instruction under Guido De Ruggiero establish a new *Commissione per l'esame dei libri di testo*.⁴⁰ This new organization in effect comprised a network of commissions managed by the *Sottocommissione alleata per l'Educazione*. To quote scholar Anna Ascenzi, it particularly consisted of "una Commissione ministeriale centrale e [...] una serie di Commissioni regionali per la scuola istituite nei territori via via liberati e sottoposti al controllo dell'*Allied Military Government*, composte da insegnanti e funzionari scolastici designate dai *Regional Education Officers*."⁴¹ The first task of this new *Commissione* involved gathering and reviewing all circulating reading material with "elementi suscettibili di epurazione con la indicazione delle pagine e dei passi incriminati."⁴² As per the new commission, these books were worthy of revision, as they contained "giudizi ed affermazioni di spirito fascista," cited examples "di personaggi e di istituzioni fasciste," and, therefore, did not comply with

⁴⁰ For a definition of "defascistization," see Washburne 274. On the new ministerial commission for the defascistization of textbooks, refer to Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Circolare Ministeriale 22 novembre 1945, n. 10.861 – Libri di testo, Il libro per la scuola nel ventennio fascista: la normative sui libri di testo dalla riforma Gentile alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale (1923-1945)*, ed. Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani (Macerata: Alfabetica, 2009) 302-303. The first Minister of Public Instruction in the New Republic, De Ruggiero was an anti-fascist intellectual and university professor. He, along with Benedetto Croce, famously signed the *Manifesto degli intellettuali anti-fascisti* in 1925. See Papa 194 and also, "Guido De Ruggiero," *Camera dei deputati, Portale Storico* 2017, 1 Jan 2017 <<http://storia.camera.it/deputato/guido-de-ruggiero-18880323#nav>>.

⁴¹ Ascenzi, "L'educazione alla democrazia nei libri di testo" 65.

⁴² See "Defascistizzazione libri di testo," *Giornale della Libreria* 31 Aug 1945: 472; and also, Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Circolare Ministeriale 22 novembre 1945, n. 10.861* 303.

“spirito di libertà democratico della Italia nuova.”⁴³ Examples of such reading material comprised books on a variety of subjects and hence included not only textbooks on literature, but also “*libri di storia antica, storia medievale e lingue estere.*”⁴⁴

Once the books were examined, the *Commissione* could in turn decide whether the volumes could be revised considerably enough for use at the primary school. Should any one of the textbooks display an excess of Fascist ideology it would, by consequence, be considered unfit for use and be ultimately destroyed. Examining a plethora of books, the Commission made public a list “nel quale i libri stessi venivano divisi in tre categorie: 1) libri da eliminare; 2) libri da ammettere condizionatamente alla soppressione di alcune pagine; 3) libri incondizionatamente approvati.”⁴⁵ Yet, despite the new government’s will to teach elementary school students the principles of a new democracy, the process of examining and revising Fascist-era textbooks was in no way a thorough one and, as a result, allowed for the continued influence of Fascist ideology.⁴⁶

Several reasons inhibited the *Commissione* from diligently and fully “defascisticizing” textbooks. For one, it was compelled to issue the schoolbooks within a three-month period between June and September 1944 after the Allied Military Government had entered into Sicily

⁴³ See “Defascistizzazione libri di testo” 472. For further reading on this article printed in the *Giornale della Libreria*, see also Galfré, *Il regime* 186-187.

⁴⁴ So long as they lacked any “traccia di fascismo, nè nello spirito, nè nella forma, nè nel contenuto,” books under the category of “matematica, fisica, chimica, scienze naturali ed arti applicate; testi classici di latino, italiano, greco, lingue moderne e filosofia,” were nevertheless considered exempt from review. See “Epurazione dei libri di testo nelle scuole medie,” *Giornale della Libreria* 31 July 1945: 67, and also “Defascistizzazione libri di testo” 472.

⁴⁵ Reproduced in full, the *Commissione*’s list of approved and rejected books may be found in the following pages: Ascenzi, *Il libro per la scuola nel ventennio fascista* 309-474.

⁴⁶ Ascenzi, “L’educazione alla democrazia nei libri di testo” 70; Montino, *Parole educate* 179-180, 184-185; White 61, 118-123; and also Galfré, *Il regime* 190.

to liberate Italy.⁴⁷ Washburne himself admittedly did not speak fluent Italian.⁴⁸ Neither he nor his American and English colleagues, moreover, held a firm and thorough understanding of Fascist education and pedagogy, and, in scholar Steven F. White's own words, were "not trained to engineer social change" in post-war Italy despite being charged with the task.⁴⁹ Washburne consequently entrusted the work to a group of Italian teachers and intellectuals, which included not only anti-Fascist but also Fascist sympathizers.⁵⁰ The process of revising elementary and middle school textbooks was hence largely subjective, as this latter class of members tended to disregard certain details within the textbooks that exemplified Fascist values.⁵¹ With the objective to maintain profit levels, editorial companies also held political sway and influenced the decisions made by the *Commissione*.⁵² In an impassioned article published in a special English-language edition of the *Giornale della Libreria*, editor Tancredi Vigliardi Paravia himself condemned publishing executives, who issued textbooks and scholastic reading material without much consideration for its content and its readership. Within the article, Paravia calls on the Allied Military Government to "take it upon themselves to severely control all those who endeavour to make of the publication of school books a mere matter of business, one of the many

⁴⁷ Washburne 273-274.

⁴⁸ Washburne 273.

⁴⁹ White 49-51, 61.

⁵⁰ Anna Ascenzi has studied a large sample of the history textbooks examined and revised by the *Commissione*. She has found several examples of books "con pochi tagli e aggiustamenti, dei più accreditati e diffusi manuali dell'epoca fascista." Among these, she cites the history books of Pietro Silva, Niccolò Rodolico, Alfonso Manaresi, Nino Cortese, Augusto Lizier, Agostino Savelli, Francesco Landogna, and Francesco Calderaro. She, in particular, considers Calderaro's textbook "ultrafascist." See Ascenzi, "L'educazione alla democrazia nei libri di testo" 70. For further reading, see also Montino, *Parole educate* 188-195, and Bacigalupi 232-258.

⁵¹ Galfré in fact notes that Washburne hired many policy makers who were employed by the regime during the *ventennio*. These Fascist members of the *Commissione* thus continued to directly influence post-war government policies on education and textbook reform. See Galfré, *Il regime* 178. For further reading on this topic, see also White 5-8, 50-51.

