



Past (Im)Perfect Continuous.

Trans-Cultural Articulations of the Postmemory of WWII

Roma, 27 giugno 2018

L'esperienza di *Progetto Memoria*: quindici anni di comunicazione nelle scuole italiane attraverso il racconto dei testimoni

***Progetto Memoria* experience: fifteen year-communication in the Italian schools through witness narration**

di Sandra Terracina



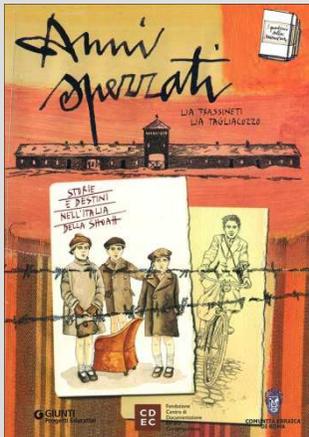
Progetto Memoria, founded in October 2003, is aimed at preserving and transmitting history and memory of the anti-Jewish persecution and the Shoah in Italy, mainly organizing meetings and lectures in schools and other institutions and associations.

A great amount of pupils and teachers have been involved in our work every year (between 7000 and 10.000). We are following three main lines of action:

- Meeting with witnesses, not only survivors, but also the so-called “saved”**
- Teachers and cultural operators training**
- Projects and didactic labs, usually worked out with the teachers**

A 15 year commitment

- Some crucial issues are linked to the commitment of transmitting the memory of the Shoah



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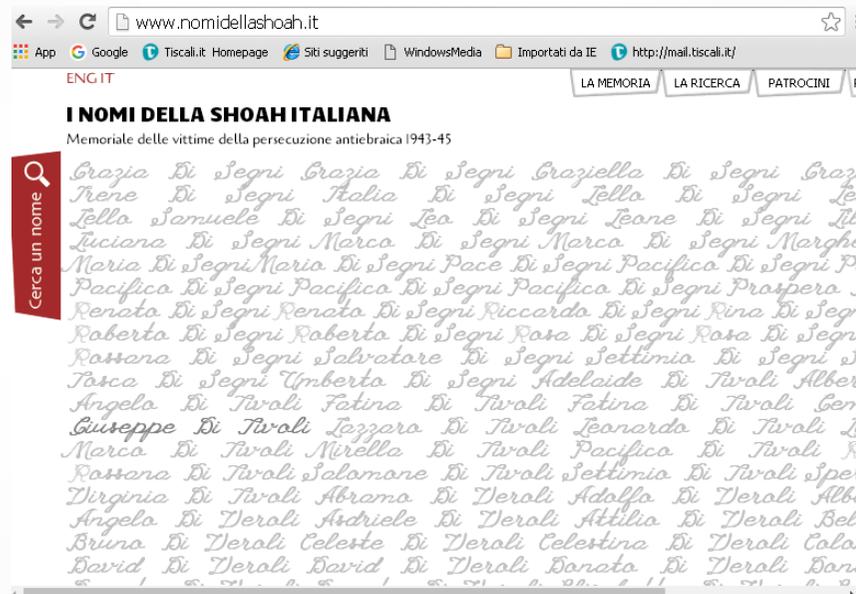
Il Giorno della Memoria

How did information, knowledge and perception of the Shoah change after the introduction of the Shoah remembrance day in Italy?

- From the beginning of the years 2000, the memory of the Jewish Holocaust became strongly predominant - even if the Italian law doesn't concern only the Jews - in a sort of compensation compared to the memory of the Resistance and antifascism.
- When we started, many were the survivors who went to speak to students in the schools. They became well known to the large public as they started to be invited in TV shows, sometimes with an enormous media exposure. There was an explosion of books of memories, novels, films and TV fictions. This led people to identify with the victims in an out-of-context empathy.
- This emotional movement involved the school first of all, explicitly asked to celebrate the Remembrance Day by the Ministry of Education. Alongside, the local administrations increasingly promoted the trips to Auschwitz and other camps. We can even say that it's never enough, but the risk perceived was rather that of an "overload", and this was widely discussed inside the Italian Jewish Community.

Milestones - beyond emotions

- Il *Libro della memoria*, Liliana Picciotto's research, was published in 1991, updated in 2002 and then converged into the site www.nomidellashoah.it and in the CDEC digital library
- The definitions: persecution of the rights and persecution of lives by Michele Sarfatti



- S. Spielberg's Schindler's List and the collection of audio-visual interviews with survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides: the greatest data-base of oral sources in this field

USC Shoah Foundation
The Institute for Visual History and Education

- In my opinion, at present, thanks to the huge educational involvement, carried out also with the contribution of the Italian Jewish Institutions, there is a greater consciousness and a sensible improvement of basic knowledge in the young people.



