

# REVIEW ARTICLE

## RETHINKING ITALY'S NATION-BUILDING 150 YEARS AFTERWARDS: THE NEW RISORGIMENTO HISTORIOGRAPHY\*

In 2011 the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Italy took place in the midst of much public controversy. In striking contrast to the mood of the occasion of its hundredth anniversary in 1961, when an optimistic country enjoying unprecedented economic growth was confidently looking to the future, in 2011 Italy was in the middle of a deep moral, political and economic crisis, in which the historical memory of the Risorgimento and the nature of Italy as a nation state had come under attack from a number of national and regional political forces, including a member of the coalition government, the Lega Nord, which tried to boycott the national celebrations, and political leaders like the governor of Sicily and the president of the largely German-speaking province of Bolzano. Such attacks provoked in turn the public intervention of the President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, who mounted a passionate defence of the memory of the Risorgimento.<sup>1</sup>

The anniversary, however, also coincided with a genuine revival of Risorgimento historiography, one that in the last ten years or so has radically transformed the intellectual landscape and enhanced our understanding of the period through a set of new approaches and research questions. In particular, two recent collective volumes, ambitious and original in scope, provide evidence of the lively state of the debate in Italy and of its methodological renewal, and point to the broader changes in the field demonstrated by the recent publication of a number of important monographs. The first is *Annali* 22 of the Einaudi

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<sup>1</sup> President Napolitano's speeches are now published as Giorgio Napolitano, *Una e indivisibile: riflessioni sui 150 anni della nostra Italia* (Milan, 2012).

*Storia d'Italia*, entitled *Il Risorgimento*, and edited by Alberto Mario Banti and Paul Ginsborg in 2007; while the second, *Fare l'Italia: unità e disunità nel Risorgimento*, edited by Mario Isnenghi and Eva Cecchinato, is the first of a seven-volume collective work entitled *Gli italiani in guerra: conflitti, identità, memorie dal Risorgimento ai nostri giorni* (The Italians at War: Conflicts, Identity, Memories from the Risorgimento to the Present), published by UTET, Turin, in 2008.

To appreciate the novelty of these two works on the Risorgimento we need only compare them with earlier milestones of Italian historiography — but to find works of similar ambition and scope we have to go back more than forty years. A masterpiece produced by one of the greatest historians of twentieth-century Italy, Giorgio Candeloro's monumental *Storia dell'Italia moderna*, published between 1956 and 1986 (and still in print), devoted the first four of its eleven volumes to the Risorgimento.<sup>2</sup> Its most important intellectual debt, as acknowledged in the introduction, was to Antonio Gramsci's deeply original Marxist interpretation of the Risorgimento. Elaborated upon in his prison notebooks, which were published after the Second World War, Gramsci's arguments were to leave an enduring mark on Italian historiography. For Candeloro, the creation of a modern and bourgeois state in Italy had excluded the majority of the population, namely the rural masses — a weakness that had led Gramsci to define the Risorgimento as a 'passive revolution'.<sup>3</sup> So, what Candeloro did in his 2,000-page account of the period was to produce primarily a lucid and exhaustive narrative of the political and revolutionary struggles, set in a broader European diplomatic context, and attentive to ideological issues. These qualities make it a still unrivalled and obligatory point of reference for any student of the Risorgimento. It also set the tone of subsequent

<sup>2</sup> Giorgio Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna*, 11 vols. (Milan, 1956–86): i, *Le origini del Risorgimento* (1956); ii, *Dalla Restaurazione alla Rivoluzione nazionale* (1958); iii, *La Rivoluzione nazionale* (1960); iv, *Dalla Rivoluzione nazionale all'Unità* (1964).

<sup>3</sup> *Opere di Antonio Gramsci*, ii, *Il Risorgimento* (Turin, 1949), 106–8; Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna*, i, 9–12; iv, 530–8. On the reception and influence of Gramsci's volume on the Risorgimento, first published in 1949, see now Francesca Chiarotto, *Operazione Gramsci: alla conquista degli intellettuali nell'Italia del dopoguerra* (Milan, 2011).

research, which for decades interpreted the Risorgimento primarily in terms of party politics and political history, and often treated the Italian state-building process as one of failure and inadequacy.

The first and third volumes of the *Storia d'Italia* published by Einaudi in 1972 and 1973, and edited by Ruggiero Romano and Corrado Vivanti, represented another attempt at a 'total' interpretation of the Risorgimento. Here two intellectual approaches are evident. The first, provided by Gramsci, shaped Giulio Bollati's influential essay (still in print and widely circulating today) on Italian national character that stressed the conservative and only partially modern nature of Risorgimento liberalism compared with its northern European counterparts, and informed Stuart Woolf's extensive reconstruction of the period within a *longue durée* framework starting with the early eighteenth century. The second, offered by Franco Venturi, focused on the 'circulation of ideas'. Venturi placed the events of the Risorgimento in the context of intellectual exchanges, starting at the beginning of the eighteenth century and culminating with the events of 1859 and 1860, and involving European and extra-European intellectuals, travellers, politicians and revolutionaries, along with their Italian counterparts. This framework enabled Venturi to suggest that Italy's revolutions and ideas were European as well as Italian events, connected but not derivative, and to reject implicitly Gramsci's ideas of failed modernity.<sup>4</sup> Venturi's innovative approach, however, had little immediate impact, while the Gramscian framework and its master-narrative of the exceptionalism of Italy's state-building remained the dominant one in the post-war period.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Giulio Bollati, 'L'Italiano', in Ruggiero Romano and Corrado Vivanti (eds.), *Storia d'Italia*, i, *I caratteri originali* (Turin, 1972); Stuart Woolf, 'La storia politica e sociale', and Franco Venturi, 'L'Italia fuori dall'Italia', both in Ruggiero Romano and Corrado Vivanti (eds.), *Storia d'Italia*, iii, *Dal primo settecento all'unità* (Turin, 1973). This approach was first put forward in his seminal essay: Franco Venturi, 'La circolazione delle idee', *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, xli (1954). On Venturi's project, see John Robertson, 'Franco Venturi's Enlightenment', *Past and Present*, no. 137 (Nov. 1992); Anna Maria Rao, 'Franco Venturi e le rivoluzioni del Settecento', in Manuela Albertone (ed.), *Il repubblicanesimo moderno: l'idea di repubblica nella riflessione storica di Franco Venturi* (Naples, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> In the post-war period, Gramsci's interpretation was partially revised by Franco Della Peruta, whose influential work challenged the notion of the socially elitist nature of the Risorgimento: see, for instance, Franco Della Peruta, *Mazzini e i rivoluzionari italiani: il Partito d'Azione, 1830–1845* (Milan, 1974).

