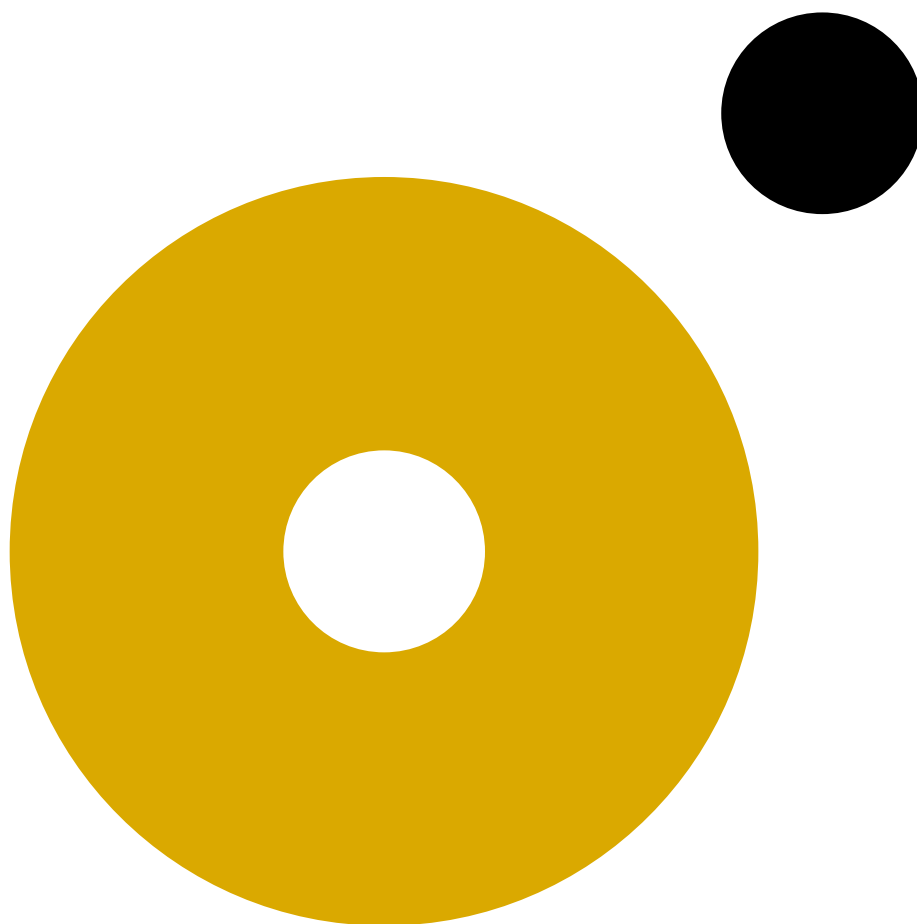


MEMORIA **SCOLASTICA**



# **The School and Its Many Pasts**

edited by Juri Meda, Lucia Paciaroni and Roberto Sani



These volumes contain the official proceedings of the International Conference «The School and Its Many Pasts. School Memories between Social Perception and Collective Representation» (Macerata, 12-15 December 2022), organized by the University of Macerata in partnership with the Catholic University of Sacred Heart of Milan, the University of Florence and the University Roma Tre.

These volumes have been published with the contribution of the University of Macerata, the Catholic University of Sacred Heart of Milan, the University of Florence and the University Roma Tre in the framework of the PRIN research project «School Memories between Social Perception and Collective Representation (Italy, 1861-2001)» (n. prot.: 2017STEF2S).

[www.memoriascolastica.it](http://www.memoriascolastica.it)

Indexing keywords:

Storia dell'educazione, memoria collettiva, memoria individuale, memoria pubblica, public history, scuola.

History of education, collective memory, individual memory, official memory, public history, school.

Historia de la educación, memoria colectiva, memoria individual, memoria pública, historia pública, escuela.

História da educação, memória coletiva, memória individual, memória pública, história pública, escola.

Histoire de l'éducation, mémoire collective, mémoire individuelle, mémoire publique, histoire publique, école.

4-volumes box set: isbn 978-88-6056-898-4

4-volumes e-book: isbn 978-88-6056-899-1

First edition: March 2024

©2024 eum edizioni università di macerata

Palazzo Ciccolini – via XX settembre, 5

62100 Macerata (Italy)

[info.ceum@unimc.it](mailto:info.ceum@unimc.it)

<http://eum.unimc.it>

# Albino Bernardini and the Representation of Italian School

Andrea Marrone  
University of Cagliari (Italy)

Among the authors who collaborated to build and modify the collective representation of the Italian school in the sixties and seventies, Albino Bernardini was undoubtedly one of the most important and fortunate<sup>1</sup>. The Sardinian teacher published successful school memoirs, which influenced the diffusion of a new representation of the education system, its protagonists, its problems, but also the solutions to overcome its injustices. Beyond the mere reconstruction of the author's pedagogical ideas and the inspirations that determined their elaboration, this contribution aims to deepen the main features of the scholastic representation proposed by Bernardini, with particular attention to the works *Un anno a Pietralata* [A Year in Pietralata] (1968), *Le bacchette di Lula* [The Canes of Lula] (1969), *La scuola nemica* [The Enemy School] (1973), *La supplente* [The Substitute Teacher] (1975). The spreading of Bernardini's work will then be explored, highlighting the multiple directions of its diffusion.

## 1. *The "Red" Teacher*

Research has already studied the life and pedagogical vision of Albino Bernardini<sup>2</sup>. He was born on 18 October 1917 in Siniscola, a village in the province of Nuoro. After completing elementary school, he moved to Chiavari, in Liguria, where he studied at

<sup>1</sup> On the role and use of school autobiographies as sources in historical educational research see: A. Viñao, *Las autobiografías, memorias y diarios como fuente histórico-educativa: tipología y usos*, «Sarmiento», n. 3, 1999, pp. 223-253; J. Meda, A. Viñao, *School Memory: Historiographical Balance and Heuristic Perspectives*, in C. Yanes-Cabrera, J. Meda, A. Viñao (edd.), *School Memories. New Trends in the History of Education*, Cham, Springer, 2017, pp. 1-9.