⁵² Galfré, *Il regime* 186.

ways of «making money», regardless of the ultimate results of the action.”⁵³ In light of these circumstances, the work carried out by the new textbook commission in effect proved *acceptable enough* to the new Ministry of Public Instruction, which itself had surrendered and confessed to the pressures of producing textbooks in time for the academic school year.⁵⁴ And so: what are some of the examples of schoolbooks approved by the new ministerial *Commissione per l’esame dei libri di testo*, and how do they continue to interpellate children into workers by way of Fascist ideology?⁵⁵ The answer appears in the illustrations and content of the revised *Libro unico dello Stato* issued previously under Fascism.

From Fascist Figures to Democratic Designs: Re-illustrating the Libro unico “defascistizzato”

Among the list of “defascisticized” textbooks approved by the Commission were eight *Libri unici dello Stato* published under Bottai’s administration between 1938-1943.⁵⁶ Published

⁵³ See “Publishers of educational books and political controls,” *Giornale della Libreria* 15 Nov 1945: 139.

⁵⁴ See Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Circolare Ministeriale 24 ottobre 1944, n. 2190* 297; and also Galfré, *Il regime* 179, and White 62-63.

⁵⁵ In using the term “interpellation,” I am again applying Althusser to my reading of post-war textbooks. On Althusser’s notion of interpellation, see ch.1, pp. 5-11.

⁵⁶ Vera Cottarelli Gaiba and Nerina Oddi, *Il libro della prima classe*, illus. Roberto Sgrilli (Rome: Editori Libri di Testo Elementari, 1944); Pina Ballario, *Quartiere nuovo: letture per la seconda classe dei centri urbani e rurali*, illus. Bruno Angoletta (Florence: Consorzio Editoriale dei Libri di Testo Elementari, 1944); Maria Zanetti and Adele Zanetti, *Patria. Letture per la terza classe elementare dei centri urbani e rurali*, illus. Mario Pompei (Florence: Consorzio Editoriale dei Libri di Testo Elementari, 1944); Piero Bargellini, *Letture per la quarta classe elementare dei centri urbani e rurali*, illus. Angelo della Torre (Rome: Editori Libri di Testo Elementari, 1944); Piero Bargellini, *Letture per la quinta classe elementare dei centri urbani e rurali*, illus. Piero Bernardini (Florence: Consorzio Editoriale dei Libri di Testo Elementari, 1944); Armando Armando, *Il libro della quarta classe elementare: aritmetica, geografia, scienze* (Florence: Consorzio Editoriale dei Libri di Testo Elementari, 1944); Angelo Zammarchi, *Il Libro Della IV Classe Elementare: Religione, Grammatica, Storia*, illus. Pio Pullini (Firenze: Consorzio editoriale libri testo elementari, 1944); and Carmelo Cottone, *Il Libro Della V Classe*

and circulated between 1944-1946, these included all first through fifth grade *lettore* for the *scuole urbane* authored by Gaiba, Ballario, Zanetti, and Bargellini as well as the grammar, math, science, geography, and religion *sussidiari* compiled by Armando Armando, Angelo Zammarchi, and Carmelo Cottone.⁵⁷ Despite the large corpus of critical literature available on education in post-war Italy today, these “defascisticized” textbooks, to my knowledge, have not been examined or analyzed. I can only speculate on the reasons why we have such a dearth of criticism on the “defascisticized” *Libro unico*. One possible reason may lie in the fact that only a few copies of these textbooks remain. Published between 1944-1945, these textbooks, after all, had a very short shelf life. Primary sources such as journal articles, interviews, and ministerial circulars, moreover, express public apprehension over the *Commissione*’s move to “defascistize” the school and already confirm the presence of Fascist ideology in textbooks and other similar reading material. Still, these “defascisticized” *Libri unici* in my view merit our study, as they can show us exactly which Fascist ideals they retain in spite of the *Commissione*’s revisions. The Fascist values on work maintained in these texts, as I will show, particularly, overlap with the

Elementare: Religione, Grammatica, Storia (Rome: S.A.E.L., 1944). See also, White 118 and Ascenzi, *Il libro per la scuola nel ventennio fascista* 340, 342-343, 363, 436.

⁵⁷ Davide Montino asserts that Belloni’s *Il libro per la seconda classe dei centri rurali* was among those *Libri unici* “defascisticized” by the textbook commission. However, as it is *not* listed among those materials reviewed by the *Commissione*, I am particularly skeptical of Montino’s argument. If the Ministry of Education did not in fact revise or reissue Belloni’s *Libro unico*, we can only speculate on the reasons why this became the case. One reason might be that the Bottai administration published the textbook in limited numbers for those few rural schools that actually had the means to obtain copies. Few if any editions of the textbook therefore might have been in circulation for the 1944-1945 *Commissione*’s consideration. In any case, as Belloni’s *Libro unico* clearly privileges the rural to the urban and offers no insight into life in city areas, it would have nonetheless proven unfit for the new school programs. We are here reminded that the new textbooks under these programs were to address an audience consisting of children from both rural and urban areas of Italy. Bottai-era *Libri unici dei centri urbani*, in this regard, perhaps proved a better fit than the *Libri unici dei centri rurali*, as they set stories and anecdotes in both demographic areas. Despite these considerations, the question nonetheless requires further research and remains open for debate. See Montino, *Parole educate* 179.

democratic principles, which the textbook Commission sought to convey in elementary schools and perhaps indicate one reason why it was so difficult for the New Republic to come up with a clear definition of democracy in the post-war era.⁵⁸

In an effort to provide a comparative approach to my analyses of the editions of *lettura* that I have considered across this dissertation, I will here examine briefly the “defascisticized” *Libri unici* compiled by Gaiba, Ballario, Zanetti, and Bargellini. These “defascisticized” editions do indeed lack the iconography that characterized the Fascist State-issued textbooks that came before. We no longer find illustrations and stories of children wearing *balilla* uniforms and practicing the *saluto romano*. Traces of the *fascio*, black flags, and busts of Mussolini as well as references to such Fascist propaganda campaigns as the *battaglia del grano* and the Agro Pontino have all been removed and replaced with images and text that convey the new government’s democratic values. That being said, the *Libri unici* nevertheless reproduce a large fraction of the textbooks’ tales—several of which I have discussed in Chapter Four—with very little to no revisions. As their themes coincide with Dewey’s ideas on democratic *fraternità* and the *scuola di lavoro*, these tales and anecdotes in the above *Libri unici*, as a result, continue to emphasize the value of manual labor for the country’s economy and instill a hierarchy between urban and rural children. Let us first turn to an analysis of the textbook’s illustrations.

The textbooks’ new cover designs, for one, immediately indicate the major changes, which the *Commissione* made to the above Bottai-era textbooks. Replaced with designs that were more politically neutral in nature, illustrations on the cover of Gaiba’s and Ballario’s new textbooks, in particular, attest to the *Commissione*’s efforts to “defascisticize” the *Libro unico*.

