

## The Wanderings of a Provincial Cosmopolite

On September 23, 1943, official date of the creation of the Italian Social Republic, Salvatore Maraffa Abate wrote a distressed note to Fernando Mezzasoma, General Director of the Italian Press and newly appointed Minister of Popular Culture:

Mio carissimo,  
tu mi conosci bene; puoi quindi immaginare la mia gioia: *grande!!!*  
Io sarò a giorni a Roma. Fra il 27 e il 28 ti vedrò! Ti abbraccerò!  
*Io sono a terra!!!* In modo angoscioso!!! Proprio ieri (ero a Roma)  
ho fatto istanza a Tosti (al Ministero) per un sussidio pronto  
immediato e adeguato!!... Ora ci sei tu e respiro e ringrazio Dio!!  
Ma vedi di chiamarmi alla tua segreteria! Ti prego! Ti prego!  
Aiutami!!! Ti abbraccio tuo aff.mo Maraffa Abate (Leodalba)<sup>1</sup>

Ten days later, on October 3, Maraffa received a thousand Lire.<sup>2</sup> His anxious letter and subsequent payment signalled the end of a significant portion of the life of a minor intellectual<sup>3</sup> of the *Ventennio*, an unusual player in the Fascist propaganda machine. The events that followed Mussolini's arrest in July 1943 meant that Maraffa, along with other regime supporters, had to flee Rome and move to the north, to Venice, where he spent the rest of his long life until his death, in 1974, at the age of 98.

Salvatore Maraffa Abate was a journalist, a poet, an entrepreneur, a publicist and sometime publisher.<sup>4</sup> With a life that spanned a century of momentous Italian history, and armed with an aristocratic pedigree, he managed to survive and adapt to different situations and political settings: from his early carefree years in the elegant Palermo of the *Belle Époque*, through two world wars, fascism and, finally, republican Italy.

The present study focuses on Maraffa's compelling and controversial life story in order to revive his intellectual figure and place it in the context of twentieth century Italian cultural history. Rather than focusing on his unremarkable literary work, I explore Maraffa's personal relationship with fascism and with his fascist past

in the larger scenario of Italy's own association with the *Ventennio* and its immediate aftermath. Additionally, I retrace Maraffa's periodic attempts to re-invent himself and to adapt to different cultural and political situations, from sophisticated and ironic chronicler of the Sicilian and European *beau monde*, to political journalist, to fascist propagandist, to Badoglio supporter, to Salò enthusiast, to unobtrusive travel reporter. Some questions arise: were these "transformations" only deliberate moves aimed at professional (and personal) survival, or were they also the result of a true intellectual and political metamorphosis? Paul Corner and other contemporary scholars have already underlined Italy's "real difficulty in coming to terms with its fascist past" (7). Almost a case-study, Maraffa's case deserves our attention for it is a little-known, exemplary (and reasonably successful) attempt to erase his enthusiastic endorsement of fascism (and consequent financial profits) from his understated new post-war life.

My research on Maraffa has revealed a complex, contradictory and, at times vulnerable personality, marked by an intense desire to fit in and to be socially accepted by the ruling class. This inclination to conform is not solely an Italian phenomenon, of course. And yet, inasmuch as it was fuelled by the two chaotic years that followed Mussolini's downfall and a *de facto* civil war, I think that the Italian case is particularly intriguing and worth studying. To this end, in his *I mali della politica italiana*, Luigi Sturzo tells a compelling anecdote:

Un italiano profugo a Parigi quando il regime era in auge, classificava i compatrioti in conformisti e anarchici; anarchici perché conformisti; conformisti perché anarchici. Gli feci osservare che... egli dimenticava gli indifferenti e i disillusi. Non li dimentico, rispose; sono sottoprodotti del conformismo e dell'anarchismo. (76)

Similarly, in her recent *I redenti. Gli intellettuali che vissero due volte. 1938-1948*, Mirella Serri notes that "La storia dei redenti non ha ancora oggi esaurito la sua capacità di fomentare discordie e divisioni. La rivisitazione delle vicende degli uomini che vissero una duplice esistenza provoca accesi dibattiti. ... La cancellazione di tante esperienze avvenute nel ventennio, la rimozione proprio delle 'reti'

più pervasive del fascismo ha, paradossalmente, avuto come effetto quello di sminuire i tratti più violenti della dittatura..." (Serri 23-24). Maraffa is part of this controversial history. He was a *Mitläufer*, a conformist who used his talent to survive past the disastrous fascist period, and managed to revert to an earlier concept of cosmopolitan, glamorous, and non-political form of journalism.

Salvatore Maraffa Abate's life was long and adventurous. He moved from his native Palermo to Messina, Genova, Milan, Rome, and finally Venice. But, as we know, history has not been generous with minor figures and Maraffa is not an exception. Literary records retain little or no trace of this chameleonic character and research on him turned out to be an arduous task, partially due to his reluctance to collect his own writings and publications and preserving a personal archive.<sup>5</sup> Salvatore Maraffa Abate<sup>6</sup> was born in Palermo in 1876. His parents were Filippo Maraffa and Rosa Lungarini,<sup>7</sup> a descendent of a noble family whose name is still preserved in Palermo's homonymous street and palace. While a law student, he joined the city's close-knit cultural *élite*; among them was historian Giuseppe Pipitone Federico. In December 1897, Maraffa issued his first notable magazine, *Flirt*.<sup>8</sup> Among *Flirt*'s regular contributors were—apart from the already mentioned Pipitone Federico—Matilde Serao, Giovanni Alfredo Cesareo, Mara Antelling, Jolanda, Mantea, Edoardo Giacomo Boner, Luigi Capuana, Nino Martoglio, Giuseppe Aurelio Costanzo, Mario Rapisardi, Giuseppe Ragusa-Moleti, and Emanuele Portal. Occasionally, the magazine also published pieces by Luigi Pirandello, Trilussa, Vittoria Aganoor, Adelaide Bernardini, Giovanni Pascoli, and Gabriele d'Annunzio. *Flirt* was the ideal mirror of the Sicilian *beau monde*, an elegant, eclectic magazine modeled on the French *petite presse* and on Angelo Sommaruga's *Cronaca Bizantina*,<sup>9</sup> whose primary goal was to spread "il gusto del pettegolezzo e, genericamente, quello della novella mondana" (Gaeta 191).

