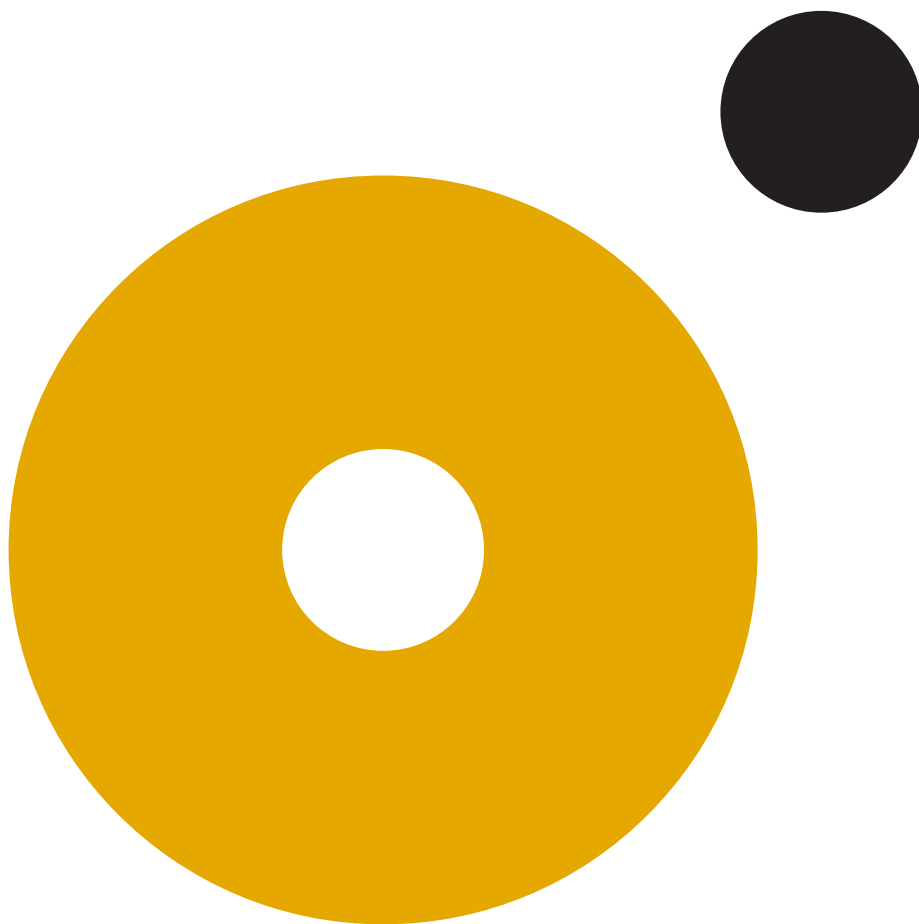


MEMORIA **SCOLASTICA**



The School and Its Many Pasts

edited by Juri Meda, Lucia Paciaroni and Roberto Sani



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Metamorphosis of School Memory: the Case of Adelfo Grosso between Individual, Collective and Public Memory

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Introduction

Today, school memory studies have been consolidated both nationally and internationally, as witnessed at the conference held in Seville in 2015 and more recently in Macerata in 2022, the result of a Project of Relevant National Interest entitled “School Memories between Social Perception and Collective Representation (Italy, 1861-2001)”¹ which investigated and catalogued the various forms of school memory – individual, collective and public – in an online portal². Generally, the study of public memory has already demonstrated how street and building names are assigned by the ruling classes, who select personalities deemed as exemplary models for the community, consistently with their vision of the world, for naming streets, plaques and buildings³. The public memory of schools also falls within this field of study, describing the representation

¹ International Symposium “School Memories. New Trends in Historical Research into Education Heuristic Perspectives and Methodological Issues”, Seville 22-23 September 2015, which was followed by the publication of the book of abstracts and of the book edited by C. Janes-Cabrera, J. Meda, A. Viñao (edd.), *School Memories. New Trends in the History of Education*, Springer, 2017. This contribution elaborates, also in the title, the report presented at the International Conference “The School and its Many Pasts” organized in Macerata (12-15 December 2022).

² <https://www.memoriascolastica.it/> (last access: 29.12.2022).