⁵⁸ Here again I am referring to the work of Roberto Sani and Giorgio Chiosso. Sani and Chiosso have both examined the difficulties, which Italy’s post-war government had in defining the term “democracy” in light of the continued presence of Fascist ideology and politics. See above p. 5-6, n. 12.

Designed by Roberto Sgrilli, the 1944 edition of Gaiba's *Sillabario* substitutes the original pastoral image of a *balilla* and a *piccola italiana* reading their schoolbooks outside in a field. The new cover portrays a vernal image of birds nesting in a tree (see fig. 5.1). While the new illustration maintains the bucolic motif of the original 1942 cover, it no longer makes any reference to Fascist schoolchildren.

Ballario's textbook, in comparison, is no longer titled, *Quartiere Corridoni*, but *Quartiere nuovo*. Eliminating any and all references to Mussolini's celebration and re-presentation of Filippo Corridoni as a presumed heroic Fascist *operaio*, the cover no longer depicts a *balilla* writing the term "vincere" upon a city wall.⁵⁹ Instead, we see two children, a boy and a girl, reading a book (see fig. 5.2). Carrying satchels and lunch bags with them, the children appear to be on their way to or from school. Yet, as they stand before a beige background, the cover provides no indication as to the children's actual physical location. We hence do not know if they are in a rural or urban environment. Here, lies another difference between *Quartiere Corridoni* and *Quartiere nuovo*. Subtitled, *Lecture per la seconda classe dei centri urbani e rurali*, *Quartiere nuovo* addresses students living not only in cities, but also in the countryside, and indicates the 1945 *Commissione*'s objective to establish a sense of democratic unity or "fraternità" among children of different demographic backgrounds. In this respect, the cover illustration appears to subvert the class divide between rural and urban children established under Fascism.

Mario Pompei's cover illustration of Zanetti's "defascisticized" *Patria: lecture per la terza classe dei centri urbani e rurali* likewise alludes to this new objective of the *Sottocommissione all'istruzione*'s 1945 democratic school programs (see fig. 5.3). Its title not

⁵⁹ For an analysis of Ballario's original cover illustration, cfr. ch. 4, pp. 37-44.



Fig. 5.1. Roberto Sgrilli. 1941 and 1944. Cover illustrations of Nerina Oddi and Vera Cottarelli Gaiba’s first grade *Libro unico*. The original 1941 image on the left features Fascist *balilla* children, reading their textbook. The 1944 “defascisticized” image to the right, by contrast, lacks any reference to *balilla* and, instead, depicts the vernal image of birds nesting in a blossoming tree.



Fig. 5.2. Bruno Angoletta. 1944. Cover illustration of Pina Ballario’s *Quartiere nuovo: letture per la seconda classe dei centri urbani e rurali*. This “defascisticized” cover illustration no longer showcases a *balilla* boy writing “vincere” on a building wall. It instead offers the politically neutral image of a boy and girl reading a book. The children’s clothing indicates that they are on their way to or from school. The lack of a background makes it difficult for us to know whether the two are located in an urban or rural environment.

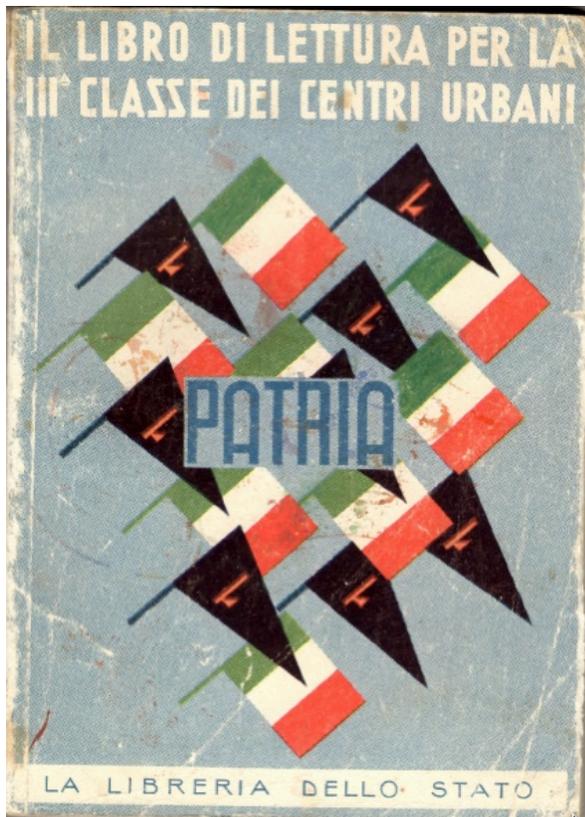


Fig. 5.3. Mario Pompei. 1942 and 1944. Cover illustrations of Maria Zanetti's *Patria: letture per la terza classe dei centri urbani e rurali*. The “defascistized” illustration of an urban and rural landscape on the right replaces the black flag and *fascio* of the original 1942 edition of Zanetti's book to the left.

only identifies the textbooks' audience as schoolchildren from urban and rural areas of Italy. Its cover design also makes reference to urban and rural technical work. The "defascistized" illustration of an urban and rural landscape, in particular, replaces the black flag and *fascio* of the original 1942 edition of Zanetti's book. Within the foreground of Pompei's revised 1944 cover, an *aratro* and *prora* stand fixed upon a clod of earth. Combined with the plowed fields in the background, the tools make reference to farming. Behind the plow and prow to the right of the cover, moreover, lie the three cooling towers of an industrial factory. Emitting steam, the buildings allude to manufacturing work. Despite portraying objects that refer to both rural and urban work, however, the cover illustration seems to lay particular focus on the farming tools—*aratro* and *prora*—which, not so long ago, assertively served to communicate the Fascist regime's ideology of nationalism, autarchy, and work.⁶⁰ It thus appears once more that even in its "defascisticized" form, Zanetti's *Libro unico* perhaps still resonates with traces of Fascist ideology as it privileges farming over industry and, therefore, the country over the city. We are hence left to wonder whether these revised editions of the State-issued schoolbooks might, as a result, reinforce, rather than eradicate, the hierarchy established between rural and urban children under Fascism and interpellate its subjects accordingly.

As we take a look at the 1944 editions of Bargellini's fourth and fifth grade *Libri unici*, we are, in fact, once more left to speculate on this very same question, especially as we glance upon the textbooks' cover illustrations (see fig. 5.4 and 5.5). The cover designs of both schoolbooks no less omit all traces of Fascist iconography—the *fascio*, *moschetto balilla*, and ancient Roman vexillum symbolizing Fascist Italy's imperial conquests in colonial Africa—that appeared in the original artwork. Yet, in comparison with Pompei's illustration of Zanetti's third

⁶⁰ Cfr. ch. 3, pp. 36-37, 46-47, 53-55, 62, 71-76.

