

Attilio Momigliano

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A full professor of Italian literature, when he was removed from his post it took several months and the intervention of Minister Bottai to reactivate the chair he held, after at least two 'Aryan' scholars refused to take the place of such an esteemed teacher. He is among those who immediately asked for emigration assistance, preferably to a neo-Latin-speaking country, and was recommended by various foreign colleagues; but then he desisted. After almost thirty years of miscellaneous service, he had a modest pension; with his wife, but without children, and his mother, who was a widow since 1939, he did not feel like moving to another continent without even the certainty of finding a job. He did not imagine that they would even have to hide. The procedures for his return to the Faculty, which he requested in 1944, concluded only in 1950, amidst tensions that never subsided.

Life and studies: a profile

Attilio Momigliano is an eminent figure in Italian culture, and his work as a critic and as a very fine commentator on texts has long been probed and evaluated, often by students mindful of a high moral magisterium: it is not worth it to recall all his work here, except in general outline. But it helps to at least remember the intense and sympathetic words that one of his distant cousins, the antiquarian Arnaldo Momigliano, wrote from London specifically for the commemoration proposed in 1960 by the University of Florence and addressed to the Rector, with a request for Walter Binni, who would officially remember him, to participate: «my sense of debt for the one who has been to us a teacher of simple and responsible spiritual life»¹. Attilio Momigliano had in fact followed an original and complex critical itinerary, which was always grounded in an attentive engagement with the

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¹ ASUFi, AC, SD, f. «Momigliano Attilio», letter from Arnaldo Momigliano to the Rector, London, 8 May 1960, and mentioned in Id., *Pagine ebraiche*, edited by Silvia Berti, Milan, Adelphi, 2016 (1st ed. 1987), p. XXXII.

texts and their poetic significance. This approach, soon removed from the positivistic-erudite training he had received at the University of Turin, led him to a sizeable production: from his early research on comic form and on dialect poetry (Carlo Porta, Cecco Angiolieri, Luigi Pulci) and the study of Poliziano to the study of the *Decameron* and of fundamental literary authors of the 18th and 19th centuries (Goldoni, Parini, Alfieri, Foscolo, Leopardi and, above all, Manzoni, to whom he dedicated influential contributions), all the way up until his *Saggio sull'Orlando Furioso* (1928), the three volumes of *Storia della letteratura italiana* (1933 to 1935), his contributions in twentieth-century criticism and the commentary on *Gerusalemme Liberata*, which he prepared in 1944 while taking refuge in a hospital room at San Sepolcro during the terrible months of racial persecution. And finally, the «deservedly famous»² monumental commentaries on the *Divina Commedia* and the *Promessi sposi*, published after the Second World War.

Momigliano was born into a Jewish family in Ceva (Cuneo) on 7 March 1883, to Felice (1856-1939) and Sofia (nèe Debenedetti) (1860-1947). The couple also had three daughters, Clelia (1885-1971), Lidia (1889-1973) and Michelina (1894-1965). He attended parochial schools before enrolling in the Faculty of Letters at the University of Turin, where he studied with Rodolfo Renier and Arturo Graf, among others. With the help of the latter, whose memory he always held dear despite their different critical perspectives, he graduated in 1905 with a thesis on Pulci. He graduated the following year in philosophy. In 1907, he obtained a *diploma di perfezionamento* [postgraduate diploma] from the Istituto di Studi Superiori of Florence under the guidance of Guido Mazzoni, whom he would succeed as professor of Italian literature at that university on 1 November 1934. Between 1906 and 1920, Momigliano taught in high school, fulfilling a long apprenticeship in numerous Italian cities: Saluzzo, Savona, Treviglio, Asti, Bologna, Nuoro, and Catania. At the Liceo Massimo d'Azeglio in Turin, in an exceptional year, he had

² Enrico Ghidetti, *Attilio Momigliano*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 75, Rome, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 2011, which is the source for the main critical and biographical information reported here <<https://www.treccani.it>> (accessed 20 January 2021).

such pupils as Giacomo Debenedetti, Sergio Solmi, and Mario Gromo. Regarding his stay in Sardinia, and the oppressive and backward atmosphere he found there, he recorded his experience in the final part of his *Lettere Scelte*³. Regardless, the memory of Turin remained vivid in him, «the capital of my life» he wrote, and so did the intense and cultured acquaintances of his youth⁴.