<sup>2</sup> On the life and work of Albino Bernardini see: R. Rizzi, *La pedagogia popolare in Italia (1950-1990): Albino Bernardini*, «Educazione e scuola», n. 49, 1991, pp. 100-110; G. Guzzo, *Da Lula a Pietralata: le battaglie di Albino Bernardini per il rinnovamento democratico della scuola elementare*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2007; *Albino Bernardini: i novant'anni di un Maestro. Convegno di studi (Lula, 9-10 novembre 2007)*, Bitti, Comune di Lula, 2010; A. Bernardini, *Un secolo di memorie*, Patti, Kimerik, 2011; E. Zizioli, *Introduzione*, in A. Bernardini, *Un anno a Pietralata*, Roma, Edizioni conoscenza, 2019, pp. 7-34. The "Mauro Laeng" School and Education Museum of the Roma Tre University recently acquired the archival collection of the Sardinian teacher, now being cataloged.

*Scuola d'avviamento al lavoro*, a lower secondary school. Back in Sardinia, he continued his studies at the *Istituto magistrale* of Nuoro, a school to educate future primary school teachers. He dropped out of school to support his family financially and only obtained his qualification in 1940. A few months later he was drafted into, and participated in the Second World War, serving on the French Front, in Albania, Greece and Yugoslavia. He went to war filled with the belligerent rhetoric of the fascist regime, but he returned profoundly changed, with a revulsion towards the nationalism he had believed in and which had disappointed him. In 1944 he joined the PCI, Italian communist party, becoming secretary of the Siniscola section. He studied Gramscian texts and the Soviet educator Makarenko, his «true pedagogical love»<sup>3</sup>. In 1949 he attended the PCI's school in Bologna for six months. In these years he engaged in political militancy, also organizing a series of «strikes in reverse», which was the occupation of unused private land, for which he was imprisoned for a few months. In 1953, due to conflicts with the local communist leaders, he was dismissed from the party, leaving his responsibilities in the PCI. He decided to devote himself entirely to elementary school teaching, which he had started working in after the war. In the second half of the 1940s and then in the early 1950s he taught in various villages of Sardinia, mostly in the province of Nuoro.

In 1960 he moved to Rome with his wife and family. Bernardini was assigned to the elementary school of Pietralata, a poor suburb of the capital at that time. He immediately made contact with and joined the *Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa* (Cooperative Education Movement), although he was critical of some decisions of the team's leadership. As soon as he arrived in Rome, he went to the headquarters of the journal «Riforma della Scuola» (School Reform), starting a fruitful collaboration. The magazine was the most important journal of Italian pedagogical Marxism<sup>4</sup>, constituting a lively environment of cultural elaboration and political criticism. Among the editorial staff of the «Riforma della Scuola» he met and established relationships with the main protagonists of that successful pedagogical period, such as Dina Bertoni Jovine, Mario Alighiero Manacorda, Lucio Lombardo Radice, Ada Marchesini Gobetti, Gianni Rodari and many others.

Bernardini's first article in the «Riforma della Scuola» was published in February 1961, four months after his arrival in Rome. In his first article called *La miseria della scuola* (The Misery of School)<sup>5</sup>, he shared his first impressions of the Pietralata school where he worked and also of the initiatives he proposed in the first two months of teaching there. These are brief anticipations of what he would write about in more detail seven years later in *Un anno a Pietralata*. In the following period he intensified his collaboration, publishing dozens of articles. He also became part of the editorial staff of the «Didattica della Riforma» (Didactic for Reform), the magazine's insert for teachers, which he helped to grow. Collaboration on the «Riforma della Scuola» was for Bernardini valuable training in which he practiced writing and structured his political and didactic ideas.

<sup>3</sup> A. Bernardini, *Viaggio nella scuola sovietica*, Trapani, Celebes Editore, 1976, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> On the Italian Marxist pedagogy of the second half of the Twentieth century see C. Covato, *Litinerario pedagogico del marxismo italiano*, Roma, Edizioni Conoscenza, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> A. Bernardini, *Miseria della scuola*, «Riforma della scuola», vol. VII, n. 2, 1961, pp. 24-25.



Not surprisingly, Bernardini spoke of his arrival in Rome and his involvement with the Marxist pedagogical group as a second birth. Without them, he wrote, referring to intellectuals close to «Riforma della Scuola», «I don't know if I would ever have become a writer»<sup>6</sup>. The publication of his first school memoirs was due to Dina Bertoni Jovine, who invited him to write a book about his educational experiences, after the publishing house *La Nuova Italia* asked her for new works to be published in the series «Educatori antichi e moderni» (Ancient and Modern Educators). The Sardinian teacher accepted the proposal and, in a few months, finished *Un anno a Pietralata*, which found immediate success. Encouraged by this, the following year he published for the same publishing house *Le bacchette di Lula*, dedicated to his previous school experience in a small Sardinian village in the early fifties.

Four years later, Bernardini published a third book, *La scuola nemica* (1973), in which he did not retrace his school experiences, but reported on children and teenagers from the Nuoro area who, in interviews with him, crudely described the dramas and injustices of compulsory state school. A last educational memoir less well known than the previous ones, was *La supplente* (1975), where he recounted one of his last school experiences in a class in Bagni di Tivoli, a small town near Rome. After a long absence due to illness, he was assigned to a class, which was taught by a substitute teacher who had set the didactic work in a directive, classist, and oppressive way. Initially Bernardini found it very difficult to deconstruct this system, because most of the children and parents seemed to accept it, while also fearing the Sardinian teacher's innovations. Over the months Bernardini managed to change the climate of the group, obtaining excellent results.

After the publication of these four school memoirs, Bernardini continued to write various essays and books. In 1975 he published, with the pedagogists Alberto Granese and Tonino Mameli of the University of Cagliari, a manual entitled *Diventare maestri* (Becoming Elementary Teachers). After a two-week stay in Russia, in 1977, he published *Viaggio nella scuola sovietica* (Journey to Soviet School), in which he described the conditions of Communist education. In these years he also intensified his collaboration with various magazines, mostly devoted to educational issues. From the 1980s he was involved in children's literature, writing numerous stories. His contribution to education was acknowledged by the attribution of an honorary degree conferred by the University of Cagliari in 2005. Bernardini died in 2015.

## 2. *The Enemy School*

In his four school memoirs published between 1968 and 1975, Bernardini, while working within different contexts (Pietralata, Bagno di Tivoli and various schools in the province of Nuoro), represents common features of a single subject: the Italian school, with its problems and its contradictions.