*Flirt* was not a political publication. It contained poetry, prose, history, art history, gossip, charades, sport news. Two of its most interesting features were the unusually generous space allowed to women writers<sup>10</sup> and its dynamic *Direttore*, Maraffa Abate, often hidden behind the pseudonym Leodalba. Maraffa Abate edited *Flirt* until May 1902, a relatively long time for a late nineteenth century

provincial publication.<sup>11</sup> While working at *Flirt*, Maraffa also showed a penchant for entrepreneurial work: it was during these years that he created a tourist agency and an import-export company that specialized in upscale foods and wines.<sup>12</sup> However, in the last months of his tenure as *Direttore*, regular readers could register a certain lethargy: the magazine was issued less regularly until, on 1 May 1902, Maraffa announced that he was to sell *Flirt* to Pietro Mammana. The real reason behind this decision was a new and exciting project, another magazine, *La Sicile Illustrée*, which distanced itself from the almost exclusively literary structure of *Flirt*. To this day, *La Sicile* remains Maraffa Abate's most successful enterprise and the only one that is still remembered in Palermo's literary and historical accounts.

Promoting the idea of a cosmopolitan Sicily, and of a cosmopolitan Palermo in particular, and presenting a worldly image of its society were the main ambitions of *La Sicile*. It was an exciting time for Palermo, a city headed by the powerful Florio family,<sup>13</sup> a city that for the first and last time, threatened the economic supremacy of the north of Italy.<sup>14</sup> Palermo had become a stage for the rich and powerful, for royalty and statesmen from Europe and the Americas. The same Sicilian aristocracy that, only a few decades earlier, snubbed Mastro Don Gesualdo and his *nouveau riche* peers, had by now realized that it could not ignore the power of the new bourgeoisie.<sup>15</sup> The aristocratic Maraffa was among them.

A multilingual (English, French, German, and of course Italian), illustrated periodical first issued in April 1904, *La Sicile Illustrée* was a shared project with co-editors Duchess Mara di Villa Gloria and Prince Pietro Lanza di Scalea, both regular *Flirt* contributors. *La Sicile* allowed Maraffa to combine literary and cultural journalism, together with local gossip and captivating travel news. Just like with his earlier periodical *Flirt*, any reader looking for politics or current events would have been disappointed. In his 1975 study on *La Sicile*, Roberto Ciuni laments this aspect of the magazine:

[*La Sicile Illustrée*] gioca su due tavoli: da un lato allarga i confini dell'interesse alle plaghe della retorica politica corrente, a tutto il dannunzianesimo parolaio di moda; dall'altro, indugia a pubblicare colonne su colonne destinate alle piccole vanità

locali che certo non servono a far venire nessuno in Sicilia. ... È il documento di una società chiusa, questa Sicile. (5-6)

However, the magazine's program was clearly stated in its first issue, in an editorial called "Ai lettori nostri":

Sicilia Illustrata sarà un fantasmagorico cinematografo; in essa sfiliranno i paesaggi più incantevoli, i monumenti più interessanti, i panorami magnifici, le opere d'arte più decantate di Sicilia, le più belle figure muliebri della nostra Società, mentre vi troverà posto la rassegna d'arte, la nota storica o archeologica, o etnografica, la caratteristica novella siciliana, la fine poesia dialettale, la nota gaiamente festosa come un trillio di uccello della parte migliore della nostra vita mondana. (n.p.)

Both *Flirt* and *La Sicile Illustrée* were based on the cult of beauty and elegance, magazines publications, as Cesare Luigi Gasca put it, meant as "forma d'arte nella parola e nel disegno, nel reverente culto esteriore per la bellezza" (quoted in Castronovo 153). Maraffa's notion of journalism, at this point, differed from what he would develop in the future. Moreover, we should not forget that professional journalism in the contemporary sense of the word is a much more recent notion, as demonstrated by Carmen Salvo and Valerio Castronuovo, among others. Salvo, in particular, notes:

Il professionismo giornalistico appartiene alla nostra epoca più recente, mentre i giornalisti del tempo spesso erano personaggi della politica, delle scienze e del mondo delle lettere. Ciò rende ancora più evidente la chiave di lettura sociale e l'intreccio stesso tra cultura e società del giornalismo d'epoca tanto che, probabilmente, non è neppure il caso, per il periodo che studiamo, di parlare di "informazione." (189-190)<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, Maraffa was still a provincial character, albeit one with cosmopolitan aspirations; and in many parts of Italy journalism was still a not particularly evolved elitist activity:

Nelle città italiane piccoli intellettuali, ex professionisti, esponenti del medio ceto colto (ma anche funzionari o militari a riposo) costituivano, alla fine del decennio postunitario, le fila del giornalismo d'opinione, ma rappresentavano in fondo solo ristretti "clan" di politici o piccoli gruppi clientelari di potere. (Castronovo 75)

But times were changing and soon the economic power of the Florios in Sicily would come to an end. Around 1911, Maraffa left Palermo and headed north, to Genoa and Milan and, eventually, to Rome. This decision had significant consequences in the way he conceived of journalism. It is during the period immediately before World War I that Maraffa developed into a political reporter, and matured a new sort of periodical, a clever mix of cosmopolitanism, patriotism, and politics. Two critical encounters, the first one with Filippo Tommaso Marinetti,<sup>17</sup> and the second one with Benito Mussolini, prompted him to the definitive change. Futurism and its main features (modernity, energy, innovation) and, later, fascism seduced the restless Maraffa and contributed to his radical transformation into a militant journalist. From this moment on, Maraffa's publications combined art and politics, travel literature, action and reflection, always with a strong dose of nationalism.

