

## THE WHISPER WITH A THOUSAND ECHOES: Tony Gentile's Photograph of Falcone and Borsellino.

### Abstract:

Tony Gentile's photograph of Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino is one of the most reprinted Italian icons of the 20th century. Sacred icons can lose their auratic power when they are excessively re-printed and re-used, yet Gentile's photograph continues to maintain a certain power. Deriving a special status from its immediate connection to the lost dead bodies of the judges, Gentile's photograph makes demands on viewers in the present like an uncanny revenant from 1992. This paper considers examples of ways the photograph has been visually, symbolically and materially manipulated by various social agents in the twenty four years since the judges' assassinations to reflect on the polysemous power of the photograph. Considering visual adaptations of the photograph from anti-mafia demonstrations, to monuments and commemorative stamps, from football stadiums to political cartoons this paper will show how the dead judges have been made to speak from beyond the grave, though whether anyone is listening is a matter for another paper.

[Fig.1] Tony Gentile 'Falcone e Borsellino'

### **The birth of an icon**

On March 27 1992, two greying men in suits exchanged a whisper at a press conference. Touching shoulders as they leant into each other to speak and listen, the two men smiled, one loosely clasping his reading glasses, the other with arms crossed like his teacher might have taught him to do in elementary school many decades earlier. The two judges were speaking at a conference about mafia and politics at Palazzo Trinachia in Palermo, and were captured by a young photographer, Tony Gentile working for the evening edition of *Il Giornale di Sicilia*. Little did they know, as Gentile clicked a sequence of five black and white shots, that those images would bind them together in a frozen whisper that would become one of the most iconic photographs in Italian history.

Gentile's most famous photograph was not published on the evening it was taken. After the death of judge Giovanni Falcone on 23 May Gentile sent the photograph to the distribution company Sintesi, from where it reached the editorial boards of major newspapers worldwide. It wasn't until the assassination of judge Paolo Borsellino on 19 July that the photograph made front page news across the world and by the end of that year it had appeared on the cover of *Time Magazine* and become a symbol of

the dead judges and their struggle against the mafia.<sup>1</sup>

As a lasting symbol of the judges the photograph now has the status of a cultural icon. Robert Hariman and Luis Lucaites in their book *No Caption Needed*, explore the ways iconic images serve as rhetorical devices that make demands on viewers in the present. They write that 'iconic photographs provide the viewing public with powerful evocations of emotional experience'.<sup>2</sup> Photographs become iconic not only due to their wide circulation, which makes them immediately recognisable<sup>3</sup> but also for the way they are able to harness emotions and spur 'artistic improvisation and viewer response'.<sup>4</sup> Miles Orvell described how the meaning of iconic images 'is not necessarily fixed or stable over time'<sup>5</sup> in fact it may very well be that it is the ability of a single photographic image to allow for contradictory meanings to be projected onto it that lends it iconic status. This paper will reflect on the ambiguity embedded in the perceived power of Gentile's photograph as an icon, by considering the context in which it was made iconic, as well as presenting practical ways the icon has been 'used' in the aftermath of the judges' assassinations. While the photograph's iconic status at times empties it out of the very symbolic resonance social agents attribute to it, its connection to the dead bodies of the judges still lends it a dangerous power.

Tony Gentile's photograph represents and encompasses the joint tragedy of the brutal killing of two judges by the mafia in 1992. Vicky Goldberg has noted that iconic images 'concentrate the hopes and fears of millions and provide an instant and effortless connection to one deeply meaningful moment in history.'<sup>6</sup> Gentile's photograph, however, does not capture the moment of the assassination of the judges but a lost moment, a time of innocence prior to the judges' destruction. Its power as an icon lies precisely in this distancing from the 'meaningful moment in history' it represents. Unlike other iconic photographs where the events made visible by photography ARE the events being represented (see for example the famous photograph *The Terror of War* by Nick Ut capturing Vietnamese children running from a napalm attack) the 'event' Tony Gentile captured was an ordinary day in which the judges were alive together. Yet this very ordinary depiction gained extraordinary power precisely for its invisible relation

---

<sup>1</sup> The context of the photograph's publication was discussed in John Dickie. "Falcone and Borsellino: The Story of an Iconic Photo." *Modern Italy* 17.2 (2012): 251-55.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Hariman, and John Louis. Lucaites. *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, p.35.