<sup>6</sup> Id., *Un secolo di memorie*, cit., p. 117.

A first element to consider in the memoirs of the Sardinian teacher is the “scenography”. In his realistic representations, Bernardini dwells on the poverty, filth and dilapidation of state schools. In Lula there is not a single school building, but the classrooms are distributed in various houses in the village, mostly unsuitable for teaching work. Bernardini defines his classroom as a “stable”: there was no floor, only beaten earth, no window and the little light which filtered through was from the broken glass of the door, often left open, even in winter, to improve the brightness of the classroom. However, the desks at the back were always covered in semi-darkness. The roof, made of reeds and stones, let the water and the winter cold through. Not surprisingly, after a storm, the roof was blown off and the Mayor procured a new classroom for Bernardini’s pupils. His class moved into a room below the apartment of a particularly noisy family, dealing with a disabled child. In addition to the screams, the work of the class was often interrupted by the liquid excrement that dripped from the cracks in the ceiling. The first impression of the Pietralata school is analogous: it is described as «sleazy and dirty like a prison»<sup>7</sup>. The building was insufficient to accommodate the student population, so some pupils were forced to attend school in the afternoon, to the disappointment of their parents. In Lula and Pietralata the Sardinian teacher had to make a collection among already poor families to buy school supplies.

Bernardini describes a school that seems committed to excluding those who most needed to be educated. Teachers do not help pupils in particular need, they punish and discriminate against those who have poor results, they forget the cultural disadvantages of many children who live in an object poverty. The school is pervaded by a widespread classism which, with the excuse of merit, rewards and supports rich children, while penalizing the poor ones. This is a discrimination that, in some cases, could be seen from the very disposition of the class. The substitute teacher of Bagni di Tivoli, for example, had divided the pupils into three groups: that of “criminals”, of “females”, and of «beautiful, clean and tidy children»<sup>8</sup>. In *La scuola nemica*, the various witnesses agreed in denouncing the tendency of teachers to penalize and exclude children from poor families<sup>9</sup>.

In his books, Bernardini writes of a boring school, where the teachers do nothing to arouse the interest of the pupils but base their education on the repetition of rules and formulas. They seem unable to mobilize the intelligence of the students and are hostile to the cultures they belong to. The school is represented as a «prison»<sup>10</sup>, isolated from the world, from the real life of the children and from all those experiences that could have interested them. The method used to perpetuate this system was rigorous authoritarianism, where the teachers speak and command, while the children must be

<sup>7</sup> Id., *Un anno a Pietralata*, cit., p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> Id., *La supplente*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1975, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> A series of examples brought by the pupils interviewed confirms this impression. Among others, a boy from Bitti recounted that once, the Director surprised a student eating a banana during a break, scolded him saying: «You don’t even have to go to study, and now come with the banana: and then they say that there is misery... you have to go feed the pigs» Id., *La scuola nemica*, Nuoro, Ilisso, 2004, p. 201.

<sup>10</sup> Bernardini, *Un anno a Pietralata*, cit., p. 121.

«quiet and good»<sup>11</sup>. This school model was mostly pursued through intimidation and violence, the greatest common denominator. In his books, the Sardinian teacher describes in detail the punishment and torture perpetuated in schools.

The case of Lula is emblematic. The author talks of a colleague, called “Ballena”, who adopts extreme punishment: in addition to locking up the students in dark classrooms for hours<sup>12</sup>, she organizes singular “macabre processions”: the “culprit”, punished perhaps for not having withheld his needs or for having disobeyed, was tied with his hands behind his back to a broomstick and forced to walk the streets of the town with his classmates who had to rail against him<sup>13</sup>. A primitive rite that found a sort of legitimation in its public performance. Such humiliating practices did not find opposition from peers or parents, who seemed to accept and respect such practices and punishment.

The justification of violence was consolidated and internalized in various forms. In Lula, for example, there was a singular tradition: at the beginning of the year the children made canes and gave them to the teachers who were supposed to use them on them in case they misbehaved. When, during the presentation of the canes, Bernardini confesses that he has no intention of using them, pupils were scandalized: «But if he doesn't hit us – said little Pasquale in amazement – what kind of teacher are you then?»<sup>14</sup>. In *La scuola nemica* Bernardini collects numerous testimonies of the violence still widespread in the early seventies in the schools of the provinces of Nuoro. Pupils tell of teachers who beat them with whips or with a carpet beater<sup>15</sup>, ridiculed the pupils by requiring them to parade through the classes with donkey ears<sup>16</sup>, and excluding the mothers of the poorest children from the school plays. However, these punishments generated an equally violent reaction from some pupils, who beat up the teachers, stole from them and threatened them with a knife<sup>17</sup>. Also in Bagni di Tivoli, Bernardini collects the testimonies of children who told of various punishments, including the habit of some teachers to kick, punch and «pull ears and hair»<sup>18</sup>.

### 3. *A New Teacher Icon*

Bernardini not only represents the injustices of School, but in his books he promotes a new way of teaching, indicating his experience, his results, his way of teaching and being as a new and revolutionary model. Bernardini is seen as a teacher who fights early school leaving, also taking an interest in «those who don't go to school». He seeks out children

<sup>11</sup> Id., *Le bacchette di Lula*, cit., p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>15</sup> Bernardini, *La scuola nemica*, cit., pp. 223-224, 234-241, 304.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 262, 295, 297.

<sup>18</sup> Bernardini, *La supplente*, cit., p. 6.

who have dropped out of education at home or in the workplace, to persuade them to go back to school. He opposes the suspension of pupils, then a widespread «educational» means, convinced that it was a «senseless» practice, a «contradiction», «a deprivation of the right to know and learn»<sup>19</sup>. Furthermore, Bernardini prefers not to fail his students<sup>20</sup>, convinced that blocking their education would only have negative consequences<sup>21</sup>.

Bernardini does everything to make the school attractive: inspired by the pedagogy of activism, he overturns traditionalist and mnemonic teaching, focuses on the interests of the pupils, organizes activities related to their experiences and current events. He prefers outdoor lessons, manages trips and excursions, has naturalistic research carried out in the field, invites workers, trade unionists, mayors, and the film director Comencini to meet his pupils<sup>22</sup>. The work is set up with the brainstorming method: the class is divided into «collectives» which regulate themselves and organize the work. The problems are discussed, and the teacher asks the pupils to find solutions. He condemns those who force children to only listen, without ever letting them intervene to express opinions and interests. In short, he fights against the passive and disinterested «school for puppets»<sup>23</sup>.