³ M. Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1950; J. Le Goff (ed.), *La nuova storia*, Torino, Einaudi, 1977, pp. 347-399; P. Nora (ed.), *Entre Mémoire et Histoire*, in Id., *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. I, Paris, Gallimard, 1984; P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989; B. Tobia, *Una patria per gli italiani. Spazi, itinerari, monumenti nell'Italia unita (1870-1900)*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1991; M. Isnenghi, (ed.), *I luoghi della memoria. Simboli e miti dell'Italia unita*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1996; Id., *La storia nelle vie e nelle piazze*, in M. Petrantoni (ed.), *Memorie nel bronzo e nel marmo. Monumenti celebrativi e targhe nelle piazze e nelle vie di Milano*, Milano, Federico Motta Editore, 1997, pp. 39-49; J. Assmann, *La memoria culturale. Scrittura, ricordo e identità politica nelle grandi civiltà antiche*, Torino, Einaudi, 1997; A. Huyssen, *Present Pasts. Urban palimpsests and the politics of memory*, Stanford, Stanford University, 2003; J. Assmann, *Cultural memory and early civilization. Writing, remembrance, and political imagination*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011; A. M. Banti, *Sublime madre nostra. La nazione italiana dal Risorgimento al fascismo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2011; C. Mancuso, *Miti del Risorgimento a Palermo. Spazi urbani e simbologie patriottiche (1860-1911)*, «Mediterranea Ricerche storiche», n. 11, 2007, pp. 545-576; U. Fabietti, V. Matera, *Memorie e identità. Simboli e strategie del ricordo*, Milano, Meltemi, 2018.

and idea of school and education promoted by the ruling classes and consecrated in an inscription on the wall⁴. So what therefore is the subject of a memory expressed on a plaque or the name of a school or a road? The reasons often appear in the wording of the inscription, but this is also the point of arrival of a much longer process that may last years or even decades before reaching the public memory, which therefore represents the peak of cultural intentionality that transforms the individual and collective emotional impact of the news of a death into a publicly visible, perpetual memory written on the walls. It is therefore interesting to dig into the archaeology of school memory, reconstructing the path, figures and reasons of a possible passage from the individual to the collective and public memory of the school, in order to understand the metamorphoses of the subject of that memory. To this end, we will look at the case of Adelfo Grosso, director of the male Normal School in Bologna after Unification, who remains in the perpetual memory of the city's public spaces on a stone plaque, while a classroom, park and three schools were named after him following a long and intense process of construction of the school memory, today destined for oblivion.

1. *A stone plaque for Adelfo Grosso: but who was he?*

Adelfo Grosso was born on 24 February 1831 in Pinerolo, in the province of Turin, where he taught in the upper primary schools, was head and teacher at the technical school, and was appointed *maestro di Lettere italiane* (teacher of Italian literature) by the Minister Quintino Sella without having to sit the state exam⁵. When the need arose

⁴ P. Cunningham, *Making Use of the Past: Memory, History and Education*, «History of Education Society Bulletin», vol. 66, 2000, pp. 68-70; M. D'Ascenzo, *Creating Places of Public Memory through the Naming of School Buildings. A Case Study of Urban School Spaces in Bologna in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, «El Futuro del Pasado», vol. 7, 2016, pp. 441-458; A. Ascenzi, R. Sani, «Oscuri martiri, eroi del dovere». *Memoria e celebrazione del maestro elementare attraverso i necrologi pubblicati sulle riviste didattiche e magistrali nel primo secolo dell'Italia unita (1861-1961)*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2016; M. D'Ascenzo, *Collective and public memory on the walls. School naming as a resource in history of education*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XII, n. 1, 2017, pp. 633-657; Janes-Cabrera, Meda, Viñao (edd.), *School Memories*, cit.; M. Brunelli, J. Meda, L. Pomante (edd.), *Memories and Public Celebrations of Education in Contemporary Times* (special issue), «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XIV, n. 1, 2019; J. Meda, *The "Sites of School Memory" in Italy between memory and oblivion: a first approach*, *ibid.*, pp. 25-47; C. Venturelli, *A stone on the wall. Collective and public memory of an eclectic primary teacher*, *ibid.*, pp. 223-237; D'Ascenzo, *Remembering teachers and headmasters. Funeral memories as source in history of education between nation building and collective memory*, *ibid.*, pp. 279-294; V. Minuto, *L'educazione al patrimonio monumentale della scuola*, in A. Ascenzi, C. Covato, G. Zago (edd.), *Il patrimonio storico-educativo come risorsa per il rinnovamento della didattica scolastica e universitaria: esperienze e prospettive. Atti del II Congresso Nazionale della Società italiana per lo studio del Patrimonio Storico-Educativo (Padova, 7-8 ottobre 2021)*, Macerata, eum, 2021, pp. 151-168; Id., *Monumental memory of school in post-unitarian Italy*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XVI, n. 1, 2021, pp. 213-255; Id., *Memorie di scuola a Campo Verano. I monumenti funebri a Erminia Fuà Fusinato e a Carlo Belviglieri*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XVI, n. 2, 2021, pp. 527-553.