<sup>3</sup> as Cornelia Brink described in her article "Secular Icons: Looking at Photographs from Nazi Concentration Camps." *History & Memory* 12.1 (2000): 135-50, p. 137.

<sup>4</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, *ibid.* 20.

<sup>5</sup> Miles Orvell. *American Photography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.213.

<sup>6</sup> Vicky Goldberg, *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives* (New York, 1991), 135.

to other impossibly painful images in which the judges' bodies were conspicuously absent.

Most Italians learned the news of the assassination of both judges Falcone and Borsellino through the special editions of the *telegiornali*. These early reports on what are known as the 'stragi' of Capaci and Via D'Amelio, revealed the news of the deaths of the judges by focusing on the destroyed landscapes torn apart by the Mafia's 'Lebanese strategy'.<sup>7</sup> In Capaci the scene was initially filmed at a great distance, and the cars carrying Falcone, his wife and his bodyguards had to be 'discovered' by viewers in a landscape where five tonnes of explosives obliterated an immense stretch of highway. The Via D'Amelio reports showed panning images where the camera filmed through crowds of people, burning cars and billowing smoke before it finally focused on the exploded building where Borsellino's mother lived and where the judge lost his life. In the news reports<sup>8</sup> the bodies of the judges were only present in the imagination, replaced by signifiers of their destruction: the twisted metal of the highway, mangled cars, the debris and mud collected around the shattered vehicles in Capaci; smoke and collapsed balconies, the melted dashboard of a parked car in front of Via D'Amelio.<sup>9</sup> Tony Gentile's photograph thus recomposed the shattered bodies of the judges and concentrated the collective gaze of traumatised viewers on their serene smiles.<sup>10</sup>

In this light, Tony Gentile's photograph of the judges is sublime. Nicholas Mirzoeff defines the sublime as 'the pleasurable experience in representation of that which would be painful or terrifying in reality'<sup>11</sup> and refers to the ancient statue of Laocoon and his children to illustrate this concept. While representing the judges' total annihilation the photograph provides a positive sensorial experience in its readers as it 'defends' the

---

<sup>7</sup> This term was meant to draw a comparison between the scale of urban destruction produced by the mafia's war against the state and the type of destruction commonly associated by the bombs used in the Lebanese civil war of the 1980s.

<sup>8</sup> 23 Maggio 1992, TG1 edizione straordinaria sulla Strage di Capaci <http://bit.ly/1QruB6v> (visited December 2015); 19 Luglio 1992, il TG2 annuncia la strage di via d'Amelio, <http://bit.ly/21gfLBq> (visited January 2016).

<sup>9</sup> This form of reporting, now common, was aimed at eliciting direct participation from the viewers, led to the scene of the crime by a shocked and slightly confused reporter. It strongly resembles the style of reporting on the Moro kidnapping and then on the recovery of his body and certainly created a sense of collective national trauma.

<sup>10</sup> Deborah Puccio-Den has commented on the ways the thousands of people who paid visit to the Albero Falcone in the aftermath of his killing considered themselves 'witnesses' to his sacrifice. This act of witnessing, which was deeply emotional and traumatic for the public, was made possible by the spectacle of death choreographed by the mafia and captured by television. See Deborah Puccio Den "Difficult Remembrance: Memorialising Mafia Victims in Palermo" in Margry, P. J., and Cristina Sánchez Carretero (eds.) *Grassroots Memorials: The Politics of Memorializing Traumatic Death*. New York: Berghahn, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed.). *The Visual Culture Reader*. London: Routledge, 2002, p.9.

'shreds of living presence' of the judges 'against oblivion, against death'.<sup>12</sup> Gentile's photograph thus represents an act of resurrection of the dead judges, which simultaneously captures their loss and destruction.