1938: the dispensation from service from the University of Florence

Winner of a *concorso* [a public exam to secure a teaching position in a given discipline], he assumed a professorship in Italian literature from 1920 to 1924 at the University of Catania; he later transferred to the University of Pisa between 1925 and 1934, before being called to the Faculty of Letters at Florence in 1934, where on 6 December he gave a packed inaugural lecture on «The trends of Italian lyric poetry from Carducci to the present». Luigi Russo, with whom Momigliano had lasting and strong bonds of friendship, succeeded him at Pisa. In 1925, Momigliano endorsed the «Manifesto degli intellettuali antifascisti» by Benedetto Croce; in 1931 he took the oath of loyalty imposed by the regime on university professors. He did not adhere to any religious denomination, but in 1935 he supported the efforts of the Florentine Jewish community to help Jewish refugees from Germany⁵. Momigliano was relieved of his academic duties as of 14 December 1938, via a written communication from the Rector on 15 October 1938, following the *R. Decreto Legge* [Royal Decree] of 5 September, no. 1398, implementing racial legislation⁶. As early as the previous July, he had been excluded from collaboration

³ Letter to Giuseppe Gallico, Pisa, 17 February 1930, in Attilio Momigliano, *Lettere scelte*, edited by Mario Scotti, Florence, Le Monnier, 1969, p. 87, for the memory of the three young critics.

⁴ *Ibid.*, letter to Giuseppe Gallico, 28 December 1941, p. 175.

⁵ Alessandra Minerbi, *La comunità ebraica di Firenze (1931-1943)*, in *Razza e fascismo. La persecuzione contro gli ebrei in Toscana (1938-1943)*, edited by Enzo Collotti, Rome, Carocci, 1999, vol. I, pp. 115-222, p. 155.

⁶ ASUFI, AC, SD, f. «Momigliano Attilio», letter from the Rector, Arrigo Serpieri, which communicated the removal from service, 15 October 1938. On 5 December 1938 a note from the Rector, handwritten but also reproduced in typewritten form, attested to «the high value of Italianness in the instruction and the literary works of Professor Attilio Momigliano and his elevated temperament as a man and a citizen». On 3 November 1938 Serpieri supported the request that an exception be made [procedure called 'discrimination'] for Momigliano and three other colleagues expelled from Florence, via a letter to the Ministry. See Francesca Cavarocchi and Alessandra Minerbi, *La politica razziale e la persecuzione*

with the «Corriere della sera» by injunction of the Minister of Popular Culture, Dino Alfieri. The editor of the paper, Aldo Borelli, hastened to reply to Alfieri assuring on 23 July that «by August, Momigliano will no longer be here»⁷. The professorship at Florence was offered to Massimo Bontempelli and later to Luigi Russo, who both refused it, as also did the writer Giovanni Papini, according to his biographer Roberto Ridolfi. The Italian literature scholar Giuseppe De Robertis (1888-1963) replaced Momigliano in both roles – at the University of Florence and at the «Corriere» - upon appointment «for exceptional merits» by the national Minister of National Education, Giuseppe Bottai⁸. The appointment, made without deliberation of the High Council of the Ministry of Education, was communicated to the Rector at the beginning of March 1939.

On 26 April 1939, De Robertis authored a malevolent and clumsy attack on Momigliano in a «Corriere della Sera» article dedicated to Michele Barbi. Presented as a champion of aesthetic criticism, Momigliano was not named, but was easily recognizable in the contemptuous oral comments, attributed to Barbi, regarding his edition of the *Decameron*⁹. The episode – even more serious because it was directed toward a man forced to the margins of the academic community and thus rendered unable to defend himself -provoked a stern and resentful letter to the editor of the newspaper from Pietro Pancrazi, distinguished critic and contributor to the «Corriere». He disapproved of, in De Robertis's contribution, «an underhanded and unfair (and, for reasons that I will spare you, extremely cowardly) allusion to Attilio Momigliano». The incident («an ugly thing») engulfed the

antiebraica nell'Ateneo fiorentino, in *Razza e fascismo*, cit., pp.467-510, pp. 477, 505 note. In the same interval of time, the Administrative Director of the university, Carlo Baccarini, testified to Momigliano's belonging to the «Jewish race», at the request of the principals of the «Dettori» High School of Cagliari and the Technical-Commercial Institute of Chiavari. Paolo Marrassini records the academic vicissitudes of Momigliano in *Una Facoltà improduttiva: Lettere fra cultura e politica*, in *L'Università degli Studi di Firenze 1924-2004*, vol. I, Florence, Olschki, 2004, pp. 49-163, pp. 84, 86-87 (which reports the professor's cold response to the Rector's circular, greeting the removed Jewish scholars), p. 100, 102, 105.