⁵ On Adelfo Grosso, see M. D'Ascenzo, *La scuola elementare in età liberale. Il caso Bologna 1859-1911*, Bologna, Clueb, 1997, pp. 100-102; F. Fabbri, *L'insegnamento di agricoltura nella Scuola normale maschile di*

to open the male Normal School to train primary school teachers in Bologna, at the initiative of the Province of Bologna soon after Unification, Minister Sella proposed to appoint Grosso as director, describing his characteristics

he is currently director and professor at the Administrative Technical School in Pinerolo; for his doctrine and commitment, the High Council of the Ministry granted him a teaching diploma for Italian literature, history, geography without having to sit the exam; for several years he taught in some upper primary schools, where he gained that experience of the best educational disciplines that constitute the main quality of those who have to manage an educational establishment, throughout his career he has constantly demonstrated his upright character and common sense, as well as his courteous ways⁶.

And so, Adelfo Grosso came to Bologna and managed the male Normal School until 1888, overseeing the organisation, coordinating the teaching staff and expanding the range of subjects. His cultural actions extended beyond the school, participating in local civil society, in educational debates and initiatives, defending the Piedmont school policies for which he clearly represented the standard bearer in the city. Indeed, during the discussion on the contents of the primary school reform in Bologna proposed by the mayor Gioacchino Napoleone Pepoli (1867-1868), he publicly intervened in writing, referring to the need for a formal and substantial application of the Casati Law, thus in favour of absolutely free schooling for the whole primary school, which had been challenged by Pepoli's proposal. Adelfo Grosso, who from 1862 also exchanged letters with the poet and teacher Giosuè Carducci, whom he affectionately referred to as «dear Carducci»⁷, promoted a number of educational and cultural initiatives in the city, particularly from 1870. For instance, in the years when gymnastics was being introduced into schools, Grosso adopted physical education in the male Normal School even before it became mandatory by law in 1878. He appointed Emilio Baumann, one of the main exponents of gymnastics in Italy, who taught an experimental course in the primary schools and other secondary institutes in Bologna⁸. From 1872 to 1875, Grosso was vice-chairman and later chairman of the "Virtus" gymnastics society founded by Baumann, offering a significant contribution to the organisation of the V Italian Gymnastics Congress held in

Bologna 1866-1888, in M. Tozzi Fontana, G. Dragoni (edd.), *Interpretare l'innovazione*, Bologna, Il Nove, 1997, pp. 252-267; F. Delneri, *Educare gli educatori. La Scuola normale maschile provinciale di Bologna e i suoi luoghi*, «Strenna Storica Bolognese», 2009, pp. 175-199; M. D'Ascenzo, *Alle origini delle attività sportive in Italia: la ginnastica "razionale" di Emilio Baumann (1860-1884)*, in R. Farnè (ed.), *Sport e infanzia. Un'esperienza formativa tra gioco e impegno*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2010, pp. 194-215; F. Fabbri, *Diventare maestri: la Scuola Normale maschile di Bologna*, in M. D'Ascenzo (ed.), *Tutti a scuola? L'istruzione elementare nella pianura bolognese tra Otto e Novecento*, Bologna, Clueb, 2013, pp. 55-70; M. D'Ascenzo, *Grosso Adelfo*, in G. Chiosso, R. Sani (edd.), *Dizionario Biografico dell'Educazione DBE* (thereafter: *DBE*), Milano, Editrice Bibliografica, 2013, vol. I, p. 692.

