

The ‘turn to the victim’ in Italian culture: victim-centred narratives of the *anni di piombo*

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This article considers the emergence of a corpus of victim centred-narratives addressing the experience of political violence during the *anni di piombo* in the period surrounding the establishment of the ‘Day of Memory for the Victims of Terrorism’. Bringing a critical victim-studies approach to bear, it explores how the victim of terrorism is portrayed in the corpus of victim-centred narratives and asks what is claimed, effected and achieved by the corpus in cultural terms. It further explores how the perspective of survivors of terrorist attacks and of relatives of the victims reshapes the cultural imaginary of the *anni di piombo* in the new millennium.

Keywords: victim-centred narratives; *anni di piombo*; victims of terrorism; survivor testimony; critical victim studies; cultural memory

Victims of political violence and terrorism in Italy have long lamented the anomalous nature of contemporary historical, memorial and cultural practices relating to the period known as the *anni di piombo* (c.1969–1983). In contrast with other post-terrorist contexts, the defeated former perpetrators of Italy’s violence – particularly those on the political left – have enjoyed a high public profile, influencing contemporary understandings of the violent past and actively contributing to the shape of the *anni di piombo* in the cultural imaginary. The existence of a substantial corpus of memoirs and other publications written by and about prominent former members of outlawed terrorist formations is testament to the fascination and appeal that such individuals appear to hold for the Italian public. Television programmes, documentaries and newspaper articles providing retrospective interrogations of the *anni di piombo* have also tended to call upon leaders and exponents of those same terrorist organisations to comment on aspects of the violent past and to provide overarching historical and political interpretations.¹ In this way, former terrorists have been reconstructed in the public domain as expert witnesses and cultural authorities capable of providing a privileged understanding of the events, culture and legacy of the *anni di piombo*. So great has their influence been that, in the words of one cultural commentator, ‘Italy . . . risks being the only country in the world where, paradoxically, history is written by the defeated, by the ex-terrorists’ (Anon. 2007, 12).

That summation of the situation, though commonplace at the time of its articulation, is not entirely accurate. Despite the acute inequality of space afforded to victims and perpetrators of political violence, the perspective of the victim has not been wholly absent from cultural representations treating the *anni di piombo* and their aftermath. Memoirs by individuals held

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prisoner or attacked by left-wing groups emerged slowly and sporadically between the 1970s and 1990s (Sossi 1979; Lenci 1988; Petter 1993). This small corpus was complemented by an even smaller number of publications penned by the spouses of high-profile, early victims of the *anni di piombo*: Licia Pinelli (Pinelli and Scaramucci 1982) and Gemma Capra (1990). The sporadic nature of these publications and the difficulties faced first in securing publication and then remaining in print suggests that the Italian public had, for a long time, little interest in engaging with victims and survivors of the political violence of the *anni di piombo*.² This, coupled with the evident inequality and tokenism of attention granted to survivors and relatives of the victims in the Italian media resulted if not in the absence then in the conspicuous long-term marginalisation of the experience of the victim in the cultural imaginary of the *anni di piombo*.

In recent years, however, a new consciousness of the injustice of that marginalisation has emerged in Italian culture. Indeed, the very articulation of Italy's post-terrorist cultural landscape as anomalous is testament to a significant rhetorical and conceptual shift in public discourses and cultural debates addressing the legacy of the *anni di piombo*. The shift was marked by the introduction of a comparative perspective of the kind promoted by *Il Meridiano*'s anonymous reviewer: 'Only the perpetrators have been called to testify to those terrible years . . . The victims and their relatives have been forgotten' (Anon. 2007, 12). The comparative perspective of the review displaces what had initially appeared as a relatively dispassionate consideration of anomalous social and cultural practices with a more critical assessment of the ethical implications of such practices. Implicit in that move is a condemnation of Italy's failure theretofore to adequately acknowledge and allow for the experience, sentiments and interests of those who suffered injury or loss in acts of political violence and terrorism, and a call for a more victim-centred approach to the cultural memory of the *anni di piombo*.

