

From Myth to Reality and Back Again: The Fascist and Post-Fascist Reading of Garibaldi and the Risorgimento

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Abstract: This article analyzes the elaboration, interpretation and political-instrumental use of Garibaldi during Fascism and during the transition period toward post-war Republican and democratic Italy. Both Fascism and the political forces of the new Italy employed Garibaldi in an attempt to gain public support and to bolster their claims to historical legitimacy. While regime changes are usually accompanied by a radical dismantling of mythical and ritualistic underpinnings of the former regime's legitimacy, the Italian transition from Fascism to democracy represented a remarkable case of symbolic and historical-semantic continuity. The article argues that Fascism elaborated upon the figure on Garibaldi in a way that made alternative future readings and interpretations inherently possible, creating a legacy of polysemic, ambivalent and open-ended memory politics.

Keywords: Fascism, Garibaldi, myth-making, political symbolism, memory politics, Risorgimento

Il garibaldinismo è nello spirito con cui si affrontano i disagi della guerra,
e nella volontà di vincere per cui si va "alla morte"
come "allo splendido convito" della canzone leopardiana

Benito Mussolini, "Torna, torna Garibaldi", *Popolo d'Italia*, 2 February 1918

Oh come back Garibaldi, come back!

When Gabriele d'Annunzio occupied Fiume in 1919, Benito Mussolini hailed the event as the true continuation of the Garibaldian tradition. From the columns of his newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, he pledged full moral

support to the new hero (Duggan, 2007: 420). Three years later, the same Garibaldian tradition inspired Mussolini's March on Rome and the whole organisation and symbolism of the Blackshirts. Indeed, in a speech held in September 1922, just before seizing power, Mussolini proclaimed, using these emblematic words, that his mission was to finish the Risorgimento:

But if Mazzini and Garibaldi tried three times to reach Rome, and if Garibaldi had presented his redshirts with the tragic and inexorable dilemma of "Rome or death", this signifies that for the men of the Italian Risorgimento Rome had an essential role.... We aim to make Rome the beating heart, the galvanizing spirit of the imperial Italy that we dream of (Duggan, 2007: 431).

Thus, by taking Rome, Mussolini saw himself as completing Garibaldi's historic mission. *Garibaldinismo*, betrayed by the liberals as well as the socialists, was to be entrusted to the Fascists.

On 12 November 1946, the left-wing political bloc which had run jointly in a 'Blocco Popolare' with the symbol of Garibaldi in the municipal elections two days earlier, arranged a torch-bearing walk through Rome to celebrate Garibaldi in front of the Campidoglio (*l'Avanti*, 1946).¹ This took place in the aftermath of a traumatic Second World War, and after twenty years of Fascist rule when the name, figure and myth of Garibaldi had played a significant role in the legitimisation of the regime.

The anti-Fascist front, in reality, had tried to re-appropriate the Risorgimento - to clean the Risorgimento from Fascist pollution - even before the end of the war. The liberal socialists of Giustizia e Libertà (Justice and Freedom) had carried forward Gobetti's analysis of the Risorgimento as an incomplete or unsuccessful revolution, and in 1942 they named the political organisation they formed with other anti-Fascist groups the Partito d'Azione (Party of Action), just like Mazzini's party. One of the founders of the party, Luigi Salvatorelli, published in 1943 the first edition of his pro-Mazzinian *Pensiero e azione del Risorgimento*, which denounced Fascism as an anti-Risorgimento that had suppressed all liberties (Salvatorelli, 1950: 189). The Italian Communist volunteers in the Spanish Civil War had organised themselves in a Battaglione Garibaldi (Garibaldi Battalion); one of their clandestine radio broadcasts into Italy from Spain had declared in March 1937: 'Mussolini's policies are dragging Garibaldi's Italy into the mud' (Monteleone, 1976: 369). The Communists in the Italian Resistance likewise named their units Brigade Garibaldi (Garibaldi Brigades) - and the Communist partisan Arrigo Boldrini many decades later defined Garibaldi as a predecessor of the Republic due to his internationalism and his attention to social problems (Boldrini, 1984: 557). In Rome the single issue of the Confederazione dei Lavoratori (Workers' Confederation) broadsheet, *Il Lavoro italiano* (Italian Labour) - whose editorial board consisted of a Communist (Mario Alicata), a Socialist

(Olindo Vernocchi) and a Christian Democrat (Alberto Canaletti Gaudenti) – appeared in the streets on 10 September 1943, as German troops began occupying parts of the city, with the headline *Torna Garibaldi* (Garibaldi returns) and a picture of Garibaldi by Renato Guttuso. Whether or not this was a conscious rebuttal of Mussolini's 1918 article in *Popolo d'Italia*, published with the same title, is unknown, but it might very well have been so:

Today Garibaldi returns on his horse to Italian soil. He gallops again through the streets of Rome; he is the true leader of the people, dressed in battle uniform, who at long last takes up and aims his rifle in defence of their rights. As in 1849 he calls on the people to help defend their city. This true rebirth of Garibaldian spirit, which does not just consist of words but becomes concrete in actions is, we feel, the best prelude to the future because finally popular democracy is being defended now, and with determination, by the people (Spriano, 1975: 21).