⁷ Corriere della Sera Foundation, Historical Archive of the «Corriere», *Sezione amministrativo-gestionale*, f. «GS113».

⁸ Communication from Giuseppe Bottai, n.d. but received by the Rector's office of the University of Florence on 7 March 1939, cited by Marrassini, *Una Facoltà improduttiva*, p. 85 and note.

⁹ Giuseppe De Robertis, *Michele Barbi*, «Corriere della sera», 26 April 1939.

academic communities «of not only Florence, but (as I now know) all over Italy»¹⁰. Piero Calamandrei's comment on the matter was also very harsh when he spoke to Eugenio Montale¹¹.

In the following years leading to 1943, Momigliano continued to write and contribute to specialized journals, including «Leonardo», under the pseudonym Giorgio Flores, with the articles that he eventually incorporated into *Cinque saggi*, published in Florence in 1945.

The failed expatriation: 1938-1939

Although his posthumously published letters show few traces of the looming persecution and catastrophe of the war, at the time, however, he looked to avert the worst consequences of the new laws and apply for an exception [a special procedure known as «discrimination» to suspend the newly implemented racial provisions]. He turned to Giovanni Gentile for this purpose,¹² for he was inclined toward individual acts of generosity toward the victims, but not toward a formal disassociation from the politics of the regime. At the same time, Momigliano searched for refuge abroad. The available bibliography affirms that he refused a position offered to him in England (or in the United States) due to the unstable health conditions of his wife, Giustina Haydée Sacerdoti¹³. However, such a statement is not confirmed in the primary sources consulted for this work from major international organizations, in England and in the United States, that assisted displaced scholars in their job searches. Instead, starting on 5 December 1938

¹⁰ Corriere della Sera Foundation, Historical Archive of the «Corriere», *Sezione Carteggio*, f. «Pietro Pancrazi», letter from Pancrazi to Borelli, 29 April 1929 [*recte*: 1939] and the brief reply from the editor, 1 May 1939, who agrees that «the 'Corriere' attacks openly and not indirectly and with unpleasant allusions». Bottai, according to Pancrazi, was informed of the quarrel.

¹¹ Piero Calamandrei, *Diario I*, 1939-1941, Rome, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2015, p. 29 and p. 35.

¹² Gabriele Turi, *Giovanni Gentile. Una biografia*, Florence, Giunti, 1995, p. 477 and note. A letter of 20 November 1938 from Momigliano to Gentile, Commissary of the Centro Nazionale di Studi Manzoni, is utilized in Amedeo Benedetti, *Contributo alla biografia di Attilio Momigliano*, «Studi novecenteschi», 40, 85, 2013, pp. 31-71.

¹³ A. Benedetti, *Contributo*, cit., p. 58; similarly Alvaro Biondi, *Il silenzio della letteratura*, Padua, Liviana, 1981, p. 67, which relates the «invitations from England and America to teach in those countries», and the news of a trip taken by Momigliano to England, of which no other information can be found.

Momigliano approached the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning in London (SPSL) for help, declaring himself willing to emigrate, preferably to a neo-Latin-speaking country (French, Spanish, Portuguese). In addition to Latin America, he would accept to move to North America - despite the linguistic difficulties - or to the Near East¹⁴.

In the informational questionnaire sent to him on 15 December by the SPSL, he included a curriculum vitae and a list of his major publications, and indicated Giovanni Gentile and Benedetto Croce as his possible references, in addition to the French historian and Italianist Henri Bédarida, professor at the Sorbonne. On 4 March 1939, he then turned to the SPSL, asking to succeed, as a lecturer of Italian at the University College London, Camillo Pellizzi, who had been recalled to Italy to teach the history and doctrine of fascism in Florence¹⁵. The conduct of the SPSL was largely understanding and helpful, but not encouraging, given the extreme scarcity of positions in the United Kingdom also due to the influx of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany with high academic and intellectual profiles. As for the London professorship, this did not fall within the role and jurisdiction of the Society, which for this reason suggested the applicant to follow the normal procedures of the University.