## FROM PASSIVE REVOLUTION TO CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The temporal distance between the works of Candeloro and the 1973 Einaudi volume, and the equally ambitious intellectual ventures produced by Ginsborg and Banti, and by Cecchinato and Isnenghi, is in itself indicative of the long decline of the Risorgimento as a field of inquiry from the 1970s until the new century. This period was by no means devoid of noteworthy contributions. On the contrary, there were a good number of revisionist studies that looked beyond revolutions and politics as factors leading to the creation of the new state. Yet what characterized research in the 1990s, in particular, was the determination of scholars to look primarily at the interaction between social classes and institutions in the Restoration regimes, at the expense of revolutions, ideology and politics, thus neglecting nationalism and even the Risorgimento itself as putative causes accounting for the creation of the Italian state.<sup>6</sup>

What marks the revival of research, within which the collective volumes edited by Banti and Ginsborg, and by Isnenghi and Cecchinato represent milestones, is a renewed interest in nationalism that was revived by the influence of *cultural studies* and *histoire culturelle*, whose methodological approach Banti introduced to the field of Risorgimento studies in his pioneering work of 2000.<sup>7</sup> The introductions to these volumes indicate two altogether distinctive approaches and interpretative frameworks. For Banti and Ginsborg the roots of the patriotic movement are to be sought neither in social change, nor in institutional transformations, nor in the ideological clashes between political

<sup>6</sup> See the ground-breaking work of Marco Merigli, *Amministrazione e classi sociali nel Lombardo-Veneto, 1814–1848* (Bologna, 1983); Marco Merigli, *Il Regno Lombardo-Veneto* (Turin, 1987); and more recently, for example, Marco Merigli, *Gli stati italiani prima dell'Unità: una storia istituzionale* (Bologna, 2002); and also David Laven, *Venice and Venetia under the Habsburgs, 1815–1835* (Oxford, 2002). The most important collective project of this period is Giovanni Sabbatucci and Vittorio Vidotto (eds.), *Storia d'Italia, i, Le premesse dell'Unità dalla fine del Settecento al 1861* (Rome and Bari, 1994). This new wave of research, in open contrast to traditional Risorgimento historiography, questioned the teleological account of the birth of the nation state and the focus on high politics. For this period of Italian historiography, see also Lucy Riall, *Risorgimento: The History of Italy from Napoleon to Nation State* (Basingstoke and New York, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Alberto M. Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento: parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita* (Turin, 2000).

parties, but rather in the emergence of a new culture shared by all patriots, irrespective of their political alignments. Romanticism (understood not simply as a literary tradition, but also as a new culture fostering a specific sensibility) and an idea of the nation based on a set of narrative devices or, in Banti's words, 'deep figures', are at the origins of patriotic mobilization. According to Banti and Ginsborg, the Risorgimento is best understood as a cultural revolution driven by an idea of the nation that is closely associated with family and biological bonds, so that its very nature is intolerant and xenophobic, yet also appealing and readily comprehensible.<sup>8</sup> The twenty-seven essays in their six-section, 883-page, volume place the emphasis upon cultural representations and political practices rather than on politics as traditionally understood, and upon the interaction between private and public sphere, family life and political engagement, rather than upon social classes. The first two sections are devoted to the relationship between the individual, the family and the national project, to the interaction between private emotions and public passions, and to the way in which participation in the national movement was affected by gender roles and created models of family and family morality particularly associated with the Risorgimento. The third and fourth sections are dedicated to political culture and practices; while the final two discuss the memory of the Risorgimento and its impact on other European political and cultural movements.

Partly in order to counter this emphasis on the shared elements of the Risorgimento culture advanced by Banti and Ginsborg, and in continuity with an established historiographical tradition, Isnenghi and Cecchinato, as they make clear from their title, have chosen to highlight the conflictual nature of the period.<sup>9</sup> However, Isnenghi and Cecchinato neither consider conflicts solely in terms of a contrast between moderates and democrats,

<sup>8</sup> Alberto Mario Banti and Paul Ginsborg, 'Per una nuova storia del Risorgimento', in Alberto Mario Banti and Paul Ginsborg (eds.), *Storia d'Italia: Annali 22. Il Risorgimento* (Turin, 2007), pp. xxviii–xxxiv. But this goes against the classic interpretation by Federico Chabod, which contrasted the intrinsically peaceful, benign and exclusively political idea of nationality upheld by Risorgimento patriots with the less benign one advanced by German intellectuals: Federico Chabod, *L'idea di nazione*, ed. Armando Saitta and Ernesto Sestan (Rome and Bari, 1961).

<sup>9</sup> Mario Isnenghi, 'Apertura', in Mario Isnenghi and Eva Cecchinato (eds.), *Gli italiani in guerra: conflitti, identità, memorie dal Risorgimento ai nostri giorni*, i, *Fare l'Italia: unità e disunità nel Risorgimento* (Turin, 2008), 7.

according to a classic post-war interpretation, nor define the contested nature of the struggle for national liberation as a peculiarly 'Italian pathology' that has made ideas of nationhood permanently divisive, as some historians have recently argued.<sup>10</sup> Rather, their collective volume aims at broadening the scope of investigation so as to examine not only the more traditional political, ideological and social conflicts, but also dissensions regarding culture, territory, memory and gender, without a specific focus on the causes and drivers of political engagement. Compared with *Annali 22*, this ambitious 1,040-page volume aims at reaching a broader, non-specialist audience and appears to be more systematic in the ground it aspires to cover. It contains sixty-eight short essays including a useful introductory one by Eva Cecchinato on key events, and also a very lengthy biographical appendix. While here too the emphasis is on culture, one of the four sections into which the volume is divided is in fact devoted to the social groups of the Risorgimento, the 'Attori sociali'; and the other three deal with its main characters, 'Personaggi e figure', its key places, 'Luoghi', and its images and representations, 'Immagini, rappresentazioni'. As a result, we learn also about the enemies of the Risorgimento such as brigands, the Church, and the reactionary opposition to the national movement, including the last King of the Two Sicilies, Francis II. In thus paying serious attention to the losers, Isnenghi and Cecchinato ward off excessively teleological representations of the period.

However, in spite of their differences in structure and intentions, both collective volumes are radically distanced from some aspects of the nation-building process which once were centre-stage, namely, institutions, structures and the economy. These latter aspects, while not entirely absent, seem to have been relegated to a marginal role.<sup>11</sup> Both volumes describe the Risorgimento as a mass movement, an interpretation that undermines one of the central tenets of Gramscian orthodoxy: that is, the conviction that it had been a socially elitist process. In fact,

<sup>10</sup> This is, in a nutshell, the interpretation advanced for instance in Loreto Di Nucci and Ernesto Galli della Loggia (eds.), *Due nazioni: legittimazione e delegittimazione nella storia dell'Italia contemporanea* (Bologna, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Attention is devoted to the monarchy in an essay by Brice, and to diplomats and ambassadors by Guida: see Catherine Brice, 'La dinastia Savoia', and Francesco Guida, 'Diplomatici e ambasciatori', both in Isnenghi and Cecchinato (eds.), *Fare l'Italia*. The collapse of the Restoration regimes is discussed by Marco Meriggi in his 'Gli antichi stati crollano', in Banti and Ginsborg (eds.), *Il Risorgimento*.