It is only since the start of the new millennium that such a call has come to be made by cultural critics and that an identifiable 'turn to the victim' has been effected in both the public sphere and cultural production. It is difficult to identify the precise origins of that shift, but the triggering factors may include public dismay at the anachronistic return of domestic terrorism with the New Red Brigades' murders of Massimo D'Antona in 1999 and Marco Biagi in 2002; the victim-centred response in Western culture to the 9/11 attacks on the East coast of the USA in 2001; and perhaps a general fatigue with the cultural dominance of the perpetrator of the *anni di piombo*, especially in the period surrounding the twenty-fifth anniversary of the kidnapping and death of Aldo Moro in 2003. Whatever its origins, the effects of the qualitative shift in the relationship between victims and survivors of terrorism and the wider population are clear. In the field of cultural production, the publishing success of edited volumes detailing the experiences of survivors of terrorist attacks and of autobiographical accounts written by the children of victims has not only promoted the authors to prominent spokespersons for victims' rights but has also warranted the reprinting of earlier victim-centred texts, which had long been out of print and unread by the Italian public (see Lenci 2009; Pinelli and Scaramucci 2009; Petter 2011). Although the turn to the victim has been less marked in cinematic production – in part because the experience of survivors was already a thematic concern in the cinema of the 1990s – recent films have nonetheless played an important role in reminding the Italian public of the many ordinary Italians who died alongside high-profile victims of terrorism, often in the service of the state.³ More significant still are the series of commemorative events that were established or revitalised in the early years of the new millennium and the official inauguration on 9 May 2008 of a national 'Day of Memory for the Victims of Terrorism'.⁴ The inauguration was the culmination of a long period of campaigning on the part of the various associations representing

the relatives of victims. It also constituted a symbolic assertion of the moral imperative of national recollection and official recognition of the need to rebalance the historical memory of the *anni di piombo*.

However, while the inauguration of the ‘Day of Memory’ undoubtedly represents a significant shift in societal attitudes towards the victims of the *anni di piombo* quite specifically, it may also be seen to partake of a wider memorial trend in Italian culture, which has not been without its critics. In his recent and controversial study, Giovanni De Luna (2011, 19–20) observes that the Italian parliament has established not one but five such official days of memory since the start of the new millennium; it has, moreover, entertained at least 10 other proposals of a similar kind and instituted a number of related initiatives for distinct groups within Italian society. For De Luna, such developments represent the ‘triumph of the victim’ (ibid. 83) in collective memory and culture in Italy and the ascendancy of a ‘victimary paradigm’ (ibid. 16) which is symptomatic of the ‘comprehensive privatisation of memory’ (ibid. 14) associated with the waning of state power in the Western world. Despite the international scope of his argument, De Luna attributes the recent prominence of the victim in the Italian cultural imaginary primarily to the ‘unresolved issues’ (ibid. 16) of the *anni di piombo*. For that very reason, his critique bears all the hallmarks of a critical backlash against the turn to the victim in cultural discourses relating quite specifically to the legacy of the *anni di piombo*.

This article addresses victim-centred narratives that emerged in the years surrounding the establishment of the ‘Day of Memory’, in the light of changing memorial practices in Italy. It asks how the victim of terrorism is portrayed in the corpus of victim-centred narratives and what is claimed, effected and achieved by the corpus in cultural terms. It further explores how the perspective of survivors of terrorist attacks and of relatives of the victims reshapes the cultural imaginary of the *anni di piombo* in the new millennium.

Introducing the corpus: theoretical considerations

In approaching what I have termed the corpus of victim-centred narratives addressing the *anni di piombo*, it is important to acknowledge and redress a common tendency within lay discourse and victim studies alike to ontologise or naturalise the concept of the victim and to construct victimhood as an empirically definable condition. As Justin Crumbaugh (2010, 661) productively observes in his work on the political uses of victim discourse in contemporary Spain, ‘people do not become victims through acts of aggression alone; they must also be made – that is, fashioned – into victims through conventions of representation’. Adopting Crumbaugh’s ‘critical’ victim studies approach, I regard the corpus of victim-centred narratives as constitutive (rather than descriptive) of the victimhood of the *anni di piombo*, and throughout my interrogation of the corpus I ask of its particular conceptualisation of victimhood the Foucauldian questions Crumbaugh (ibid. 662) also poses: what is it being invoked to achieve, what kind of subjects and objects is it producing, and what ramifications does it have beyond its surface claim?