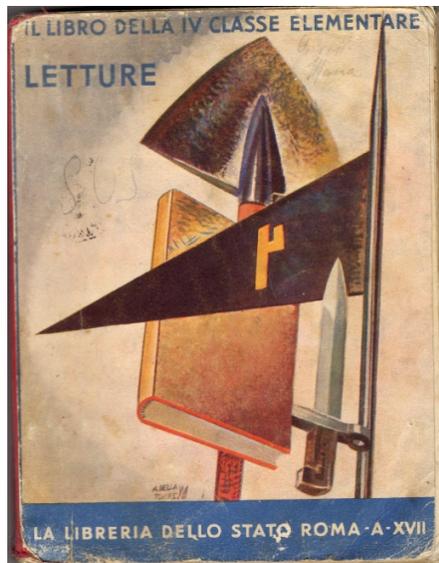


Fig. 5.4. Angelo della Torre. 1938 and 1944. Cover illustrations of Bargellini's *Letture per la quarta classe dei centri urbani e rurali*. Illustrations of a bayonet, shovel, and book on the 1938 cover of Bargellini's book represent Mussolini's dictum, *Libro e moschetto, fascista perfetto*. Lacking any blatant references to Fascism, the 1944 cover, by contrast, portrays the familiar picture of a farmer plowing fields with an *aratro* and *prora*.

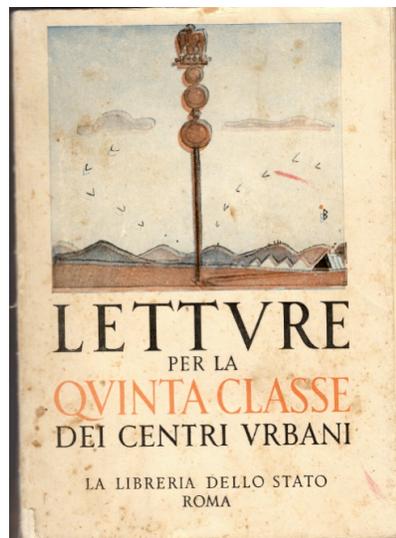


Fig. 5.5. Piero Bernardini. 1942 and 1944. Cover illustrations of Bargellini's *Letture per la quinta classe dei centri urbani e rurali*. To the left, the perpendicular vexillum illustrating the Latin acronym, *S.P.Q.R.* (a.k.a., *Senatus populusque romanus* or "The Senate and Roman People") on the original 1942 edition of the textbook makes reference to Fascist Italy's imperial conquests in colonial Africa. To the right, a simple book, shovel, and olive leaf make reference to farming on the 1944 cover of the "defascisticized" version of Bargellini's book.

grade “defascisticized” schoolbook, both editions of Bargellini’s covers exclusively showcase symbols that allude to farming. On his *Letture per la quarta classe dei centri urbani e rurali*, for instance, we find a farmer plowing his fields with the familiar *aratro* and *prora*.⁶¹ Likewise, on Bargellini’s *Letture per la quinta classe dei centri urbani e rurali*, we see a shovel lying over an open book adorned with an olive leaf. Both illustrations thus elide any mention of industrial work and appear to privilege the agricultural. Might Bargellini’s two textbooks then likewise retain traces of Fascist ideology and hence subject urban to rural children by way of its tales, anecdotes, and poems, as they did under the *ventennio*?⁶²

Re-writing Fascist Subjection: Selected Prose from “Defascisticized” Editions of the Libro unico dello Stato

Far from judging such textbooks solely by their cover, the aim of our thesis in understanding the relationship between Fascist and post-war education lies in a study of the content as well as the illustrations of the *Libri unici*. I hence pose the question: were the actual stories and poems in these *Libri unici* likewise “defascisticized” in order that they not only remove all Fascist propaganda, but also provide equal focus on urban and rural work? Did the “defascistization” of the schoolbooks finally put an end to or perhaps sustain traces Fascist subjection?

⁶¹ This familiar image especially brings to mind Bernardini’s cover illustration of Eros Belloni’s *Libro unico*, his illustrations of Romulus and Remus plowing fields with an *aratro* and *prora*, as well as Pullini’s color sketches of Italian *contadini* working in the Agro Pontino within Petrucci’s third-grade Fascist schoolbook. Cfr. ch. 3, pp. 58-59, 66-67, 79-85.

⁶² Once again my reference to Althusser here with the term “subject” establishes the framework with which I read the “defascisticized” *Libri unici*.

As I have argued in the previous chapter, Fascist subjection took two paths, as it shaped Italy's elementary school children into two categories of subjects—a rural one as well as an urban one.⁶³ Subjection under Fascism in effect depended upon one's demographic area and involved two relations of power, the regime itself as one Subject and the "sovereign" rural Subject as the other. I established this argument based on my analysis of the way in which such authors as Ballario, Zanetti, and Bargellini struggled to convey Mussolini's vague notion of a disciplined and obedient *soldato-operaio*.⁶⁴ Whereas Ballario and Zanetti depict the *operaio*, either as a manual laborer in an *officina* or a craftsman, Bargellini, by contrast, largely focuses on the consumption habits of city folk and draws attention to the agricultural labor power that produced the goods consumed. Bargellini's text, as a result, establishes a hierarchy between urban and rural folk. By way of his stories, urban children become subjected to rural children, as they survive at the behest of the products these future *contadinelli* produce. Comparing Ballario, Zanetti, and Bargellini's original textbooks to their "defascisticized" versions, we can see how the 1944-1945 *Commissione* strives—albeit unsuccessfully—to put an end to such Fascist subjection so that the country's new textbooks convey Dewey's principles of work, community, and democracy. Let us now begin with a brief analysis of Ballario's *Libro unico*.

Ballario's original *Quartiere Corridoni*, focused exclusively on the life of the *operaio*. The textbook's stories and poems indeed were framed upon the model of the hard-working urban syndicalist, Filippo Corridoni. The fictional *Quartiere Corridoni* itself, moreover, was set in a city. Its thriving inhabitants reaped the benefits of a tranquil urban life made prolific by the manufacturing industries surrounding them. Ballario's original textbook thus did not include stories, poems, or anecdotes that made reference to farming or rural life. The revised version of

⁶³ Cfr. ch. 4, pp. 92-94.

⁶⁴ Cfr. ch. 4, pp. 1-4, 37-44, 50-62, 81-87.