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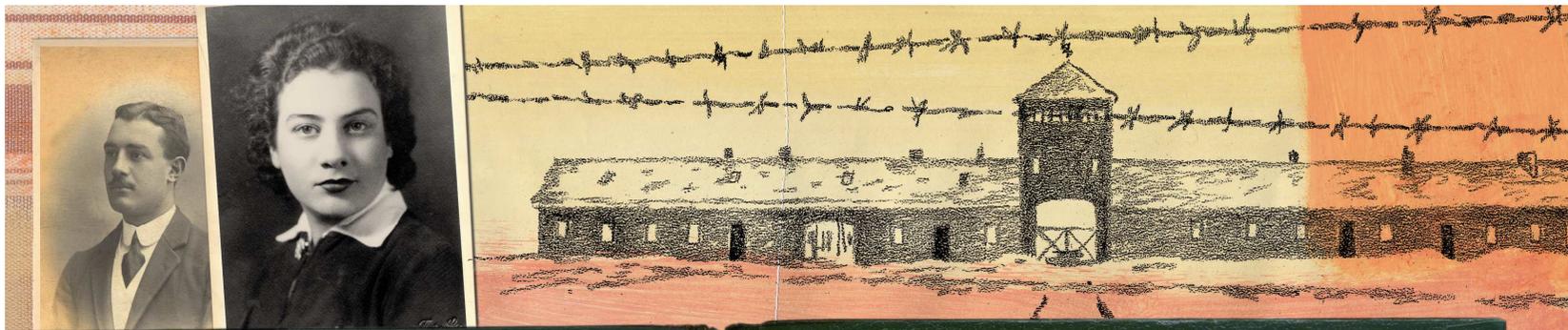
The testimony

How, through the survivors narration, can we build a civil memory (or postmemory!) to share with and forward to the young generations; how can we give a maximum value to this narration?

- The testimony of survivors and witnesses has given feature to our times
- The Era of the Witness, so was defined by Annette Wieviorka already in 1999 and many others reflected on the “intreccio fra storia e memoria”, i.e. the intertwining of history and memory; among them, Anna Rossi Doria, who, in 2006 and then in 2012, pointed out three main issues, not yet resolved:
 1. **The risk of transmitting the history of the Shoah separated from the history of Nazism and the WWII, with an unhistorical definition of “Absolute Evil”;**
 2. **The Shoah is reduced to a private affair between Nazis and Jews;**
 3. **The idea that the survivors testimony has itself an automatic value, along with the images of horror, which, on the contrary produce addiction, if not bother or, at best, arouse an emotional effect that circles around without giving any consciousness of the matter.**

The witness is special and unique: my personal chance to assist Piero Terracina

- Piero Terracina's testimony: a story-telling well calibrated through the years, often rearranged as the political situation changed and aimed at making people reflect.
- When a witness speaks, there is commotion and absolute silence. The wider dimension of Piero's speech lies in the inclusion of dates and facts in his personal story. This allows his narration to keep tied to the historical context, far from the creation of myth.
- I can sometimes tell by heart his words and even predict what he is going to say, nonetheless he is always able to surprise who is listening, enriching his narration with different episodes and adapting it to his audience. So his narration is never the same.



- Let us wish that the words made their mark, because unfortunately there is little time left!
- Some effects may be considered taking into account the great amount of remarkable works done by the students for instance produced for the annual contest held by MIUR and UCEI.
- As for the construction of a civil memory, the present Italian situation forces us to reflect carefully on how much is yet to be done.



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Second and third generation: legacy and transmission

How can we keep and preserve the survivors and witnesses legacy?

Now it's up to us, sons and daughters of the ones who lived the persecutions. And it is not easy.

Raffaella Di Castro in the book *Testimoni del non-provato. Ricordare, pensare, immaginare la Shoah nella terza generazione*, (Carocci, 2008), analyzed the question of how we identify ourselves in our parents, in carrying their weight of remembrance, anguish and pain.



Zachòr, remember, is for us Jews an imperative question.

From generation to generation, everyone must consider him/herself as if he/she had come out of Egypt. We have to tell our children, as our parents told us, and so on.

And we will have to be effective in telling our familiar story, even if “we were not there at that time” .

There is not a single way to do it, but we are working with teachers and students to find suitable ways, taking into account the faster and faster diffusion of information and communication by social media, which are now overwhelming. But is important to communicate to the young generations with their own language and resources. In addition, we have to fight intolerance and racism, which are now threatening other people and groups.



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ProgettoMEMORIA

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La memoria non é il ricordo; il ricordo si esaurisce con la fine della persona che ricorda il suo vissuto.
La memoria é come un filo che lega il passato al presente, é proiettata nel futuro e lo condiziona.

Piero Terracina