The question we want to pose in this paper is quite simple: How could the torch-bearers representing the Resistance movement so easily take up a theme so widely (ab)used by the Fascist regime, a regime against which they had fought and often sacrificed their lives? How did they manage to mobilise people around a symbol that Mussolini had so evidently tried to appropriate and incarnate? The paradox goes even further: even the Fascists of Salò, against whom the Resistance had been fighting most directly, had claimed to be the heirs and the true followers of Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Pisacane (Isnenghi, 1986; Pala, 2011).

The appeal to Garibaldi in fact became quite central for the left-wing bloc. The view of the Resistance as a 'second Risorgimento' (Focardi, 2003; Pezzino, 2005; Pavone, 1991: 169-220) was a crucial feature of the anti-Fascist narrative which had developed between 1943-1947. All the anti-Fascist parties from the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale (Committee of National Liberation) would unite in elaborating a collective memory of the war which was imposed as the all-dominant public and social memory. This narrative hinged upon the idea of the resistance as a national and patriotic war of liberation. It was in this sense that the Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party) continued to claim to be 'really Italian' and made more use of nationalist symbolism in their campaigns than other parties. It was therefore quite natural for the left-wing coalition running for the 1948 elections to choose Garibaldi as name and symbol of its electoral list. However, this evoking of Garibaldi and the larger left-wing appropriation of his figure did not go unchallenged. The struggle to control the collective memory of Garibaldi was vigorous and involved virtually all the political forces. The Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democratic Party) printed its own election posters with references to Garibaldi who was seen to triumph and drive away the fake hero proposed by Communists.

Christian Democrats also printed a counter-propaganda poster which took up the Bloc's image of Garibaldi, and turned it upside down: the Garibaldi (mis)presented by the left-wing forces, the Christian Democrats wanted to signal, was a cover for Stalin, an 'alien' (Ventrone, 2005: 178-181; Novelli, 2008). In the midst of all the dramatic changes, the myth of the Risorgimento had remained as the symbolic ground of politics. At the dawn of the new post-war Italy, Garibaldi became the iconic image of democracy. The image was not the same, refracted as it remained by the position of the viewer; but Garibaldi was the mirror in which the new democratic forces wanted to see themselves.

By any comparative standard, this represents a relatively unique case of historical-semantic continuity.² Regime changes are normally accompanied by a toppling of statues and a thorough and radical dismantling of mythical and ritualistic underpinnings of the former regime's legitimacy. How could the totality of new political forces in the post-war period make such strong appeals to a figure so thoroughly mythologized by Fascism? We believe that the key to the answer lies, quite paradoxically, with the ways in which Garibaldi had been staged and represented during the Fascist period itself. We argue that Fascism elaborated upon the Risorgimento and on the figure of Garibaldi in a way that made alternative readings of the Risorgimento *inherently* possible and *intrinsically* part of any Garibaldi-reception even after the advent of Fascism. On this point fascism created a legacy which has perhaps not received due recognition so far: a legacy not of doctrinal stubbornness, radical readings of the past or one-sided, ideological history-writing, but quite the contrary, a legacy of polysemic, ambivalent and open-ended memory politics.

This article is therefore about the elaboration of Garibaldi and the larger Risorgimento period during Fascism. We do not aim to present a full picture of this elaboration;³ rather, we single out for analysis what we consider some emblematic snapshots of commemoration/symbolisation of the Risorgimento; first, Gentile's 1923 book *I Profeti del Risorgimento* (The Prophets of the Risorgimento); second, specific events like the 1932 celebrations marking the anniversary of Garibaldi's death; third, we briefly discuss how tropes from the writings and political speeches by Mussolini himself were translated into popular culture via the cinema. This article is therefore not a history of Fascism and the Risorgimento; and no single event can of course allow us to reconstruct the general picture. We single out tropes of memorisation that in their symbolisation hold importance for today; what we suggest is a history of the present. As we will briefly allude to in the conclusion, the Fascist celebration of Garibaldi actually paved the way not only for the Resistance, but also for contemporary political usages of Garibaldi, including the Northern League's political rhetoric, the symbolism evoked by the recent presidency of Carlo Azeglio Ciampi (1999-

2006), and other contemporary attempts to take up Garibaldi and the Risorgimento (Forlenza, 2011; Thomassen and Forlenza, 2011). Garibaldi was turned into myth, and myth, as we know, links to ritual and ritualistic memory politics. That myth came to sustain political reality, which in turn mythologised itself. The story about Garibaldi is therefore, in more ways than one, a true myth about Italy, a mytho-poetic political community celebrating itself in 2011; a nation telling a story about itself.