Leaving Sicily meant leaving his readers, his friends, and his family behind. It also meant leaving his trademark notion of a literary and cultural magazine. The years immediately following World War I saw Maraffa move from city to city, each time with a new, increasingly political magazine and with short-lived collaborations (with *Il popolo d'Italia* and *Il popolo di Roma*, among others). One of his periodicals, *Le Giornate d'Italia*, was the first to adopt the emblem of the *fascio littorio* in its masthead.<sup>18</sup>

In the early 1930s, in Rome, Maraffa started a new editorial adventure, *Italia fascista*, an elegantly designed, illustrated, colorful propaganda magazine meant to promote fascist entrepreneurial activities around the world. *Italia fascista* derived from an earlier project, *I Quaderni dell'Italia fascista*, that was meant to include—according to Maraffa's elaborate *Quaderni dell'Italia fascista* letterhead—"12 quaderni illustrati / Alle più belle, più nobili, più ardite

/ Iniziative opere imprese del regime." With *Flirt* and *Sicile Illustrée* Maraffa had earned the necessary self-confidence that allowed him to move beyond the provincial atmosphere of his native island. With *Italia fascista*, which he managed to issue—with the generous help of various government agencies—until 1943,<sup>19</sup> Maraffa blended politics, art and high-end travel, all essential ingredients of his ideal magazine. Openly obsequious to the fascist regime, as its name suggests, *Italia fascista* tried hard (a little too hard, at times) to balance itself between a servile and an extremely patriotic attitude towards the autarchic regime and a strong cosmopolitan air.

It contained richly illustrated articles on Mussolini's new towns (Mussolinia, Sabaudia, Littoria); on the land drainage plans; on the African conquest and on Mussolini's charisma. From time to time, *Italia fascista* presented its readers with more artistic content, reflecting Maraffa's old interests literature, travel, and cinema. *Italia fascista*'s prose was usually austere rather than aesthetic, and often weighted down by an abundance of percentages and other figures, a telling sign of a too obvious deferential attitude towards the regime. If the content was, at times, bland and banal, while its graphics skillfully reflected the elegant rational style of the 1930s. The *Sicile Illustrée* reader would have been able to recognize an attempt at a similar piquancy—albeit not as brilliantly executed—in Maraffa's choices for advertisements, for photographs, for issues entirely dedicated to a particular region or city of the empire where fascist enterprises were particularly successful. However, while at first *Italia fascista* was keen to print articles on economics, politics, travel and cultural events, little by little, especially after the beginning of the war, the magazine started turning its gaze inwards. Mussolini remained a protagonist, of course, with *Italia fascista* continuing to follow his every move, as a public and as a private man.<sup>20</sup> But the magazine, similarly to other publications, such as *Il Bargello*,<sup>21</sup> started favoring articles in Italian and German and only about Italian or German film, literature and theater. By the early 1940s, in the last desperate moments of Mussolini's regime, his journal almost failing, Maraffa progressively withdrew from conventional reporting.

*L'Italia fascista* was located in Rome's via delle Medaglie d'Oro. Among its subscribers, proudly listed on the cover, were

Marinetti, Badoglio, and Guglielmo Marconi. Marinetti in particular was generous with his old acquaintance Maraffa, allowing *Italian fascista*, in 1938, to publish his “Poesia dei tecnicismi” and an article on Leopardi’s poetry (“Giacomo Leopardi”). “Poesia dei tecnicismi” was an extract from “Poema di Torreviscosa,” a work composed to celebrate autarchic cellulose at Snia Viscosa. Actually, the manifesto had already appeared in print, as a pamphlet, the previous fall, but the founder of Futurism allowed Maraffa to publish it as well, an important gift for a struggling publication like *Italia fascista*.<sup>22</sup> Throughout its decade long existence, the tone of *Italia fascista* remained celebratory. To commemorate D’Annunzio’s death, for example, Maraffa published a nostalgic memory of Fiume that he had penned two decades earlier, in 1919, when he was among the organizers of a committee in the poet’s honor. Incidentally, this initiative aroused the spirited reaction of *Avanti!*’s Giacinto Menotti Serrati who, in his “Scampoli,” sarcastically accused Maraffa and his associates of political opportunism:

Ma questi giornalisti sono davvero inesauribili nello aspirare e nel premere sulle casse del capitalismo industriale arricchito dalla guerra! Ogni giorno veniamo a scoprire una circolare o lettera riservata con cui questi signori, per una ragione o per l’altra bussano a quattrini, in nome, naturalmente, sempre della patria o delle sue istituzioni. (n.p.)

In 1919, Maraffa was already a Mussolini supporter and more than once defined himself a *Sansepolcrista*.<sup>23</sup> His activities and his writings throughout the 1920s and 1930s show a dedicated, enthusiastic defender of the regime and of the Duce in particular. It would seem only natural then for both the Ministero della Cultura Popolare—also in its earlier incarnations, such as the Ufficio Stampa del Capo del Governo—to welcome such fervent, committed coverage of the regime. It was not the case. On the contrary, the Min.Cul.Pop. would closely guard not only opponents of the regime but also its overly zealous supporters. Maraffa’s case was judged with suspicion at the very onset; he was accused of appearing as fascist as possible only in order to appeal to the higher sphere of the regime. His persistent

requests to be received by Mussolini were regularly rejected by the Duce’s *entourage* and actually caused damaging investigations on his professional attitude, on the aristocratic title he occasionally used, “dei marchesi Lungarini,” and even on his pseudonym Leodalba. These investigations resulted in a 1934 injunction against the use of a crown and of the title “dei Marchesi Lungarini” on his calling cards. With regards to his choice of pseudonym, *Flirt* readers would remember that Maraffa had been using this pen name for decades. Unfortunately for Maraffa, his *nom de plume* Leodalba was too similar to Futurist poet Umberto Bottone’s alias, Auro D’Alba. On 21 July 1932, Maraffa appeared in front of a Roman judge who ruled that he could only use Leodalba together with his real name and had to use, instead, “Leodalba. Maraffa Abate.” Later, Maraffa commented on this unjust offense in the foreword of one of his collections of poetry, *Chiarezze*:

Lo pseudonimo Leo d’Alba fu adottato dall’Autore sin dalla prima giovinezza, nel 1896... Leo d’Alba *non ha niente in comune con il sig. Auro D’Alba, pseudonimo adottato soltanto nel 1905 dal sig. Comm. Umberto Bottone.* (n.p.)