⁶ Historical Archive of the Metropolitan City of Bologna, General Archive of the Province of Bologna, Year 1861, Title 23, Folder 248, Letter from Minister Quintino Sella dated 15 April 1861.

⁷ Casa Carducci, Correspondence, Box LXII, File 45 "Adelfo Grosso", Letter dated 4 November 1862.

⁸ D'Ascenzo, *Alle origini delle attività sportive nella scuola italiana: la ginnastica razionale di Emilio Baumann (1860-1884)*, cit.

the city in 1874⁹. He also collaborated with the Municipality of Bologna to recruit and train teachers, and with the local Teachers' Society, helped to revise the curricula and text books used in the primary schools. Grosso took part in the cultural and scholastic life of the city with a passion, also refusing the prestigious appointment as director and general inspector of all the primary schools in Turin in 1869¹⁰, in order to remain in the city where he had built his career and many strong friendships, also after he was widowed¹¹. He was popular among colleagues and students alike. In 1871, for his birthday, they had organised a small two-act performance in his honour; written by vice-headmaster Luigi Savorini with music by his colleague Federico Parisini, the text was published by the students with an emblematic dedication of their fondness, gratitude and esteem

To the illustrious professor
CAV. ADELFO GROSSO
Director of the Normal School
of the province of Bologna
for his honesty and zeal towards good
he is second to none
and on XXIV February MDCCCLXXI
the anniversary of his birth
his college students
as a sign
of gratitude, affection and esteem
indelible
have published this at their own expense
and wish to dedicate it to him¹².

He was clearly very popular in his position at the Normal School among both colleagues and students, with whom he continued to correspond even after they had finished their studies and begun to teach in the schools, as emerges from the archive documents. This was a type of activity that went way beyond his institutional tasks but bears witness to the paternal and fraternal care Grosso expressed in his way of being director, evidently recognised by his students also after his death.

⁹ M. Negroni, "Virtus" *Società di educazione fisica in Bologna* *Notizie storiche* MDXXXLXXI-MCMXXXI, s.l., s.n., n.d. (but 1931), pp. 18-42.

¹⁰ *Grosso Prof. Cav. Adelfo vs. Province of Bologna*, Bologna, Stabilimento Tipografico Zamorani e Albertazzi, 1890, p. 3.

¹¹ Casa Carducci, Correspondence, Box LXII, File 45 "Adelfo Grosso", cit., Obituary of his wife Maria Repetto who died on 26 December 1876.

¹² *Una burla farsetta in due atti di Luigi Savorini musicata dal maestro Federico Parisini da rappresentare nel Convitto Normale maschile della Provincia di Bologna il carnevale del 1871*, Bologna, Tip. Mareggiani all'insegna di Dante, 1871.

2. *Adelfo Grosso, between individual memory and collective memory*

Adelfo Grosso died in Bologna on 21 January 1892. Two days later, on the evening of his funeral, Gustavo Guazzaloca, former student of the Normal School and teacher in the city for some time, as well as a key member of the Teachers' Society in the province of Bologna¹³, gave a commemorative speech also in the name of other ex-students and friends, which was then published at their expense for the memorial service a month after his death. He spoke in the first person, driven by the «profound emotion afflicting me in this saddest moment alongside this coffin [for] the supreme farewell to our dear and beloved teacher»¹⁴. Guazzaloca described Grosso as being from a «remarkable Piedmont family»¹⁵ and coming to Bologna thirty years before «in the flower of his youth»¹⁶, called by the Ministry of Public Education to manage the Normal School «with the noble aim of procuring teachers for our municipalities, conforming to the needs of these new times»¹⁷ and, precisely thanks to «his burning zeal and most special talents, led the school [...] reputed to be one of the best in Italy»¹⁸. Guazzaloca then turned to his ex-colleagues and students remembering Grosso's moral and intellectual qualities

oh companions, let us bow reverently to his memory, to the memory of a man of simple customs, an honest gentleman with no hypocrisy, an upright and honouring citizen, a learned teacher of fluent, committed eloquence, an active and diligent director with no wrath¹⁹

along with the «moderation of affections and the generosity of sentiments»²⁰ and what we may today define as empathy towards their inexperienced and frightened students

and that exceptionally exquisite, delicate and never diminishing feeling that, by nature, he was dispensed with, and was particularly manifested in us, poor unexpert youths hungry for the knowledge required to continue our studies in the Normal Schools, most of them coming from the peak of the high mountains and the far ends of the Province. To overcome our lacking culture, he doubled his efforts and incessantly surrounded us with the most fervent care, a patient and loving brother who strove to incite them and help them in their first, arduous studies²¹.