Patrick Hagopian and Paul Lester have both commented on the important relationship between the moving image and still photographs.<sup>13</sup> Hagopian noted how some of the most iconic images of the Vietnam war were all originally moving images from which stills were taken and yet it is in the still images of the war that memories concentrate. For Hagopian it is the stillness of the photograph that lends it its power because the photograph 'exists in space but not in time, it can endure for the viewer. We can fix on a particular configuration of forms and we can hold it in our gaze. We can possess it and stare at it'.<sup>14</sup> There is no single still image from the *stragi* of Capaci and Via D'Ame-lio that the Italian public can hold in its gaze, and Gentile's photograph manages to join the two violent events together. For Paul Lester, 'it is the powerful stillness of the frozen, decisive moment, that lives in the consciousness of all who have seen the photographs'.<sup>15</sup> As the 'decisive moment' of both the assassinations did not appear on film (the actual explosions) and viewers were presented with the confusing violent aftermath of the tragedies, Gentile's photograph allowed the grieving public to slow down the visual loop of death and destruction presented by television and to rest on the frozen stillness of a prior moment.

Gentile's photograph can also be read as the visual near-embrace between two men. As Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites have noted, iconic images 'provide dramatic enactments of specific positionings, postures and gestures that communicate emotional reactions instantly' (...) such reactions 'create interactions that become circuits of emotional exchange'.<sup>16</sup> Emerging in visual opposition to the mechanised and faceless violence of the mafia's destruction, the smiling near-embrace of the two judges triggers strong emotions in viewers also because it constitutes an image of idealised male bonding, which is key to a long tradition of *impegno* in Italy and its close association with masculinity.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> In the words of sociologist Edgar Morin, cited by Cornelia Brink (ibid.) p. 140.

<sup>13</sup> Patrick Hagopian. 'Vietnam War Photography as a Locus of Memory' in *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts*. Eds. Annette Kuhn and Kirsten Emiko McAllister. New York: Berghahn; Paul Lester. *Photojournalism: An Ethical Approach*. Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum, 1991.

<sup>14</sup> Hagopian, ibid. p. 213.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Lester. *Photojournalism: An Ethical Approach*. Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum, 1991, p.120.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Hariman, and John Louis. Lucaites. ibid. p. 36.

<sup>17</sup> For discussions on representations of masculinity and *impegno* in popular culture see: Sergio Rigoletto. *Masculinity and Italian Cinema : Sexual Politics, Social Conflict and Male crisis in the 1970s*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014 or Florian Mussgnug and Pierpaolo Antonello (Eds.) *Postmodern Impegno: Ethics and Commitment in Contemporary Italian Culture*. Italian Modernities. Oxford: Peter Lang. 2009.

If we are to find the 'punctum'<sup>18</sup> in Gentile's photograph, one could say it rests in the direct line going from Giovanni Falcone's lips to Borsellino's right eye (and hidden ear) or perhaps in the gentle tightening of Falcone's fingers around his reading glasses. These gestures play a key role in the circuit of emotional exchange between the public and the assassinated judges perhaps because they trigger echoes of another cherished icon of Italian heroic masculinity: that of the water exchange between cyclists Fausto Coppi and Gino Bartali.<sup>19</sup> Read in parallel to each other these two icons of Italian heroism share many points in common: the focus on two male bodies 'in action' side by side, the suits and cycling gear which make the bodies of each pair near identical, the notepads of the judges echoing the handlebars of the cyclists, even the eyes of Falcone and Bartali being half closed. In both cases it is a sudden and unexpectedly intimate gesture linking the two male bodies that captures the viewer's eye: the whisper and the bottle exchange.<sup>20</sup>

Iconic images, according to Hariman and Lucaites, are 'civic performances combining semiotic complexity and emotional connection.' In the days after the violent disappearance of the judges it is unsurprising that an image linking the lost bodies of the judges not only to each other but perhaps also to other symbolically encoded lost male bodies, became the image of choice to commemorate them.

### **Material and symbolic adaptations: afterlives of a photograph**

Tony Gentile's photograph has been appropriated, copied and satirised by a wide range of social agents. It would be impossible to discuss them all, but I will now present examples ranging from street demonstrations, to official commemorations, from contemporary protests to satirical cartoons.

