The construction of the Italian national identity
A historiographical reflection

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If we consider the historical forms with which the construction of the Italian national identity was outlined in the second half of the 19th century, I believe that we cannot ignore the suggestions offered by the studies of Giuseppe Galasso[1], one of the greatest European historians of the 20th century. Galasso rightly asked himself whether the centuries-old Italian story concerned "the history of things that happened in the peninsula"; or whether, rather, it should constitute the model of a spiritual entity called "Italy"[2]. Overall – the Italian scholar notes – the Italian identity has been formed in the European assembly as a result of a series of fractures, such as the redesigning of the geographical spaces of the community that came about under Roman rule: the Arab-Muslim intrusion into the Mediterranean and the loss of the unitary direction of the already Phoenician and Hellenic and later Roman traditions[3]; the religious division between the Latin West and the Byzantine East[4]; the formation of a European socio-economic structure renewed after the year 1000[5]; the breaking of the ancient Mediterranean balance in the wake of new Atlantic routes in the 16th century, which in the framework of the "world economy" made possible the progressive shift of the centre of gravity of the strategic interests of the most influential powers towards Northern Europe[6]. In light of these changes, on a long-term historical horizon, the Italian regions would no longer have had the same community relations that once existed between West and East.

Galasso writes that "the process of the formation of an Italian identity and the process of the formation of an awareness of Italianity, which are two sides of the same inseparable national story, must be identified and contextualized in a very lengthy period, in the seven to eight centuries between the dissolution of the empire of Charlemagne and the imperial ef-

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[1] Cf. G. Galasso, *L'Italia come problema storiografico*, Torino, UTET, 1991.
[2] Ivi, p. 173.
[3] Cf. G. Galasso, *Storia d'Europa*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2019, pp. 73-134.
[4] Cf. G. L. Potestà-G. Vian, *Storia del Cristianesimo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2010.
[5] Cf. R.S. Lopez, *La nascita dell'Europa. Secoli V-XIV*, Torino, Einaudi, 1966.
[6] Cf. F. Braudel, *Espansione europea e capitalismo (1450-1650)*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1999; Id., *Civiltà e imperi del Mediterraneo nell'età di Filippo II*, Torino, Einaudi, 2010; I. Wallerstein, *Il sistema mondiale dell'economia moderna*, 3 voll., Bologna, il Mulino, I 1978, II 1982, III 1995.

fort of Charles V, that is, between the ninth and sixteenth century"[7]. Galasso also observed that the national realities, at the very moment in which they sprang up, "are outside the dissolution of the empire of Rome, and the complex story of encounter and confrontation between the peoples of the Empire itself and the invading Germanic peoples of the Roman West, which the Christian faith and the Roman Catholic Church soon united, extending to new peoples and to a European area much wider than the imperial one"[8]. Under the rule of the first Roman-Barbarian kingdoms and with the partial Byzantine occupation what unity there had been in the peninsula was lost[9] and with the subsequent descent of the Lombards, and the beginning of political division and the dualism between the North and South of the country, the long duration of the temporal power of the Church of Rome began[10]. In some areas of Northern Italy the phenomenon of urbanization spread[11], which in the framework of the multi-national dimension of Italian history managed to maintain the prerogatives of feudality at a rather low level of functions[12]: in the twelfth century there were, in fact, at least two hundred municipalities of a considerable in central-northern Italy, while the monarchic South continued in its tendency towards a rural and feudal organisation[13].

Beyond the universalistic objectives and beyond the exaltation of imperial dreams, of which literary men of letters and high officials of the international chancelleries remained greatly inebriated, between the 11th and 13th centuries, the social matrix of typically urbanized realities was accentuated in Italy, which in a *fil rouge* of continuity came to be referred

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[7] Cf. G. Galasso, *L'Italia s'è desta. Tradizione storica e identità nazionale dal Risorgimento alla Repubblica*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 2002, p. 70; G. Galasso, *Carlo V e Spagna imperiale. Studi e ricerche*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2006; F. Chabod, *Carlo V e il suo impero*, Torino, Einaudi, 1985; J. H. Elliott, *La Spagna imperiale*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1982.