Giovanni Gentile and the early elaboration of the Risorgimento

Mussolini's elaboration of Garibaldi started long before he came to power. In his journalistic writing, in his political propaganda, and in his mobilisation of the Blackshirts, Mussolini repeatedly made reference to Garibaldi. "Torna, torna Garibaldi" was the title of an article published by Mussolini in *Popolo d'Italia* a few months after the catastrophic defeat, both military and moral, of Caporetto (November 1917). The poet and intellectual Gabriele D'Annunzio, a war hero, led nationalist agitation by stressing the importance of national unity, symbolised by Garibaldi, and attacking the government for its failure to uphold national pride. At the war's end, D'Annunzio looked for support among disillusioned ex-army officers, while the new Fascist movement created by Benito Mussolini began to infiltrate the various Garibaldian associations.

However, a more systematic elaboration of Garibaldi and of the nexus between the Risorgimento and Fascism started once Mussolini had conquered power. Of course, the main historical reference point for Fascism remained the Roman Empire. After all, Rome, along with the figure of the Duce, remained the most important myth within the symbolic and cultural universe of Fascism. But the Risorgimento remained an important reference point throughout the Fascist period. An early elaboration took place in the writings of historian and ideologue Giovanni Gentile. His book, *I profeti del Risorgimento italiano*, written in 1923, merits our attention as it was the first major, systematic and conscious attempt to create a line of continuity from the Risorgimento to Fascism. It was far from the only Fascist elaboration of Italian history, but Gentile's view was one that many Fascists, including Mussolini himself, came to identify with; it was also a view that greatly influenced Italian school books and popular culture throughout the Fascist period. Gentile was minister of Education when the book was published.

After the losses and human sacrifices of WWI, leading to what many patriots considered a 'mutilated victory',⁴ Fascism wanted to establish itself as a 'new Risorgimento', a return to the *geist* of an original 'spirit' which had somehow got lost, and which needed to be brought alive again. The Fascist reading of history argued that Italy had become corrupt and had betrayed its true origins and deeper values. Fascism was the movement

which could restore truth and hence also Italy's identity as a nation. But what exactly was the Risorgimento for Gentile?

In his introduction Gentile stated that the Risorgimento as a matter of fact *had not happened yet*. At least, Gentile wrote, the Risorgimento had not been totally accomplished on 20 September 1870. A Risorgimento of Italy therefore remained an unrealised augury, a project barely begun. Paradoxically, what is normally referred to as 'the Risorgimento' was for Gentile a series of events which were almost meaningless in and by themselves. These events needed to be interpreted as the omen of a future resurrection. This resurrection was Fascism. Fascism was not simply the heir of the Risorgimento but the historical force called upon to realise it *for the first time*. The Fascists therefore were the real prophets of the Risorgimento. The realisation of the prophecy implied a return to an origin. It was not a leap or a new starting point, nor a negation or interruption of history aimed at establishing a new revolutionary reality. Here, Gentile explained, Fascism was very different from the Bolshevik revolution and its claim to represent an absolute break with anything that had preceded it. Fascism, argued Gentile, was a resurrection, a return, to what one must be, to what one in an ethical sense always had been. Gentile put it like this:

After [the war], the torch [of Italy] was almost dead. But it did not die, because the warrior spirit was kindled and survived in Mussolini... The same spiritual conception of the world [as in the Risorgimento]; the same opposition to individualism; the same concept of state and nation... the same postulate of a totalitarian understanding of human life [came back with Fascism] (Gentile, 1944: 151-2, translated by Dainotto, 2001: 245).

To sum up, for Gentile Fascism very represented a) the fulfilment and the completion of the historical Risorgimento, b) the resurgence continuously in the making, the return to the 'original' essence of Italian nationalism and the return to an original model and ideal. This resurgence was not a revolution; or rather it was not a revolution in a Marxist sense, but a Latin-Mediterranean response to the Marxist-Bolshevik idea of revolution (Fogu, 2003; Dainotto, 2001). To Gentile, the Risorgimento was therefore also a return to a dormant *spirit*, not just a historical period; a spirit which was already there. In that way the Risorgimento at a deeper semantic level came to represent the true national ethos, always already there, waiting for somebody to bring it to life again. As can be sensed, this interpretation was on the one hand tied to Fascist ideology and Gentile's own idealism; but on the other hand the position also involved a narrative construction of past/present that remains open to various interpretations of 'historical fulfilment', within and beyond Fascism proper. Gentile emphatically called this national ethos *italianità risorgimentale* ('Italian-ness of the Risorgimento'). The book became a foundational statement on how Fascism

related to the Risorgimento. The message it delivered would be revived again and again. One such occasion was provided in 1932.