He aimed to make his children «directly responsible»<sup>24</sup>. In this regard, the use of the «billboard of rules» is very significant, where not only did the pupils write down the main rules of the class that they developed autonomously, but they also had to mark the cases in which they did not respect them<sup>25</sup>; education through collaboration. Bernardini then proposes a series of group work such as reading the newspapers, drafting a class journal, conducting inquiries on current issues and creating billboards. His action is not limited to just «teaching concepts», but is conducted according to an «ideal content»<sup>26</sup>, aimed at saving students from ignorance, superstition, social degradation, and distortions due to the cultures they belong to. He is a teacher who believes in his pupils and trusts in their redemption through school: «You are good to me» he said to the pupils of Lulu as he broke their canes. «What is most striking in Bernardini – observed Elena Zizioli – was the innervation of the teaching methods of civil values, managing to give us back a model of a complete teacher: militancy not separated from continuous and constant didactic research»<sup>27</sup>.

Bernardini was convinced of the need to dialogue with families, especially the poor ones. He organizes assemblies well before the 1974 law, introduces collegial bodies<sup>28</sup>, visits parents, tries to involve them in and explain the reasons and methods of his didactics. His action is seen as an integral vocation, called to expand beyond the school

<sup>19</sup> Id., *Un anno a Pietralata*, cit., p. 131.

<sup>20</sup> Bernardini spoke of failing as a «primordial scholastic taboo»: Id., *La supplente*, cit., p. 144.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Id., *Un anno a Pietralata*, cit., p. 160; Id., *Un secolo di memorie*, cit., pp. 185-187.

<sup>22</sup> Bernardini, *La supplente*, cit., pp. 94-104.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, cit., p. 141.

<sup>24</sup> Bernardini, *Un anno a Pietralata*, cit., p. 89.

<sup>25</sup> Id., *La supplente*, cit., pp. 90-93.

<sup>26</sup> Id., *Un anno a Pietralata*, cit., p. 89.

<sup>27</sup> Zizioli, *Introduzione*, cit., p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Bernardini, *Un anno a Pietralata*, cit., pp. 56-62; Id., *Le bacchette di Lulu*, cit., pp. 149-161; Id., *La supplente*, cit., pp. 19-23.

walls: in the central square of Lula he is “among the people” and discusses education and school, questions the violent methods of teachers and parents, organizes an assembly on the principles of activism. He portrays himself as a “red Socrates”, a true organic intellectual who defends and spreads his ideas by immersing himself in the social context. Bernardini is also a «troublemaker»<sup>29</sup> trade unionist, who goes to complain to those who administer the school and claims adequate spaces and materials. To quote Rodari, «school commitment, social commitment, political commitment are all one for him»<sup>30</sup>.

Bernardini represents himself as an antagonistic teacher, whose behaviour generates hatred and opposition in the schools and in the realities in which he teaches. If for many colleagues the problem of school is rude pupils or parents who do not take care of their children, Bernardini's opponents are his own colleagues, the «ministerial teachers»<sup>31</sup>, mostly unmotivated, who opt for «positions of convenience or renounce», the moralistic and violent teachers. More generally, the rest of the school staff also seem to oppose Bernardini's changes and battles: janitors, lackeys and spies<sup>32</sup>, school directors who are bureaucrats with no perception of school problems<sup>33</sup>, school inspectors uninterested in teaching or school injustices, but supine to pressure policies.

The Sardinian teacher portrays himself as a «lone hero», one of the few exceptions in a school that does not work. But there is no narcissism or triumphalism or idealistic self-aggrandizement in his character description. Bernardini «doesn't want to embellish anything»<sup>34</sup>, not even himself. In his books he remembers moments of discouragement, expresses his doubts, does not hide the difficulties and various mistakes. In the early days in Pietralata, for example, he had serious difficulty maintaining order in the class, and while theorizing that he excluded violence, he said that he had sedated the children's conflicts by force, even threatening to throw a pupil «out of the window»<sup>35</sup>. Also in the other school memoirs, Bernardini describes himself as an impulsive man who sometimes loses his patience, shouts, and threatens. Among other episodes, the clash with the priest of Lula stands out, thrown out of the classroom during the hour of religion because he had started a homily against the communists<sup>36</sup>. Bernardini reflects and in some cases criticizes his pedagogical errors, with the aim of representing the difficulties and risks of educational work. Among these is the limited effectiveness of his intervention.

In his books, his commitment brings good results, but partial, and in any case always temporary. The feeling is that the «old school» prevails over the attempts of the teacher. When Bernardini left Pietralata after a year, a new teacher arrived in his class. Listless and disinterested in the fate of the pupils, he had put aside Bernardini's method, preferring authoritarian and discriminatory teaching. Some of his pupils who had made

<sup>29</sup> G. Rodari, *Prefazione*, in *Le bacchette di Lula*, cit., p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> Bernardini, *Un anno a Pietralata*, cit., p. 174.

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*, *La supplente*, cit., p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 120-122; Bernardini, *Un anno a Pietralata*, cit., pp. 104-108.

<sup>34</sup> G. Rodari, *Scuola e civiltà*, in Bernardini, *Un anno a Pietralata*, cit., p. 23.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*, *Le bacchette di Lula*, cit., p. 117.

great progress are rejected, others drop out of school. All of Bernardini's results seemed cancelled. In Lula he was dismissed by the Inspector and the experience of a different school remained only a memory. *La supplente* also has a bitter ending: after the successes built with patience and work, the arrival of his students in secondary school was traumatic. The lessons were boring, traditionalist and strictly authoritarian. Domenico, one of the children he had managed to save, was rejected and decided not to complete his studies.

In short, Bernardini represents his school as an exception in an educational system that is still mostly old, hostile, and unjust. However, he was convinced that his work was not useless. In the final pages of *Un anno a Pietralata*, thinking of his former students, he wrote with optimism that he had the profound «conviction that not everything, despite the difficult life of the village in which time has immersed them, can be forgotten»<sup>37</sup>.