¹³ Gustavo Guazzaloca (1847-1919) was vice-chairman of the Emilia Teaching Federation in 1894, promoter of new educational curricula for the city's primary schools, the female professional schools and the Secular Sunday school initiated by Luigi Bombicci, as well as author of texts on school hygiene and propaganda against alcoholism. Cf. M. D'Ascenzo, *Guazzaloca Gustavo*, in *DBE*, cit., vol. I, p. 697; S.A., *In memoria di un educatore, Raduno di vecchi insegnanti ed antichi scolari della Scuola Normale Maschile di Bologna*, «Il pensiero dei maestri», vol. IV, n. 6, 15 June 1922, p. 3.

¹⁴ *Omaggio alla memoria del cavaliere e professore Adelfo Grosso nel trigesimo della sua morte. Discorso improvvisato dal maestro Gustavo Guazzaloca la sera del 23 gennaio 1892 ai funerali del professore cavaliere Adelfo Grosso in nome degli insegnanti usciti dalla scuola normale e pubblicato per cura di amici e di allievi del defunto*, Bologna, Stabilimento Tip. Zamorani e Albertazzi, 1892, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Guazzaloca remembered Grosso's efforts to ignite the students' enthusiasm towards a career, that however was painted in its most negative aspects, due to its meagre satisfactions

a career, strewn with infinite trials and tribulations, that offers only light, sterile compensation for the untiring efforts, the forced excitement, which attacks and weakens the strongest fibres, wears down and destroys the most vigorous energies²².

The former student briefly described the director's physical appearance, his solemn gait, his high forehead, his smile, his deep blue eyes intent on comprehending the soul of his students, severe yet understanding towards them, little more than adolescents. Then he clarified the pedagogic and educational foundation that exhorted them to discern well between the real and presumed innovations of the time, and to solidly base their own pedagogy on the «glorious tradition of Italian schools that produced great teachers: Romagnosi, Rosmini, Gioberti, Capponi, Aporti, Rayneri and many other illustrious writers and pedagogists»²³. For these reasons, Guazzaloca recalled the diffidence towards the new forms of «education science» of the positivism for which Grosso was attacked as a

stick-in-the-mud by foolish scribblers, as the Sicilians well defined them, who, stealing with a vengeance here and there, citing several languages and knowing none of them, manipulating curricula with neither head nor tail, spend their lives stuffing books and booklets and memorials with clumsily styled, insignificant and empty ideas swollen with words²⁴.

Moreover, Guazzaloca talked of Grosso's work in local society as a battle against the Pepoli's proposed school reform of 1867 «which would have irreparably ruined our primary schools»²⁵, the presidency of the Gymnastics Society and the civil employees' club. The former student was sure that «the love of your disciples will never die, that sweet memory of the venerated teacher will never fade»²⁶, that teacher then defined as «an untainted, fearless knight, an honourable gentleman of the good old days»²⁷, hoping that beyond the grave he would meet with Enrico Sassoli who had strongly supported the male Normal School and with «your dear idealism that was Father Girard»²⁸, defined as the inspiration behind Adelfo Grosso's cultural and pedagogic action. The individual memory added up, progressively overlapping the collective memory linked to common youth, a profound emotion shared by all, while the language used tells of a very strong bond with «our dear, beloved teacher»²⁹, «patient and loving brother»³⁰ consigned to memory like a soldier wearing a laurel wreath and wrapped in the flag

²² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

farewell friend; farewell brother; our affection and grief follow you; go, into the kingdom of death like a wounded soldier, crowned in laurel, wrapped in the flag in the name of which you fought long and bravely for your whole life³¹.