The 'Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista' and the 'Cinquantenario Garibaldino'

On the morning of 28 October 1932, the tenth anniversary of the Fascist assumption of power, Benito Mussolini inaugurated the most enduring propaganda event of the Fascist dictatorship. As the Duce reviewed the assembled guards of honour and passed the cheering crowds to open the doors of the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* (Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution), Fascism invited Italians and foreigners alike to experience and participate in the regime's self-representation. The *Mostra* recreated, through a mélange of art, documentation, relics and historical simulations, the years 1914 to 1922, as interpreted by Fascism after ten years in power. The exhibition's twenty-three rooms focused on each year from the beginning of World War I until October 1922 and culminated in a *Sala del Duce* ('Room of the Duce') and a *Sacrario dei Martiri* ('Chapel of the Martyrs') (Stone, 1993; Schnapp, 2003; *Mostra della rivoluzione*, 1933). The *Mostra della rivoluzione* was the highest expression of the 'sacralisation of politics' (Gentile, 1993: 212-35) enacted by the regime, the clearest and ultimate expression of the mythic and symbolic universe created by Fascism.

However, had it not been for the celebration of the 'Fascist revolution', the year 1932 would have been remembered as *l'anno garibaldino* (the Garibaldinian year). 1932 was indeed also the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Italy's most popular Risorgimento hero. The commemoration of the *Cinquantenario Garibaldino* ('the fiftieth anniversary of Garibaldi') assumed spectacular and unprecedented proportions, both for the number of events organised throughout the year and for the involvement of the regime (Fogu, 1996).

The official programme of the *Cinquantenario* consisted, among others, in: the Garibaldi Exhibition in the *Palazzo delle esposizioni*; the publication of the first national edition of Garibaldi's writing; the issue of a stamp with Garibaldi's image; a parliamentary commemoration (a joint session of the two chambers); a day of celebration in schools and universities; another day for public orations by members of the Fascist party in the principal squares of all the major cities; a pilgrimage to Garibaldi's tomb in Caprera; and finally, a Garibaldi lottery.⁵

Mussolini fully exploited the convergence of the two celebrations: that of Garibaldi and that of the Fascist regime. In March 1932 Mussolini pressured the editors of the national edition of Garibaldi's writings to have the first volume ready in time for the half-centenary, telling them that

Garibaldi was always closer than anyone else to the people with his marvellous actions; everything that emanates from his person cannot be but profoundly felt by the people who love him and who will always be under the spell of his profound fascination (Mussolini, 1958a, authors' translation).

The core and the most important celebration of the *Cinquantenario* was a three-day National Commemoration – a long spectacle executed in three public ceremonies. First: the transfer of the remains of Garibaldi's first wife Anita from Genoa (where she had been buried) to Rome on 1 June 1932. Second: the internment of Anita's remains in the base of a monument built in her memory on the Gianicolo near the equestrian statue of her husband on 2 June 1932. Third: the official inauguration of the monument by Mussolini on 4 June.⁶

The decision to place the construction of Anita's monument at the centre of the celebration was announced by Mussolini himself during his famous speech for the presentation of the Lateran Pacts to the Chamber of Deputies (14 May 1929). The construction of the monument was to serve as an explicit deterrent to an ultra-Catholic interpretation of the Lateran Pacts as 'a license to put the Risorgimento on trial' (Mussolini, 1939: 54). Mussolini added insult to injury in response to the Vatican's unofficial request that Garibaldi's monument be moved from the top of the Gianicolo. He said:

I believe that Garibaldi can keep gazing in that direction [the Vatican] because, today, his spirit is appeased! Not only will he not be moved, but the Fascist regime will also raise a monument to Anita Garibaldi in the same area (Mussolini 1939: 53, authors' translation).

The announcement also became an authoritative reinforcement of what had rapidly become the most popular and widely elaborated image of the regime's historical continuity with the recent Italian past: the Fascist 'completion' of the Risorgimento.

The King and Queen were at the inauguration. In his speech Mussolini made only the briefest references to Anita. He said that Garibaldi was 'a national hero born of the people'. Then he actually drew a clear line of descent of the Fascist revolution from Garibaldi's campaign of the 1860s. The passage is worth quoting in full as it again captures the Fascist interpretation of the Risorgimento in a nutshell.

The Italians of the 20th century resumed, between 1914 and 1918, under Your Majesty's command, the march which Garibaldi broke off at Bezzeca in 1866 with his laconic and dramatic 'I obey' and they have continued it to the Brenner, Trieste, Fiume, Zara, the peak of the Nevo, the opposite shore of the Adriatic. The Blackshirts, who knew how to fight and die during the years of humiliation, also stand politically in a

line of descent from the Redshirts and their leader. All his life his heart was enflamed by one passion: 'the unity and the independence of the Fatherland'. He never let himself be deflected in difficult times from this supreme aim by men, sects, parties, ideologies, speeches in public gatherings, which he despised, ardent proponent as he was of 'totally unlimited' dictatorships.⁷ The true, sovereign greatness of Garibaldi lies in this character of his as a national Hero born of the people who always remained with the people, in peace and in war... (Mussolini 1958b: 109).