[8] Cf. G. Galasso, *L'Italia s'è desta* cit., p. 79.

[9] Cf. F. Canale Cama-D. Casanova-R.M. Delli Quadri, *Storia del Mediterraneo moderno e contemporaneo*, diretta da L. Mascilli Migliorini, Napoli, Guida, 2009, pp. 11-34; G. Galasso, *Medioevo euro-mediterraneo e Mezzogiorno d'Italia da Giustiniano a Federico II*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2009.

[10] Cf. D. Abulafia, *The two Italies: economic relations between the Norman Kingdom of Sicily and the northern communes*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

[11] Cf. P. Malanima, *L'economia italiana. Dalla crescita medievale alla crescita contemporanea*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2012, pp. 77-92.

[12] Cf. G. Galasso, *Potere e istituzioni in Italia. Dalla caduta dell'Impero romano ad oggi*, Torino, Einaudi, 1974, pp. 46-61.

[13] Cf. G. Galasso, *Il Regno di Napoli*, *Intervista* a cura di F. Durante, *Postfazione* di V. Fiorelli, Vicenza-Milano, Neri Pozza, 2019; Id., *Intervista sulla storia di Napoli*, a cura di P. Allum, *Nota di* L. Mascilli Migliorini, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2018; Id., *Mezzogiorno medievale e moderno*, Torino, Einaudi, 1975, pp. 13-59; Id., *Il Mezzogiorno nella storia d'Italia. Lineamenti di storia meridionale e due momenti di storia regionale*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1992, pp. 42-80; Id., *Le città del Regno di Napoli. Studi storici dal 1980 al 2010*, Napoli, Editoriale Scientifica, 2011; G. Vitolo-A. Musi, *Il Mezzogiorno prima della questione meridionale*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 2005, pp. 14-45; G. Vitolo, *L'Italia delle altre città. Un'immagine del Mezzogiorno medievale*, Napoli, Liguori, 2014; A. Musi (a cura di), *Le città* del *Mezzogiorno nell'età moderna*, Napoli, ESI, 1998; *Città e contado nel Mezzogiorno tra Medioevo ed età moderna*, a cura di G. Vitolo, Battipaglia, Laveglia e Carlone, 2005; M.L. Cicalese, A. Musi (a cura di), *L'Italia delle cento città. Dalla dominazione spagnola all'unità nazionale*, Milano, F. Angeli, 2005.

to as the so-called Italian model[14]: the system of Italian states at the time of Dante; southern unification under the Normans; the birth of the Lombard League, the backbone of a certain identity and unifying discourse; the separation of the young Frederick II from Innocent III between the Sicilian heritage and the Germanic bond; the politics of equilibrium that fixed its pre-requisites and its rules with a view to Italian freedom, not only with the aim of keeping the overlanders at bay but also of preserving the independence of the individual states[15]. Thus we come to the early sixteenth century with the dramatic outbreak of the "horrendous wars" of Italy[16], which beginning in 1494 had heralded the upheaval of most of the territories of the peninsula[17], leading to the genesis, so to speak, of that Italian "decadence", whose lively and dramatic perception, soon translated into historiographic paradigm, that would accompany the long and jagged path of the most sensitive cultural sensibilities towards national unification[18].

There are, then, these cultural contexts that fill the tortuous journey of the developing Italian identity with content. The focus is on a certain national coinage: the chivalric motifs of the *langue d'oil* and the Provençal themes, which are affirmed both in the North of the peninsula and in Sicily, soon become the almost exclusive prerogative of urban civilization within a process of authentic appropriation. Dante Alighieri introduces the association between Frederick's court in Sicily and the Italian literary tradition: through his *De vulgari eloquentia* and Boccaccio's mediation, the first critical awareness of the Italian literary heritage is probably formed and the awareness is born that Italy, through the creative genius of the author of the Comedy, but also of Petrarch and Boccaccio himself, is beginning to represent an intellectual environment of undisputed European appeal[19].