In order to understand what is being invoked to achieve in the particular conceptualisation of victimhood constituted by victim-centred narratives of the *anni di piombo*, it is instructive to explore issues pertaining to genre. Although there is some overlap between them, the corpus consists primarily of two distinct text types: edited volumes collating interviews with those who suffered injury or loss in acts of terrorism and autobiographical writings by the offspring of high-profile victims of terrorism.⁵ In their testimonial mission, their vexation about the interplay of personal and public memory and their anxiety about reception, the different text types share

several features in common with other autobiographical and mediated forms of writing that endeavour to testify to experiences of crisis.

Among the edited volumes are Giovanni Fasanella and Antonella Grippo's *I silenzi degli innocenti* (2006); Giancarlo Feliziani's *Lo schiocco: Storia della strage di Brescia* (2006); Piero Corsini and Giovanni Minoli's *Eroi come noi* (2006); Francesco Specchia and Raffaello Canteri's *Terrorismo: L'altra storia* (2007); and Alberto Conci, Paolo Grigolli and Natalia Mosna's *Sedie vuote. Gli anni di piombo: Dalla parte delle vittime* (2008). These texts are characterised by formal hybridity, combining autobiographical narration with interviews and the use of third-person narration. But they also share notable affinities with the Latin American *testimonio* form of 'resistance literature', as discussed by John Beverley (1989). Like *testimonio* narratives, victim-centred narratives of the *anni di piombo* present the perspective and life story of subjects who were largely 'excluded from authorized representation when it was a question of speaking and writing for themselves' (Beverley 1989, 13). They are also, for the most part, told 'in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually ... a significant life experience' (13). They share with *testimonio* the sense of writing to a particular occasion or event, as well as a degree of self-conscious political engagement. Finally, in both cases, the narrative of the victim-survivor is mediated and edited by a professional journalist or writer, who advocates on the part of the testimonial subject while the reader is invited to adjudicate on the events narrated, playing the role of a jury member in a courtroom (14).

I limit my discussion of this text type to the most wide-ranging and comprehensive volumes, *I silenzi degli innocenti* (Fasanella and Grippo 2006) and *Terrorismo. L'altra storia* (Specchia and Canteri 2007). Both pursue an overtly political mission to call Italian society and institutions to account and are characterised by tones of indignation, frustration and anger. However, where Fasanella and Grippo (2006) collate the testimony of survivors and relatives of the victims on both sides of the political divide, assigning a different first-person testimonial account to each individual chapter and limiting the intervention of the editors to the Introduction, Specchia and Canteri (2007) instead focus exclusively on the victims of left-wing violence and primarily present a third-person historical account of the *anni di piombo*, into which short quotations from survivors and relatives of the victims are filtered.⁶ While the historical account that structures the latter volume appears as an attempt to rewrite the history of the *anni di piombo* from the perspective of the victims, the prominence granted the actions and discourse of the perpetrators throughout the historical narrative clearly limits the success of that attempt and suggests the secondary importance of the victim-centred narrative with regard to that of the perpetrator of political violence.

The second text type consists instead of autobiographical writings by the offspring of high-profile victims of terrorist formations. These include Giovanni Fasanella and Sabina Rossa's *Guido Rossa, mio padre* (2006); Mario Calabresi's *Spingendo la notte più in là* (2007); Andrea Casalegno's *L'attentato* (2008); Bendetta Tobagi's *Come mi batte forte il tuo cuore* (2009); and Silvia Giralucci's *L'inferno sono gli altri* (2011). This group of texts is best situated at the crossroads between traumatic memory and the category of 'postmemory', conceived by Marianne Hirsch (2001) to designate the response of a second generation to the trauma of the first. Although the Italian corpus departs from Hirsch's (2001, 12) understanding of postmemory as characterising the experience of those 'who grow up dominated by narratives that precede their birth', the authors and protagonists of the autobiographical strand of victim-centred narratives were usually far too young to understand the events surrounding their fathers' deaths and therefore share with the subjects of postmemory the sense that 'their own belated stories are