Having thus established a historical line of continuity, and a direct link between the Redshirts and the Blackshirts, Mussolini could later conclude, by once again stressing the central, symbolic role of Rome:

If by a miracle the bronze horseman who rears up near this spot were to come alive and open his eyes I should like to think that he would recognize the descendant of his Redshirts in the soldiers of Vittorio Veneto and the Blackshirts who for ten years have continued, in an even more popular and productive manner, his volunteer spirit, and that he would be happy to rest his gaze on this vast, luminous and pacified city of Rome which he loved with infinite love and from his first youth identified with Italy' (Mussolini 1958b: 111, translated by Forgacs, 2001: 261).

Mussolini exercised an unprecedented degree of control over the organisation and performance of the display, down to every detail. However, the official organiser was Ezio Garibaldi, grandson of Giuseppe. Ezio had endorsed Fascism and in 1924 he had founded the *Federazione Nazionale Volontari Garibaldini* (National Federation of Garibaldian Veterans). While founding this organisation Ezio had effectively appointed himself sole leader of *Garibaldinismo* ('Garibaldianism') and official heir of the 'Garibaldian tradition'. From this institutional platform Ezio had propagandised his conception of *Garibaldinismo* as the political vanguard of Fascism.⁸

Throughout the Garibaldian Exhibition in the *Palazzo delle esposizioni* and the three-day long National Commemoration, Fascism claimed to be heir of the Risorgimento. The Blackshirts would in all possible ways depict themselves as descendants of the Redshirts. In Garibaldi Mussolini possibly saw the only other protagonist of Italian history whose image, just like his own, was jointly made up of order and rebellion, authority and subversion; this ambivalence and reversibility of values and character traits no doubt fed the myth the Duce was creating around his own figure (Passerini, 1991).

The relations between Fascism and the Risorgimento (and between the persons of Mussolini and Garibaldi) had to be constructed with care, and from the perspective of the regime, had to avoid certain pitfalls of interpretation. The crucial point for the regime was to exalt the Risorgimento and Garibaldi and to establish some sort of continuity

between such a glorious tradition and the present; but this historical construction should in no way obscure or undermine the novelty represented by Fascism.⁹ The Garibaldian Commemoration of June 1932, therefore, served to mark not only the continuity but also some degree of *discontinuity* between Fascism and Garibaldianism, and between Mussolini and Garibaldi (Baioni, 2010b; Fogu 2001). For instance, at the parade which accompanied Anita's coffin in Genoa, the Blackshirts and the veterans of World War I were clearly separated from the glorious Redshirts – yet all of them, taken together, were represented as living survivors of Garibaldi's time.

This marked the symbolic separation between the glorious past which had to be honoured but also overcome and detached from the present; a sort of living present still in the making. The association of Garibaldianism with a past to be honoured as historical, and only as such, was carefully enacted in the parade's passage through the *Arco dei caduti* (Arch of the Fallen), Genoa's triumphal arch recently built in memory of the city's dead in World War I. Only the historical section of the parade – the municipal ushers, the funeral carriage, the members of Garibaldi's family, and the Redshirts – passed through the arch; the rest, including Blackshirts and World War I veterans, were ordered to proceed to the station by another route. Here too everything was carefully planned by Mussolini himself. Mussolini even managed to frustrate Ezio Garibaldi's attempt to cancel the symbolic distance between the Redshirts and the privileged martyrs of the new *patria* (fatherland): the veterans of WWI and the Blackshirts.

At the same time – and this is important to stress – the reality and image of fascism as a complete novelty in Italian history was emphasised by the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista*. In the exhibition there was no mention of Italian history preceding World War I. The chronology focused exclusively on the 1914-1922 period, leaving aside the Risorgimento and the first fifty years of Unification. Fascism here claimed to be born with the *interventismo* (interventionism) and with the human sacrifice in the trenches of WWI. Mussolini and Fascism were depicted as the sole, legitimate heirs of the war experience: they alone had protected the nation from the political and social disorder in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. They also had protected Italy from the attack of the enemy within – the *disfattisti* (defeatists) who, after the war, had taken the monstrous features of Bolshevism (*'la bestia ritornante'* ('the recurring beast')).¹⁰

The ambivalent approach to the Risorgimento was evidenced in some other decisions taken by Mussolini regarding traditional celebrations. To invoke one example, Mussolini ordered the suspension of the celebration of the Second War of Independence (1859). The battles of this war were the pillar of the moderate and monarchical memory of Risorgimento; the celebration of such an event would have brought to mind the existence of a diarchy (*diarchia*) within Fascist Italy (Duce and King, Fascism and

Monarchy). This could have created an obstacle towards building a system of rituals and historical commemorations which had to be completely and exclusively Fascist; hence it was cancelled. These efforts at symbolic appropriation of past and present equally inspired popular culture, especially via the production of films.