Our succinct overview of Maraffa’s publishing career until Mussolini’s fall reveals him as an ideal tool for the fascist propaganda machine: self-censored, obsequious, unquestioning and uncritical in his attitude and in his writings. Why would the Ente Stampa and the Ministry not use his commitment for its own purposes? Since the fascist press was heavily controlled beginning in 1924 (year of the foundation of the Sindacato Fascista dei Giornalisti, which replaced the old Federazione Nazionale Stampa Italiana, with the subsequent creation of the Albo Professionale dei Giornalisti in 1925), Maraffa’s flattery must have been seen for what it (most probably) was: exaggerated and aimed at personal gain, rather than the result of ideological conviction.

On his part, Maraffa was probably drawn by a certain self-righteousness and superiority and saw fascism as an ideal opportunity to become a credited celebrity; he almost certainly saw the Duce’s circles as an assembly of desirable, powerful people and, fuelled by his ambition and by his own antidemocratic stance (something that was apparent already in his early years in Palermo), he thought he could

benefit from the political situation. Although he was undoubtedly aware of his intellectual limits, he needed, more than ever, to belong to an *élite*. And he thought that celebratory journalism and, to a lesser extent, congratulatory poetry would be the means to a successful end. A poet since the *Flirt* years, Maraffa wrote a number of openly philo-fascist poems. Among them, *Aquile di Roma* (1935) and *La pelle del serpente* (1942).<sup>24</sup> But the regime would rather silence its opponents and control its supporters; and even before the March on Rome, the party tried to limit the publication of fascist oriented press, as stressed by Mario Forno (36). With regards to Maraffa (and Mangano) we have proof of this as early as 6 September 1934:

Unitamente alla predetta Lori Mangano... Maraffa si dedica a certe imprese editoriali delle quali la più recente è la rivista "mensile" *L'Italia fascista*. Il Maraffa sfrutta vergognosamente il titolo della rivista e le adesioni pervenutegli... per raccogliere in tutto il Regno delle somme per abbonamenti e per pubblicità. ... Tutta l'opera di D'Alba si basa sull'equivoco, su dediche non richieste e quindi su lettere di ringraziamenti di prammatica in base alle quali poi carpisce adesioni e ottiene entrate arrivando così al Re e al Segretario del Partito che formano poi il pane quotidiano di tutte le sue lettere e di tutte le sue richieste da 50 lire in su [per gli abbonamenti alla rivista] compromettendo così nelle provincie (sic) italiane fra gli allogeni e fra gli stranieri il buon nome della stampa Fascista. (Polizia Politica, Report on Maraffa, 6 September 1934)

Almost a decade later, another note reads:

Il Ministero della Cultura Popolare—richiesto di notizie—ha comunicato che la rivista "Italia fascista" è un organo personale del Maraffa che se ne serve per ricevere contributi finanziari; essa ha scarsa importanza culturale. (Letter from Ministero della Cultura Popolare to the Segreteria Particolare del Duce, 15 May 1943)

These notes are kept in Maraffa's files at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato, where we also find a profusion of requests for financial help directed both at Mussolini's office and at the Ministero della Cultura Popolare. Overall, between 1932 and 1943, Maraffa received more than fifty thousand Lire (Ministero della Cultura Popolare n.p.). He was not alone: this behavior was part of a widespread attitude, what Mario Forno calls "scalate personali ai vertici del regime" (35). Even if it did not entirely work for Maraffa, the crossing from elitist journalism to fascist propaganda worked well for others, even for people in Maraffa's old circles. For instance, Antonio Favales, the editor of *The Smart Set* magazine, a publication that followed—in its graphics and contents—the *Flirt* and *Sicile* model, managed to rise through the ranks of the fascist press, from "capo ufficio stampa della Federazione fascista di Palermo" to "direttore dell'antico *Giornale di Sicilia*" (Isnenghi 257).

Widespread national chaos following the July 1943 events collided with Maraffa's personal troubles. At the time of Mussolini's arrest, Maraffa was 67 years old. Not a young age, especially for someone plagued by professional and personal troubles. His personal situation was almost as chaotic as his professional one: with his first wife, Concetta Di Bartolo, he had two daughters; with his partner Lori Mangano, a pianist and writer (with the pseudonym Astra), he had two sons, Augusto and Bruno.<sup>25</sup> One of Maraffa's daughters, Rosella (also known as Rossalba), married orchestra conductor Giuseppe Savagnone. They had two daughters, bound to become well-known *doppiatrici*: Rita and Deddi Savagnone.<sup>26</sup> Maraffa and Mangano spent the 1930s and early 1940s in Rome, trying to establish themselves in fascist society. For someone like Salvatore Maraffa, Mussolini's fall must have meant the realization that his plans of a financially secure old age were unlikely to come to fruition. Moreover, Maraffa seemed destined to be forever tainted by his (too obvious) fascist past. As Philip Morgan noted:

Mussolini's fall from power at the hands of the king was not definitive. There was no democratic anti-Fascist succession, but rather a military monarchical government which wanted to manage the transition with Italy's conservative institutions intact,

and so restrained anti-Fascist forces re-emerging in the country on Mussolini's fall from power... the armistice... [was] arguably the real watershed of Italy's war... led to the destruction by death, disbandment, and internment of Italy's armies and discredited the monarchy and the military as national institutions... Thereafter, Italians, increasingly confused about where they were and would be... participated in a struggle for survival.... It was a struggle for personal and family survival. (228)

But it was also thanks to the widespread turmoil that affected all levels of society—especially after Italy changed sides in the war—that, for many, the “struggle for personal and family survival” was a successful one. Thus, republican Italy managed to avoid fully coming to terms with its fascist past, dwelling instead for decades in the “ubiquity of the continuing sense of victimhood” (Morgan 231). Maraffa was among those who benefited from this social and political uncertainty as he was able to smoothly step into the next phase of his life.