Galasso argues that the cultural primacy of the Tuscan idiom was not flanked by the same political and social hegemony and that the incipient urban bourgeoisie imposed its

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[14] Cf. P. Craveri, *Potere e Istituzioni in Italia di Giuseppe Galasso: un'analisi penetrante sui vizi e le virtù di dieci secoli di storia italiana e su come questi si riflettano nell'odierna crisi nazionale*, in *L'Europa e l'Altra Europa. I libri di Giuseppe Galasso*, Napoli, Guida, 2011, pp. 85-100.

[15] Cf. E. Stumpo, *Il sistema degli Stati italiani: crollo e consolidamento (1429-1559)*, in N. Tranfaglia-M. Firpo (a cura di). *La Storia*, V. 3, Torino, UTET, 1995, pp. 35-53; E. Fueter, *Storia del sistema degli Stati europei dal 1492 al 1559*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1932.

[16] Cf. G. Galasso, *Dalla "libertà d'Italia" alle "preponderanze straniere"*, Napoli, Editoriale Scientifica, 1997.

[17] Cf. P. Pieri, *Il Rinascimento e la crisi militare italiana*, Torino, Einaudi, 1952; F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli e Guicciardini. Pensiero politico e storiografia a Firenze nel Cinquecento*, Torino, Einaudi, 2012.

[18] Cf. B. Croce, *Storia dell'età barocca in Italia. Pensiero, Poesia e Letteratura, Vita morale*, Milano, Adelphi, 1993, pp. 65-77; Id., *Storia del Regno di Napoli* cit., pp. 335-360; A. Quondam, *L'identità (rin)negata, l'identità vicaria. L'Italia e gli italiani nel paradigma culturale dell'età moderna*, in G. Rizzo (a cura di), *L'identità nazionale nella cultura letteraria italiana*, I, Martina Franca, Congedo, 2001, pp. 127-150; A. Musi, *Fonti e forme dell'antispagnolismo nella cultura italiana tra Ottocento e Novecento*, in Id. (a cura di), *Alle origini di una nazione. Antispagnolismo e identità italiana*, Milano, Guerini & Associati, 2003, pp. 11-45; M. Verga, *La Spagna e il paradigma della decadenza italiana tra Seicento e Settecento*, ivi, pp. 49-81.

[19] Cf. A. Asor Rosa, *Storia europea della letteratura italiana. I. Le origini e il Rinascimento*, Torino, Einaudi, 2009, p. 140 ss.; G. Petrocchi, *Vita di Dante*, Roma-Bari, Laterza 2008; A. Quondam, *Petrarca, l'italiano dimenticato*, Milano, Rizzoli, 2004.

own dialects without, however, succeeding in raising them to a national level; the language therefore grew in an exclusive literary space, fed by elites who were well integrated in the court society[20]. This explains "the multilingualism of the Roman dialect (at least in some areas) until almost the beginning of the 15th century; bilingualism with Latin until almost the end of the 16th century. Moreover, there were geographical, social and sectorial limitations to the diffusion of Tuscan dialect as a hegemonic language even after the 14th century and until the advanced 16th century such as the return of Latin to a position of pre-eminence, as a written language, from the first decades of the fifteenth century to the mid-sixteenth century. There followed the final victory of the vernacular, as a language, however, always prevalently literary, and of a literature that was prevalently positioned in the arc of 'grammar in rhetoric', language "of another style, of an intellectual aristocratic style"[21].