Films on the Risorgimento and Fascism: 1860 recounted

Throughout the 1920s several silent films were made with the Risorgimento or Garibaldi as main subjects. *Nostra Patria* ('Our Fatherland', Emilio Ghione, 1925), *Cavalcata ardente* ('Blazing Cavalcade', Carmine Gallone, 1926), *Garibaldi e i suoi tempi* ('The Life and Times of Garibaldi', Silvio Laurenti Rosa, 1926) and *Anita* (Aldo de Benedetti, 1927) were the most famous, and shown in cinemas all across the Peninsula. However, the two most important films dealing with the Fascism-Risorgimento nexus were *Villafranca* (Giovacchino Forzano, 1934) and, especially, *1860* (Alessandro Blasetti, also released in 1934). Both these films also had a soundtrack.

1860 especially fit into a precise strategy of re-appropriation of the Risorgimento by the regime and by Fascist intellectuals that was developing in the early 1930s. The film is regarded as presaging neo-realism, as it was wholly shot on location and made use of many non-professional actors. The film recounts the *spedizione dei Mille* (the Expedition of the Thousand) and the Risorgimento as a whole, as a popular epic. And yet the Redshirts are never really seen in the film. Interestingly, in its first release the film had a modern-day coda attached. This consisted of two shots showing elderly veterans of the 1860 campaigns saluting and being saluted by parading Fascists in Rome. Clearly enough, *1860* is part of tracing a descent from the Expedition of the Thousand to the March on Rome. The film focuses on a character that nobody knows or will ever get to know; a patriot riding from the deep Italian south to ensure the assistance of Garibaldi in the north: a true narrative of popular Unification. Other aspects of symbolic representation are worth mentioning. In a period of rapprochement with the Catholics after the 1931 crisis of Catholic Action,¹¹ the film gives significant prominence to a priest who fights for the national cause and to a Giobertian who ends up joining the Mille. In a period of Fascist ruralism and the *bonifiche* (reclamation) projects which sought to revitalise and improve the Italian countryside, it centres the narrative on a Sicilian peasant community which finds salvation in Garibaldi and in annexation to Italy. In a period prior to the Pact of Steel, the oppressors speak German (the hated Austrians of the Risorgimento) whereas the British can still be represented as working for the unity of Italy by making a monetary donation to Garibaldi's cause.

The film was re-released after World War II, this time of course without the coda. In 1974 Blasetti told Francesco Savio in an interview that

the coda had been added in response to criticisms (from the Fascist hierarchy, most evidently) that he had not alluded to the 'continuation of the *garibaldini* tradition among the Fascist youth'. Blasetti said that he had added the coda 'without any difficulty or any shame. I admit this because I was a convinced Fascist and I really believed it was right to point to the new generation as continuing the tradition of the *garibaldini*' (Savio, 1979: 128, authors' translations).

Let us close this section with an anecdote that leads us back to the question posed at the beginning concerning the continuity of political symbolism, and points to our conclusion. In 1948 the film critic Antonio Pietrangeli ran for Parliament as a candidate for the Fronte Popolare (Popular Front), the coalition of Socialists and Communists. During pre-election meetings he carried with him the film *1860* (of course without the coda). Pietrangeli claimed that the film was to be seen as a precursor of the neo-realist cinema that had developed in Italy since 1945 and which had become broadly identified with anti-Fascism.¹²

This means that a film about the Risorgimento made during Fascism could be taken up again and reinterpreted not only as not Fascist but in fact as anti-Fascist. A Mussolini propaganda film about Garibaldi could be swiftly used for the left's political purposes and treated as a piece of neo-realism. How are we to understand this remarkable continuity?

Conclusion

Let us thus return to our initial question: How could post-war democratic anti-fascist forces so easily continue to make reference to a symbolic-semantic universe of reference points that had been thoroughly used and theatrically enacted by the Fascist regime? Different interpretive positions can be identified. One hypothesis would quite plainly argue that there was a real and substantial ideological continuity or common ground between the two periods, and that this common ground is evidenced by the persistence and the consistency in the representation of the Risorgimento and the figure of Garibaldi. Substantially speaking, this commonality can be argued to consist of a perpetual need to anchor the political present in identical historical periods, and emphasising the role of the 'people' as originators of liberty and nation.