Analyzing this period from the point of view of the working classes, and drawing on Foucault's idea of power, Luisa Passerini stressed that “the identification of fascism with evil and a source of national shame, and the consequent desire to keep quiet about it, even among those not actually responsible... signifies that power makes those who are subjected to it complicit in its exercise” (67). What happened in Italy in 1943 and in the years that followed could be identified as a case of widespread amnesia that resulted in a shared sense of victimhood. It was during this period that many Italian intellectuals who were active under the regime started on the thorny path that would take them through the end of the war and beyond. Like Maraffa, many successful figures quietly sailed through this delicate time. The publishing press was not immune to this memory loss: in the case of Giuseppe Bottai's *Primato*, for example, Lorenzo Tronfi notes how in the issue published immediately after July 25 1943, there is no “riferimento al presente” (354).

The history of Italy's relationship with its past is a complex one, one that scholars started exploring relatively recently. In her book *I redenti*, mentioned above, Mirella Serri covers the history of several

high-profile Italian intellectuals, such as Carlo Muscetta and Norberto Bobbio. Bobbio in particular was more outspoken than others about his conflicting youth. He admitted to be torn between “un convinto fascismo patriottico in famiglia e un altrettanto fermo antifascismo appreso nella scuola, con insegnanti noti antifascisti, come Umberto Cosmo e Zino Zini, e compagni altrettanto intransigenti antifascisti come Leone Ginzburg e Vittorio Foa” (quoted in Buttafuoco n.p.). Bobbio also opened up about his post-fascist sense of shame, about his being “immerso nella doppiezza, perché era comodo fare così. Fare il fascista tra i fascisti e l'antifascista con gli antifascisti,” only to hide behind a widespread sense of apathy: “Infatti non esiste rigo di quegli anni dove io abbia mai fatto apologia di fascismo, non mi interessavo affatto alla politica” (quoted in Buttafuoco n.p.). To quote Claudio Fogu, “Italians possessed a fundamental banality of goodness ... [and] bore no sense of collective responsibility for their fascist past” (147).

Maraffa's actions after the war echo such lack of accountability. Like many others, although a small figure (or perhaps *because* he was a marginal figure) of the fascist publishing press, he managed to survive and have a respectable post-fascist life in Venice, where he edited a travel magazine, *Venezia*, until his death.

As we already know from his note to Mezzasoma, quoted at the beginning of this study, Maraffa enthusiastically welcomed the birth of the Repubblica Sociale, something that was confirmed by his migration northwards, a rite of passage common to Mussolini's *fedelissimi*, Marinetti included. In his letter to Mezzasoma, Maraffa's “joy” must refer to the unexpected events: with a risky operation, on 12 September 1943, the Germans had freed Mussolini and had put him at the head of the short-lived new republic. Like Maraffa, people who had been professional and financial profiteers during the previous regime must have taken it as a sign that the old ways could resume. It was not meant to be. Unfortunately, in Maraffa's case, the scarcity of documents and of an archive prevents us from shedding more light on the crucial years that followed Mussolini's arrest. A partial answer comes from the 1950s *curriculum vitae*, written by Maraffa himself:

Nell'ultimo decennio trasferito forzatamente a Venezia subì quattro mesi di carcere politico (1944), fu radiato dall'albo dei

giornalisti per la sua adesione al movimento dei quarantacinque giorni, fu escluso dal lavoro retribuito, le sue opere ritirate dal commercio con diffida del Ministero della Cultura Popolare del tempo, mentre la sua casa di Roma gli veniva saccheggata di ogni bene mobile. Dopo dieci anni gli è stata rigettata la domanda per il risarcimento dei danni di guerra. (n.p.)

Maraffa depicts himself not like an exploiter of fascist politics and policies, but like a victim, a professional who was robbed of all of his possessions (“la sua casa di Roma gli veniva saccheggata di ogni bene mobile”) and of the right to write and publish. It would appear as if his troubles started when he supported the “movimento dei quarantacinque giorni,” but it probably has more to do with the previous two decades. We do not know precisely what happened after his letter to Mezzasoma, and the move to Venice meant that his archive was lost. It is hard to say whether Maraffa had actually been at risk. Some philo-fascist intellectuals were imprisoned and tried. Among them Attilio Vallecchi, “accused of having taken subsidies from the Fascists” (Forgacs and Gundle 112). Others left Italy, among them the Mondadoris who, on September 9 1943, “fled to Switzerland, taking with them 85 percent of the firm’s shares” (Forgacs and Gundle 116). Later on, “Arnoldo would cite his self-imposed exile as evidence of his refusal to collaborate with the Nazis and the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (RSI)” (Forgacs and Gundle 116). Perhaps. But it is undeniable that many intellectuals, on all political sides, were in a state of alarm.

Suddenly, after Mussolini’s fall, and even more after the end of the war, Italy discovered itself to be anti-fascist, a baffling circumstance for contemporary scholars. Fogu offers an explanation:

The puzzling fact that the large majority of Italians who had not taken up arms either against or in defense of the Nazi-fascist regime could transform itself overnight into an anti-fascist mass may have had a lot to do with their psychological ability to remember themselves as Mussolinians rather than as fascists. (160)

Moreover, according to Fogu, “the equation of the resistance with anti-fascism *tout court* provided the new political forces of the new Italian

republic with a founding myth for their democratic constitution” (149). In Maraffa’s case, we can see a practical application illustrated in his carefully crafted post-war *resumé*, containing the fragments of a life that appears substantially different (no mention of the *Ventennio*) from the one described in an earlier *curriculum vitae* addressed to Mussolini:

Proveniente dai Fasci Rivoluzionari Interventisti di Milano. Sotto le armi dal ’16 al ’19. Proveniente dal Gruppo Nazionalista Giovanile di Genova. Aderente alla storica adunata 23 Marzo 1919 – Milano P. S. Sepolcro; cui non poté intervenire di persona, perché essendo sotto le armi, gli fu negato il permesso di recarsi da Genova a Milano, essendo stato noto il suo telegramma di adesione, pubblicato sul Popolo d’Italia. (*Curriculum Vitae*)