New elaborations of this history seem, however, to distance themselves from the historiographical models that have been accepted thus far. From this point of view, two important basic differences are shown in a study by Banti[22], that departs from the interpretations described above. Firstly Banti uses a different chronological approach that looks at the period between 1796 and 1861, in particular the three Jacobin years with Napoleon's entry into Italy and then the completion of the unitary process and secondly he places considerable emphasis on the thesis that the nation represents the imagined community. In fact, Banti states that the men of letters, who worked to forge the Italian identity, used pre-existing linguistic and semiotic codes, which belonged to discursive parameters clearly different from those presented by the historical models considered above.

Contrary to the French historian Lucien Febvre, although coinciding with a methodological trajectory having as its purpose both the meaning and the semantic change of the categories of homeland and nation, Banti chooses to place similar historiographical images in the second half of the eighteenth century, where the pre-political, so to speak, components of the Italian nation emerge from the "texts of the Risorgimento canon", which play a decisive role in promoting the spread and success of the national discourse[23]. Through the examination of memoirs and epistolaries of personalities, who reshaped a certain interest in the Risorgimento process, Banti identifies precisely in the status of Nation the formation of a single thought and a coherent narration which leads to an elementary morphology of the national assumption, that is, to an idea which is the result of a conscious choice, of a collective pact which prevails over ethnic belonging, strongly anchored to the earth and blood.

The existence of a foundation agreement signed by a community of heroes fighting for their homeland is outlined, where even the familial network of relationships acquires an exclusive function that gives it an original place; a land, in short, that has hosted since time immemorial, a universe studded with glory and pain, heroism and tragedy, where the protagonists are, as in the novels, paladins and traitors and where interesting figures of the fe-

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[20] Cf. N. Elias, *La società di corte*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2010.

[21] Cf. G. Galasso, *L'Italia come problema storiografico* cit., p. 78; also C. Dionisotti, *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana*, Torino, Einaudi, 1967, p. 87.

[22] Cf. A. M. Banti, *Nazione del Risorgimento. Parentela, santità ed onore all'origine dell'Italia unita*, Torino, Einaudi, 2000.

[23] Cf. G. Cirillo, *Virtù cavalleresca e antichità di lignaggio. La Real Camera di S. Chiara e le nobiltà del Regno di Napoli nell'età moderna*, Roma, Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali - Direzione Generale per gli Archivi, 2012, p. 247.

male universe emerge[24]. And while the hero dies because of a betrayal, it is around the woman that the defence of the honour of the homeland is concentrated. But what communicative devices can produce such a result? And what symbolic circuits are activated to make such an idea of belonging credible, so that men and women are led to believe that it is really worth sacrificing themselves for their country and the values it embodies, as do lyrical heroes in novels?

It is undoubtedly a civil archetype which, owing much to the fortune of Giambattista Vico, can be read implicitly in the pages immortalized for posterity by Vincenzo Cuoco, and which revolves around a double trajectory: on the one hand, the one where the "antiquissima sapientia italica" runs, masterfully described in *Platone in Italia*[25], and in which the design of a pre-Roman origin of the Italian nation emerges strongly; on the other, the "federalist" one, which marches in tune with the moral and civil primacy of the Italians[26]. Therefore, the "Risorgimento unitary canon" identified by Banti after 1861 proceeds to crack following the discovery of the "two peoples" and the "two Italies"[27]. The territorial fractures put the smooth scheme of the canon to the test and a real gap is wedged between the liberal-monarchical model and the democratic-republican model. On the other hand, in this direction it has also been pointed out that a certain image of Southern Italy marks "that divisiveness which seems to be among the salient characteristics of contemporary Italy" and also constitutes the vision of Italian dualism exemplified in "anthropological stereotypes, economic policies, forms of representation on a macro-territorial scale, as well as the great and multi-faceted river of Southern Italy"[28].