3. *Adelfo Grosso from individual and collective memory to public memory*

In the following years, the traces of the memory of Adelfo Grosso were lost, both in the archives and in the bibliographies, at least as far as the current state of research finds. Only thirty years after Grosso's death, in April 1922 an article in a local teaching journal referred to a "Gathering of former students of our male Normal School", at the *Casa del Maestro* (Teacher's Society House), «who organised a lovely ceremony»³². Behind the initiative was no longer Guazzaloca, who had since passed away, but another and younger former student of Adelfo Grosso's, Ettore Mattiuzzi, at that time director of the local primary schools and author of school texts. The gathering was an opportunity for meeting with friends united by a «cordial fellowship of old classmates»³³ from which the desire emerged to «re-establish a male Normal School in Bologna, for which there is a strong need»³⁴, as it had been closed in 1888, transferring the men's Normal School to Forlimpopoli, further away in Romagna.

It was precisely Mattiuzzi, along with the teacher Edmondo Chelli and the more famous Ernesto Cappelletti, one of Grosso's former students and at that time the central director of the municipal primary schools³⁵, again on behalf of a "Gathering of former students of the Normal School", submitting an application on 3 May 1922 to the Municipal Education Department for a rectangular stone plaque, in Verona marble, to commemorate Adelfo Grosso, affixed in via Santo Stefano 116³⁶, the last site of the male Normal School in Bologna³⁷. The proposed epigraph was dictated by Giuseppe Lippardini, local poet and professor, then lightly amended with the agreement of the author, as declared by the former students themselves in a subsequent note dated 8 May 1922³⁸.

It is interesting to analyse the final text of the epigraph carved into the marble stone at the former site of the male Normal School. While in Guazzaloca's speech of 1892 the

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³² S. A., *Riunione di ex allievi della Scuola Normale maschile*, «Il pensiero dei maestri», vol. IV, n. 4, 15 April 1922, p. 3. The "Casa del Maestro" (note the capital M) was in De' Foscherari street in Bologna.

³³ D'Ascenzo, *Mattiuzzi Ettore*, in *DBE*, cit., vol. II, p. 137.

³⁴ S. A., *Riunione di ex allievi della Scuola Normale maschile*, cit.

³⁵ M. D'Ascenzo, *Cappelletti Ernesto*, in *DBE*, cit., vol. 1, pp. 269-270.

³⁶ Historical Archive of the Municipality of Bologna, Administrative papers, Year 1924, Folder 918, Title V, Sect. 3 Municipal buildings, Sect. 1 Buildings, File "Plaque to Adelfo Grosso", Letter dated 4 May 1922.

³⁷ Delneri, *Educare gli educatori. La Scuola normale maschile provinciale di Bologna e i suoi luoghi*, cit.

³⁸ Historical Archive of the Municipality of Bologna, Administrative papers, Year 1924, cit. On the stone plaque see M. D'Ascenzo, *Lapide ad Adelfo Grosso e agli insegnanti della Scuola Normale Maschile di Bologna (1922)*, «Banca dati delle memorie pubbliche della scuola», DOI: 10.53218/1906, published on 30.08.2022 (last access: 23.08.2023).

protagonist was Adelfo Grosso, described physically, in his humanity and culture and in the role he played in the city, here the subjects of the stone were both Grosso and his patrons, i.e., the former students. The wording of the epigraph is clearly divided into three parts, joined by the memory of Adelfo Grosso whose name lies at the centre in larger characters than the rest of the text

HERE STOOD THE FIRST MALE NORMAL SCHOOL
 THAT THE PROVINCE OF BOLOGNA MAGNIFICENTLY ESTABLISHED
 AND MAINTAINED FROM THE YEAR MDCCCLX TO THE YEAR MDCCCLXXXVIII.
 THE FORMER STUDENTS, IN MEMORY OF THE BELOVED TEACHERS
 LED BY ADELFO GROSSO FROM PINEROLO,
 A GREAT MIND AND PATERNAL HEART, LAID THIS MEMORY
 AS A CELEBRATION OF THE HUMBLE, DAILY HEROISM
 OF THE ITALIAN SCHOOL AND ITS TEACHERS.
 YEAR MCMXXII³⁹.

The first three lines remembered the site of the male Normal School established by the province of Bologna, which ran from 1860 to 1888: therefore *in primis* the place and promoter of the school, that is, the Province of Bologna.

The next three lines remembered the former students as the promoters of the stone itself in memory of their teachers («the former students in memory of the beloved teachers») and their head, the director Adelfo Grosso, with information on his origins and moral and intellectual characteristics, “great mind” (high, supreme) and “paternal heart” (with the love of a father).