‘mass’ seems now to have replaced ‘class’ as a key interpretative tool. Admittedly, it cannot be denied that political mobilization for the most part affected only a small percentage of the overall population of the peninsula.<sup>12</sup> Yet essays in both volumes provide plenty of evidence of the ways in which the Risorgimento was a ‘mass movement’, whose popular basis becomes even more remarkable if the extremely low literacy levels, and the material difficulties impeding the circulation of persons and printed material, are taken into account. Participation in military events cut across the whole of society, involving for instance over a hundred thousand individuals organized in more than 350 groups of volunteers in the conflicts between 1848 and 1849 (as discussed by Isastia), and fifty thousand volunteers in the 1859 war against Austria. Moreover, as Alessio Petrizzo, Carlotta Sorba and Maurizio Bertolotti show, squares, theatres and public spaces in cities hosted public rituals, protests and celebrations that attracted considerable participation.<sup>13</sup> The mass nature of Risorgimento mobilization is also well documented in Gian Luca Fruci’s ground-breaking studies on electoral practices and plebiscites between 1796 and 1870.<sup>14</sup> Fruci’s research revises earlier interpretations, which had taken plebiscites to be evidence of the authoritarian nature of the state-building process in Italy, and had highlighted the degree to which popular participation, being subject to so much manipulation, had been essentially passive. Fruci argues instead that plebiscites represented key

<sup>12</sup> On the question of the mass nature of the Risorgimento, see the thoughtful considerations by Marco Meriggi, ‘Il Risorgimento rivisitato: un bilancio’, in Adriano Roccucci (ed.), *La costruzione dello Stato-nazione in Italia* (Rome, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> See Carlotta Sorba, ‘Il 1848 e la melodrammatizzazione della politica’, and Alessio Petrizzo, ‘Spazi dell’immaginario: festa e discorsi nazionali in Toscana tra 1847 e 1848’, both in Banti and Ginsborg (eds.), *Il Risorgimento*. See also Anna Maria Isastia, ‘La guerra dei volontari: ruolo politico e dimensione militare’, Maurizio Bertolotti, ‘Piazze e barricate del Quarantotto’, and Maurizio Bertolotti, ‘Il Quarantotto in piazza: saggio iconografico’, all in Isnenghi and Cecchinato (eds.), *Fare l’Italia*.

<sup>14</sup> Gian Luca Fruci, ‘Cittadine senza cittadinanza: la mobilitazione femminile nei plebisciti del Risorgimento (1848–1870)’, in Vinzia Fiorino (ed.), *Una donna un voto*, special issue, *Genesis*, v (2006); Gian Luca Fruci, ‘Il sacramento dell’unità nazionale: linguaggi, iconografia e pratiche dei plebisciti risorgimentali (1848–70)’, in Banti and Ginsborg (eds.), *Il Risorgimento*; Gian Luca Fruci, ‘Alle origini del momento plebiscitario risorgimentale: i liberi voti di ratifica costituzionale e gli appelli al popolo nell’Italia rivoluzionaria e napoleonica (1797–1805)’, in Enzo Fimiani (ed.), *Vox populi? Pratiche plebiscitarie in Francia, Italia, Germania (secoli XVIII–XX)* (Bologna, 2010); Gian Luca Fruci, ‘I plebisciti e le elezioni’, in Giovanni Sabbatucci and Vittorio Vidotto (eds.), *L’unificazione italiana* (Rome, 2011).

experiences of popular participation that sanctioned the existence of the nation and its symbolic unity, demonstrated popular adherence to it, and combined recognition of popular sovereignty with monarchical or personal power.

Admittedly, in these collective works the Risorgimento is cast as an essentially urban phenomenon. Artisans, shopkeepers and street vendors were the protagonists of mass demonstrations and public protests in urban centres. Yet recent scholarship, including a couple of essays in Isnenghi and Cecchinato's volume, provide scattered evidence for the penetration of political and national ideas into rural areas. In the 1850s this was the case in the countryside around Mantua, where the Mazzinian movement was led by rural priests. In Austrian Lombardy in the early 1830s, priests acted as cultural intermediaries in rural communities, preaching the language of nationhood and liberty in religious terms. We now know that hundreds of Garibaldi's volunteers were either farmers or day labourers. Thus more research in this area needs to be carried out to evaluate the extent to which the Risorgimento affected the countryside.<sup>15</sup> What emerges beyond dispute, however, is the importance of religion to Risorgimento political culture. Against earlier interpretations of the Risorgimento as a crucial step towards the secularization of Italian society, the period seems now, in the light of recent research, to be marked by a conflict between competing ideas of religion deemed to be respectively compatible or incompatible with the national project. Thus religious symbols and language (above all, the idea of martyrdom for the fatherland) played a crucial role in shaping ideas of nationality, as traditional Catholicism was challenged by new varieties of civil religion and reformed Christianity capable of attracting substantial portions of the clergy.<sup>16</sup> Another aspect of

<sup>15</sup> See Maurizio Bertolotti, 'Non solo nelle città: sul Quarantotto nelle campagne', in Isnenghi and Cecchinato (eds.), *Fare l'Italia*. It was also true in Sicily, where each revolutionary wave of the Risorgimento saw the participation of rural squads in urban riots, as Enrico Francia demonstrates in his 'Città insorte', *ibid.* On the role of priests in the countryside of Lombardy, see Arianna Arisi Rota, *Il processo alla Giovine Italia in Lombardia, 1833–1835* (Milan, 2003); the project on the Garibaldini is currently available at <<http://archiviodistatotorino.beniculturali.it/Site/index.php/it/progetti/schedatura/garibaldini/statistiche>>.