Gentile's photograph came to resurrect and materially re-embody the judges almost immediately after the 'stragi'. Following the Strage di Capaci the tree outside Giovanni Falcone's house became the focus of a series of spontaneous private outpourings where individuals left messages and flowers dedicated to the dead judge. After the Strage di Via D'Amelio, Gentile's photograph was stapled to the tree at human height so that the bottom of the tree with its roots and half trunk appeared to be symbolic legs for

---

<sup>18</sup> Roland Barthes calls the 'punctum' the specific detail in a photograph that 'pricks' the viewer and provokes an emotional reaction, in Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang. 1981, p.146.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of this photograph by Wafrido Chiarini see John Foot. *Pedalare! Pedalare!: A History of Italian Cycling*. London: Bloomsbury. 2011, p. 159-172.

<sup>20</sup> While Falcone and Borsellino were not rivals as Coppi and Bartali had been, their polar opposite private political views (socialist and MSI) echoed those of the cyclists (PC, DC).

the judges. Deborah Pucci-Den described how: 'In many representations of the *albero Falcone*, the written pieces blend in with the ficus magnolia leaves. The branches link the anti-mafia supporters and their founder, the judge, who is embodied in the tree trunk in certain pictures'.<sup>21</sup>

The symbolic recomposition of the bodies of the judges through invisible legs became even more explicit on the first anniversary of the Strage di Capaci when Palermo's *Comitato dei Lenzuoli*<sup>22</sup> reprinted Tony Gentile's photograph above the inscription: 'Non li avete uccisi: le loro idee camminano sulle nostre gambe'.<sup>23</sup> [Fig 2] Comitato dei lenzuoli. Not only did the writing of the word 'gambe' sit precisely in the space where the judges legs should have extended beyond Gentile's photograph, but the writing and the photograph itself were tinted with green, pink and red hues. Thus the protesters were symbolically carrying the judges on their own legs while imbuing them with 'their' collective new life, retrieving them from the morbid stillness of black and white and literally bringing colour back to their faces.

Just as Tony Gentile's photograph was quickly appropriated by anti-mafia protesters as a symbol of the judges it was similarly visually and materially incorporated in the texture of state and regional commemorations on the anniversaries of the massacres. Two examples of this explicit adaptation of the photograph can be found in the monument to Falcone and Borsellino that was placed in Palermo's airport of Punta Raisi (renamed after the judges), and in the commemorative stamps printed on the tenth and twentieth anniversary of the stragi.

On a wall outside the arrivals hall in Punta Raisi, Falcone and Borsellino's photographic whisper was re-rendered in a bronze medallion inscribed with the judges' names 'Giovanni Falcone, Paolo Borsellino, gli altri...orgoglio della nuova Sicilia'. The medallion was placed in the centre of a rough map of Sicily made of sandstone slabs of different colours and sizes. Unveiled on 11 June 2002, it didn't even last a decade in its airport location. On 23 June 2011, in fact, it was transferred to the police station in the town of Cefalù, where the artist who made the monument, Tommaso Geraci, resides. The failure of the monument reflected tensions surrounding the symbolic meaning of the

---

<sup>21</sup> Deborah Pucci-Den. *ibid.* p.55.

<sup>22</sup> A grassroots organisation which spearheaded a series of spontaneous anti-mafia actions across Palermo beginning with the display of white sheets from windows (sometimes with sprayed slogans on them). The sheets were meant to evoke the sheets that are placed on mafia corpses in the street after a killing to protect them from sight as well as the need to clean up the city of the mafia.