While the interpretations that proposes the *topos* of the "two Italies" may lack a cultural approach, it is also true that, beyond the evident dualism present in the social structures of

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[24] Cf. M. Baioni, *Miti di fondazione. Il Risorgimento democratico e la Repubblica*, in M. Ridolfi (a cura di), *Almanacco della Repubblica. Storia d'Italia attraverso le tradizioni, le istituzioni e le simbologie repubblicane*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 2003, pp. 185-196.

[25] Cf. V. Cuoco, *Platone in Italia*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2006.

[26] Cf. G. Cirillo, *Virtù cavalleresca e antichità di lignaggio* cit., pp. 219-241; A.-L.G. Staël-Holstein (Madame de Staël), *Corinne ou l'Italie*, Paris, Nicolle, 1807; G. Leopardi, *Discorso sopra lo stato presente dei costumi degl'italiani*, in *Scritti vari inediti di Giacomo Leopardi dalle carte napoletane* (1824), Firenze, Le Monnier, 1906; G. Prezzolini, *L'Italia finisce. Ecco quel che resta*, Milano, Rizzoli, 2003; G. Bollati, *L'Italiano*, in *Storia d'Italia,* 1. *I caratteri originali*, Torino, Einaudi, 1972, pp. 951-1022.

[27] Cf. V. Cuoco, *Saggio storico sulla rivoluzione di Napoli*, *Introduzione* di A. De Francesco, Manduria-Bari-Roma, Piero Lacaita editore, 1998; also Id. *Saggio storico sulla rivoluzione di Napoli*, a cura di A. De Francesco, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2014.

[28] Cf. P. Macry, *Se l'Unità crea divisione. Immagini del Mezzogiorno nel discorso politico nazionale* (pp. 63-92), in L. Di Nucci-E. Galli della Loggia (a cura di), *Due nazioni. Legittimazione e delegittimazione nella storia dell'Italia contemporanea*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2003, p. 63. On these issues cf. also G. Pescosolido, *Nazione, sviluppo economico e questione meridionale in Italia*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2017; G. Brancaccio, *Primato di Napoli e identità campana nell'Italia unita*, Lanciano, Itinerari, 1994 and M. Trotta, *Il Mezzogiorno nell'Italia liberale. Ceti dirigenti alla prova dell'Unità 1860-1899*, Milano, Biblion, 2012, pp. 33-63. Cf., then, M. Petrusewicz, *Come il Meridione divenne una Questione. Rappresentazioni del Sud prima e dopo il Quarantotto*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 1998; C. Petraccone, *Le due civiltà. Settentrionali e meridionali nella storia d'Italia dal 1860 al 1914*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2000, and Id., *Le "due Italie". La questione meridionale tra realtà e rappresentazione*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2005.

the nation, that approach has proved to be a fundamental element for the definition of the collective identity process that started with the Risorgimento. And it is relevant to note here, that Galasso[29] identified the main elements of identity in the works of great men of southern culture, such as Benedetto Croce[30] and Francesco De Sanctis[31].

Since the last decade of the twentieth century the discussion on the destiny of the Italian nation[32], developed along a particularly delicate phase of Italian political history, regained vigor and the unitary certainties of a country that seemed to have finally become a nation-state began to falter under the pressure from movements born out of secessionist fury and in the name of alleged Celtic traditions[33]. At the same time with an empty rhetoric, the historical 'southern question' was reproposed, and the disastrous results of past efforts to ameliorate problems in the South continued to echo threateningly against the unitary life of the Italian nation, bringing to the surface the great gap between the two strongly differentiated geographical areas and between the two anthropologically divergent peoples (according to Cuoco's scheme, mentioned above)[34].

The Northern separatist movements were not the only controversial issues that tended to weaken unity: the crisis of the liberal state, the tragedy of the Great War[35], the rise and fall of fascism on 8 September (1943) and the relative death of the Fatherland[36], the partisan resistance as a palingenetic projection of a new birth and the anti-fascist narrative of national history, the history of the winners[37] were all topics which, since the end of the Second World War, have not only been pretexts or "paper flags"[38] feeding the long-standing and bitter confrontation between political forces and intellectuals forced to take one side or

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[29] Cf. G. Galasso, *L'Italia s'è desta. Tradizione storica e identità nazionale dal Risorgimento alla Repubblica* cit., pp. 197-216.