#### 4. Spreading of Bernardini's Memoirs

The ideas and «scholastic images» transmitted in the Sardinian teacher's four books had various levels of dissemination. The first is represented by editorial circulation. The diffusion of Bernardini's works was initially favoured by links with the Marxist pedagogical group which had a certain influence in Italian culture of the time. Except *La scuola nemica*, the books were then introduced and presented by Gianni Rodari, a respected writer and journalist.

However, as written by the Sardinian teacher himself, the real success of his first work and of the subsequent books came above all thanks to television and then cinematographic transposition of *Un anno a Pietralata*, which inspired Vittorio De Seta in the creation of *Diario di un maestro* [Diary of an Elementary School Teacher]<sup>38</sup>. Thanks to De Seta,

<sup>37</sup> Id., *Un anno a Pietralata*, cit., p. 174.

<sup>38</sup> On the work of De Seta and on the series inspired by Bernardini's book, see: V. De Seta, *Film per la TV: diario di un maestro. Appunti del servizio stampa n. 52*, Roma, RAI– Radiotelevisione italiana, 1972; G.P. Cresci (ed.), *Diario di un maestro in TV. Una esperienza per chi insegna oggi*, Torino, EDA, 1973; A. Rais (ed.), *Il cinema di Vittorio De Seta*, Catania, Maimone, 1995; S. Toffetti (ed.), *Il maestro impaziente*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 2012; Laura, Luisa e Morando Morandini (edd.), *Il Morandini 2015: dizionario dei film e delle serie televisive*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 2014, p. 414; D. Felini, *Una proposta pedagogica sullo schermo. La scuola in due produzioni televisive di Vittorio De Seta (1970-1979)*, «Orientamenti Pedagogici», n. 2, April-May-June 2015, pp. 273-291; A. Debè, *Constructing Memory: School in Italy in the 1970s as Narrated in the TV Drama "Diario di un Maestro"*, in Yanes-Cabrera, Meda, Viñao (eds.), *School Memories*, cit., pp. 231-244; P. Nappi, *L'avventura del reale: il cinema di Vittorio De Seta, con un ricordo di Raffaele La Capria*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2015; F. Fiumara, *A Light in the Classroom: Vittorio De Seta's "Diario di un maestro" and the Bringing of Experiential Education into Italian Living Rooms*, «MLN», n. 134, 2019, pp. 303-317; A. Debè, *Costruire la memoria: la scuola italiana degli anni Settanta nello sceneggiato televisivo "Diario di un maestro"*, in P. Alfieri (ed.), *Immagini dei nostri maestri. Memorie di scuola nel cinema e nella televisione dell'Italia repubblicana*, Roma, Armando Editore, 2019, pp. 77-98; Ead., *Vittorio De Seta e le sue immagini di scuola: una rappresentazione mediatica della didattica italiana degli anni Settanta*, in *La responsabilità della pedagogia nelle trasformazioni dei rapporti sociali. Storia, linee di ricerca e prospettive*, Lecce, Pensa Multimedia, 2021, pp. 762-769.

the “ant” became an «elephant»<sup>39</sup>, and Bernardini, until then mostly unknown, was transformed into a national pedagogical icon. The television drama was broadcast in four episodes on RAI 1 (the most important channel of Italian state television) in 1973. It was followed by around 12 million viewers, arousing lively debate. As indicated by Anna Debè this transposition was undoubtedly a «filtered transition»<sup>40</sup>, but above all it was not smooth. This is a significant case, which well represents the difficulties and problems that can arise in the transition from a written source to a cinematographic one.

Vittorio De Seta had intended to make a film about school since the 1950s. Well before shooting the film *Banditi ad Orgosolo* (Bandits in Orgosolo) with which he won a prize at the Venice Film Festival, he read and appreciated *Il diario di una maestra* (Diary of a Teacher) by Maria Giacobbe, to the point of asking her, as revealed by the research by Piera Caocci presented in this same volume, to make a film about her school diary, although nothing came of it. According to De Seta's story, in April 1969 Ugo Pirro advised him to read *Un anno a Pietralata*. The film director was delighted. He proposed a film inspired by the book to RAI and two months later he signed a contract with state television which committed him to writing the screenplay. In the meantime, he contacted Bernardini who enthusiastically accepted the proposal that his book be made into a film, and they wrote the first screenplay together. De Seta then independently continued his research, deepened the pedagogy of activism and, in search of a teacher who could interpret Bernardini, met various avant-garde teachers (Mario Lodi, Francesco Tonucci, Alberto Manzi, Fiorenzo Alfieri and Sandro Lagomarsini), although he later opted for an actor (Bruno Cirino). Gradually De Seta changed his mind and understood that a screenplay which faithfully reflected the plot of the book risked representing an artificial class eventually setting aside Bernardini's memoir<sup>41</sup>. That of the Sardinian teacher – he wrote – «was a lived experience. My film must be the same. I feel that the only way to achieve it is to “live” film from life, an authentic pedagogical experience»<sup>42</sup>. Filming began only two years later, in April 1971, and followed a looser script. This too, during filming, was forgotten, indeed «self-sabotaged»<sup>43</sup>: the plot was mostly constructed and improvised day by day, also conditioned by the pupils – actors who became real «authors»<sup>44</sup>. «The third screenplay was conceived during filming. The fourth, the definitive one, will come out of the editing»<sup>45</sup> and was concluded in October 1972. *Diario di un maestro* therefore does not present itself as a reduction of *Un anno a Pietralata*, but a «reinvention which, starting from an idea and from a precise starting point, then found its own autonomy and creative originality as it developed»<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> Rodari, *Un maestro militante*, in A. Bernardini, *La supplente*, cit., p. IX.

<sup>40</sup> Debè, *Costruire la memoria: la scuola italiana degli anni Settanta nello sceneggiato televisivo “Diario di un maestro”*, cit., p. 86.

<sup>41</sup> Cresci, *Diario di un maestro in TV. Una esperienza per chi insegna oggi*, cit., p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> V. De Seta, *Quattro anni di lavoro*, in Toffetti (ed.), *Il maestro impaziente*, cit., p. 105.

<sup>43</sup> E. Morreale, *Diario di un maestro, quarant'anni dopo*, in Toffetti (ed.), *Il maestro impaziente*, cit., p. 126.

<sup>44</sup> Cresci, *Diario di un maestro in TV. Una esperienza per chi insegna oggi*, cit., p. 18.