The involvement of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars of New York (ECADFS) was not much more fruitful. In February of 1939, Nelda A. Filippone, who had been his pupil in Florence from 1937-1938, got in contact with

¹⁴ BLO, MS, SPSL, 308/2, f. «Momigliano Attilio», 1938-39 (a copy of this dossier was provided by Patrizia Guarnieri). See the introductory letter by Momigliano, in English, «December 5th, 1938»; *ibid.* also the response to the questionnaire «Confidential information – Vertrauerliche Auskunft» from 15 December 1938, that indicates his preferred locations for emigration and references: the senators Giovanni Gentile and Benedetto Croce, and Henri Bédarida, professor at the Sorbonne. The short curriculum vitae (2 typewritten pages) gave an account of his publications and of the collaboration with the «Corriere della sera» (1926-1938). It also indicated, in a handwritten note, the major periodicals in which his works had been discussed, these being, in addition to the «Giornale storico della letteratura italiana», «La Stampa», «La Tribuna», «Il Giornale d'Italia», «Il Resto del Carlino», «Études italiennes» and, naturally, «Il Corriere della Sera».

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Momigliano to the SPSL, 4 March 1939. Pellizzi, founder of London's Fascio, had somewhat helped another applicant of the SPSL, namely Curt Gutkind, a great admirer of Mussolini. On Gutkind see here *ad nomen*. See Maria Salvati, *Camillo Pellizzi (1895-1979)*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 85, Rome, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 2015 <<https://www.treccani.it>> (accessed 20 January 2020).

the Assistant Director of the Institute of International Education in New York, Edgar J. Fisher, declaring to have received a letter from Momigliano, who had been dismissed for racial reasons and «who is anxious to continue his work as a Professor of Italian literature, if possible, in the United States». She had asked the scholar to contact the Institute directly¹⁶. Prominent figures in the American academic world acted in favor of the illustrious Italianist. In April, Stanley A. Smith, Professor of Romance Languages at Stanford, requested information from Stephen Duggan, Secretary of the ECADFS, about the transfer of «our unfortunate Italian colleague», removed from Florence «because of his Jewish extraction». Smith had received a request in this regard from Gustave Charlier, professor at the Université Libre de Bruxelles¹⁷.

In the meantime, on 17 February 1939, the ECADFS formally asked Momigliano to submit his curriculum vitae, informing him of the difficulties of arranging a position in the United States, where the arrival («a great influx») of refugees from Germany had exacerbated the tightened circumstances of the academic job market¹⁸. Momigliano was asked about his willingness to eventually accept a position at a high school, for which, however, the Italian scholar seemed less suitable. In reality, in a signed letter from 1 March 1939, Momigliano indicated that he would welcome an appointment of that kind, at least «for the beginning». He sent his curriculum vitae, along with his publications, to ECADFS, and indicated the names of two possible references, Benedetto Croce and Mario Praz, Chair of the Department of English at the University of Rome La Sapienza¹⁹. The ECADFS had gotten to work shortly before, and Miss Betty Drury, Assistant Secretary, had approached William E. Knickerbecker, chairman of the Department of Romance Languages at the City College of New York, asking him for information regarding an opening «in the

¹⁶ NYPL, MAD, ECADFS, I.B. Non Grantees, b. 96, f. 47, «Momigliano Attilio», 1939-1940, letter from Nelda Filippone to Edgar J. Fisher, «received February 18, 1939». A copy of this dossier was provided by Patrizia Guarnieri.

¹⁷ Ibid., Stanley A. Smith to Stephen Duggan, «received April 4, 1939».

¹⁸ Ibid., letter to Momigliano, «February 17, 1939»; the response from the Italianist, in English, is dated 1 March 1939.

¹⁹ Ibid., excerpt from the typewritten curriculum, n.d.