evacuated by the powerful stories of the previous generation, shaped by monumental traumatic events that resist understanding and integration' (ibid. 12).⁷ Also reminiscent of Hirsch's understanding of postmemory is the fact that the author-protagonists' connection to their object or source 'is mediated not through recollection but through representation, projection and creation' (ibid. 9): photographs, newspaper articles and diaries are all plumbed by the authors in their attempt to get to know their lost fathers, learn more about the circumstances of their deaths and rehabilitate their memories. Similarly, this text type conveys understandings 'often based on silence rather than speech, on the invisible rather than the visible' (ibid. 9). Finally, the autobiographical corpus of victim-centred narratives locates the traumatic impact of violence within the family, so that the author-protagonists share with the subjects of postmemory the experience of 'adopting the traumatic experiences – and thus also the memories – of others as experiences one might oneself have had, and of inscribing them into one's own life story' (ibid. 10).

This second set of texts differs from the first not only in form and perspective but also in tone: although they too campaign for greater respect and responsibility with regard to the treatment of victims, they are less antagonistic and political than the edited volumes and present a more considered and intimate portrayal of the personal, familial and social effects of terrorism. These texts provide a vivid and personalised interrogation of the human legacy of the *anni di piombo*, and work to restore the humanity of the murdered father, reclaiming his individual identity and life story from both the ideological rhetoric of his murderers and the ceremonial rhetoric attached to his memory in state commemoration.⁸ I limit my discussion of this type to the two most widely discussed and influential books, *Spingendo la notte più in là* (Calabresi 2007) and *Come mi batte forte il tuo cuore* (Tobagi 2009). Calabresi (2007) interrogates the circumstances surrounding the 1972 murder of the author's father, Luigi Calabresi, following a pernicious hate campaign by the extra-parliamentary group, Lotta Continua.⁹ Three members of the group were subsequently tried and convicted for the murder amid great controversy. The book also narrates the afterlife of the Calabresi family, but broadens the perspective by interweaving the Calabresi family story with that of other families similarly affected by terrorism, and by incorporating into the book quotations from individual members of those families, many of them drawn from the corpus of edited volumes. In contrast, Tobagi (2009) is a more introspective volume, which focuses more directly on the life and death of the author's father, journalist Walter Tobagi, who was shot dead in 1980 by the Brigata XXVIII Marzo. Detailed historical and investigative documentation is united in this book with careful consideration of the treatment of victims and their relatives in the controversial *pentitismo* legislation of the 1980s and in more contemporary cultural practices relating to the legacy of the *anni di piombo*.

What both text types share is a common testimonial mission to articulate the traumatic effects of the injury and loss suffered by victims and survivors, to engage the Italian public in the plight of victims and survivors, and to call to account those who have evaded responsibility for the tragic consequences of their violence. That testimonial mission, implicit in the autobiographical texts, is explicitly asserted in the introductory or prefatory material of the edited volumes. For instance, in the preface to Specchia and Canteri (2007, 9), Vittorio Feltri asserts that 'this book gives voice to those from whom it was taken', while the front cover of Fasanella and Grippo (2006) announces: 'having their say at last: those who have never had the opportunity to speak the truth'. But what most forcibly unites these texts is the oppositional or resistant stance they take in respect of the cultural dominance of former terrorists and their mission to counter their understanding of events. Feltri, for instance, asserts twice within his

three-page preface that *Terrorismo: L'altra storia* 'remedies' the habit of viewing the *anni di piombo* 'through the eyes of the terrorists' (Specchia and Canteri 2007, 9, 11), while the Introduction to Fasanella and Grippo asserts: 'today it is the victims who demand that proper order be restored' (2006, 8). Among the autobiographical texts, the most eloquent expression of that desire to counter the cultural dominance of the perpetrators is Calabresi's (2007, 13–16) invitation to readers to consider, from the perspective of the victim, an iconic photograph of the *anni di piombo*, which captures a balaclava-clad youth crouching to shoot at an unseen target in Milan's Via De Amicis in 1977. Calabresi thus redirects the focus of attention away from the subject and towards the object of the violence, a group of young policemen, one of whom would lose his life in the encounter between armed protestors and police.¹⁰