<sup>45</sup> De Seta, *Quattro anni di lavoro*, cit., p. 110.

<sup>46</sup> Cresci, *Diario di un maestro in TV. Una esperienza per chi insegna oggi*, cit., p. 25.

The four episodes were broadcast on RAI 1 between February and March 1973. When Bernardini watched the first episode he was furious: «there was not a single word – wrote Bernardini – that mentioned the fact that it had been taken from my book»<sup>47</sup>. It was a «first snub», with which began what Bernardini called a real «underground war» with the Sicilian director. Bernardini, thinking he was the victim of an injustice, wrote to the RAI offices, «threatening them – he said – that if they don't include my name, I'll have the episodes interrupted. Immediately, from the second episode, “Taken from the book of Albino Bernardini” appeared in the credits». At this point the author felt satisfied, but there would be other clashes with De Seta, for whom the Sardinian teacher did not forgive his ingratitude towards his book<sup>48</sup>.

However, De Seta's film played an important role in the promotion of Bernardini's memoirs. This simple credit created huge publicity for the Sardinian teacher, which benefited his entire career as a writer and his representation of the school. The book went through a series of reprints, in March 1980 an educational version was released for middle schools, and again in 2008 Mondadori edited an edition with commentary and exercises for secondary schools.

In addition to editorial circulation and television success, there is a third dimension through which Bernardini's memories spread and influenced the collective imagination. This is a less striking channel, but perhaps more effective, namely the thousands of meetings and conferences which, from the beginning of the seventies, saw Bernardini engaged in speaking tours talking about his works. The effect of De Seta's script can be seen also in this field. After the publication of the first books, Bernardini began to be called in some cultural circles and schools to talk about his experience, but the invitations multiplied exponentially after the second episode of *Diario di un maestro*. As soon as it ended, Bernardini himself said that he had received a call from the assessor for education of the municipality of Cortona who invited him to talk about the book and the film<sup>49</sup>. It was the first of many conferences and presentations, through which Bernardini visited hundreds of schools throughout Italy, meeting pupils and teachers to talk about school and its problems. He then gave an account of it in a book entitled *Un viaggio lungo trent'anni. Tra i bambini e i ragazzi italiani* [A Thirty-Year Journey. Among Italian Children and Young People] (1996)<sup>50</sup>. Furthermore, from the end of the 1970s he began to include his address (Via de Fauni 51 in Bagno di Tivoli) in the introductions of his various books, asking his readers to comment on what they would read and he received more than 15.000 letters from students and readers, now preserved in the archive of the “Mario Laeng” Museum in Rome. Bernardini thus tried to make his books a working tool, capable of arousing questions and reflections, through a real educational relationship that he never gave up.

<sup>47</sup> A. Bernardini, *Inedito di Albino Bernardini*, in Guzzo, *Da Lula a Pietralata: le battaglie di Albino Bernardini per il rinnovamento democratico della scuola elementare*, cit., pp. 187-188.

<sup>48</sup> Id., *Un secolo di memorie*, cit., pp. 182-184.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>50</sup> A. Bernardini, *Un viaggio lungo trent'anni. Tra i bambini e ragazzi italiani*, Cagliari, Edizioni Castello, 1996.



### *Conclusions*

From what emerged, Bernardini's contribution played a leading role in the broader phenomenon of deconstruction and reconstruction of the collective imagination of school on which a group of militant teachers and pedagogists worked since the 1960s, determined to profoundly renew the face of Italian state education. Bernardini spoke of his first book as an «instrument of struggle», with a «revolutionary character». His memoirs are not limited to pure reporting but are addressed to a clear political intent: revealing the misery of school, denouncing its social injustices, testifying to the possibility of a pedagogical revolution in institutions, promoting an idea of active education, free from the mechanisms of power that limited its potential and vitality. The forms of this commitment have had various phases: starting from real individual experience, Bernardini's memoirs have become "public memory" with his books, until they find an extraordinary diffusion with the film adaptation of De Seta. In a final phase, Bernardini dedicated himself to spreading his ideas through hundreds of meetings in Italian schools, aware that school changes and renews itself piece by piece.

# Table of contents of the volumes of *The School and Its Many Pasts*

Volume 1: *The School and Its Many Pasts:  
The Different Types of School Memory*, edited by Lucia Paciaroni

## PREMISE

Lucia Paciaroni

- 7 Introduction to the Different Types of School Memory

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Cristina Yanes-Cabrera

- 11 The Future of Memory: Initial Steps in a Research Career and Emerging Historiographical Perspectives

Davide Allegra

- 25 Images of the Changing School in Luigi Comencini's Television Documentary "I bambini e noi" (1970)

Elisa Mazzella

- 35 The Infant School on Set. The Film "Chiedo asilo" by Marco Ferreri and the Educational Imaginary in 1970s Italy

Dalila Forni

- 45 Pupils and Teachers at School: Memories and Social Imagination through Cinema

Chiara Naldi

- 55 Between School Memory and Visual Culture: the Photo Albums of the Porta Romana Art Institute in Florence (1939-1962)

Silvia Pacelli, Valentina Valecchi

- 67 School Life Representation in the Photographic Images of the Dossier Series "Biblioteca di Lavoro" by Mario Lodi

Chiara Martinelli

- 77 Representing the Institutions between 1968 and Coming-of-age Novels: the "Educational Video Memories" Database

Rossella Andreassi, Valeria Viola

- 85 The Construction of an "Archive of Memory". School Memory through the Voice of Its Protagonists in 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Molise

Francesco Bellacci

- 97 The School of "Fascism in Crisis" through the Memories of Pupils of the Time