<sup>23</sup> This sentence, drawn from Giovanni Falcone's words "Gli uomini passano, le idee restano. Restano le loro tensioni morali e continueranno a camminare sulle gambe di altri uomini" has become a slogan used in anti-mafia commemorations by contrasting political parties and organizations. This sense of the re-embodiment of the judges is conveyed over and over, to see an example from 2012 consider this comic strip by Mauro Biani: <http://bit.ly/1OIVVvq> (visited 15 February 2016).

judges as right-wing politicians like Gianfranco Micciché challenged the very renaming of the airport after the judges as he claimed it confirmed negative stereotypes of Sicily as the land of the mafia to tourists landing on the island.<sup>24</sup>

Judges Falcone and Borsellino have been commemorated by two official stamps issued by the Italian state, respectively ten and twenty years after the Strage di Capaci. The first stamp<sup>25</sup>, issued in 3.5 million copies, was a drawn adaptation of Tony Gentile's photograph. [Fig. 3] Drawn in black-and-white it positioned the judges shoulder to shoulder and with smiles on their faces – their names written alongside the years of their respective births and deaths. This first adaptation of Gentile's photograph is explicitly concentrating on the deaths of the judges and functions as a commemorative stamp unapologetically focusing on their death. The birth and death dates of the two men evoke similar commemorations to 'caduti' of the Italian resistance and other contexts.<sup>26</sup> There are no words relating to the work of the judges, nothing written about the mafia or the anti-mafia and the men are simply framed as hero-martyrs for the Italian state.

The second stamp<sup>27</sup> depicting judges Falcone and Borsellino was issued to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Direzione Investigativa Antimafia (which also corresponded with the twentieth anniversary of their assassinations). [ Fig. 4] In this second stamp the iconic duo of the judges (still reproduced by the order and the position of the judges Falcone left, Borsellino right) was disrupted by the presence of a third judge above and between the other two, judge Rosario Livatino. Livatino was murdered by the Mafia in Agrigento in 1990 and was in the process of being beatified by the Catholic Church when the stamp was issued. The visual disruption of Tony Gentile's iconic image stood to highlight Rosario Livatino's sacred status among the other icons of the struggle against the mafia and produced an odd visual trinity supposedly aimed at suggesting a new chronology in which the two judges known as a 'duo' were to be remembered as part of a longer sequence of sacrificial victims for the state.<sup>28</sup> The president of

---

<sup>24</sup> Micciché first commented on this matter upon viewing the monument to Falcone and Borsellino at the Airport in 2007. *corriere del mezzogiorno* <http://bit.ly/1TwESP7> (visited February 2016). The controversy around Micciché's comments eventually led to his withdrawing the statement though the transfer of the monument to Cefalu cannot be coincidental.

<sup>25</sup> *i bolli 10 anniversario morte di falcone* <http://bit.ly/1RecLRB> (visited February 2016)

<sup>26</sup> In May 1986 for the 40th anniversary of the Italian Republic and the 41st anniversary of Italian liberation a commemorative stamp series was issued in Cinisello Balsamo to commemorate the fallen 'martyrs of the resistance and of deportation'. On that occasion individual stamps depicted the dead in black and white and with their dates of birth and death under their image: <http://bit.ly/1TwyRC0> (visited February 2016).

<sup>27</sup> *Ventesimo anniversario direzione investigativa antimafia* <http://bit.ly/21506IH> (visited February 2016)

<sup>28</sup> Inserting a 'catholic' judge between the duo appropriated by the left (Falcone) and the right (Borsellino) might also have had the intent of representing all three sides of the Italian political spectrum at a time of political polarisation.

Poste Italiane, Giovanni Ialongo said that the stamp dedicated to the Direzione Investigativa Antimafia was not only a 'celebratory philatelic event' but that it took on a 'significant civil and moral value because it expresses the recognition of an entire nation to the contribution that the Dia and its investigators offer each day to the security of the Country in their struggle against organized crime'. The commemoration of the three judges is not casual, according to Ialongo, as they are 'emblems of the struggle against the mafia and of the many investigators and magistrates that paid with their life for their commitment in defence of citizens and institutions'. In this retelling Falcone and Borsellino are simply remembered as 'emblems' of the struggle against the mafia.