The third part gave the last reason for the plaque, «the celebration of the humble, daily heroism of the Italian school and its teachers», the daily fatigue of the teaching profession, defined as heroic.

The stone therefore firstly celebrated the place, then the former students as patrons, the teachers of the school and their director, finally emphasising the difficulties of teaching as indeed a heroic task. It seemed almost a cry of pain, a public, evidently shared confirmation of the tough condition of the teacher, a condition not sufficiently appreciated by the community, as in fact had been reported in the pages of the teaching periodicals and trade associations for decades. Here, in this epigraph, the former students defined Grosso as the “head”, using a language befitting the time of war and the political debate that followed, marked by profound animosity that then led to the rise of Mussolini.

The plaque was unveiled on 4 June 1922. The speed with which the stone was proposed, laid and inaugurated – less than one month – is quite amazing. Probably the idea had already been taken on board some time before, the collective consensus was unanimous and moreover, among the promoters was also Cappelletti, a former student of Grosso and at that time the central director of the city’s primary schools, who had helped to complete all the authorisations needed in the municipal administration. The unveiling of the plaque was accompanied by a public ceremony organised by the former students,

³⁹ The first text read as follows: “Wise and beloved teachers” rather than beloved teachers; most beloved mind rather than “great mind”.

who gathered «to manifest their fellowship and remember their director, Adelfo Grosso and their teachers»⁴⁰. The inauguration was quite complex, and also strange. Many students came also from various parts of Italy, as well as the municipal and state civil authorities, including the Prefectural Commissioner Vittorio Ferrero and the Director of Education, with the support of the *Cassa di Risparmio* and the Province of Bologna. Around 70 former students gathered that morning in front of the “Carducci” primary school in Via Dante, then walked the short distance to the home of the poet Giosuè Carducci, welcomed by Albano Sorbelli, director of the museum, in front of which they laid a laurel wreath as a tribute. From there, the group moved to Via Santo Stefano 116, in front of the site of the former Normal School, received by Prof. Di Tizio, and then returned to the “Carducci” School, where in the hall, adorned with plants and tricolour trophies, the former students welcomed the authorities. Short speeches were made by Mattiuzzi, Lipparini, the former student Enrico Fornioni, now director of the primary schools in Piacenza⁴¹ – who talked of his time at Grosso’s Normal School – and finally Francesco Bonatto, educational director of Bologna, representing the Municipality of Pinerolo from where he, like Grosso, came⁴². Precisely while they were at the “Carducci” School, the stone plaque was unveiled in Via Santo Stefano, a spatial leap of around 300 metres

in the meantime, the memorial stone on the wall beneath the arches was unveiled, and a postcard bearing a portrait of Prof. Grosso was distributed⁴³

quite an unusual fact and told in just three lines, preceded on the other hand by the great emphasis on a kind of feast of schools and teaching, with almost goliardic tones (toasts, lunch in a restaurant, etc.) which evidently had the function of a collective school memory aiming to re-establish a male Normal School in the city of Bologna «because Bologna, the centre of education, cannot and must not be lacking in a seedbed for primary school teachers»⁴⁴.

The focus of the story of the inauguration of the plaque was no longer Adelfo Grosso in person but rather the desire to strengthen the identity of the students around their teacher and restore a new male Normal School to the city. The intensity of the individual and collective memory of the first few days following the death of Grosso, to whom little space was devoted in the article, appeared faded. The passing time, thirty years, had soothed the pain, the stone celebrated the former teacher but in fact celebrated the whole teaching profession with all its difficulties. This is confirmed by another later public event, when once again Mattiuzzi, commemorating Vittorio Savorini, former teacher at the male Normal School in Bologna who later moved to become headmaster in Teramo,

⁴⁰ S. A., *Raduno di vecchi insegnanti ed antichi scolari della Scuola Normale Maschile di Bologna*, «Il pensiero dei maestri», vol. IV, n. 6, 15 June 1922, p. 3.

⁴¹ D’Ascenzo, S. Spadea, *Fornioni Enrico*, in *DBE*, cit., vol. 1, p. 570.

⁴² D’Ascenzo, *Bonatto Francesco*, in *DBE*, vol. 1, cit., p. 584.