- Tommaso Petrucciani  
107 Learning Memory. The Impact of the Racial Laws on Three Roman High Schools: between Oblivion and Remembrance
- Rocco Labriola  
119 Rebuilding and Enhance Memory. The Activity of the Lower School “G. Perotti” of Turin
- Teresa Gargano, Simone di Biasio  
129 The Collodi School. Educational Atmospheres in the Work of Carlo Lorenzini
- Martine Gilsoul  
139 The Palidoro Children’s House Diaries of Irene Bernasconi (1915-1916)
- Monica Dati  
151 “She Told Me to Read, Always Read”. Itineraries of Reading Education through the Oral Testimonies of Teachers and Students of Yesterday
- Piera Caocci  
163 The “Diario di una maestra” of Maria Giacobbe and the Sardinian School
- Maura Tripi  
173 Formation and Transformation. Memories around Early Childhood Educational Services in an “Educationally Poor” Context
- Giulia Cappelletti  
181 School Architecture and Furniture in Italy, 1950-1970. Forms and Spaces of a Collective Memory
- Valentino Minuto  
191 Plaques and Statues as School Memories. The Case of the Monumental Tributes to Giovanni Cena
- Sofia Montecchiani  
207 Child-Care Institutions. Memories between Public Celebrations and Collective Representations
- Giulia Fasan  
217 The “Raggio di Sole” Open-Air School and Its Directors in Collective and Public Memory
- Silvia Panzetta  
227 Villa Emma in Nonantola, between History and Public Memory
- Annarita Pilla  
241 Public School Memory between Centralist Policies and Local Instances. Giulitta Ferraris Well-Deserving of Education and the Termoli “Gesù e Maria” Boarding School in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Volume 2: *The School and Its Many Pasts: Official and Public Memories of School*, edited by Juri Meda and Roberto Sani

PREMISE

- Roberto Sani  
259 Introduction
- Juri Meda  
265 Introduction to the Study of School Memory

- María Del Mar Del Pozo Andrés  
269 School Memories and Travelling Iconic Images of Education in the Nineteenth Century
- SECTION *Official and Public Memories of School*
- Luigiaurelio Pomante  
293 The International University Games of 1933. The Fascist Regime and the Issue of Commemorative Stamps as a Memory Policy for a “Glorious” Italian University Tradition
- Juri Meda  
305 “Educational Italianness”. National Stereotypes and Pedagogical Localism in the Centenary Celebrations of Italian and Foreign Educationalists between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries
- Simone Dos Prazeres  
317 School Architecture as Public School Memory: the Portuguese Case of “Plano dos Centenários”
- Roberto Sani  
325 Memory and Celebration of the “Heroic Youth”. The Youth Organisations of the Mussolini Regime, School and the Creation of the “New Fascist Man”
- Wolfgang Sahlfeld  
341 School Jubilees as an Opportunity for the Implementation of New Instruments of Memory Building: the Case of the 150 Years of *Scuola Magistrale* in Locarno (Switzerland)
- Fabio Targhetta  
351 The Public Representation of Schools in Philately
- Carla Ghizzoni  
361 Ambrosian School Memories. Milan City Council’s Construction of Its Own Glorious Educational Tradition from the Italian Unification through the Aftermath of World War II
- Maria Cristina Morandini  
373 Representations of Disability in the Great Turin Exhibitions at the Turn of the Twentieth Century (1884-1911)
- Ariane Dos Reis Duarte, Estela Denise Schütz Brito  
383 Procession to the “Honorable Son”: Memory and Representations in the Funeral Rites of Felipe Tiago Gomes (Brasília/DF and Picuí/PB – Brazil, 1996/2011)
- Mirella D’Ascenzo  
395 Metamorphosis of School Memory: the Case of Adelfo Grosso between Individual, Collective and Public Memory
- Snježana Šušnjara  
407 A Monument in Memory of the Teachers
- Oleksandr Mikhno  
421 Obituaries to Teachers on the Pages of Periodicals of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- Alberto Barausse  
431 Medals, Diplomas and Lifetime Allowances. Honours as a Form of Promotion for a Public Policy of School Memory
- Marta Brunelli  
447 “Minor Educators”? Traces of the Public Memory of the School, between the Official History of Education and the Community’s History. The Case of Emidio Consorti (1841-1913)

- Domenico Francesco Antonio Elia  
465 Meritorious Experts of Physical Education: the Obituaries of the Gymnasiarchs in the Liberal Age

SECTION *The "Sites of School Memory"*

- Marc Depaepe  
477 How Can History of Education Research Improve the Valorisation of the Educational Heritage in Museums and Vice Versa?
- Anna Ascenzi, Elisabetta Patrizi  
487 Between School Memory and Historical-Educational Heritage: the Library of the "Giacomo Leopardi" National Boarding School in Macerata
- Paolo Bianchini  
505 The Story of a School Too Good to Be a School: the *Collegio di Savoia* in Turin
- Agnieszka Wiczorek  
515 Restoring Memories of an Old School in Museums and Open-Air Museums in Poland
- Sergi Moll Bagur, Francisca Comas Rubí  
527 Corporate History in the Education Business
- Francesca Davida Pizzigoni  
537 Studying to Survive: the Representation of the Waldensian School through the Beckwith Museums
- Sabria Benzarti  
547 The Fame of the First Girls' High School in Paris: the Birth of a Co-Constructed Collective Memory
- Ana Isabel Madeira  
559 Building the Local History Curriculum in Rural Portugal: between Local Developments and Global Understandings
- Tatiane De Freitas Ermel  
569 Colegio Mayor Universitario "Casa do Brasil" (1962): a Place between Stories and Memories

Volume 3: *The School and Its Many Pasts: Collective Memories of School*, edited by Juri Meda and Roberto Sani

SECTION *The Representation of School between Press, Literature and Collective Imaginary*

- Lorenzo Cantatore, Luca Silvestri  
587 Iconographical Sources and History of Italian Schools in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries
- Francisca Comas Rubí  
597 Between History and Memory: the School Souvenir Portrait in Spain
- Carmela Covato  
607 Female Teachers in Italy in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The Teacher Training Schools in Literary Narratives and Archive Papers: Destiny or Emancipation?
- Giuseppe Zago  
617 The "Excellent Head Teacher" in Professional Manuals