[30] Cf. B. Croce, *Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915*, Milano, Adelphi, 2004.

[31] Cf. F. De Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, Torino-Parigi, Einaudi-Gallimard, 1996; cf. also P. Orvieto, *La "Storia della Letteratura italiana" (1870-'71). Letteratura ed educazione nazionale. La condanna del nostro Rinascimento è da rivalutarsi?*, in Id., *De Sanctis*, Milano, RCS, 2016 (Salerno editrice 2015), pp. 154-185.

[32] Cf. A. De Francesco, *1799. Una storia d'Italia*. Milano, Guerini & Associati, 2004, pp. 121-163; G. Aliberti, *La resa di Cavour. Il carattere nazionale italiano tra mito e cronaca (1820-1976)*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 2000; E. Galli della Loggia, *L'identità italiana*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2010.

[33] Cf. G. Galasso, *Italia nazione difficile. Contributo alla storia politica e culturale dell'Italia unita*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1994.

[34] Cf. A. Musi, *Mito e realtà della nazione napoletana*, Napoli, Guida, 2016; G. Galasso, *Il Mezzogiorno da "questione" a "problema aperto"*, Manduria-Bari-Roma, Lacaita, 2005; and in a different perspective G. Di Fiore, *La nazione napoletana .Controstorie borboniche e identità "suddista"*, Torino, UTET, 2015.

[35] Cf. M. Isnenghi, *La tragedia necessaria. Da Caporetto all'otto settembre*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2013; P. Fussel, *La Grande Guerra e la memoria moderna*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2000; G.E. Rusconi, *1914: attacco a Occidente*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2014.

[36] Cf. E. Galli della Loggia, *La morte della patria. La crisi dell'idea di nazione tra Resistenza, antifascismo e Repubblica*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2003; E.A. Rossi, *Una nazione allo sbando. 8 settembre 1943*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2006.

[37] Cf. R. De Felice, *Rosso e Nero*, Milano, Baldini e Castoldi, 1997; C. Pavone, *Una guerra civile. Saggio storico sulla moralità nella Resistenza*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2006.

[38] Cf. A. Musi, *Bandiere di carta. Intellettuali e partiti in tre riviste del dopoguerra*, Cava de' Tirreni, Avagliano, 1996.

the other by a reality that reduced everything to one or the other side of the "Iron Curtain", but they have also vanified efforts at finding a path forward that offers a different unitary vision of the vicissitudes of the Nation[39]. Dark ideological barriers made the unitary scaffolding of a homeland falter, which – as is well known – was rooted in the fragile results of a revolutionary solution then applied in the name of moderation in 1861, the year of the Unification of Italy under the the Savoy monarchy, the only way recognized as practicable by the constituent fathers of the Risorgimento process, for the most part almost all of whom agreed with Mazzini. It was a result that for a long time would keep the popular masses, socialist and catholic, distant from a certain national narration[40] (although fascist propaganda had indeed tried to nationalize these masses).

However, it was precisely in the first post-unification decades and in the last phase of the 19th century that liberal Italy, hermetically closed and refractory to any popular inclusion in general political life, managed to conquer a living space among the most industrialized powers in Europe and was able to consolidate it over a very long period among many uncertainties and false steps[41]. And it did so thanks to rationales and practices that made full sense of the supreme need to defend a monarchic regime governed by elitist modes: one of these was certainly the "trasformismo", a method and a practice which served to face the subversive danger of the internal enemies (republicans and internationa-lists, future socialists) in the context of a centralized design of the institutional configuration, where regionalisms, still too recent echoes of the multi secular history of the Italian States, continued to lead the new institutional structure and to establish more or less stable hegemonies, in the framework of alliances constituted in Parliament in the name of a lasting compactness of the political system.