Italian division» of the institution. She had already contacted an «eminent Italian professor now in this country», who had not responded at the moment: but Momigliano's scholarly excellence was well-known to many in the country, among whom were George Benson Weston at Harvard and the Italianist Charles Singleton at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore²⁰. Benson's interest shines through in a signed letter endorsing Momigliano, «the successor of Guido Mazzoni and one of the most distinguished literary scholars and critics in Italy – now 55!». Hope, in any event, was little, and the letter was written «more as a 'sgravio di coscienza' [to unburden one's conscience] than in the hope of a practical result»²¹. In any case, it was important to know that a man of such value was willing to move to America. Perhaps the most convincing attempt to find Momigliano a placement came from Cornell University. On 31 May 1939, the Chairman of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Morris Bishop, asked Lessing J. Rosenwald of Sears, Roebuck and Co. in Philadelphia for financial aid (\$5,000 annually) that would allow the institution to hire Momigliano as a critic, a teacher, and above all, a Dante scholar, given that «the Cornell Dante collections are the finest outside Italy»²². We do not know the addressee's response, but the inquiries conducted in the United States ended up with nothing productive. Support for Momigliano also came from a celebrated exile from Germany (and Italy), Paul Oskar Kristeller. On 27 September 1939, Kristeller went to the ECADFS in order to renew Momigliano candidacy «for a series of lectures» or for a temporary assignment: «a very dignified man», not at all inclined to promote himself, his colleague was an «outstanding scholar of Italian literature», but perhaps «might not be able to make the adjustment in America»²³. The beginning of the second world war put an end to any plan to move to the other side of the Atlantic, and thus, the Piedmontese scholar weathered all the difficulties of wartime in Italy.

²⁰ Ibid., Miss B. Drury to W. E. Knickerbecker, «New York, February 2nd, 1939»

²¹ Ibid., fragment of a signed letter from G. Benson to «Dear Andrew», n.d.

²² Ibid., Morris Bishop to L. J. Rosenwald, Ithaca, «Cornell University, 31 May, 1939».

²³ Ibid., handwritten note, which records Kristeller's presence at the ECDAFS offices and his interest in Momigliano's fate.

Persecution and refuge: 1943-1944

Momigliano faced the years of war and the tragedy of persecution with courage and dignity, carrying with him «a sadness made more severe and deeper not so much by his misfortune as by the progressive dehumanization of the times», as Mario Fubini, who took refuge in Switzerland with his family, later observed²⁴. In the first half of 1943, Momigliano was with his wife in Bologna, then in Florence, where the bombardments of Pisa and Pontedera of 31 August and that of Prato on 2 September dissuaded the couple from leaving the city, as they had intended to do²⁵. The anguish of that period echoed within his published letters: «I'm not living, but surviving», he said to Giuseppe Gallico on 27 February 1942; «while writing I feel the pen fall from my hand, since so much of what I should write is sad», he wrote to Manara Valgimigli on 31 October 1942²⁶. Whereas editor Bompiani's villa in Fiesole appeared to him, in August of 1943, as an island of happiness «in this world where hell extends its increasingly vast reach»²⁷.

On 24 October, the couple was in Città di Castello and found refuge as of December in the Hospital of San Sepolcro, thanks to the help of the director Raffaello Alessandri and the doctor Gino Franceschini. With dedication and courage, another doctor, Dr. Carlo Vigo - to whom Momigliano would dedicate his 1946 commentary on Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* - assisted the couple (Attilio's wife being sick). The frenzy of those days also surfaces in the letters to his ex-student, Vittore Branca, whom he asked to take care of his home (at the time under seizure) and books, and to «elicit interest in his predicament, directly or indirectly, from Giov[anni] Gentile, who has always helped me». Branca eventually delivered Gentile, via his son Federico Gentile, a personal letter from Momigliano²⁸.

During this harsh isolation, Momigliano found comfort in the study of and reflection on poetry, primarily Dante and Tasso, and wrote: «I must say that, if I have

²⁴ Mario Fubini, *Commemorazione di Attilio Momigliano*, speech delivered at the Accademia dei Lincei on 13 December 1952, in Id., *Critica e poesia*, Rome, Bonacci, 1973, p. 367.

²⁵ A. Benedetti, *Contributo*, cit., p.61.

²⁶ A. Momigliano, *Lettere scelte*, cit., pp. 179, 183-184.

²⁷ Ibid., letter to G. Gallico, n.d. [but August 1943], pp. 183-184.

²⁸ A. Momigliano, *Lettere scelte*, cit., pp. 191-193, end of 1943 - beginning of 1944.

always lived for poetry, I have survived only for it»²⁹. But the experience remained tragic: «we spent several months as those condemned to death»³⁰.