However, one can also argue that the two historical contexts were essentially different and that the meanings one can read into a film or any other symbolic representation of past and present must be considered radically different, shaped by the changing context of articulation, and only superficially 'the same'. This is the position taken by David Forgacs. Drawing on Ernesto Laclau's notion of 'ideological articulation' he suggests that just as Fascist filmmakers critiqued and remade the Risorgimento, so post-war anti-fascist intellectuals (Communists and Leftists above all)

appropriated and re-forged Risorgimento images for their apparently very different purposes (Forgacs, 2001: 8). More crucially, Forgacs puts into relief the perplexing fact that despite ideological differences, the images and the strategies deployed in pre- and post-war appropriations of the Risorgimento are not only similar but – in specific and symptomatic cases – identical. In his analysis, the fact that 1860 could be recycled from the Fascist period to the Republic seems to confirm what scholars of nationalism have suggested: that nationalism is a slippery notion of which a scientific definition is impossible (Seton-Watson, 1977: 5). The very notions of nation are contingent artefacts (Gellner, 1983: 6-7) or, as Benedict Anderson put it, nations are imagined political communities (1983: 15), where the modalities of imagination are open to a variety of contingencies. Core nationalist doctrine is generic and adaptable because it depends on abstract categories (fatherland, nation, people), which can mean different things to different people in different moments, articulating categories of belonging whose membership definitions remain fluid and indeterminate.¹³

We would like to situate our conclusion between these two positions, while fully accepting Forgacs' conclusion concerning the indeterminate nature of nation. The elaboration of Garibaldi and the Risorgimento during the Fascist period was indeed particular to its moment and to the very specific political configurations of Fascist doctrines and ritual. However, we would also like to insist that the elaboration of Garibaldi does tell us something crucial about him and his centrality for myth-making in Italian politics from 1945 onwards. There *was* a certain carry-over from Fascist to post-Fascist commemoration. However, that carry-over rested exactly on ambivalence and polysemy. During the Fascist period, Garibaldi became much more than a single person: he came to display the characteristics of a group, of a mass movement. There is a duality to his figure which can be summed up using these binary pairs:

Individual heroism	Popular revolt
Fighting for a just cause against state and authorities	Founder of state and political authority
Military hero with primordial loyalty to his own men	Military leader loyal to King and nation
Garibaldi, a unique historical figure	<i>Garibaldismo</i> , a generalised phenomenon
Patriotic loyalty	Aversion to institutions
Rebellion	Order
Illegal and subversive	Loyal to political institutions
Anticlerical	Mythico-religious
Heroic individualism	Fusing of the individual in the collective movement; adversary of individualism

This duality, we argue, to a large extent explains the uses of and references to Garibaldi from the post-war period onwards. Garibaldi's 'shirts' could become the Blackshirts, but they could just as easily become the heroes of the anti-Fascist Resistance. In the more recent period, and yet again in the context of a nation looking for its own historical underpinnings, they can come to represent the loyalty to the state and primordial love of nation so emphasised during Carlo Azeglio Ciampi's presidency (for further analysis, see Thomassen and Forlenza, 2011). Garibaldi is a right-wing hero, stubborn, steady, incarnating military pride and fighting until his death while protecting his men; but he is also a left-wing hero, fighting the Fascists, and bringing power back to the 'real' people of the Resistance movement; he is a spirit of rebellion against injustice and illegitimate statehood, but he is also the hero of the unified state and its representative institutions.

Whenever political forces have tried to appropriate the figure of Garibaldi they have operated a kind of choice: the Fascists appropriated and over-emphasised some elements of Garibaldi (for instance 'I obey' or the loyalty aspect), but purposely disregarded other more radical or 'democratic' elements, which were instead taken up by the Resistance and the post-war parties of the left. These are not contradictions: they confirm the polysemic symbolism that make up the larger figure of Garibaldi. Ambivalence *is* Garibaldi's 'nature' as a historical subject and political reference point. They also confirm the fact that political symbolisms are not logical mathematical systems, nor coherent ideological programmes but cultural complexes in which contradictions and ambivalences are the stuff that political identities and legitimacy are made of. In that sense, Italy is probably no exception. So we should not be surprised to find Garibaldi galloping the streets of Rome for some time to come.

Notes

1. The elections showed the difficulties of the Christian Democrats which were overcome not only by the *Blocco Popolare* but also by the *Fronte dell'Uomo Qualunque* (Front of the Ordinary Man) – a political movement led by Guglielmo Giannini which promoted a deep distrust for political parties and governmental institutions, accused of oppressing the 'average' man. Its opponents accused the party of being a hiding place for former Fascists. Although Giannini himself was not a pro-Fascist, the grassroots anti-hierarchical organization of the party allowed for the infiltration of many former Fascists into its structure. For the negotiation between Socialists and Communist see report of 10 October 1946 stored in Istituto Gramsci, Archivio Storico del Partito Comunista, [IG, APC] mf. 113, ff. 1685-1688; see also the leaflet 'Il Campidoglio al Popolo – il Popolo al Campidoglio' in IG, APC, mf. 113, ff. 1695-1698. The pact between the leftist forces was considered the beginning of an electoral alliance which had to be extended to other places and

eventually made to function at the national level. On Qualunquismo see Setta (2005).