Activists from Palermo's ex *Comitato dei Lenzuoli* lament this paying empty lip service to the memory of the judges. Piera Fallucca observed that: 'While everything is softened in the stagnant rhetoric of official commemorations, too often the anti-mafia is reduced to an institutional liturgy, celebrated in defiance of the memory of the victims and the dignity of the just'.<sup>29</sup> To Piera, such official commemorations are distasteful as they insult the memory of the victims of the mafia. In her words, the 'dignity' of just and honest people is set in stark contrast to the indignity of empty commemorations. For Piero Li Donni the commemorations taking place each year on the anniversaries of Capaci and Via D'Amelio are nothing but a 'ritual whose ECG is flat'<sup>30</sup> emptied out of meaning and life. Fausto Nicastro also says that:

By dint of school assignments, commemorations, shabby poems, recitals, little shows and papier maché statues, a genre that should instead be competitive in the field of ethics, the aesthetics and reason has been devalued. The risk is that what is left of civil consciences gets jammed up by inert materials.

All three of these comments use metaphors of stagnation, death and suffocation to describe the efforts of commemoration. For Piero Li Donni, in particular, the medical metaphor of the ECG suggests the uselessness of efforts at resuscitation though it is unclear whether the patient he imagines is Italy, Palermo, the anti-mafia movement or the memory and legacy of the judges.

One recent episode in the context of a football game played in Turin on 8 May 2013, illustrates the ways Gentile's photograph may still serve to transmit powerful ethical messages in an aesthetically pleasing way. Following the death of Giulio Andreotti,<sup>31</sup> Giovanni Malagó – the president of Italy's National Olympic Committee (CONI) – ordered that players and audiences hold a minute of silence for the politician before the

---

<sup>29</sup> Words of Piera Fallucca cited in Roberto, Alajmo. *Un lenzuolo contro la mafia*. Palermo: Navarra Editore, 2011, p.152 (my translation, the word she uses is actually 'dignità degli onesti', honest people).

<sup>30</sup> Alajmo (ibid.) p.158.

<sup>31</sup> Italy's seven-time prime minister and controversial Democratic Christian politician.

mid-week games of Italy's Serie A. In stadia all over Italy the minute of silence for Andreotti was disrupted by chants and whistling. Andreotti had been indicted for collusion with the mafia and had faced serious allegations (including suspicion of being behind the murder of journalist Mino Pecorelli in 1979) and only narrowly escaped a prison sentence when his links to the mafia were found to have ceased in 1980, protected by a statute of limitations. Andreotti was close friends with Salvatore Lima, a Palermo politician with explicit links to the mafia whose murder by the mafia in 1992 was seen to be linked to the Maxi Trial of mafia bosses overseen by Giovanni Falcone himself.

At the Toro-Genoa game in Turin the night of the commemorations for Andreotti, fans held up Tony Gentile's black and white picture printed in multiple copies as an act of defiance. Interrupting a liturgical ritual of respect for the dead Democratic Christian politician, the fans symbolically transformed the immortal whisper of the judges into a silent accusation. Operating outside of the traditional memorialisations of the two judges and within the secular sphere of a football game, Gentile's photograph became an uncanny reminder of the dead judges, whose memory was deemed to have been insulted by honorific displays addressed at Andreotti. If anniversary and official commemorations produce flat ECGs, to go back to Piero Li Donni's observation, this stadium commemoration reanimated Gentile's icon with the power of defibrillators.

The photograph's material and symbolic connection to the dead judges has the capacity to 'evoke the awe, uncertainty, and fear associated with "cosmic" concerns' linking it to death and lending it the power of the uncanny.<sup>32</sup> Regardless of how often Gentile's photograph is reproduced, it still has the capacity to draw a direct connection between the once-living bodies of the judges and the living viewers of the photograph. This icon's power rests precisely in the way it simultaneously evokes life and death. Roland Barthes saw photographs of the dead as 'emanations of the referent'. He wrote:

The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star.

This 'touching', connecting the dead to the viewer of the photograph is about more than a simple awareness that a photographed person was once alive; as with religious icons, cultural icons transmit a web of symbolic messages, which radiate into the present with reverberations of the referent. This emotional and symbolic contamination that comes

---

<sup>32</sup> Katherine Verdery. *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 31.

from deeper encounters with an icon is quintessentially visual and functions and operates outside of language.