In the post-war years, this proud fascist biography is excised, leaving an embarrassing twenty-year gap:

Per altri dodici anni diresse tra Roma e Milano la rivista *L’Italia Illustrata* considerata unanimemente tra i più autorevoli periodici d’arte, turismo, economia. Fu combattente volontario della guerra 1915–18 durante la quale fu utilizzato validamente dai Comandi nel settore della propaganda tra le masse di prima linea e per cui si ebbe la particolare simpatia di D’Annunzio che in seguito lo ricevette al Vittoriale e gli dedicò vivo incoraggiamento e l’appoggio per ogni iniziativa che avesse carattere di italianità... la sua opera poetica raccolta in tre volumi: “Ombre, silenzi, armonie” con illustrazioni di Servolini (poesie); “Riflessi,” “Chiarezze” (poesie). In prosa scrisse “Note Critiche,” “Colloqui con i giovani,” e “Aquila di Roma.” Nell’ultimo decennio trasferito forzatamente a Venezia subì quattro mesi di carcere politico (1944)... Operato due volte agli occhi è rimasto quasi cieco e già da diversi anni non è nelle possibilità di svolgere il suo lavoro come un tempo, malgrado tutto all’età di ottantadue anni dirige la rivista illustrata “Venezia” che tratta di turismo, arte ed economia ed è diffusa in pregevole edizione in tutta Italia e all’estero. (*Curriculum Vitae*)



Maraffa's careful transformation into an unwilling participant, into a victim of fascism, was complete. He followed many others on the route of 'convenient' amnesia:

Non dovrà dunque stupire il carattere ambiguo e ingannevole delle autorappresentazioni dei giornalisti che hanno "attraversato" il fascismo: a differenza di quanto è accaduto nel primo quarantennio postunitario, i "ragionamenti" intorno al proprio itinerario professionale e politico non possono, ovviamente, aver corso in tempo reale... ma sono di regola largamente differiti, e spesso sostituiti da un'ottica speciosamente giustificazionista che tocca il suo estremo limite nella contorta operazione autoanalitica che apre *La coda di paglia* di Piovene: insomma, nessuna autocritica ha corso prima del 1945, e talvolta bisogna aspettare anni e anni ancora. (Contorbia XXVII)

The years following Mussolini's fall until the end of the war and the proclamation of the new Italian Republic were a confusing time, but also a time of opportunity that could be used to one's own advantage. And yet, despite the confusion and the danger of retaliation, publishing in Italy did not stop. On the contrary, it resumed vigorously, propelled by a new-found energy:

The period immediately after liberation in 1945 saw a mushrooming of small publishing houses, some of which survived for only a few months, and an increase in book production, despite residual paper shortages. At the same time some existing publishers sought to take advantage both of the market opportunities and of the chance for cultural renewal opened up by the liberation. (Gundle and Forgacs 105)

However, in spite of his efforts, Maraffa did not manage to avoid all reprisal for his fascist past. In particular, in January 1945, all intellectuals guilty of questionable behavior between 25 July and 8 September 1943 were banned from publishing:

Sul finire della repubblica sociale, si era arrivati alle liste di prescrizione. Una circolare, spedita il 24 gennaio 1945 dal direttore del sindacato editori, Guido Zirano disponeva "l'immediato ritiro dalla circolazione delle loro opere a stampa; la proibizione alle case editrici e alle tipografie di stampare e pubblicare le loro opere, l'esclusione dalla rappresentazione dei loro lavori teatrali, il divieto ai giornali e ai periodici di giovare della loro collaborazione." (Fenzi Viziano 36)

Maraffa was among them. A small price to pay, all things considered. And he was in good company; the list included Sibilla Aleramo, Leo Longanesi, and Indro Montanelli.

Salvatore Maraffa Abate was an average man, an *italiano medio*, ruled by his desire to belong, to be on the winner's side, from Ignazio and Franca Florio's elegant Sicily to Mussolini's powerful Rome. For almost a century, he desperately tried to rise to fame, like a mediocre everyman or, rather, like a superman who was not yet a man, to recall Francesco Flora's words in his 1945 *Stampa nell'era fascista*:

È ben difficile trovare grandi scrittori che, pur capaci della più ardua purezza lirica, non abbiano accanto alle poesie, manifestato il loro principio politico e non abbiano come cittadini partecipato alla vicenda sociale. Basterà citare Dante, Petrarca o Foscolo. Per trovare poeti che si dichiarano indifferenti alla vita politica, ... bisogna giungere ai minori poeti del romanticismo e del decadentismo. Ma, appunto, si tratta di poeti minori: di superuomini che, di fatto, non erano ancora divenuti uomini. (XIV–XV)

In the past several years, historians and literary critics tackled the question of Italian intellectuals and their relationship with fascism, but a lot of work still needs to be done on the so-called minor or marginal figures and their participation in the fascist propaganda machine. Maraffa's case is not unique, but it is representative of the idiosyncratic Italian situation. While the Min.Cul.Pop. would keep him—and, presumably, others like him—under control, and be suspicious of his constant adulation, as the thick files on him at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato testify, he continued to receive small subsidies until the

fall of Mussolini and beyond. This is a sign that, while not openly promoting it, the ministry did benefit from these apparently irrelevant characters and from their unauthorized propaganda.

Even with all the negative traits of the *Mitläufer*, Maraffa deserves to be pulled out from oblivion for his contribution to early twentieth century Sicilian world of letters.<sup>27</sup> His strong desire to succeed was matched by his spirited will, and on 2 June 1958, he was honored with the “Cavaliere dell’Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana per i suoi meriti di giornalista.”<sup>28</sup> His great act of *trasformismo* into model Italian citizen was complete; Maraffa achieved what he searched for all his life: official, national recognition (even if belated) for his “service” to Italian culture.