<sup>16</sup> See Simon Levis Sullam, ‘‘Dio e il Popolo’’: la rivoluzione religiosa di Giuseppe Mazzini’, Enrico Francia, ‘‘Il nuovo Cesare è la patria’’: clero e religione nel lungo Quarantotto italiano’, and Daniele Menozzi, ‘I gesuiti, Pio IX e la nazione italiana’, all in Banti and Ginsborg (eds.), *Il Risorgimento*. See also Maurizio Ridolfi, ‘Martiri per la patria’, Giovanni Vian, ‘Chiesa, cattolici e costruzione dello Stato’, John A. Davis,

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the Risorgimento that is given renewed attention is its international scope as a revolutionary and cultural phenomenon. The research presented in the edited volumes, and in *Annali* 22 in particular, seems at last to have done justice to Venturi's intellectual legacy. Moreover, the essays in the two volumes reflect a larger body of recent work in this area.<sup>17</sup> Italian revolutionaries like Garibaldi and Manin became transnational icons relevant to radicalism and republicanism across Europe. Liberalism in its Spanish and English variants (the Spanish Revolution and the 1812 constitution, and the ideas of Richard Cobden, for instance) were in turn crucial in shaping Risorgimento political culture. Indeed, as Christopher Bayly and Eugenio Biagini have suggested, the circulation of Mazzini's ideas bears witness to the globalization of ideologies in the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup>

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'L'Antirisorgimento', and Renata De Lorenzo, 'L'ultimo dei Borboni: Francesco II', all in Isnenghi and Cecchinato (eds.), *Fare l'Italia*. Other work on religion includes Simon Levis Sullam (ed.), *Risorgimento italiano e religioni politiche*, special issue, *Società e storia*, no. 106 (2004); on martyrdom, see especially Lucy Riall, 'Martyr Cults in Nineteenth-Century Italy', *Jl Mod. Hist.*, lxxxii (2010); Lucy Riall, "I morti nostri son tutti risorti": Garibaldi, i garibaldini e il culto della morte eroica nel Risorgimento', and Roberto Balzani, 'Alla ricerca della morte "utile": il sacrificio patriottico nel Risorgimento', both in Oliver Janz and Lutz Klinkhammer (eds.), *La morte per la patria: la celebrazione dei caduti dal Risorgimento alla Repubblica* (Rome, 2008); Eugenio F. Biagini, 'Citizenship and Religion in the Italian Constitutions, 1796–1849', *Hist. European Ideas*, xxxvii (2011); Michael Broers, *Politics and Religion in Napoleonic Italy: The War against God, 1801–1814* (London and New York, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Pietro Finelli and Gian Luca Fruci, "Que votre révolution soit vierge": il "momento risorgimentale" nel discorso politico francese (1796–1870)', Christopher Duggan, 'Gran Bretagna e Italia nel Risorgimento', Isabel María Pascual Sastre, 'La circolazione di miti politici tra Spagna e Italia (1820–80)', and Stefan Malfèr, 'Immagini dell'altro: austriaci e italiani', all in Banti and Ginsborg (eds.), *Il Risorgimento*. See also Gilles Pécout, 'Le rotte internazionali del volontariato', in Isnenghi and Cecchinato (eds.), *Fare l'Italia*.

<sup>18</sup> C. A. Bayly and Eugenio F. Biagini (eds.), *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalisation of Democratic Nationalism, 1830–1920* (Oxford, 2008); Roberto Romani, 'The Cobdenian Moment in the Italian Risorgimento', in Anthony Howe and Simon Morgan (eds.), *Rethinking Nineteenth-Century Liberalism: Richard Cobden Bicentenary Essays* (Aldershot, 2006); Martin Thom, 'Great Britain and Ireland in the Thought of Carlo Cattaneo', in Arturo Colombo, Franco Della Peruta and Carlo G. Lacaita (eds.), *Carlo Cattaneo: i temi e le sfide* (Milan, 2004); D. S. Laven, 'Mazzini, Mazzinian Conspiracy and British Politics in the 1850s', *Bollettino storico mantovano*, ii (2003); Michele Gottardi (ed.), *Fuori d'Italia: Manin e l'esilio* (Venice, 2009); Danilo Raponi, 'An "Anti-Catholicism of Free Trade?" Religion and the Anglo-Italian Negotiations of 1863', *European Hist. Quart.*, xxxix (2009); Elena Bacchin, 'Il Risorgimento oltremanica: nazionalismo cosmopolita nei meeting britannici di metà Ottocento', *Contemporanea: rivista di storia dell'800 e del '900*, xiv (2011); Marcella

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Both volumes document how the centre of gravity of the Risorgimento has shifted away from the French period and the earlier decades of the Restoration towards 1848–9 and the biennium of 1859–60.<sup>19</sup> While the question of origins is not directly addressed, this apparent neglect is presumably no indication of any objection to the now uncontroversial consensus that the French Revolution was central to the origins of the Risorgimento (a matter hotly debated in earlier decades by nationalist and Marxist historians), and is perhaps attributable to the division of labour among historians in Italian universities which has almost always led to a specialization in one field or the other.<sup>20</sup> However, this shift in emphasis is by no means without consequences: for it is the years between 1848 and 1860 that provide evidence for the radically new interpretation of the Risorgimento as a mass movement and a cultural revolution. While, according to the Gramscian paradigm, 1848 was marked by the failure of democratic revolution, the conservative turn of the Risorgimento and the hegemony of the moderate party, these collective volumes now depict the revolutionary movement of 1848 as the one that best demonstrates the birth of a new popular political culture.

In addition, war emerges as the central experience of the Risorgimento, although it was associated with competing political affiliations, one loyal to Savoyard military traditions, and the other to revolutionary and republican ideals. The Risorgimento produced a number of heroes noteworthy for their military valour, from Santorre di Santarosa to Giuseppe Garibaldi, who saw war as a romantic adventure and an opportunity to display their exceptional qualities. Much attention is devoted in many different chapters and contributions to the Garibaldinian revolutionary tradition of military volunteerism. Even the songs,

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Pellegrino Sutcliffe, ‘Negotiating the “Garibaldi Moment” in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1854–1861)’, *Mod. Italy*, xv (2010); Fulvio Cammarano and Michele Marchi (eds.), *Il mondo ci guarda: l’Unificazione italiana nella stampa e nell’opinione pubblica internazionali (1859–1861)* (Florence, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> In Isnenghi and Cecchinato (eds.), *Fare l’Italia*, the Risorgimento starts in 1815. References to the pre-1815 period are made in only two essays in Banti and Ginsborg (eds.), *Il Risorgimento*: Roberto Bizzocchi, ‘Una nuova morale per la donna e la famiglia’; Finelli and Fruci, ‘“Que votre révolution soit vierge”’.