Ballario's textbook, *Quartiere nuovo*, however, differs from the original, as it puts emphasis upon both rural *and* urban work. While it largely maintains the tales from *Quartiere Corridoni*, now known as the *Quartiere nuovo*, it removes such Fascist stories as those on the "Leva fascista" and the "Marcia su Roma." These tales, in particular, are replaced with anecdotes on such agricultural events as the "Festa dell'uva" and the "vendemmia."⁶⁵ In comparison to the ways in which the farmer was presented as god-like figure in Fascist era *Libri unici*, the *contadino* here gains no particular favor over the industrial worker.⁶⁶ In both working environments, the efforts exerted by the *contadino* as well as the *operaio* equally reinforce communal bonds and express the village or townsfolk's sense of prosperity and happiness. The narrator of the tales "La festa dell'uva" and "Vendemmia," for instance, notes the way in which

⁶⁵ Compare Ballario, *Quartiere Corridoni* 3-5, 11-20 to Ballario, *Quartiere nuovo* 5-7, 13-16.

⁶⁶ We also see this for instance in the tale, "Il seminatore," reproduced from Belloni's *Libro unico per le scuole rurali*. Whereas Belloni's rendition of the biblical tale centers on the "seminatore," or *contadino*, in order to depict him and his action of sowing seeds with saintly characteristics, here the revised story places focus back upon the recipient of the "seme" or "word of God," as the original text had intended. The new text now reads: "Il seminatore andò a spargere la sementa. Alcuni chicchi caddero sulla strade e gli uccelli li beccarono. / Altri caddero fra i sassi, dove non poterono mettere buone radici e, perciò, inaridirono. / Altri caddero fra le spine, che li fecero morire soffocati. / Altri in fine, caddero nella terra fertile e diedero buon frutto. / Lo stesso avviene della parola di Dio. Egli la dice a tutti; ma son pochi quelli che la tengono nel loro cuore e ne ricavano un buon frutto." The final two lines here, in particular, contrast with the final two lines in Belloni's tale (e.g., "Il seme è come parola di Dio. Egli fa cadere in tutti i cuori, ma soltanto nei cuori degli uomini buoni essa mette radici e si trasforma in buone azioni"). Comparing the agent of the verb "tengono" in the final line of Ballario's version of "Il seminatore" to that of the verb "mette" and "si trasforma," we see how the text focuses back upon the recipient of the *seminatore's* actions. The grammatical subject of plural present indicative "tengono" in the final line of Ballario's version refers to "tutti" (e.g., "everyone," to whom "il buon Dio," preaches); while the agent of the singular present indicative "mette" and "si trasforma" in the final line of Belloni's edition of the tale alludes to the feminine demonstrative pronoun "essa" or "parola di Dio." As Ballario's revised narrative now focuses on the recipient rather than the object, which the *seminatore* scatters, the farmer's presence in the tale becomes less important. The *contadino* in effect appears no less significant than, say, the anthropomorphic industrial ants, who together bring about prosperity for their insect colony in Ballario's tale "Colloquio con la formica." For Ballario's version of "Il seminatore," see *Quartiere nuovo* 14-15. On Belloni's tale, cfr. ch. 3, pp. 59, n. 140.

“[donne] e uomini rigovernano botti, tini, bigonce per la pigiatura,” and how all the village children or “tutti i bimbi e tutte le bimbe del quartiere andavano in colline a vendemmiare. Tutta una giornata all’aperto, nelle vigne, a cogliere i bei grappoli... e a mangiarli.”⁶⁷ The narratives’ use of the gendered nouns (“donne e uomini”) and predeterminers (“tutti” and “tutte”) in both lines serve to emphasize the village people’s equal participation in the grape harvest. Citizens of all genders and ages contribute to the “vendemmia” and appear united, as they rejoice in the outcome of their work. Their society hence appears democratically “fraternal,” while the working people together assist in producing the wine that all Italians consume on a daily basis.

This idea of a united rural community is juxtaposed to the notion of a working urban community in the tale “Colloquio con la formica.”⁶⁸ Reproduced in its entirety with no additional changes from the original 1942 edition of Ballario’s *Libro unico*, we might recall how the allegorical story depicts a day in the life of a colony of ants.⁶⁹ Anthropomorphized, the working ants resemble *operai*, as they exchange orders and work in factory-like “stabilimenti” and “magazzini.” Working tirelessly, while ensuring the time to provide assistance to any fellow worker in need, the ants bring about prosperity for their army. Similar to the grape harvesters of Ballario’s previous tale, each individual ant here equally contributes to the progress of her insect colony. The ants themselves, moreover, seem to exemplify a sense of democratic *fraternità* as they articulate the phrase, “l’unione fa forza.”⁷⁰ Whereas the phrase once made reference to the *fascio*, here the line could instead express a commonality between Dewey’s principles of a democratic working society and Fascist pedagogy.⁷¹ A unified working population, in other

⁶⁷ Ballario, *Quartiere nuovo* 15-16.

⁶⁸ Ballario, *Quartiere nuovo* 99-100.

⁶⁹ Cfr. ch. 4, pp. 46-50.

⁷⁰ Ballario, *Quartiere nuovo* 99.

⁷¹ Cfr. ch. 4, p. 49.

words, strengthens the economy and progress of the country. Yet, we can only wonder how feasible it would be for a child to read and interpret this line according to such new democratic principles so soon after the fall of the Fascist regime.⁷² As the “defascisticized” *Libro unico* reproduces the same language of original tale, the democratic ideals of unity and fraternity seem to overlap with Fascist ideology. Could it be that such a phrase as “l’unione fa forza” reinforces Fascist values instead of those new ideals advocated by the republican government and the 1944-1945 school programs?⁷³

If the democratic principles in Ballario’s textbook allowed readers to hear Fascist values of nationalism, the revisions made to Zanetti’s *Libro unico* certainly served to compensate for such blunders. Alterations made in particular to the final two paragraphs of Zanetti’s tale, “Il lavoro,” demonstrate how the 1945 textbook Commission once more sought to “defascisticize” the *Libro unico* with the goal to teach children the value of manual labor for the New Republic. Comparing the original to the rewritten edition of the tale, we find that work now represents an individual’s responsibility to participate in the civic life of the country. The original reads:

Più si lavora, meglio si lavora, più tenacemente si lavora, e più la Patria diventa ricca e potente.

⁷² “Colloquio con la formica,” is not the only such Fascist tale retained from Ballario’s textbook. *Quartiere nuovo* likewise reproduces the anecdote, “Le voci delle cose,” in its entirety. This allegory originally served as a means to instruct students on economic autarchy. Here, however, we can imagine that the *Sottocommissione* maintained the story for its representation of craftwork as well as its ability to educate children on wastefulness. See Ballario, *Quartiere nuovo* 88-89, and also cfr. ch. 4, p. 47, n. 106.