2. However, for a comparison with the German case and the comparative role played by Bismarck, see Gerwath and Riall, (2009); for the myth of Garibaldi in Italian political discourse see Isnenghi (2007, 2010); Riall (2007).

3. On this point and on the wider topic of the Fascist ideology see Zunino (1985); Fogu (2003); Baioni (2006; 2010a: 65-86), Gentile (2001), Ridolfi (2010: 30-33).

4. After the war, Italy failed to annex Dalmatia (which had been promised by Britain and France in the Treaty of London to induce Italy to join the war), and had to fight some more years to annex the city of Fiume, which had an Italian population. This led Italian politicians, patriots and figures such as D'Annunzio to speak of a 'mutilated victory'. In reality, Italy had benefited from the outcome of the war. The country had been definitively freed of her century-old enemy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. With the annexation of Trento, Trieste, South Tyrol, Friuli, Istria, Zara and some Dalmatian islands, Italy had practically completed her territorial expansion and could now rely on secure borders. Italian politicians refused to perceive the positive elements of the peace treaties and systematically stressed the negative ones; and so the myth of the 'mutilated victory' spread, eventually fueling Fascist propaganda and helping Mussolini seize power (Isnenghi and Ceschin, 2008; Duggan, 2007: 407-32).

5. All the documents regarding the Government's sponsorship of the Garibaldian celebrations are stored in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Roma, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 1931-33, Cinquantenario Giuseppe Garibaldi, f. 14.5.701/1-34.

6. All Italian newspapers dedicated front pages to the celebrations. The LUCE institute edited 900 metres of positive film to produce one silent documentary, one sound documentary, three silent newsreels and two with sound; (www.archivioluce.com/archivio/). The reader might want to consult the film stored by LUCE with brilliant images of the commemoration on the Gianicolo with the King and Mussolini.

7. Mussolini referred, here, to the events of the Roman Republic of 1849. Asked by Mazzini what was the best way to defend the Republic, Garibaldi replied that he could serve the Republic in only two ways: as dictator with unlimited power ('*dittatore illimitatissimo*') or as a simple soldier; for the telegram sent by Garibaldi to Mazzini see Garibaldi (1885: 37); on the Roman Republic of 1849 see Severini (2011). It is also worthy of note that Garibaldi proclaimed himself 'dictator' of Sicily in the name of Victor Emmanuel II in May 1860, a few days after the Thousand landed at Marsala.

8. Since 1925 Ezio had refinanced and become editor of the official organ of Garibaldianism, *Camicia rossa* ('Redshirt'), founded in 1903 by his father Ricciotti. In 1928 he had 'systematized' his view in a very popular book, *Fascismo Garibaldino*; on the contrasting and controversial choices of the Garibaldian; on this point see Cecchinato (2009).

9. Indeed, the liberal accounts of recent history stressed the continuity of liberal ideals from the Risorgimento to World War I (Benedetto Croce *Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915* (1928) or *Storia d'Europa nel secolo XIX* (1932)) or put the Risorgimento into a line of development from the Enlightenment through the French Revolution (Adolfo Omodeo's *L'eta' del Risorgimento* (1931)); a line of

continuity which an *Enciclopedia Italiana* article on the doctrine of Fascism, signed by Mussolini but generally attributed to Giovanni Gentile, would represent Fascism as having decisively broken (Mussolini, 1932). Another 'liberal' interpretation of great influence is found in the work of Walter Maturi (1936, 1942, 1962); Maturi stressed the positive role played by the Piedmontese political class, back to Alfieri. He also emphasised the connections to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, but at the same time insisted on the historical uniqueness of the Italian Risorgimento.

10. "Contro la bestia ritornante" was the title of a famous article written by Mussolini shortly after World War I where he denounced the decadent and dangerous nature of (Leninist) Socialism and Communism (Mussolini, 1919); the very same expression was used to designate room E at the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* in 1932.

11. On 26 May 1931, Mussolini ordered the closure of all youth organisations which were not under the direct command of the Fascist Party and the 'Opera nazionale Balilla'. This was seen by the Church as a serious attack on the Catholic youth organisations, most importantly Catholic Action, and led Pope Pius XI to distance himself resolutely from the regime, which he condemned as pagan, and as being guilty of inciting hatred and conflict.

12. This story is recounted by Gianfranco Gori in his book on Blasetti (1984: 39).

13. Smith (1971: 20-1) defines nationalism as 'sketchy and incomplete'.

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