An arduous return

After the liberation of Umbria and Florence between July and August, the Momigliano couple left San Sepolcro on 18 August 1944 for Città di Castello, where they remained until at least the first days of November. They later went on to Perugia, where they were received by former students Aldo Capitini, Walter Binni and Bruno Enei, who was already a courageous partisan commander. Thanks to Capitini, Rector pro-tempore of the University for Foreigners since 27 July, Momigliano was able to teach for some time at this institution, «where he held much appreciated lectures on Dante and Pascoli»³¹. And he would always hold grateful memory of that experience. The Italian scholar was back in Florence on 26 December, to take back possession of his apartment - not without difficulties - which had been occupied by others and where he would return permanently on 18 April 1945.

As in other cases, the reintegration of Momigliano within the ranks of the university was rough. Already by November of 1944, he had submitted the necessary application for re-employment, which was accepted on 3 February 1945 by the Ministry of Public Education with an effective date of service on 1 January 1944 and recognition of the administrative and pension rights accrued from the time of his removal in 1938.³²

²⁹ T. Tasso, *La Gerusalemme liberata*, 2nd ed., Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1948, p. VII (1st ed. 1946).

³⁰ A. Momigliano to G. Gallico, 24 June 1945, in A. Momigliano, *Lettere scelte*, cit., p. 198.

³¹ Pasquale Tuscano, *Lettere inedite di Attilio Momigliano ad Aldo Capitini*, «Esperienze letterarie», 6, 1981, pp. 71-86. Quoted in Walter Binni, *Introduzione*, in Alvaro Biondi (edited by), *Attilio Momigliano. Atti del Convegno di studi nel centenario della nascita*, Florence, Olschki, 1990, pp. 3-16, p. 8: here is also reported the news of the refusal, on the part of the Piedmontese critic, of «a university position abroad».

³² ASUFI, AC, SD, f. «Momigliano Attilio»: communication from the Ministry of Public Education signed by the Minister, Vincenzo Arangio-Ruiz, 3 February 1945. An overview of the legislation regarding the reintegration of expelled professors can be found in Roberto Finzi, *Il triplice colpo subito dagli universitari di «razza ebraica»*, in Dianella Gagliani (edited by), *Il difficile rientro. Il ritorno dei docenti ebrei nell'università del dopoguerra*, Bologna, CLUEB, 2004, pp. 21-52. See also the section [Fascist legislations and reparations legislation \(1925-2000\)](#) here.

In the 1944-1945 academic year, Momigliano started off his new academic cycle in Florence with a course on Tasso. The Italian literature chair position remained, nevertheless, with Giuseppe De Robertis. The historical circumstance, however, had changed by way of a rapid evolution. Pursuant to the Royal Decree of 5 April 1945 no. 238, which ordered the annulment of academic appointments awarded for «chiara fama» [highest repute] and without national examination, De Robertis's position underwent investigation by a commission instituted by the High Council of the Ministry of Public Education to verify the appointees' qualifications. The concluding report, by Pietro Pancrazi, recognized the value of De Robertis as a scholar, but, pursuant to the law, denied him the qualification as «distinguished teacher» in his field³³. On such basis, the commission proposed to the Minister the termination of De Robertis's appointment as well as the assignment of «special benefits» to him, provided by law in support of those professors being removed from their posts. Elements of this episode emerge from the correspondence between De Robertis and Giuseppe Ungaretti, in which the former's enmity toward Pancrazi comes through: «I am no longer friend with Pancrazi - I have not been for ten years now - but I rest easy all the same, and you should too», wrote De Robertis in the summer of 1945³⁴. In 1946, Momigliano's contributions to the «Corriere della sera» also resumed by invitation from the editor, Mario Borsa.

Regarding the university, however, the decision reached by the special commission was not implemented on account of the intervention of the Minister, Guido Gonella. Gonella directly consulted the Faculty of Letters in Florence, which, in a meeting of its council on 11 February 1947, expressed a favorable opinion for the

³³ What follows derives from Giovanni Montroni's reconstruction in *La continuità necessaria. Università e professori dal fascismo alla repubblica*, Florence, Le Monnier, 2016, pp. 122, 130, 139, 153. Not much is gained from Riccardo Bonavita, «Una ingiustizia strana e indecifrabile». *Il difficile rientro di Santorre Debenedetti e Attilio Momigliano*, in D. Gagliani (edited by), *Il difficile rientro*, cit., pp. 149-158.