⁷³ Teachers in the post-war era in fact held a significant role in making sure that children studied their schoolwork according to the country’s new democratic principles. However, as Italy’s teachers did not receive—as under the Fascist regime—the proper didactic training for instructing students such values, children continued to run the risk of reproducing the Fascist ideology they once learned. See Lombardi, *I programmi della scuola elementare* 49; Montino, *Parole educate* 181; and also White 124-127.

Ecco perchè *il Fascismo, con le sue sapienti leggi, ha aiutato, protetto, ordinato, disciplinato il lavoro*. Tutte le speranze per l'avvenire d'Italia, *esso ripone* nel lavoro del popolo.

The revised version, by contrast, states:

Più si lavora, meglio si lavora, più tenacemente si lavora, e più la Patria diventa ricca e potente.

Ecco perchè *bisogna aiutare, proteggere, ordinare, disciplinare il lavoro*. Tutte le speranze per l'avvenire d'Italia, *sono riposte* nel lavoro del popolo.⁷⁴

According to the revised passage, the government no longer expects or forces people by law to work for the country's benefit. Rather, work represents an expression of a citizen's own sense of patriotism (e.g., "speranze per l'avvenire d'Italia") and willingness to contribute to the country's well being. Replacing the phrase, "Ecco perchè il Fascismo, con le sue sapienti leggi, ha aiutato, protetto, ordinato, disciplinato il lavoro," the new passage employs the key words, "bisogna aiutare." This key phrase underscores the altruistic purpose behind the act of manual work. The aim of such work is not to gain profit or support a dictatorial regime. Rather it provides assistance to fellow citizens in need and improves conditions of struggle and difficulty. The

⁷⁴ The emphases here are mine and serve to highlight the differences between the two passages. See Ballario, *Quartiere Corridoni* 173, and Ballario, *Quartiere nuovo* 129. For an analysis of the Fascist version of the tale, refer to ch. 4, pp. 50-62.

outcome of such a gesture of support would thus, as Dewey notes, reinforce the bonds among Italian citizens.⁷⁵

Yet, as Althusser has suggested, Dewey's notion of *fraternità* incorporated in Zanetti's "defascisticized" textbook appears itself an ideology—one that does not necessarily see itself as such.⁷⁶ Indeed, taking the form of an imperative, "bisogna aiutare" carries hegemonic undertones. It hails or calls on readers to adopt the "know-how" laid out in Zanetti's tale in order that the new democratic society prospers.⁷⁷ Expressing an authoritarian tone, the phrase, moreover, seems to warn readers of what might happen to Italy if such manual work is not carried out. Indeed, the hopes or "speranze" for a better Italy will not be realized if children do not adopt the technical skills, which Zanetti's offers. The threat of an Italy in decline might once more push children to follow the demands of their textbooks.⁷⁸ Children in other words would follow the instructions laid out in their textbook out of fear rather than out of a sincere appreciation for the value of work. Here, we once more see Fascism's influence upon post-war education. Using such hegemonic language, Zanetti's tale continues to subject children into workers and, in doing so, prevents them from participating out of their own will, as citizens in a free democratic society.

This notion of subjection additionally reveals itself in Bargellini's "defascisticized" volumes of his fourth and fifth grade *Libri unici*. Indeed, if teaching children technical work proved as urgent as Zanetti's text suggests, then the bad habits defining one's unwillingness to

⁷⁵ See above, p. 8, n. 18.

⁷⁶ See Althusser 124-125.

⁷⁷ By way of the term "hail," I am referring once more to Althusser's seminal essay on subjection, "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus." See ch. 1, pp. 5-11.

⁷⁸ In this respect, the language in Zanetti's revised tale echoes that in Petrucci's "L'Italia nuova." Petrucci's, we might recall, uses the expression, "bisogna vincere," to make readers overcome the obstacles that would undermine Mussolini's ideological scope for the country. See ch. 4, pp. 27-30.

work would likewise be censured in revised versions of the *Libro unico dello Stato*. With Bargellini's reproduction of "Michelaccio" in *Lecture per la quarta classe dei centri rurali e urbani*, the 1945 Textbook Commission sought to chastise lazy children, in a move worthy of the Fascists.⁷⁹ As I argued in Chapter Four, Michelaccio's transformation from a slothful child into a working young adult demonstrates the protagonist's change into a Fascist subject.⁸⁰ Once hated but now embraced by his classmates, neighbors, and mother, the interpellated Michelaccio practices the ideological beliefs—"Il lavoro ricrea," "Il lavoro distrae," "Il lavoro fa sani"—on work held by the established order. The outcome of his labor results in Michelaccio gaining social approval. He is no longer a social outcast and has place and purpose in the society in which he lives. As readers ought to model themselves after Michelaccio, the protagonist's story then would serve to entice his audience to adopt a life of manual work not out of any altruistic sense to help one's fellow citizens in need. The audience rather might follow Bargellini's protagonist as a means of escaping the threat of social exclusion and ostracism. As the new democratic government approved the use of such a tale for vocational training, it then appears once more that the civic education of elementary school children likewise consisted of subjecting students into citizen-workers.

Yet, the preservation of "Michelaccio" in such post-war editions of the *Libro unico* not only appears to subject children into workers, but also, and perhaps more importantly, seems to reinforce the hierarchy, which Fascism established between Italians living in rural and urban areas of Italy. Though presumably removing all traces of Fascist propaganda from Bargellini's fifth grade textbook, the 1945 *Commissione* surprisingly retained such tales as "Il messaggio nel

⁷⁹ The revised edition of "Michelaccio," solely omits Bargellini's citation of Mussolini's speech on the *italiano nuovo*. Cfr. ch. 4, p. 68.

⁸⁰ Cfr. ch. 4, p. 62-69.

Rumine” and “Il pensiero della campagna” without making any changes.⁸¹ Their edition of the *Libro unico* hence largely maintains the stories that portray Italian city folk as selfish and impoverished consumers.⁸² The theme of Bargellini’s fifth grade textbook consequently deviates substantially from that of Ballario’s and Zanetti’s revised *Libri unici*. Urban citizens within Bargellini’s schoolbook no longer appear as working figures, who contribute to the country’s welfare through the necessary goods and services they produce. Rather they are subjected to the farmers who provide them with nourishment.⁸³ Rural folk, in turn, emerge as Italy’s saviors. They prevent the country’s townsfolk from dying in hunger and thereby prevent the spread of moral depravity. Though “defascisticized,” Bargellini’s textbook hence continues to reflect the class divisions established under Fascism.