⁴³ S. A., *Raduno di vecchi insegnanti ed antichi scolari della Scuola Normale Maschile di Bologna*, cit.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

remembered precisely that inauguration ceremony for the plaque named after Adelfo Grosso

the former students of the former Normal School, around 35 years after the school had closed [...] gathered together by their colleagues from Bologna, came from all over Italy and, respectful and moved, laid a stone outside that glorious school so that it and its teachers could be rightly remembered⁴⁵.

A few months later, on 27 November 1922, a group of former students wrote to the Prefectural Commissioner asking to name a school after Adelfo Grosso and

choose the school (to be named after the worthy Educator) in an important place in the country (Corticella, S. Viola etc.) to remind how He, with such special love and rare wisdom, trained the rural schoolteachers⁴⁶.

On 5 February 1923, the Prefectural Commissioner Vittorio Ferrero issued a decree stating that the new school in Via Libia would be named after Adelfo Grosso, considering the road to be part of the rural area. The new municipal council, led by the Mayor Umberto Puppini, revoked the previous prefectural decree because – as reported by the former students – Via Libia was not a rural area – and approved the naming of the primary school in the rural area of Arcoveggio, in the former Villa Ronzani bought from Cavalier Alessandro Ronzani by the council, after Adelfo Grosso. It was 18 April 1924.

Conclusions

From these findings, Adelfo Grosso was the subject of school memory for a long time, more than thirty years after his death, considered a kind of “guiding star”, a bright light that slowly faded and today has waned completely, fallen into the oblivion of local and national school memory and history, despite the traces of public memory on the city walls: in fact, the school in former Villa Ronzani is still named after him, and today is a nursery and preschool, with a classroom at the front named “Adelfo Grosso” standing in the park of the same name: the primary school was moved to a new and more suitable site in the mid-70s, keeping the same name.

The school memory of Grosso remained vivid at least as long as his former students were alive, gathered around a kind of archetypal figure of the educator, father and brother and a model of virtue, before whom they defined themselves “former students”, “companions” and “classmates”. It is not surprising, as memory is linked to people, it survives time only when written and/or impressed on the walls. What appears relevant from this case study

⁴⁵ R. Istituto Tecnico “Comi” di Teramo, *Vittorio Savorini commemorato dai suoi alunni e dalla sua Scuola nel VI anniversario dalla morte*, Teramo, Tipografia Cioschi, 1932, p. 24.

⁴⁶ Historical Archive of the Municipality of Bologna, Decrees of the Prefectural Commissioner, 5 February 1923. It was not possible to recover the letter of 27 November 1922 due to incomplete documentation.

is the passage of the forms of memory from individual and collective to public. In this case, there was a sort of metamorphosis of the memory over the thirty years between his death, the plaque and the naming of the first school. While Guazzaloca's commemoration in 1892 was full of references to Grosso's physical appearance, educational and professional talents and to the former student's state of mind, with a brief mention of the difficulties of the teaching profession, in 1922 the figure of the director was less evident, faded between the celebration of the place of the male Normal School, the community of teachers and former students in their everyday heroism. Perhaps the time that had passed since Grosso's death progressively weakened the emotion of remembrance and his memory, in favour of a plurality of figures including the patrons who, celebrating the founder, also celebrated themselves, in a kind of highly identitarian collective ritual, hanging on the nostalgia of youth and the subtle denunciation of the teaching category, crushed between the "duty to be" and the harsh reality of everyday school work, as denounced elsewhere in school journals and political and social battles from the late 19th century. The memory of Grosso became hazier, while the central issue became the social criticism of the teachers' condition because, as indicated by Halbwachs

remembrance is in very large measure a reconstruction of the past achieved with data borrowed from the present, a reconstruction prepared, furthermore, by reconstructions of earlier periods wherein past images had already been altered⁴⁷.

In the passage of the school memory of Grosso from individual to collective and finally to public, therefore, the subject of the memory slowly changed: the person remembered is no longer only Adelfo Grosso but the patrons, i.e., the teachers, who are described as hanging between an ideal "duty to be" and the hard, tiring, everyday heroism. It is in this way that studying the collective and public memory of school offers further elements for understanding the representation of schools and their teachers, bringing a profession hanging between promised honours and allotted burdens back to the fore.

⁴⁷ Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, cit., p. 69.

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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.

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