The "trasformismo", for some an anomaly, has undoubtedly constituted a crucial hairpin bend in national history since the unification of 1861[42]. Its specificity – not by chance, nor anomaly – coincided with the forms of the "Latin democracy" and served to align the State to the block of the liberal models in vogue in 19th century Europe, offering elements of constitutional affinity and near equivalence of government practices[43]. From this point of view, the identity discourse not only questioned the reasons for the anthropological instability of the territorial framework in formation, but with it and through it a solid tradition of historical studies, on the one hand, sought to forge through the national foundation of a language the cultural dimension of a community, so as to strengthen and preserve the idiomatic unity

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[39] Cf. E. Di Rienzo, *Un dopoguerra storiografico. Storici italiani tra guerra civile e Repubblica*, Firenze, Le Lettere, 2004.

[40] Cf. A. Oriani, *La rivolta ideale*, Napoli, Ricciardi, 1908; G. Volpe, *L'Italia in cammino*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1991; F. Chabod, *L'Italia contemporanea (1918-1948)*, Torino, Einaudi, 2002.

[41] Cf. R. Romeo, *Risorgimento e capitalismo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2008; G. Pescosolido, *Rosario Romeo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1990, pp. 39-49.

[42] Cf. C. Tullio-Altan, *La nostra Italia. Clientelismo, trasformismo e ribellismo dall'unità al 2000*, Milano, EGEA, 2000; L. Musella, *Il trasformismo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2003; G. Sabbatucci, *Il trasformismo come sistema. Saggio sulla storia politica dell'Italia unita*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2003; M. Salvadori, *Storia d'Italia, crisi di regime e crisi di sistema: 1861-2013*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2013; G. Carocci, *Il trasformismo dall'unità ad oggi*, Milano, Unicopli, 2013.

[43] Cf. G. Galasso, *Stato nazionale e democrazia latina: il modello italiano*, in P. Ciocca-G. Toniolo (a cura di), *Storia economica d'Italia*, 1. *Interpretazioni*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1999, pp. 327-400.

in the face of the irrepressible particularisms which had been so tightly interwoven into the millenary history of Italy and indeed reinforced by centuries of foreign occupation and oppression; on the other hand the discourse on identity also attempted to promote, so to speak, the invention of a tradition shared by patriots who identified themselves as the sole repositories of the nation-building process[44].

Therefore, the category of national identity was formed at the time of the Romantic ferments and remains intimately connected to those anthropological traits that would have provided the foundation of the community of Italians in the mid-nineteenth century, eventually reunited under the aegis of an unprecedented statuesque framework[45]. Not a single identity, therefore, but a multiplicity of references to the rich, centuries-old Italic cultural tradition, rethought in the light of a decisive turn of time for national destinies. Identity yes, but also decadence in the modern framework of the "territorial nations"[46], and the foreign predominance (French, Spanish, Austrian) was found to be a contributing factor in the Italian decline in long term development, which also gave rise to that lively sense of moral regeneration, that stubborn search for the collective ideals of independence and autonomy, those moral principles that have marked the national movement, proving to be decisive in explaining, in the end, the expectations of renewal, the passions and the proofs of redemption, but also the contradictions and disappointments of a whole movement crossed by turbulent and confused unitary feelings[47].

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[44] Cf. R. Romeo, *Italia mille anni. Dall'età feudale all'Italia moderna ed europea*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1996; G. Volpe, *L'Italia moderna*, I. *1815-1898*, Firenze, Le Lettere, 2002.

[45] Cf. F. Chabod, *L'idea di nazione*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2011, p. 17; A. Quondam-G. Rizzo, *L'Identità nazionale. Miti e paradigmi storiografici ottocenteschi*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2005; *Rileggere l'Ottocento. Risorgimento e nazione*, a cura di M.L. Betri, Roma, Carocci, 2011.