The fundamental thesis of this analysis regarding Bargellini’s re-subjection of urban to rural folk, however, no longer concerns the question as to whether or not post-war textbooks succeeded in interpellating children into workers. I have already discussed the ways in which Fascist subjection largely failed.⁸⁴ What is significant about Bargellini’s *Libro unico*, however, is the fact that despite the change in regime and the program to “defascisticize” the school, the *Commissione* continued to educate and hold Italians to such imagined, binary categories as urban

⁸¹ Compare Bargellini, *Lecture per la quinta classe* 8-13, 193-194 to Bargellini, *Lecture per la quinta classe dei centri urbani e rurali* 10-15, 190-191.

⁸² Comparing Italy’s farmers to an authoritarian prince, Bargellini’s story, “Amedeo di Savoia Duca D’Aosta,” no longer appears in the “defascisticized” version of the textbook. For an analysis of the tale, cfr. ch. 4 pp. 85-87.

⁸³ Cfr. ch. 4, pp. 81-85.

⁸⁴ Due to the low supply of paper, the Ministry of Education did not produce very many copies of the “defascisticized” *Libro unico dello Stato*. White estimates that about 200,000 copies of the textbook were printed and disbursed across Naples and Palermo only. Under pressure to provide enough textbooks for the 1944-1945 academic school year, as a result, the MPI allowed teachers to use older editions of the Fascist textbooks, which “gli alunni sono in possesso.” See “Carta per i libri della scuola elementare e media” 80, and also White 64, 118-119. On the failures of Fascist subjection, cfr. ch. 4, pp. 102-105.

and rural, consumer and worker, *contadino* or *operaio*. This meant that the *Commissione* as well as the new *Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione* was still unable to overcome the socio-economic prejudices and class dynamics that prevailed under Fascism and, as a result, undermined its own efforts to develop a sense of *solidarietà* and *fraternità* among the people.

We can, on the one hand, understand why such a relationship exists especially as Fascist intellectuals studied Dewey, Freinet, and Kerchensteiner, while drafting their didactic curriculum.⁸⁵ As Charnitzsky has argued, the Fascists appear to have borrowed ideas from these thinkers and adapted them in accordance with their own Fascist ideological project of nationalizing the people. Still, this overlap between Fascist and democratic values on work would make it difficult for the new republican government to differentiate itself from the previous regime, especially since it was influenced by the same pedagogical literature. With Italy formally declared a republic in 1946, this definition of Italian national identity continued to pose challenges for devising a proper system of education that would teach democratic values in the post-war era.

Fascist Education, the Post-War Era, and Modern Schooling: Some Further Considerations for Solutions to an Anomaly

While the use of the *Libro unico dello Stato* at the primary school was formally declared illegal with the ratification of the *Decreto Legislativo Luogotenenziale n. 714* in the summer of 1945, the idea of teaching rural and urban work persisted in both the school programs and

⁸⁵ Cfr. above p. 2-3, n. 5 and 6.

textbooks following the immediate post-war era.⁸⁶ The 1955 school programs, for instance, continued, as the Fascists did before, to provide elementary school students with only rudimentary instruction in such “materie di studio” as arithmetic, science, geography, and history.⁸⁷ This limited amount of instruction as a result did not necessarily serve to provide children with a well-rounded education. We can hence speculate to what extent these programs allowed for more social mobility as it did not challenge or encourage pupils to pursue their studies at a higher level. While primary school students under the 1955 curricula would not be encouraged to take up a course of manual work that would assume a “carattere di tecnicismo professionale,” their training in civic education and citizenship continued, moreover, to be informed by the demographic areas in which they lived.⁸⁸ The 1955 programs, for instance, note:

A quest’opera di formazione sono naturalmente collegate le esperienze di vita dell’alunno che l’insegnante deve vagliare con opportune conversazioni, e libere e ordinate discussioni. Si dia particolare rilievo a tutte le esperienze dirette a ottenere il rispetto delle persone, delle cose e di locali pubblici, delle norme di circolazione stradale e di quelle riguardanti la pubblica igiene.

⁸⁶ See Art. 1, Italy, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Decreto Legislativo Luogotenenziale 31 agosto 1945 n. 714 – Abrogazione della legge 7 gennaio 1929, n. 5, relativa al libro di testo unico di Stato per le Scuole elementari e modificazioni al testo unico delle leggi e delle normative giuridiche sulla istruzione elementare approvato con R. decreto 5 febbraio 1928, n. 577, Il libro per la scuola del ventennio fascista: la normative sui libri di testo dall riforma Gentile alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale (1923-1945)*, ed. Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani (Macerata: Alfabetica, 2009) 305.

⁸⁷ Lombardi, *I programmi della scuola elementare* 55- 60.

⁸⁸ The 1955 programs are fully reproduced in Lombardi’s volume, *I programmi della scuola elementare* 533-554. Cited here is a passage from the section titled, “Attività manuali e pratiche,” 554.

L'ambiente sociale in cui l'alunno vive offrirà occasioni a conversare sulla famiglia, sul Comune, sulla Provincia, sulla Regione, sullo Stato, in collegamento con lo studio della storia e della geografia.⁸⁹

As we see here, rules and norms governing a student's moral and ethical training particularly emphasized the "local" over the national with the mention of the terms "sulla famiglia, sul Comune, sulla Provincia, sulla Regione." Limited by such training in democratic citizenship, children hence were not expected once more to explore beyond the confines of their demographic areas.

The school programs of the experimental *Convitti Scuola della Rinascita* established by the Italian Communist party between 1945 and 1955 in contrast sought to overcome the social divisions reinforced by the school programs issued after the fall of Fascism. Their curriculum, as Fabio Prunieri has recently shown us, was open to Italians of all social classes and genders and served to encourage dialogue between the "intellectual and proletarian classes."⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the education one received at the *Convitti Scuola della Rinascita*, as before, focused on providing students with vocational training rather than a more well-rounded, liberal education. Its programs thus did not necessarily prepare students with the knowledge and skills to participate in such open dialogue.⁹¹ Lacking financial resources and often challenged by members of the Christian

⁸⁹ See Lombardi, *I programmi della scuola elementare* 537.

⁹⁰ Prunieri 192, 198.

⁹¹ Prunieri 193.