In countering the narratives provided by former terrorists in their diverse publications and media appearances, the corpus of victim-centred narratives may be seen to constitute a kind of 'talking back' to such texts in the terms proposed by bell hooks (1989). In hooks's formulation, talking back is a form of 'true speaking', which represents 'an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges politics of domination that would render [the oppressed] nameless and voiceless' (ibid. 8). In line with trauma theory's appreciation of the restorative and healing power of the narration of the trauma story, hooks's theoretical construction also sees in the act of 'moving from silence into speech ... a gesture of defiance that heals' (ibid. 9). Indeed, it is in the act of speech, of talking back, that the oppressed and exploited move from object to subject, reclaiming and recovering themselves. 'Only as subjects can we speak', hooks proclaims, 'As objects, we remain voiceless – our beings defined and interpreted by others' (ibid. 12).

Certain narratives within the victim-centred corpus articulate a similarly affirmative understanding of what hooks (1989, 12) has termed 'coming to voice'; in these cases, the status of the individual story as testimony is made explicit, as is the manner in which the work of bearing witness has become the source of a new identity and of a new mission in life for the survivor of political violence. Maurizio Puddu, who survived a knee-capping attack by the Red Brigades to become the founder of the Italian Association of Victims of Terrorism, writes of his 'commitment as a witness' (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 97), while Manlio Milani, a survivor of the Brescia bombing who lost his wife in the attack, describes himself as a 'militant of the truth' (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 20). He attests to having taken on that role when he realised that his was not 'a private but a public tragedy, because it occurred during a public antifascist demonstration. From that moment on, [the tragedy] was transformed into testimony' (ibid. 16). In a number of instances, the decision to assume a testimonial role is presented as a conscious rejection of a victim identity; such is the case in the testimony provided by Benedetta Tobagi in Fasanella and Grippo (2006, 174): 'I have reflected and still reflect a lot on the significance of memory and on being able to serve as a witness rather than as a victim who is exhibited to the public.'¹¹ Inherent in these consciously testimonial narratives is a rejection of a passive construction of victimhood and an understanding that the survivors of the *anni di piombo* are potential agents for social and political change. Such a position is in line with Judith Herman's (2001) assessment of the affirmative value of victim testimonies; Herman identifies that, through their public storytelling, victims have the capacity to draw people into the campaign for change, because 'when others bear witness to the testimony of a crime, others share the responsibility for restoring justice' (2001, 210).

However, as other narratives within the victim-centred corpus demonstrate, bearing witness is not a simple exercise. Claire Hackett and Bill Rolston (2009, 356) have noted in their work on victim testimony in Northern Ireland that there are many obstacles to testimony in post-conflict societies: 'at the individual level, trauma and fear may lead to silence rather than speech, while at

the social level there may not be spaces in which stories can be told and listened to sympathetically'. Hackett and Rolston also acknowledge the difficulties that arise from the broad political investment in 'victims telling stories in the pursuit of justice and social transformation'; because such stories are central to the process of constructing collective interpretations and memory, they may 'expose the structural forces at work' in the officially sanctioned narratives of a given society (ibid. 360). Evidence of such resistance to survivor testimony is best documented in the Introduction to Fasanella and Grippo (2006, 5), where it is acknowledged that 'it wasn't easy to find people who were willing to tell their story, to make their suffering public In the case of Piazza Fontana, it was quite impossible.' This statement prompts a series of questions about the extent to which the Italian corpus really does provide a form of 'true speaking' on the part of the survivors, a 'gesture of defiance that heals', and the extent to which individual contributors may have spoken against their volition or better judgement. It also begs the question of the extent to which those who *choose* to speak – bearing in mind that several individuals contribute to more than one volume – can be considered representative of the wider constituency and its desires. The failure on the part of the editors to interrogate or explain their decision to persist with the project, despite the reluctance of many survivors and relatives of victims to articulate their experience and suffering, surely weakens the book's claim to promote the cause, desires and demands of that constituency.