<sup>20</sup> The most recent account of the Napoleonic period in Italy is Antonino De Francesco, *L’Italia di Bonaparte: politica, statualità e nazione nella penisola tra due rivoluzioni, 1796–1821* (Turin, 2011).

ballads, and theatrical and visual representations discussed in individual essays here are dominated by military themes. This aspect of the Risorgimento revolutions is likewise explored through a spatial analysis of its battlefields, besieged cities, and barricades,<sup>21</sup> and it is also directly related to the study of gender and the family, another recent development in Italian historical research well represented in these collective volumes. Thanks to this new attention to family ties, both as social realities and as symbolic representations, the tensions existing between public duties and private sentiments, the role of women in the patriotic movement and in the war, and the ways in which the national discourse (whether in its military or in its less bellicose version) was closely intertwined with ideas of bourgeois morality and family life, are explored in depth by several contributors.<sup>22</sup>

The emphasis on the democratic tradition of volunteerism, on low culture to the detriment of high culture, and on the period between 1848 and 1860 at the expense of the earlier one, has important interpretative consequences. It has resulted in scant attention being paid to the moderate political and intellectual leadership of the Risorgimento, whose ideas were the favourite target of criticism of Gramscian historiography: just four essays are devoted to Camillo Cavour, Massimo D'Azeglio, Alfonso La Marmora and Silvio Pellico in the UTET volume, and the conservatives suffer a similar neglect in the Einaudi volume. Indeed, with the exception of Adriano Viarengo's monumental

<sup>21</sup> See the contributions to Isnenghi and Cecchinato (eds.), *Fare l'Italia: Giorgio Rochat, 'Le battaglie del Risorgimento'; Nicola Fontana, 'Le fortezze del Quadrilatero'; Anna Scannapieco, 'Teatri di guerra'; Bertolotti, 'Piazze e barricate del Quarantotto'; Giuseppe Monsagrati, 'L'invasione delle Marche e dell'Umbria: la battaglia "sacrilega"'; Eva Cecchinato, "Eppure si muove": il lungo Ottocento di Giuseppe Garibaldi'; Eva Cecchinato, 'Città assediate'; Eva Cecchinato, 'Marce su Roma'*. See also Eva Cecchinato, *Camicie Rosse: i Garibaldini dall'Unità alla Grande Guerra* (Rome and Bari, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> See Bizzocchi, 'Una nuova morale per la donna e la famiglia', Ilaria Porciani, 'Disciplinamento nazionale e modelli domestici nel lungo Ottocento: Germania e Italia a confronto', Marta Bonsanti, 'Amore familiare, amore romantico e amor di patria', Luisa Levi D'Ancona, 'Padri e figli nella codificazione italiana tra Sette e Ottocento', Simonetta Soldani, 'Il Risorgimento delle donne', Laura Guidi, 'Donne e uomini del Sud sulle vie dell'esilio, 1848–60', and Lucy Riall, 'Eroi maschili, virilità e forme della guerra', all in Banti and Ginsborg (eds.), *Il Risorgimento*; Simonetta Soldani, 'Il campo dell'onore: donne e guerra nel Risorgimento', and her 'Armi di donne, donne in armi: saggio iconografico', both in Isnenghi and Cecchinato (eds.), *Fare l'Italia*. See also Ilaria Porciani (ed.), *Famiglia e nazione nel lungo Ottocento italiano: modelli, strategie, reti di relazioni* (Rome, 2006).

political biography of Cavour, no recent work has explored the Moderates' political culture, which is today in desperate need of reappraisal.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the focus on public mobilization has been given considerable attention at the expense of the earlier, essentially clandestine forms of political engagement, namely those of the secret societies (the Carboneria).

## II

### WHAT NATION DID THE RISORGIMENTO CREATE?

In spite of these few and inevitable omissions, the renewed attention to culture paid by historians has stimulated a number of important studies that engage with the question of the nature and content of the national message, and explore it with unprecedented sophistication.<sup>24</sup> Historians are finally giving due attention to language, and they subject Risorgimento discourse to a fine-grained analysis. This is the case with another important collective work, the *Atlante culturale*, which addresses for the first time the meaning of key cultural, institutional and political concepts in twenty-eight essays that cover topics from 'decadence' and 'public opinion', to 'liberalism' and 'representation'.<sup>25</sup> It is also the case with Filippo Sabetti's recent book on Carlo Cattaneo's political thought, the best analysis ever written of the patriots' intellectual contribution to the Risorgimento and to political philosophy. This work has the merit of showing how Cattaneo's reflections, while rooted in Lombard Enlightenment culture, engaged fully and directly with questions raised by Marx, Tocqueville and Constant about the nature of democracy,

<sup>23</sup> Adriano Viarengo, *Cavour* (Rome, 2010). But on the Moderates' political culture, see now Roberto Romani, 'Reluctant Revolutionaries: Moderate Liberalism in the Kingdom of Sardinia, 1849–1859', *Hist. J.*, lv (2012); Raffaele Romanelli, *Importare la democrazia: sulla costituzione liberale italiana* (Soveria Mannelli, 2009); Francesca Sofia, 'Le fonti bibliche nel primato italiano di Vincenzo Gioberti', in Levis Sullam (ed.), *Risorgimento italiano e religioni politiche*; Gilles Pécout, "Le moment Cavour": Cavour politico nella storiografia', *Ricerche di storia politica*, vi (2003).

<sup>24</sup> A thorough discussion of the new cultural history of the Risorgimento and a set of essays representative of this approach are included in Silvana Patriarca and Lucy Riall (eds.), *The Risorgimento Revisited: Nationalism and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Basingstoke, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> A. M. Banti, A. Chiavistelli, L. Mannori and M. Meriggi (eds.), *Atlante culturale del Risorgimento: lessico del linguaggio politico dal Settecento all'Unità* (Rome and Bari, 2011).

decentralization, and the relationship between self-government, society and civilization.<sup>26</sup> Much the same can be said of Silvana Patriarca's book on the idea of Italian national character from the Risorgimento to the post-war period, a work of unusual breadth and ambition. Although that theme is not new as an object of inquiry, Patriarca's book eschews Bollati's Gramscian approach. For her, national character was not simply a mirror of the anti-modern, conservative culture of Risorgimento liberal elites, reflecting the intellectual reasons for the failure of the nation-building process; rather, she seeks to scrutinize the role played by this cultural construct in defining the actual aims of the Risorgimento.<sup>27</sup> As Patriarca notes, such a discourse focused primarily on the vices of contemporary Italians that the Risorgimento would have to overcome if Italy were to become a nation. In particular she highlights the gendered connotations of the critique of Italians' indolence and effeminacy, vices that needed to be replaced with the more masculine qualities of military virtue if the Risorgimento were to be fully accomplished. Secondly, she emphasizes the transnational context within which terms of the debate were set, noting how purported Italian vices emerged in relation to northern European norms and views and were reinforced by an adoption of stereotypes first produced outside Italy.<sup>28</sup>

Other recent work has concentrated specifically on Risorgimento nationalism to show how the holistic and intolerant aspect of the Italian idea of nationhood explored by Banti needs to be complemented by other and, at times, radically different perspectives. If the celebration of the nation in public spaces or in textual form was often accompanied by the outspoken declaration of hatred towards the Austrian enemy, the international engagement of volunteers in foreign wars of liberation points to a different idea of nationhood. This phenomenon — which connected Risorgimento patriotism with other, parallel revolutionary movements from Greece to Latin America, and which lasted until the end of the century — shows how hatred of the enemy was not