Democratic Party, which held majority in Italy's parliament, the school's efforts to unite Italians of different social classes remained largely—in Prunieri's own words—"utopian" in scope.⁹²

The challenges of devising a curriculum no less reflected the problems of compiling proper textbooks. With the fall of Fascism, Italians were once more allowed to exercise freedom of expression.⁹³ Intellectuals and pedagogues could thus print scholastic material without any censorship from the Ministry of Public Instruction.⁹⁴ Teachers, moreover, were given the option to choose textbooks that they felt were best suited for elementary school education.⁹⁵ This freedom of expression proved both advantageous and disadvantageous for educating children according to Italy's new democratic ideals. The freedom to print and choose scholastic material, on the one hand, meant that authors and teachers could finally voice their political beliefs and hence allow for more open dialogue on the problems and questions facing Italian society following the *ventennio*.⁹⁶ On the other hand, it also permitted Fascist sympathizers to continue disseminating Mussolini's political ideology without any reprimand from the government. Scholars Anna Ascenzi, Marcella Bacigalupi, and Montino, to name a few, indeed have indicated how many celebrated Fascist-era authors—Giuseppe Fanciulli, Piero Bargellini, Angiolo Silvio Novaro—who themselves contributed to compiling the *Libro di Stato*, continued to offer

⁹² Prunieri 192, 197-199. For further reading on the church's influence upon post-war schooling, see also Pazzaglia 328-353; Montino, *Le parole educate* 216-221; and also Sani, "La scuola e l'educazione alla democrazia" 54-57.

⁹³ Montino, *Le parole educate* 188-189; Commissione Alleata 12, 24-25; Ascenzi, "L'educazione alla democrazia" 67-68.

⁹⁴ Ascenzi, "L'educazione alla democrazia" 71; Montino, *Le parole educate* 197.

⁹⁵ Ascenzi, "L'educazione alla democrazia" 71-72; Galfré, *Il regime* 191.

⁹⁶ Bacigalupi, Montino, and Ascenzi agree that a number of Italian intellectuals abstained from discussing openly about the social and political problems, which Fascism caused. Children's textbooks hence did not thoroughly teach children about the dangers of the totalitarian regime. See Montino 179-180; Ascenzi, "L'educazione alla democrazia" 69-70; and Bacigalupi 241.

literature focusing on a “lavoro agricolo,” “lavoro artigiano,” and “lavoro femminile.”⁹⁷ Taking influence from the Fascist-era schoolbooks that came before, these new texts hence continued to focus on teaching children the values of urban and rural manual labor.

All this of course is not to say that Italian education did not make headway in the years following Mussolini’s twenty-year tenure as Fascist dictator. Italian schooling did indeed progress—albeit slowly—and in time made the necessary changes that would permit middle school and technical school students to attend university and thus allow for more social mobility.⁹⁸ Yet, this idea of technical training is still relevant today, as a significant fraction of Italy’s population continues to attend technical and vocational schools.⁹⁹ We can only wonder how this identity of the worker has changed in relation to the nation building process especially as Italian society has maintained a vocational school system within a globalized era. Vocational schooling indeed appears to stratify the population even today, as it mostly caters to both immigrants as well as Italian families particularly of low socio-economic backgrounds.¹⁰⁰ Despite the ways in which contemporary vocational schooling has contributed to class divide, Italy as well as such countries as France continue to debate the presumably “democratic” importance of technical training over a liberal education.¹⁰¹ If education in Italy or in France for

⁹⁷ Ascenzi, “L’educazione alla democrazia 69-85; Montino, *Le parole educate* 179-227; and Bacigalupi 243-258. Monica Galfré in like manner notes how many Fascist era schoolbooks approved by the Gentilian *Commissione* were in print up to the 1960’s and 1970’s. See Galfré, *Il regime* 191.

⁹⁸ See above p. 10, n. 23.

⁹⁹ Refer to Mocetti 193-195.

¹⁰⁰ See Bonizzoni 707-710; Polisel, “Educational Outcomes” 74-75; Panichelli 672-673; and Mocetti 190.

¹⁰¹ Politicians among France’s right wing party, *Les Républicains*, seek to reform the *college unique*, or unified middle school, for the very purpose of offering young adults technical training at a state-wide vocational school. See Marie-Estelle Pech, “Le college unique divise les candidats à la primaire de droite,” *Le Figaro* 17 Nov 2016, 13 Jan 2017 <
<http://www.lefigaro.fr/elections/presidentielles/primaires-droite/2016/11/17/35004->

that matter today serves to construct, as Roberto Sani asserts, “un’identità collettiva condivisa e fondata sui valori della Costituzione democratica,” the question I would like to pose is, how does vocational schooling prepare students to participate as citizens in a democratic society especially when it contributes to social stratification? What are the best means for us as educators to instruct students to think critically about the cultural and national values they learn especially as they are being shaped into working citizens?

The Fascists made it very clear that its textbooks and school curricula were ideological and that they were necessary to maintain the regime and its projects. It was no lie that Fascist schooling and textbooks worked according to how Mussolini believed Italian identity, social norms, and national life *ought* to be defined. These ideas were not subject to criticism. Yet, reflecting upon the larger picture of modern schooling today based upon our study of the *ventennio*, we realize that even though we might not live in a dictatorship, even if we might live in a democracy, textbooks really aren’t as politically neutral as we might think they are. They can hegemonically form the basis of our identities and our ways of thinking about ourselves and others. Because the processes of building a curriculum, compiling schoolbooks, and teaching students are subjective no matter the political regime under which we live, they all need and demand our careful attention. And so, perhaps we can turn to Althusser one last time for an answer to these questions above and finally prove Bottai wrong in his ideas on education and

20161117ARTFIG00418-le-college-unique-divise-les-candidats-a-la-primaire-de-droite.php>; Jean-Michel Blanquer, “40 ans du college unique: les ravages d’une réforme qui s’est retournée contre les élèves qu’elle voulait aider,” *Atlantico* 11 March 2015, 13 Jan 2017 < <http://www.atlantico.fr/decryptage/40-ans-college-unique-ravages-reforme-retournee-contre-eleves-qu-elle-voulait-aider-martine-daoust-jean-michel-blanquer-2035169.html>>; France, Ministère de l’éducation nationale, de l’enseignement supérieur et de la recherche, “Le college unique est-il une réalité?” *Éducation & formation* 66 (2003): 39-48.

ideology.¹⁰² Indeed the French philosopher has told us that the only solution lies in recognizing the ideologies that are making it possible for such class division to take place.¹⁰³ Perhaps it is in “confronting,” admitting, and agreeing upon the injustices, which these ideologies produce, as Althusser suggests, that democracy can truly be practiced.¹⁰⁴ How we define the purpose of education, how we approach our reading and studies, I believe, can only help us to open our minds and become better thinkers about the ideologies that we follow. Educating ourselves with the courage to confront the ways we have been made to think in an objective and critical manner perhaps can prove the best way to overcome the grips of ideology and class division.

¹⁰² Cfr. above p. 1.

¹⁰³ Althusser 126.

¹⁰⁴ As presumably democratic as it appears to be, American elementary school education likewise appears to promote certain ideological values, especially in social studies and history courses. For further reading on this topic, see Chappell 248-269; and also Bruce VanSledright, “Narratives of Nation-State, Historical Knowledge, and School History Education,” *Review of Research in Education* 32 (2008): 109-146.

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