[46] Cf., for example, in a southern trajectory, G. Galasso, *Napoli capitale. Identità politica e identità cittadina. Studi e ricerche 1266-1860*, Napoli, Electa, 2003; and G. Brancaccio, *Il "governo" del territorio nel Mezzogiorno moderno*, Lanciano, Itinerari, 1996.

[47] Cf. J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi, *Storia delle Repubbliche italiane*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 1996; G. Aliberti, *Carattere nazionale e identità italiana*, Roma, Nuova Cultura, 2009; F. Cusin, *Antistoria d'Italia*. Milano, Mondadori, 1970; A. De Benedictis-I. Fosi-L. Mannori, *Nazioni d'Italia. Identità politiche e appartenenze regionali fra Settecento ed Ottocento*, Roma, Viella, 2012; E. Di Ciommo, *I confini dell'identità. Teorie e modelli di nazione in Italia*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2005; E. Galli della Loggia-A. Schiavone, *Pensare l'Italia*, Torino, Einaudi, 2011; P. Gobetti, *Risorgimento senza eroi*, Torino, Edizioni del Baretti, 1926; A. Omodeo, *Difesa del Risorgimento*, Torino, Einaudi, 1951; G. Pécout, *Il lungo Risorgimento. La nascita dell'Italia contemporanea (1770-1922)*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 2011; L. Pirandello, *I vecchi e i giovani*, Milano, Mondadori, 1931 (I ed., 2 voll., Milano, Treves, 1913); A. Placanica, *L'identità del meridionale*, in "Meridiana", 32, 1998, pp. 153-182; M. Sciarrini, *"La Italia natione". Il sentimento nazionale italiano in Età moderna*, Milano, F. Angeli, 2004; G. Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Il Gattopardo*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1958; A. Zottoli, *Il sistema di don Abbondio*, Bari, Laterza, 1933. On various aspects related to the history of regional and city identity, particularly concerning the secular history of the Italian Mezzogiorno, cf. instead G. Vitolo, *Tra Napoli e Salerno. La costruzione dell'identità cittadina nel Mezzogiorno medievale*, Salerno, Carlone editore, 2001; G. Brancaccio, *Il Molise medievale e moderno*, Napoli, ESI, 2005; Id., *In provincia. Strutture e dinamiche storiche di Abruzzo Citra in età moderna*, Napoli, ESI, 2001; L. Delli Compagni, *Identità e nazione in Abruzzo tra Settecento e Ottocento. Politica Società Istituzioni*, L'Aquila, 2007; M. Mazziotti, *Ricordi di famiglia. 1780-1860*, Casalvelino, Galzerano, 2001.

In short, nothing more than the necessary corollary of that fundamental experience of struggle for national independence called the Risorgimento. This struggle precisely in the context of that nineteenth-century Romanticism led to Italian unity and helped to bring together under an undivided base meaningful terms such as territory, nation and identity in the intricate and legitimate attempt to establish a feeling of common belonging. However, it still struggle to find the unitary reasons for a harmonious and concordant understanding of the Italian national story.[48]

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[48] Cf. E. Di Rienzo, *Revisionismo, conservatorismo e tradizione storiografica. Gli studi sulla stagione rivoluzionaria in Italia*, in I. Botteri (a cura di), *Revisioni e revisionismi. Storie e dibattiti sulla modernità in Italia*, Brescia, Grafo edizioni, 2004, pp. 65-75; E. Di Rienzo, *Storia d'Italia e identità nazionale. Dalla Grande Guerra alla Repubblica*, Firenze, Le Lettere, 2006; M. Isnenghi, *Dieci lezioni sull'Italia contemporanea. Da quando non eravamo ancora nazione… a quando facciamo fatica a rimanerlo*, Roma, Donzelli, 2011.