Bridging the visual space between photography and language, political cartoons play on the irrational and emotional power of cultural icons and often reanimate them. Cartoonists have re-drawn and appropriated Gentile's image extremely often for both silly and profound purposes and this is a testament to the photograph's iconicity. I will now end with three examples from the realm of comics, which make use of Gentile's photograph to comment on the process of commemoration.

One simple way cartoonists have exploited Gentile's photograph is by filling in the blank left by the whisper in the photograph. Katherine Verdery has observed that dead bodies derive great power in politics from their silence. By symbolically re-materialising the bodies of the assassinated judges Gentile's photograph opens up a space in which the judges can be made to speak from beyond the grave and cartoonists play precisely on the discomfort viewers may experience in 'reading' these blasphemous imaginings. In response to the destruction of a monument to Falcone and Borsellino on the 18th anniversary of their death comic strip writer Vadelfio produced this image: <http://bit.ly/1SYm0sC>.<sup>33</sup> [Fig. 5] The use of the cloud-like cartoon bubble and that specific font links Vadelfio's cartoon to the Italian rendition of the Disney comic 'Paperino'. This visual connection to a popular childhood comic icon, stresses the punchline of the joke where Falcone and Borsellino lightly comment on Italy's failure to 'come of age' by remembering them properly. The cloud bubble, however, also evokes the symbolic clouds of paradise (further stressed by the fading of Gentile's image and the cloud sectioning at the bottom) and shows them looking down on Italy from heaven, enjoying a joke at Italy's expense from the sky.

In another invented conversation between the two judges, Marco Tonus' cartoon, printed on the last edition of ScaricaBile (a satirical news website) showed a darker rendition of Gentile's photograph <http://bit.ly/1TsalAO><sup>34</sup>. [Fig. 6] Looking like tired old crooks (perhaps even mafiosi?), smoking cigarettes, the two judges brag about being called heroes. Borsellino's comment that he has not spoken since 1992 gains its punch power from the connection between his silence and his death but also subtly suggests that he would not be seen to be a hero had he continued to speak. Tonus twice desecrates the heroic image of the judges: first by visually associating them with criminals and secondly by linking their heroism with silence, which in the mafia's honour code is the highest value of 'omertá'.

Finally, appearing on Il Manifesto on 31 January 2013, Mauro Biani's cartoon titled 'memory' re-imagines Gentile's photograph as a desperate plea by the judges.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> <http://bit.ly/1SYm0sC> (visited February 2016)

<sup>34</sup> ScaricaBile 33 <http://bit.ly/1TsalAO> (visited February 2016)

<sup>35</sup> Mauro Biani <http://bit.ly/1oSnGaj> (visited February 2016)

[Fig. 7] Evoking their Sicilian origins by the term 'cortesemente'-kindly- Biani imagines the judges addressing the readers and begging them to forget them. Only their suits remain in the imagined photograph, the judges fading away in memory and in representation, returned to the disembodied space of death and oblivion intended by the mafia and confirmed by a public unable to carry on their legacy. Mauro Biani's cartoon uses Gentile's icon to visually stress the photograph's fading power as a political symbol, yet by doing so he still reaffirms its significance as a cultural icon.

This article has hopefully illustrated the polysemous power of Tony Gentile's icon, as a famous image of the judges that is used by a wide range of social agents to represent a similarly wide set of symbolic discourses. All cultural icons are at once 'sacred images for a secular society' and hollow 'stock images'.<sup>36</sup> They can be framed in offices, plastered on ships<sup>37</sup>, flown from courthouses<sup>38</sup> and flashed up in car ads<sup>39</sup> or films<sup>40</sup>, but it is their power to provoke emotion (for its own sake or for the sake of action) that allows them to continue to 'walk on our legs' into the future.

## Bibliography

Alajmo, Roberto. 2011. *Un lenzuolo contro la mafia*. Palermo: Navarra Editore.

Barthes, Roland. 1981. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Brink Cornelia. 2000. 'Secular Icons: Looking at Photographs from Nazi Concentration Camps'. *History & Memory* 12(1): 135-50.