In the early 1930s, Sebastiano Munzone published an anthology of Sicilian poets. Among them was also Salvatore Maraffa Abate/Leodalba. His poem “Il cercatore” (Munzone 43), almost an epitaph, is a persuasive self-portrait of this elusive character:

*Il cercatore*

Viator dolente  
nuovo Israele errante sempre inquieto  
ch’eternamente  
scruti, ricerche, frughi, qual nel greto  
avidò d’oro  
l’oro ricerca il cercator audace,  
senza ristoro  
colpo su colpo, senza posa e pace  
in ogni core  
così tu scavi inesorabilmente  
finché l’ultimo colpo di piccone  
il cor ti spacchi.

Ombretta Frau

MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Leodalba was one of Salvatore Maraffa Abate’s pseudonyms.

<sup>2</sup> Accompanying this sum was a note signed Gilberto Bernabei (who later became Giulio Andreotti’s close collaborator): “In relazione alla vostra lettera del 23-9-943 (sic) mi è gradito trasmettervi per ordine del Ministero l’accluso assegno del Credito Italiano 098493 di L. 1.000 quale eccezionale sovvenzione concessavi dall’Ecc. il Ministro. Vi prego di restituire quietanzato l’unito modulo di ricevuta” (Ministero della Cultura Popolare).

<sup>3</sup> Here, I intend minor mainly as ‘marginalized,’ in the Deleuzian sense.

<sup>4</sup> In his early years in Palermo, while editor of the literary magazine *Flirt*, Maraffa Abate also managed a small publishing house. Among his publications are works by Jolanda, Pietro Lanza di Scalea, Luigi Natoli, and Virgilio La Scuola. Later, in Rome, he published his own works under the Italia Fascista Editrice label. See Cristina Gragnani (“Il lettore” and “*Flirt*”).

<sup>5</sup> In a *curriculum vitae* from the late 1950s, Maraffa wrote: “I suoi scritti rimasero sparsi un po’ dovunque—e questo è un altro lato della sua generosità—non organizzandosi egli una raccolta, una documentazione di lavoro, non catalogando mai il dare e l’avere, quando lo spirito pronto allo slancio gli suggeriva la pubblica espressione di giornalista e di scrittore. Soltanto per la insistenza di alcuni editori ha raccolto la sua opera poetica riunita in tre volumi: *Ombre, silenzi, armonie* con illustrazioni di Servolini (poesie); *Riflessi, Chiarezze* (poesie).” I am indebted to Maraffa’s son Augusto for this *curriculum* and for other information. I would like to thank him for his help and patience over the years while I was researching his father’s past.

<sup>6</sup> In *Flirt*, Maraffa appears as Salvatore Maraffa Abate (also spelled ‘Abbate’). Occasionally, he added “[dei marchesi] di Lungarini,” Lungarini being his mother’s family. The spelling ‘Maraffa’ was adopted in the 1920s.

<sup>7</sup> See *Chi è? Dizionario degli italiani d’oggi*, under “Maraffa” (n.p.).

<sup>8</sup> Cristina Gragnani notes: “La palermitana *Flirt. Rivista Illustrata Letteraria, Artistica e Mondana* (1897–1908) presenta caratteristiche tanto singolari da essere un vero e proprio caso editoriale nel panorama della stampa periodica italiana tra Otto e Novecento. Volta a riflettere (e al tempo stesso formare) l’identità culturale della leggendaria *haute* cittadina a cui si rivolge direttamente, ma anche con l’ambizione di imporsi nel mercato editoriale nazionale e di affermare un filo diretto con la Francia, la rivista rappresenta un esempio del fenomeno che oggi denominiamo *glocal*” (Gragnani, “Il lettore” 133).

<sup>9</sup> See Marta Savini’s *Riviste ottocentesche e storia della critica* (87–88).

<sup>10</sup> Cristina Gragnani analyzed this aspect of *Flirt* in “*Flirt* 1897-1902: lettrici e scrittrici di una rivista siciliana.”

<sup>11</sup> However, *Flirt* had a respectable circulation that reached 20,000 copies (Gragnani, “Il lettore” 133).

<sup>12</sup> See Gragnani (“Il lettore” 135).

<sup>13</sup> As an example, see Maraffa’s adoring profile of Ignazio Florio in *Flirt*, 1 July 1899 (“Ignazio Florio”).

<sup>14</sup> Among the numerous publications that document the rise and fall of the Florio family, see Candela, Marasà, Requierez, and Taccari.

<sup>15</sup> See Ettore Serio’s book *La vita quotidiana a Palermo ai tempi del Gattopardo*.

<sup>16</sup> We could turn to a contemporary of Maraffa’s, Benedetto Croce, and his well-known critical attitude towards journalism in general. Croce defined journalism as “gruppo di prodotti letterari di qualità inferiore... che ingegni superficiali e incolti manipolano giorno per giorno per riempirne i pubblici fogli” (128).

<sup>17</sup> In Marinetti’s correspondence we find a 1929 letter Maraffa wrote from Messina. In his letter, Maraffa asks his influential friend for help to secure a regular position: “Messina, 26-3-1929 VII ... Caro e mio grande Immortale, Congratulazioni infinite! Ma appena avrò un momento di buon umore ti cuocerò in salsa piccante accademica passatista. Scherzi a parte sto preparando un articolo che non ti dispiacerà. Tu conosci per *propria provata* la mia dedizione (?) e la mia ammirazione. Ma non vorrai tu far nulla per togliermi dalla tragica situazione in cui mi trovo? Da la Gazzetta di Messina andrà via Serretta; non può la tua catapultica forza accademica futurista imporre il mio nome all’On. Annicucci? Il quale del resto potrebbe balestrarmi anche in altri giornali e in altri centri: s’intende per posti di direttore e di redatt. capo. Ti ha chiesto telegraficamente raccomandazione per Commissario di Messina Francesco Turchi perché a sua volta mi raccomandi a Turati. L’hai fatto, lo farai? È *urgente!!!* Puoi raccomandarmi a Cavacchioli perché io entri collaboratore alle Arciriviste? Tu quando verrai a Messina? Desidero entrare a far parte della Società Autori e scrittori di cui sei Segretario. Cosa debbo fare? Ti prego di *agire* fulmineamente in mio favore e *di rispondermi*. Ti abbraccio con grande affetto, Tuo aff.mo, S. Maraffa” (“Letter to F.T. Marinetti” n.p.). The letter is written on *Italia fascista* stationery. The relationship between Maraffa and Marinetti remained friendly until Marinetti’s death, as demonstrated in the condolences letter, Maraffa’s partner Lori Mangano wrote Benedetta Cappa: “Venezia, 4-12-44, Gentile Signora, la presente per esprimervi anche a nome di Leo d’Alba il vivissimo dolore profondamente sentito per la fine del caro e illustre Marinetti. Vi siamo vicini con tutta l’anima, memori della bontà del grande Amico e della squisitezza Vostra, Signora, e delle Vostre care adorabili bambine. Vi pensiamo forti, nell’incolombabile silenzio, così come siete state sempre degne di Lui, compagne impareggiabili della sua fulgida esistenza. Vogliate accogliere, cara Signora, un abbraccio particolarmente affettuoso e baciare per me le figliole. Lori Mangano Maraffa/ Cultura Popolare” (n.p.)