- Carla Callegari  
629 Portrayals of the Head Teacher in Forty Years of the Journal “Scuola Italiana Moderna” (1946-1985)
- Giordana Merlo  
641 A Memoir of How Italian Secondary Schools Changed in the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Birth and Development of a Concept of Innovation and Experimentation in the Private Papers of the Principal Tranquillo Bertamini
- Marnie Campagnaro  
651 Portraits of Headmasters and Headmistresses. How is School Authority Depicted in Children’s Literature?
- Milena Bernardi  
661 Illustrations and Cartoonists in the Collodi Conflict Context. Childhood at School and School-Less Childhood
- Anna Antoniazzi  
671 Dystopian Schools between Reality and Narrative Fiction
- Irati Amunarriz Iruretagoiena, Paulí Davila Balsera, Luis María Naya Garmendia  
683 Memories of Students and Yearbooks: the Religious Schools in Spain Twentieth Century
- Marguerite Figeac-Monthus  
693 The Recovered Memory of the Students of Bordeaux
- Tiziana Serena  
707 Notes on School Photographs as Material Objects and Social Objects
- SECTION *The Representation of School in Mass Media*
- Simonetta Polenghi  
721 “Maria Montessori. Una vita per i bambini”: a Biopic That Blends Memory, Interpretation and Reality
- Evelina Scaglia, Alessandra Mazzini  
733 The Diverse Representations of Women Secondary Teachers in Selected Italian Films from the Past Fifty Years. A Case Study
- Sabrina Fava  
745 *Il Giornalino di Gian Burrasca*: Trajectories of Memory from the Literary Text to Filmic Mediations
- Ilaria Mattioni  
757 The Image of the Female Elementary School Teacher in the Works of Edmondo De Amicis across Literary and Visual Sources
- Aleksandra Ilić Rajković, Đurđa Maksimović  
769 Collective and Public School Memory: the Case of Professor Kosta Vujić
- Paolo Alfieri  
781 The Janitor on Screen. A Proposed Study of the School Imaginary in Twentieth-Century Italy
- Anna Debè  
791 Images of School Inclusion: Education for Persons with Disabilities in 1970s Italy across Big and Small Screens
- Yehuda Bitty  
803 The Traditional Jewish School and Its Many Pasts: History and Memories

- Luca Bravi  
819 School as Seen by the Radio (1945-1975)
- Panagiotis Kimourtzis  
829 Cinema in Greece during the Interwar Period under the Lens of History of Education
- Gianfranco Bandini  
839 Resist! Italy's Teachers and Students in the Face of Neoliberalism in Education
- Beatrix Vincze  
853 The Role of Secondary Grammar School Traditions in Hungary under Communism

Volume 4: *The School and Its Many Pasts:  
Individual Memories of School*, edited by Juri Meda and Roberto Sani

- Francesca Borruso  
871 School Life and Teachers' Diaries. Echoes of the Gentile Reform in the *Archivio Didattico Lombardo Radice* Diaries: Educational Theories and Educational Practice
- Andrea Marrone  
881 Albino Bernardini and the Representation of Italian School
- Chiara Meta  
893 Teaching in Post World War Two Italy: Anachronism and Change in Autobiographical and Literary Narratives
- Lucia Paciaroni  
903 Chronicles about School Life between Intimate Diaries and Educational Documentation
- Monica Galfré  
915 The "Brilliant" School of Elena Ferrante
- Susanna Barsotti, Chiara Lepri  
921 Restless and Longlasting *Cuore*. Readings of a Classic between Text and Images
- Polly Thanailaki  
931 Here Starts "Penelope's Web". Education and Social Prejudices as Seen in Women-Teachers' Diaries in Greece (1800-1920)
- Vittoria Bosna  
941 Using School Memory to Get to Know "Frontier Realities". Angelina Lo Dico: Teacher in the Land of Basilicata
- Terciane Ângela Luchese, Claudia Panizzolo  
951 Teachers in Transit: Memories of Doings and Knowledge from a Transnational Viewpoint (1882-1914)
- Vlasta Švogler, Zrinko Novosel  
967 School Memories from Croatia: Autobiographies of Mijat Stojanović and Imbro Ignjatijević Tkalac
- Jascha Hook  
977 A Common Narrative? Civics Teachers of the German Democratic Republic between Memory and Identity

- Despina Karakatsani, Pavlina Nikolopoulou  
 989 Memories of Teachers and School Inspectors in Post-War Greece. Visions of the Past and Interpretations in the Present
- Dóris Bittencourt Almeida  
 999 Daily Notes in Diaries: Traces of Teaching in Personal Archives (Porto Alegre/BR, 1995-2014)
- Luciane Sgarbi S. Grazziotin  
 1011 “With Faith and Knowledge, All Can Be Overcome”: Memories of an Orphanage and of Vocational Education for Abandoned Children (Porto Alegre/RS – 1947 to 1955)
- Stefano Oliviero  
 1021 Narrating the School of the Past and the Future. A Preliminary Analysis of the “Educational Memories on Video” (MEV) Database
- Evangelia Kalerante, Georgios Tzartzas  
 1033 Educational Policy in Greece and Educational Discourse throughout 1963-1965: Male and Female Student Memories

#### ABSTRACTS

- 1047 Abstracts of the contributions to the 1<sup>st</sup> volume *The School and Its Many Pasts: The Different Types of School Memory*, edited by Lucia Paciaroni
- 1055 Abstracts of the contributions to the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume *The School and Its Many Pasts: Official and Public Memories of School*, edited by Juri Meda and Roberto Sani
- 1067 Abstracts of the contributions to the 3<sup>rd</sup> volume *The School and Its Many Pasts: Collective Memories of School*, edited by Juri Meda and Roberto Sani
- 1075 Abstracts of the contributions to the 4<sup>th</sup> volume *The School and Its Many Pasts: Individual Memories of School*, edited by Juri Meda and Roberto Sani



## The School and Its Many Pasts

History is not memory; both, however, affect the way we perceive the past. In recent years, an increasing number of studies have focused on memory in order to critically analyze shared narratives of the past and their implications. Memory studies not only allow us to expand our knowledge about the past, but also help us to define the way in which today's people, social groups and public bodies look at it and interpret or re-interpret it. In this sense, school memory is not only of interest as a gateway to the school's past but also as a tool to understand what they know or believe they know about the school of the past and how much what they know corresponds to reality or is influenced by prejudices and stereotypes deeply rooted in common sense. These volumes aim to address these complex issues and broaden the perspective from which the schooling phenomenon is analyzed to better understand the school and its many pasts.

**Juri Meda** is associate professor in History of Education at the University of Macerata and member of the Executive Committee of the International Standing Conference for the History of Education.

**Lucia Paciaroni** is senior research fellow in History of Education at the University of Macerata and member of the editorial board of the international scientific journal «History of Education & Children's Literature».

**Roberto Sani** is full professor in History of Education at the University of Macerata and editor-in-chief of the international scientific journal «History of Education & Children's Literature».



**eum** edizioni università di macerata