For those who *do* choose to speak, however, a recurrent lament is that access to the public forum has been systematically denied to survivors of terrorist attacks. The denial of a public space in which to voice their private suffering and sense of injustice is felt particularly keenly by the contributors to the edited collections. For instance, Giovanni Berardi, whose father was assassinated by the Red Brigades in 1978, protests that: 'we victims and relatives of the victims . . . have been denied the opportunity to speak, to express our point of view. We have no voice' (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 111). Other contributors to the same volume attempt to explain their marginalisation with reference to the social dynamics that render the very presence of the survivor or relative of the victim a source of social discomfort, anxiety or vexation. Massimo Coco, son of Francesco Coco, who was assassinated by the Red Brigades in 1976, reflects: 'it seems to me that being a victim of terrorism . . . generates almost irritation. It almost seems as if people are afraid of our requests, or maybe of our pain' (ibid. 65). Similar sentiments are expressed throughout the corpus (where the recurrence of the word 'irritation' [*fastidio*] is especially noteworthy): Giovanni Berardi discerns in others 'a sense of irritation or at least of indifference towards our pain' (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 106), while Angelo Ventura's experience has taught him that, for others, 'The victims . . . are burdensome' (Specchia and Canteri 2007, 351).

Such sentiments are entirely consistent with the psychological literature treating the experiences of victims of trauma. Judith Herman, for instance, observes that 'denial, repression, and dissociation operate on a social as well as an individual level' (2001, 2). She adds that, because our overriding psychological impulse is to distance trauma and to banish atrocities from consciousness, victims cause anxiety and incite in others a desire to turn away (ibid. 1). An eloquent articulation of such a process is that of Roberto della Rocca, a police officer who found after being shot by the Red Brigades that:

. . . my relationship with my colleagues was also greatly altered, I had the impression that they were avoiding me, I felt them to be colder, more distant. It was a way of exorcising the danger: it's not easy to connect with someone who reminds you of a painful event . . . we avoid victims to the point of utterly dismissing them in order to distance the very idea of the danger. (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 157–158)

That psychopathological understanding of the relationship between the survivor and the wider society is further complicated by the demands and claims made by the perpetrator. Herman asserts that ‘when the traumatic events are of human design, those who bear witness are caught in the conflict between victim and perpetrator’ (2001, 7) and compelled to take sides. Rather disconcertingly, she concludes that, in a bid to preserve our psychological integrity:

... it is very tempting to take the side of the perpetrator. All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear and speak no evil. The victim, on the contrary, asks the bystander to share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement, and remembering. (2001, 7–8)

That Italian society is deemed to have fallen prey to that temptation to side with the perpetrator is evident from the tenor of the claims made in Fasanella and Grippo (2006) and Specchia and Canteri (2007), and throughout the entire corpus of victim-centred narration. The corpus displays a marked preference for the language of victimhood over that of survival, perhaps in a bid to remind the reading public of the injustice of the comparative treatment of perpetrators and victims of the *anni di piombo*. Significantly, the corpus is addressed not to the perpetrators of the violence but to what is constructed as a bystander society caught in the conflict between survivor and perpetrator and siding with the perpetrator at the expense of the survivor. It is precisely the Italian public’s decision to ‘see, hear and speak no evil’ (Herman 2001, 7) – to take the part of the perpetrators and sympathise with their motives or their present circumstances – that constitutes a second wounding of the survivor or relative of the victim in his/her role as victim, an allegation that recurs several times in the corpus, but is perhaps best encapsulated by Maurizio Puddu’s lament: ‘the victim is therefore a victim twice over, and feels disillusioned, vilified, abandoned. The victim is sacrificed’ (Specchia and Canteri 2007, 356).

Fashioning the survivor as victim of state and media

The articulation of the societal rejection of the survivor as a form of second wounding fashions the injured party not only as a victim of the terrorist violence of the *anni di piombo* but also as a victim of the Italian state and media. As Anna Cento Bull (2011) has observed in the context of Italian policies and practices aimed at national reconciliation, ‘public discourses on reconciliation aim at achieving closure, and often subordinate the victims’ individual needs to this end’.¹² Public disregard for the needs of individual survivors is clearly articulated by Fausto Cuocolo, a Christian Democrat leader who was kneecapped by the Red Brigades in 1979 and later subjected to attempted murder. Cuocolo writes:

As a victim, I have always registered a troublesome understanding, a dangerous justification, of the terrorists. The State has failed to provide justice in full or to impose adequate punishment, proportionate to the crimes committed. Quite the opposite; the law in Italy has been excessively understanding towards the phenomenon of armed struggle, without taking into account the real damage done not only to the community but, above all, to individual people. (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 147)

This statement, taken together with Puddu’s understanding that the victim has been sacrificed to the psychological needs of a society eager to find some kind of resolution to the *anni di piombo*, goes some way to explain why the greatest sense of injustice expressed throughout the corpus is reserved for the comparative treatment of perpetrator and victim on the part of two major institutions of the bystander society: the Italian state and media.¹³

In relation to the state, the many sources of discontent expressed in the corpus of victim-centred narratives include its weak response to political violence in the early years of the *anni di piombo*, its

subsequent introduction of the *pentitismo* legislation (which rewarded former terrorists who turned state's evidence with a reduced sentence), its failure to identify and bring to justice the perpetrators of *stragismo*, and its continuing refusal to make public all documentation relating to the violence of the period. For family members of the victims of *stragismo*, the failure to identify, pursue and convict those responsible for the deaths of Italian citizens remains the primary source of grievance and disillusionment. Manlio Milani, for instance, takes issue with the fact that:

The three big massacres – piazza Fontana, Brescia and the Italicus train – have no culprits, only silence, reticence, diversions. This is why I can't bring myself to make peace with the institutions; I hold them unavoidably responsible for the lack of justice. The State has denied us the right to justice and truth and it is difficult, in this context, to re-establish a harmonious relationship with the norms of civil society. (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 22)

However, mistrust of the state is not confined to victims of *stragismo* alone; Maurizio Puddu, for instance, goes even further than Milani in decrying the obscurantist actions of state, when he argues that:

The behaviour of the State in regard to the victims is truly bewildering Some have spoken of a 'pact of silence' between the State and the ex-terrorists The terrorists who know . . . don't speak because they live in the unremitting fear that someone – someone their truth could harm – will eliminate them. The State hasn't and doesn't search hard enough for the truth and, in many cases, it has even concealed it, to cover up the rotten apples it has had working within. (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 101)

In both cases, the accusation of self-serving action on the part of the state culminates in a call to end the imposition of state secrecy and to declassify all documents relating to the crimes of the *anni di piombo*. Only through full disclosure of the facts and of both individual and institutional responsibilities, it is implied, can personal and collective healing be achieved.

Another source of anger and bitterness identifiable throughout the corpus of victim-centred narratives is the state's perceived disregard for the human cost of terrorism and for the physical and psychological challenges continually faced by survivors of political violence.¹⁴ This is true of those who were wounded in the *anni di piombo*, like Fausto Cuocolo or Mario Marchetti; the latter was shot in the legs for working as a doctor in Milan's San Vittore prison and, in the words of his daughter, Auretta, 'felt betrayed by an ungrateful State' (Specchia and Canteri 2007, 225). It is also true of those who lost a relative in the violence. Silvia Perrone, whose husband was killed by the left-wing Nuclei armati proletari in 1977, attests that 'For thirty years we have experienced only isolation and ostracism on the part of the institutions' (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 78); Giovanni Berardi, whose father Rosario was killed by the Red Brigades a year later, similarly contests: 'We have been betrayed by everyone, abandoned. The State has limited itself to bureaucratic formalities in its treatment of us' (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 106); Benedetta Tobagi, too, laments that, 'in all these years, the State has proved to be completely absent' (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 196); while Anna Di Vittorio, the sister of a Bologna bombing victim, complains that 'they left us alone: the State, the institutions, politicians, the media All absent, negligent. They left the victims alone with their pain' (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 204).