---

<sup>36</sup> Hariman and Lucaites (ibid.) p. 1-2

<sup>37</sup> Since 2002, the Nave della Legalità #navedellalegalità transports students and their teachers from civitavecchia to Palermo. Gentile's photograph is only subtly reinacted on the ship by the posting side by side of blown-up portraits of the judges in the same position as in the iconic image.

<sup>38</sup> This is part of a practice in recent years of flying the photographs of murdered judges from courthouses. Gentile's photograph often appears on the anniversaries of the stragi. See for example: <http://bit.ly/1ThGPuP>

<sup>39</sup> One of the photographs from the sequence Gentile took, appeared in a 2007 FIAT 500 commercial flashing photographs from Italy's imagined family album. <http://bit.ly/1OAaGIk> The spot juxtaposes images of 'good' and 'evil' including the photograph of the living judges as 'good' and a photograph of the highway in Capaci as 'evil'.

<sup>40</sup> It appears for example in the 2006 Rai Fiction on Giovanni Falcone <http://bit.ly/2010J10>.

Dickie, John. 2012. 'Falcone and Borsellino: The Story of an Iconic Photo.' *Modern Italy* 17 (2): 251-55.

Foot, Foot. 2011. *Pedalare! Pedalare!: A History of Italian Cycling*. London: Bloomsbury.

Goldberg, Vicky. 1991. *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives*. New York: Abbeville Press.

Hagopian, Patrick. 2006. 'Vietnam War Photography as a Locus of Memory' in *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts*. Eds. Annette Kuhn and Kirsten Emiko McAllister. New York: Berghahn.

Hariman, Robert, and John Louis Lucaites. 2007. *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press.

Lester, Paul Martin. 1991. *Photojournalism: An Ethical Approach*. Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum.

Mirzoeff, Nicholas (ed.). 2002. *The Visual Culture Reader*. London: Routledge.

Mulvey, Laura. 2006. *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*. London: Reaktion Books.

Mussgnug, Florian and Pierpaolo Antonello (ed.) 2009. *Postmodern Impegno: Ethics and Commitment in Contemporary Italian Culture*. Italian Modernities. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Orvell, Miles. 2003. *American Photography*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Puccio-Den, Deborah. 2011. 'Difficult Remembrance: Memorialising Mafia Victims in Palermo' in Margry, P. J., and Cristina Sánchez Carretero (eds.) *Grassroots Memorials: The Politics of Memorializing Traumatic Death*. New York: Berghahn.

Rigoletto, Sergio. 2014. *Masculinity and Italian Cinema : Sexual Politics, Social Conflict and Male Crisis in the 1970s*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Verdery, Katherine. 1999. *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*. New York: Columbia University Press.

## **Websites:**

23 Maggio 1992, TG1 edizione straordinaria sulla Strage di Capaci <http://bit.ly/1QruB6v> (visited December 2015)

19 Luglio 1992, il TG2 annuncia la strage di via d'Amelio, <http://bit.ly/21qfLBq> (visited January 2016).

Mauro Biani: <http://bit.ly/1OIVVvq> (visited 15 February 2016).

Corriere del Mezzogiorno, Micciché areoporto Palermo <http://bit.ly/1TwESP7> (visited February 2016).

i bolli 10 anniversario morte di falcone <http://bit.ly/1RecLRB> (visited February 2016)

Cinisello balsamo ai caduti <http://bit.ly/1TwyRC0> (visited February 2016)

Ventesimo anniversario direzione investigativa antimafia <http://bit.ly/21506IH> (visited February 2016)

Fumetto Vadelfio 18 anni <http://bit.ly/1SYm0sC> (visited February 2016)

ScaricaBile 33 <http://bit.ly/1TsalAO> (visited February 2016)

Mauro Biani <http://bit.ly/1oSnGaj> (visited February 2016)

A vent'anni da capaci <http://bit.ly/1ThGPuP> (visited April 2016)

FIAT 500 spot <http://bit.ly/1OAaGIk> (visited April 2016)