<sup>26</sup> Filippo Sabetti, *Civilization and Self-Government: The Political Thought of Carlo Cattaneo* (Lanham, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic* (Cambridge, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Silvana Patriarca, 'Indolence and Regeneration: Tropes and Tensions of Risorgimento Patriotism', *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, cx (2005).

the only way in which national feelings related to 'the other', and suggests that Italian patriotism was intimately connected with sympathy for, and solidarity with, other oppressed nations. Solidarity, ethical commitment to a revised system of international relations, and belief in the emancipation of all oppressed nations as linked steps in the global expansion of freedom, demonstrate that national affiliations and universal principles of self-determination were not considered incompatible. In their ground-breaking work Gilles Pécout and his students have shown that thousands of foreign soldiers reached the Italian peninsula during the wars of the Risorgimento, while an equally substantial number of Italians were involved in military campaigns in Portugal, Spain and Greece.<sup>29</sup>

The internationalist dimension of the revolutions and wars of liberation fought by volunteers from Italy and elsewhere in the countries around the Mediterranean is also confirmed by the analysis of Mazzini's writings recently carried out by Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbiniati, which shows Mazzini's unwavering preoccupation with the international justification of the struggle for national recognition, and with questions relating to the legitimacy of intervention in terms similar to those employed by contemporary liberals such as John Stuart Mill.<sup>30</sup> The recent publication of Dominique Reill's monograph on Adriatic nationalism has served to complicate still further our understanding of the cultural definition of the nation in the Risorgimento. In this tightly focused and elegantly written book Reill discusses the concept of nation developed by a group of Dalmatian intellectuals, whose acknowledged leader and source of inspiration was the famous writer Niccolò Tommaseo.<sup>31</sup> Theirs was a concept of nationality rather different from that described as dominant by Banti. Tommaseo and his circle advanced a pluralistic concept of nation, viewing the use of several different languages as a

<sup>29</sup> See Gilles Pécout (ed.), 'International Volunteers and the Risorgimento', section in *Jl Mod. Italian Studies*, xiv (2009), especially his introduction; see also the other four articles by Grégoire Bron, Anne-Claire Ignace, Ferdinand Nicolas Göhde and Simon Sarlin.

<sup>30</sup> *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's Writings on Democracy, Nation Building, and International Relations*, ed. Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbiniati (Princeton, 2009), editors' intro.

<sup>31</sup> Dominique Kirchner Reill, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice* (Stanford, 2012).

cultural resource to be nurtured (noting its propensity to connect the various nationalities and to facilitate communication and exchange, and its compatibility with the existence of the Habsburg Empire), and rejecting hatred of the foreigner and ethnic purity as principles around which to construct a sense of national belonging. This peculiarly 'Adriatic multi-nationalism', Reill demonstrates, was affected by revolutionary and political events, since the increased tensions among national communities that emerged during 1848 and the policies advanced by the imperial authorities rendered these ideas marginal. By discussing intellectuals who looked for a solution to the national question without imagining independent nation states, Reill shows the benefits of studying 'Italian' patriotism as a phenomenon 'internal' to, and compatible with, the permanence of the Habsburg Empire, rather than necessarily hostile to it.

In addition, recent research has also highlighted the enduring influence of older forms of patriotism associated with the Restoration or pre-revolutionary states, and the importance of administrative or bureaucratic structures in shaping these allegiances. The Risorgimento idea of the nation was often reconciled with resilient regional identities, which were exceptionally strong in the case of Neapolitan or Sicilian patriotism.<sup>32</sup> The importance of regional patriotism emerges also from Maria Pia Casalena's study of the congresses of Italian scientists who started to meet regularly in 1839. While their association advanced the concept of the existence of a 'national science', discussions about whether peripheral-provincial cultures and traditions had to be represented at the congresses, or whether priority should be given to capital cities and their academic institutions, were equally important in a debate that mirrored that on administrative centralization and decentralization.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, as Adrian Lyttelton and David Laven have demonstrated, Risorgimento historical narratives continued to give due consideration to local patriotisms as crucial features of Italy's identity, and often looked back to the medieval city states to highlight the diversity and plural nature of

<sup>32</sup> Angela De Benedictis, Irene Fosi and Luca Mannori (eds.), *Nazioni d'Italia: identità politiche e appartenenze regionali fra Settecento e Ottocento* (Rome, 2012).

<sup>33</sup> Maria Pia Casalena, *Per lo Stato, per la Nazione: i congressi degli scienziati in Francia e in Italia (1830–1914)* (Rome, 2007).

the nation, seen both as a historical weakness and as a peculiarity which would not undermine the unity of the country.<sup>34</sup>

### III

#### THE BIRTH OF A NEW PUBLIC SPHERE

Other recent work has directly engaged with the reasons for the new and overwhelming appeal of the national message, as well as with its reception and dissemination in society. By so doing, it has interpreted the Risorgimento in terms of the birth of a new public sphere, and explored the extent of its development.<sup>35</sup>

The reception of the national cause, but also its limitations, are explored and tested in an innovative fashion by Arianna Arisi Rota for the case of the young patriots who joined the Mazzinian movement in the early 1830s. By utilizing a vast array of published and unpublished sources, she casts fresh light on the ways in which the appeal of the national cause varied in intensity and nature, evolved according to generational patterns and changed in the transition from youth to maturity. Indeed for many of the young people that Arisi Rota studied, who learned the Mazzinian credo either at college or at university or in the army, the adherence to the new politics of nationhood represented a reaction against depression and romantic spleen, but was not a rebellion against family background: on the contrary, more often than not young Mazzinians learned the language of patriotism from their fathers or their siblings.<sup>36</sup> The decision by many older Mazzinians to abandon the democratic and revolutionary language of their leader in favour of constitutional monarchism (rather than evidence of the ideological hegemony of the

<sup>34</sup> David Laven, 'The Lombard League in Nineteenth-Century Historiography, c.1800–c.1850', in Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz (eds.), *Nationalizing the Past: Historians as Nation Builders in Europe* (Basingstoke, 2010); Adrian Lyttelton, 'Creating a National Past: History, Myth and Image in the Risorgimento', in Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna von Henneberg (eds.), *Making and Remaking Italy: The Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento* (Oxford, 2001).

<sup>35</sup> This is how the Risorgimento is interpreted in *Nel nome dell'Italia: il Risorgimento nelle testimonianze, nei documenti e nelle immagini*, ed. Alberto Mario Banti (Rome and Bari, 2010). The documents and introductions of each section have been edited by Pietro Finelli, Gian Luca Fruci, Alessio Petrizzo and Angelica Zazzeri.