³⁴ Giuseppe Ungaretti-Giuseppe De Robertis, *Carteggio 1931-1962*, edited by Domenico De Robertis, Milan, Il Saggiatore, 1984, letter from De Robertis to Ungaretti, Florence, 26 July 1945, p. 73. For his part, the poet declared, at the end of the conflict, to understand «how Momigliano may feel disturbed», but that two different schools of thought could coexist well in Florence without harm (ibid., pp. 96-97, G. Ungaretti to G. De Robertis, Rome, 15 February 1947). Any specific and personal comments are omitted by the editor of the collection.

continuity, in unchanged conditions, of De Robertis as chair of Italian Literature (with 13 votes in favor and 3 abstaining). Two weeks later, the Minister confirmed to the Faculty that nothing was to change «with regard to the legal position of the professor in question [De Robertis]»³⁵. The will of the Minister, which thus bypassed the High Council of the Ministry of Public Education and its opposition to any form of amnesty, certainly reflects a phase of the post-war milieu in which the recovery of a moral and political cohesion in the country took the form of ensuring the continuity of the State, as much as the removal of the past. On 31 October 1950, the Ministry communicated to Momigliano that for administrative purposes, he was assigned «to the third level as supernumerary professor» at the University of Florence, with retroactive validity from 1 November 1947³⁶.

Momigliano's scholarly edition of the *Divina Commedia* in 1946 as well as the publication of his revered 1951 commentary on *I promessi sposi* are proof of the intense work that he carried out after the war³⁷. The Piedmontese scholar passed away in Florence on 2 April 1952, about two years after the death of his wife. The loss that struck the university was «a mourning of the entire Italian culture» for a man «who was for many years meritorious in the field of Italian literature on account of his noble activity as a writer and critic», as Giuseppe Cardinali, the Rector of the University La Sapienza in Rome, recited in his message of sympathy. The Ministry of Public Education posthumously awarded Momigliano the Gold medal for cultural merits³⁸. The 1984 decision - by the dean of Florence's Faculty of Letters - to dedicate a classroom to Momigliano's memory was allowed to lapse as not to

³⁵ G. Montroni, *La continuità necessaria*, cit., p. 153.

³⁶ ASUFi, AC, SD, f. «Momigliano Attilio»: communication to the interested party, 18 May 1951. His return to the Faculty of Letters was decided by the Council on 24 January 1945. On this date, however, it was De Robertis who, along with others, was in a supernumerary position, «awaiting a definitive placement until all of Italy would be liberated»; see P. Marrassini, *Una Facoltà improduttiva*, cit., p. 102.

³⁷ *La Divina Commedia*, annotated by A. Momigliano, Florence, Sansoni 1946; A. Manzoni, *I promessi sposi*, annotated by A. Momigliano, Florence, Sansoni 1951.

³⁸ ASUFi, AC, SD, f. «Momigliano Attilio»: dossier containing the condolences of universities and cultural institutions for the death of Momigliano (1952), and the letter from the Rector of La Sapienza, April 1952. Arturo Carlo Jemolo participated in the funeral service, representing the Accademia dei Lincei. Ibid., communication from the Rector of the University of Florence to Clelia Momigliano Levi for the bestowal of the medal on her brother by the Ministry of Public Education.

reprise old disagreements. It was the Municipality of Florence, in 1987, that unveiled a plaque in his memory at his home at number 4 Via Fra Giovanni Angelico³⁹.

Major publications

- *L'indole e il riso di Luigi Pulci*, Rocca San Casciano, Cappelli, 1907.
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³⁹ For a photo of the dedication of the plaque in 1987, which was proposed by Guido Clemente, dean of the Faculty of Letters, but acting in this case in his capacity as Councilor for Culture of the Municipality of Florence see the [gallery](#) here, and his testimony at a conference for the eightieth anniversary of the racial laws, reported in Patrizia Guarnieri (edited by), *L'emigrazione intellettuale dall'Italia fascista. Studenti e studiosi ebrei dall'Università di Firenze in fuga all'estero*, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2019, p. 7n., and p. X (with a mistaken date).

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