<sup>18</sup> In 1911, Maraffa created *L’Italia Illustrata* and in January 1916, in Genoa, he founded *Le Giornate d’Italia*, a publication that openly endorsed the war. *Giornate* continued its (irregular) publication until 1920. By then, Maraffa had almost completely abandoned literary themes in favor of political content. The patriotic program of *Le Giornate d’Italia* was clearly stated: “Lotteremo perché – compatibilmente con le esigenze d’ordine militare esterno – sia il più possibile lumeggiata la situazione militare italiana ... per *l’Italia amatissima*, tutti e tutto” (*Le Giornate d’Italia* n.p.).

<sup>19</sup> *Italia fascista* was closed between September 1939 and February 1942 because of the paper shortage crisis. Maraffa and Mangano obtained permission to reopen their periodical on 23 February 1942, as long as they did not request additional funds: “Salvatore Maraffa Abate (Leodalba) e il Gen. Corselli, condirettori della rivista *Italia fascista* comunicarono la ripresa delle pubblicazioni del periodico e chiesero un ritratto del DUCE, possibilmente con firma, da pubblicare per un articolo del Gen. Corselli dal titolo *I nostri Capi*. Il Ministero della Cultura Popolare, cui furono chieste notizie, comunica che l’autorizzazione a riprendere le pubblicazioni è stata concessa al Maraffa dopo lunghe insistenze e numerose premure, con la esplicita condizione che non domandasse aiuti in denaro.” (Segreteria Particolare del Duce, March 1942. TS).

<sup>20</sup> In 1942, for instance, Maraffa’s partner and colleague, Lori Mangano, wrote a piece, “Parlo con Bruno,” to commemorate the recently deceased Bruno Mussolini (1918–1941). Mangano sent the Duce her article together with a request for a meeting. Her request was denied. However, before this little setback, Mangano, like Maraffa, managed to profit from the regime and, in 1941, after a lot of pressure on Mussolini’s office, she was hired at the Ente Stampa: “La publicista Lori Mangano chiede l’interessamento del DUCE per essere assunta come redattrice in un quotidiano o presso un ufficio romano di corrispondenza, ovvero per collaborare nel quadro della attività editoriale di Garzanti” (Ministero della Cultura Popolare). She followed up the good news with a thank you note: “Dite al Duce che da questa collaborazione trarrò rinnovata lena per diffondere l’idea della Rivoluzione da Lui voluta e che trionferà ancora una volta sul nemico della nostra civiltà.” This letter, addressed to Mussolini’s *segretario particolare*, was written on 26 September 1941, only days after her plea, which exemplifies the fascist machine’s effectiveness (Mangano, Letter to Nicola De Cesare).

<sup>21</sup> “The issue for 7 December 1941 will serve as an example... There are no book-reviews in this particular issue. But there are some short reviews of operas and films (Italian and German only), all entirely aesthetic in character” (Hainsworth 710).

<sup>22</sup> The colophon of “Poema di Torreviscosa” bears the date “Milano, 17 settembre 1938.” It was dedicated to Mussolini: “Gli aeroporti futuristi dedicano al/ DUCE/ Il Poema di Torre Viscosa/ Parole in Libertà di/ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti/ Accademico d’Italia.” Claudia Salaris reports: “*Gli aeropoeti futuristi dedicano al Duce il Poema di Torre Viscosa*, parole in libertà futuriste di FT Marinetti Accademico d’Italia, Milano, Edizione a cura dell’Ufficio propaganda della Snia Viscosa, Officine Grafiche Esperia, 1938 (contiene la *Poesia dei tecnicismi. Manifesto futurista* di FT Marinetti)” (53).

<sup>23</sup> As stressed in a 1939 *curriculum vitae* he sent Mussolini hoping to be received: “Proveniente dai Fasci Rivoluzionari Interventisti di Milano. Sotto le armi dal ’16 al ’19. Proveniente dal Gruppo Nazionalista Giovanile di Genova. Aderente alla storica adunata 23 Marzo 1919 – Milano P. S. Sepolcro; cui non poté intervenire di persona, perché essendo sotto le armi, gli fu negato il permesso di recarsi da Genova a Milano, essendo stato noto il suo telegramma di adesione, pubblicato sul Popolo d’Italia” (Segreteria Particolare del Duce).

- <sup>24</sup> *Aquile di Roma* is the result of a collaboration with artist Luigi Servolini (Livorno 1906–1981).
- <sup>25</sup> Augusto Maraffa was born in 1932. Bruno Maraffa in 1935.
- <sup>26</sup> Rita married one of Italy's most celebrated film dubbers, actor Ferruccio Amendola. She is Claudio Amendola's mother. Curiously enough, Giuseppe Savagnone's sister is the mother of celebrated conductor Claudio Abbado (1933-2014). See Chiara Di Dino.
- <sup>27</sup> As demonstrated by Cristina Gagnani's articles on Maraffa's magazine *Flirt* ("Il lettore" and "*Flirt*").
- <sup>28</sup> I would like to thank Ilva Sapora, Director of the Ufficio Onorificenze e Araldica della Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, for her assistance.

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