<sup>36</sup> Arianna Arisi Rota, *I piccoli cospiratori: politica ed emozioni nei primi mazziniani* (Bologna, 2010). On the generational dimension of the Risorgimento, see also Roberto Balzani, 'I giovani del Quarantotto: profilo di una generazione', *Contemporanea: rivista di storia dell'800 e del '900*, iii (2000).

moderate party, as the Gramscian interpretation would lead us to believe) can be explained as the result of a psychological development associated with the abandonment of juvenile enthusiasm for revolution in favour of more realistic political goals. Attention to reception has helped to reassess the relationship between opera and politics in the Risorgimento, since recent research has partly revised the received wisdom that opera played a central role in the dissemination of national ideals in the peninsula. As Axel Körner and other historians have argued, Verdi and Rossini were not always perceived as a source of patriotic messages, and theatre was not always an engine of political opposition in the period.<sup>37</sup>

Reflections on the reception of the national message have stimulated further debate about the relationship between social and cultural history. The need to combine the cultural approach to the study of the Risorgimento with social analysis, and the inadequacy of an exclusive focus on the emotional appeal of nationalism as a political project without any attention to material conditions, is forcefully advanced by Gianluca Albergoni in a recent biography of the Lombard poet and journalist Pietro Perego. Perego, disappointed with his professional attainments, decided to 'switch sides' and spent the last years of his life writing for an Austrian periodical, rejecting his earlier nationalist affiliations and arguing for the compatibility between national principles and the imperial government in Lombardy and Venetia. Perego's biography raises the broader question of the relationship between the rise of a new class of intellectuals in the post-Napoleonic era and political opposition, one that Albergoni addressed in an earlier, remarkable monograph devoted to seven hundred men of letters working in Milan in the Restoration. Albergoni observed that the transition from the traditional *ancien régime* condition of writers who depended on patronage to that of professionals making a living through the market was a slow and difficult process: given the limited development of the book trade and journalism, most continued to rely on public institutions such as schools or the civil service to survive, even in the publishing capital of the peninsula. Thus, against earlier interpretations that equated intellectual work with

<sup>37</sup> Axel Körner (ed.), *Opera and Nation in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, special issue, *Jl Mod. Italian Studies*, xvii (2012), especially his introduction; see also the other six articles by Carlotta Sorba, Emanuele Senici, Roger Parker, Mary Ann Smart, Jutta Toelle and Benjamin Walton.

political opposition to the Austrian government, Albergoni notes that many writers continued to remain loyal to established authority since they depended upon it for their survival.<sup>38</sup>

While not every writer or intellectual was disposed to support the Risorgimento, it is nonetheless undeniable that the rise of the national movement was accompanied by an increase in the supply of, and demand for, printed material, and by a rise in literary activities. Against the wishes of the restored regimes to protect and maintain 'a state without a public', reading practices across the peninsula — embraced not only by traditional landowning classes but also by a growing public of tradesmen, professional men and civil servants — created the sense of a community that was at once international, national and regional. In an extensively researched monograph devoted to Tuscany, Antonio Chiavistelli has demonstrated that forms of socialization associated with traditional academies as well as university life, theatre and café culture provided opportunities for a public keen on discussing politics. In new literary clubs like the Florentine Gabinetto Viesseux the foreign press and journals from other Italian states were made available well before 1848, when the public sphere underwent a process of unprecedented expansion, and when, as Chiavistelli demonstrates, constitutional debates became central to its development.<sup>39</sup>

The study of Garibaldi's mass appeal proves the association between the Risorgimento and the rise of a new national and international public sphere. Taking her cue from the methodological premises of Banti's work, Lucy Riall has produced a ground-breaking biography of Garibaldi that studies the career of the general primarily as a transnational cultural phenomenon. His great international fame on the one hand confirms the vast public the Risorgimento was able to mobilize outside Italy, and on the other demonstrates how the popular appeal of this charismatic leader owed much to the printing and media revolution

<sup>38</sup> Gianluca Albergoni, *Il patriota traditore: politica e letteratura nella biografia del 'famigerato' Pietro Perego* (Milan, 2009); Gianluca Albergoni, *I mestieri delle lettere tra istituzioni e mercato: vivere e scrivere a Milano nella prima metà dell'Ottocento* (Milan, 2006). The equation between political opposition and intellectual work was advanced by Marino Berengo in a classic of Risorgimento historiography: see his *Intellettuali e librai nella Milano della Restaurazione* (Turin, 1980).

<sup>39</sup> Antonio Chiavistelli, *Dallo Stato alla nazione: costituzione e sfera pubblica in Toscana dal 1814 al 1849* (Rome, 2006).

that took place in the mid nineteenth century.<sup>40</sup> Analysing his mounting popularity through the various stages of his career, she notes the role played by Mazzini in manipulating the general to advance the national cause, and in making him aware of the opportunities offered by journalism. As a revolutionary symbol Garibaldi was the product of the interaction between this new mass public in search of adventure or romantic narratives, and attracted to democratic or national values, and an ambitious individual capable of manipulating it adroitly.

## IV

### REVISING THE SOUTHERN QUESTION

One of the common features of much of the research on the Risorgimento published in recent years is precisely the distance it has moved away from Gramscian orthodoxy with its notions of failure, backwardness and exceptionalism as defining traits of Italy's encounter with modernity. Gramsci's interpretations of the Risorgimento as a passive revolution based on the hegemony of the landowning classes and as a failed agrarian revolution accounted also for his own explanation of the origin of the Southern question. On this topic, too, recent work has provided new perspectives, has distanced itself from enduring interpretative legacies, and has questioned the peculiarities of the South itself. First, it has looked at the 'Meridione' as a cultural construction: the South came to be seen as a question and a problem due to a process of 'othering', initiated by the Grand Tour literature and enhanced by the encounter of the Italian elites with the South during the unification process, which transformed it into a land of backwardness and barbarism worth conquering and civilizing.<sup>41</sup> Second, it has reappraised the administrative and political histories of the South in this period by repositioning them at the centre of Europe's transition from the *ancien régime* to a post-revolutionary order, thereby emphasizing the region's agency

<sup>40</sup> Lucy Riall, *Garibaldi: Invention of a Hero* (New Haven, 2007).

<sup>41</sup> John Dickie, *Darkest Italy: The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860–1900* (Basingstoke, 1999); Marta Petrusewicz, *Come il Meridione divenne una Questione: rappresentazioni del Sud prima e dopo il Quarantotto* (Soveria Mannelli, 1998); Nelson Moe, *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (Berkeley, 2002).

and its contribution to the dynamics of the Risorgimento. John Davis has stressed the continuities between the reforming efforts started under the Bourbons and those advanced under French rule, highlighting in particular the contribution made by the Southern intellectual and administrative elites to institutional, legal and economic reform up to the 1820–1 revolution, contesting earlier notions of Southern passivity, and linking change in the region with Europe-wide processes of modernization.<sup>42</sup> Thus the collapse of the largest state in the peninsula, previously subsumed in a narrative of decadence, conquest, and revolution from the North, has been studied in its own right as another case of regime change that put an end to the Restoration order, one whose peculiarity lay in the belated and self-destructive decision by King Francis II to replace the whole ruling class of the country in 1860.<sup>43</sup> More recently, too, the interpretation of the events of 1860 in the South has been revisited in an original fashion by Carmine Pinto and Salvatore Lupo, who, like Isnenghi and Cecchinato, have seen civil conflict as the central dynamic of the Risorgimento. Rather than the result of invasion and military defeat, or simply a skirmish between Cavour and Garibaldi, or a set of revolutions leading inexorably to the nation state, unification, they argue, can be interpreted as part of a history 'within' the South characterized by multiple and long-standing tensions and divisions. The South was a divided society in which for generations loyally pro-Risorgimento families and counter-revolutionary forces recognized each other as enemies and were in constant conflict at the local and regional level. The year 1860 was decisive because external support was then given to the Liberal forces who had previously been defeated during each revolution, not because Southern society remained passive. At the time of Garibaldi's conquest of Sicily and military campaign in the South, traditional tensions — between Sicily and Naples, forces of reaction, pro-Bourbon and anti-Bourbon liberals and democrats — were in play. Thus the key feature of Southern society was not its political passivity or the *trasformismo* of its

<sup>42</sup> John A. Davis, *Naples and Napoleon: Southern Italy and the European Revolutions, 1780–1860* (Oxford, 2006).

<sup>43</sup> Paolo Macry (ed.), *Quando crolla lo Stato: studi sull'Italia preunitaria* (Naples, 2003); Paolo Macry, 'Miti del Risorgimento meridionale e morte dello Stato borbonico', in Roccucci (ed.), *La costruzione dello Stato-nazione*.

elites, but rather the existence of higher levels of civil conflict than anywhere else in the peninsula.<sup>44</sup>

In conclusion, a common trait of recent historiography has been to locate Italy's nation-building at the centre of European-wide processes of change, such as the media revolution of the nineteenth century, the birth of national and international public spheres, the sacralization of politics, the dissemination of new political practices, the quest for constitutional guarantees, and civil conflict. However, more comparative work is needed to assess what, if anything, was special about Italy's state formation and its culture. Besides some structural features, such as the weak position of the Italian Restoration states in the European order or the cultural and political importance of the papacy and Catholicism, most of the peculiarities of the Risorgimento now seem to be local variants of European or global trends, rather than evidence of partial or failed modernization. While this has entailed the rejection of many assumptions connected to Gramsci's interpretation, the association between historical writing and the critique of recent political events, such a striking feature of post-war historiography, has resurfaced on the occasion of the 150th anniversary. Gramsci's own reflections on the passive revolutions aimed to explain the rise of Fascism and continued to be employed after the War as a tool of political criticism, while more recently the undermining of Italy's democratic institutions during the Berlusconi years and the popularity of political movements challenging the nation state have encouraged ideas of Italians' feeble allegiance to the ideas of nationality, freedom or the state as permanent problems rooted in the Risorgimento. In a recent monograph on the reception of Mazzini's political thought in twentieth-century Italian culture, Simon Levis Sullam has highlighted the patriot's weak democratic credentials and the authoritarian nature of his thought, identifying in this a reason for the popularity of Mazzinianism among later nationalists and

<sup>44</sup> Carmine Pinto, '1857: conflitto civile e guerra nazionale nel Mezzogiorno', *Meridiana*, lxix (2010); Carmine Pinto and Luigi Rossi (eds.), *Tra pensiero e azione: una biografia politica di Carlo Pisacane* (Salerno, 2010); Salvatore Lupo, *L'unificazione italiana: Mezzogiorno, rivoluzione, guerra civile* (Rome, 2011); Carmine Pinto, 'La rivoluzione disciplinata del 1860: cambio di regime ed élite politiche nel Mezzogiorno italiano', forthcoming in *Contemporanea: rivista di storia dell'800 e del '900*; see also Giuseppe Barone, 'Quando crolla lo Stato e non nasce la nazione: il Mezzogiorno nel Risorgimento italiano', in Roccucci (ed.), *La costruzione dello Stato-nazione*.

citing it as evidence of the lack of a genuine democratic culture in modern Italy.<sup>45</sup> Reflection on Italy's modern history has certainly been inspired by historians' engagement with public history and by their direct or indirect comments on the official celebrations. The anniversary has encouraged them to wonder which of the Risorgimento's symbolic, cultural and ideological legacies is living or dead; and their discussions about the nature of Risorgimento nationalism have connected with debate about the values and principles that should define Italy as a community today.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, together with the adoption of methodological tools that have opened up new fields of inquiry, it is ultimately the distance from immediate contemporary political preoccupations as well as from excessively ideological stances that has enabled historians to revise so radically our understanding of the Risorgimento in the last decade, and it is this that has produced such an exciting historiography.

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<sup>45</sup> Simon Levis Sullam, *L'apostolo a brandelli: l'eredità di Mazzini tra Risorgimento e fascismo* (Rome and Bari, 2010); Italy's weak national identity is discussed by Christopher Duggan in his *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (London, 2007).

<sup>46</sup> Alberto Mario Banti, *Sublime madre nostra: la nazione italiana dal Risorgimento al fascismo* (Rome and Bari, 2011); Ernesto Galli della Loggia and Aldo Schiavone, *Pensare l'Italia* (Turin, 2011); Paul Ginsborg, *Salviamo l'Italia* (Turin, 2010); Emilio Gentile, *Italiani senza padri: intervista sul Risorgimento*, ed. Simonetta Fiori (Rome and Bari, 2011). See also the four contributions to the section 'Risorgimento, Then and Now', in *Californian Italian Studies*, ii (2011), which discuss Ginsborg's *Salviamo l'Italia*: Albert Russell Ascoli and Randolph Starn, 'A User's Manual'; Paul Ginsborg, "Prologue" to *Salviamo l'Italia* (Einaudi, 2010); Randolph Starn and Lucy Riall, "Salviamo l'Italia" An International Video Roundtable: Summary and Links'; Adrian Lyttelton, 'Comment: "What Is Alive and What Is Dead in the Risorgimento?"': available at <[http://escholarship.org/uc/ismrg\\_cisj#II.%20Risorgimento,%20Then%20and%20](http://escholarship.org/uc/ismrg_cisj#II.%20Risorgimento,%20Then%20and%20)>.