Yet, as Mario Calabresi (2007, 71) points out, the majority of those killed during the *anni di piombo* were employed by the state and died in its service. It is in the narratives of their relatives that the greatest degree of anger is expressed, an anger that is directed towards a state that has proved to be unworthy of the sacrifice given, lacking the determination to pursue the perpetrators, failing to honour the memory of the dead and quickly abandoning any responsibility for the welfare of their families. A particular grievance surrounds the 'excessive indulgence [*buonismo*]' shown by the state in facilitating the rehabilitation of former terrorists

while neglecting the needs of survivors and relatives of the victims.¹⁵ The injustice of the situation is neatly encapsulated by Maria Rosaria, whose brother, judge Gerolamo Tartaglione, was shot dead by the Red Brigades in 1978: ‘The truth is that the State has preferred to reward the killers and forget about us’ (Specchia and Canteri 2007, 220). That sentiment is echoed by Giovanni Berardi: ‘Every so often, the President of the Republic thinks to make magnanimous gestures of pardon towards the terrorists, but no one thinks of the seat left empty for over twenty years in my house’ (Specchia and Canteri 2007, 193).

The extent of the state’s perceived ill treatment of survivors and relatives of the victims is such that the actions of the state are constructed in a number of narratives as a form of wounding. Benedetta Tobagi (2009, 238), for instance, refers to the very early release of her father’s killer in accordance with the terms of the *pentitismo* legislation as a ‘sfregio’ – an untranslatable term connoting slashing, scarring and insult – which she, her family and many others were obliged to accept for the sake of the common good. While the language of wounding deployed by Tobagi recurs with some regularity throughout the corpus of victim-centred narratives, it is particularly prevalent in Fasanella and Grippo (2006). In the Introduction to the volume, the injustice of the institutional rush to rehabilitate former terrorists is described as leaving survivors with ‘the bitter sensation of having been attacked twice. The second time by the State’ (ibid. 8). That construction of the state as an overtly antagonistic and injurious force draws on a number of instances in the book in which survivors and relatives of the victims deploy the metaphor of wounding to express the impact that the actions (or inaction) of the state has had on them. Roberto della Rocca, for instance, declares that ‘what wounds me as a victim is the fact that the State has not done very much at all to arrive at a satisfactory truth about those years’ (ibid. 158) while, for Massimo Coco, ‘A multitude of wrongs, big and small ... amounts to something more bitter than the wound itself ... My father died for the State ... and it is precisely the State that denies his family justice, wounding it instead’ (ibid. 64–65).

Such constructions implicitly align the actions of the state with those of the terrorists. That alignment is more explicitly but still cautiously acknowledged not only in Maurizio Puddu’s previously mentioned allusion to a pact of silence between the state and the former terrorists (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 101) but also in the Introduction to Fasanella and Grippo (2006, 8), where it is observed that ‘the version of the brigadists [and] that of the State ... often correspond’. The correspondence between the actions of the state and those of former terrorists is also advanced through the use of a family metaphor in the words of Giuseppina Gilforte, whose Carabinieri officer husband, Emanuele Tuttobene, was targeted for murder by the Red Brigades in 1980. Gilforte launches a damning attack on the Italian state when she asserts that:

For the terrorists this State has behaved like an affectionate father, lavish with beneficial laws. For the victims, it has been a forbidding enemy ... for years they have been rewriting terrorism to the benefit of the assassins, transforming them into victims and denoting us, widows who have never asked for anything other than truth and justice, as ruthless and vindictive. (Specchia and Canteri 2007, 357)

The antagonism expressed here towards the rehabilitation of former terrorists on the part of the ‘forbidding enemy’ that is the state is reiterated and intensified in Fasanella and Grippo (2006), in the narrative provided by Silvana Perrone and Mariella Magi. The husband of the latter, Fausto Dionisi, was shot dead by Prima Linea militants during an attempted prison break in 1978. Among those convicted of being a ‘moral accessory’ to the murder was Sergio D’Elia, who would subsequently be elected to Parliament and controversially selected to serve as

secretary to the Presidency of the Chamber of Deputies in 2006. In the most forceful rhetorical equation of the actions of the state with those of the terrorist organisations of the *anni di piombo*, Perrone and Magi express vehement objection to D'Elia's appointment, asserting that:

From a symbolic perspective it is as if the State had declared that it had armed the terrorists. It is as if it had said to us: 'you will be governed by the men who killed your husbands'. No, we cannot permit, at a distance of thirty years, that they kill them a second time. (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 79)

The injurious actions of the state are compounded, for many victims of terrorism, by those of the Italian media, which are occasionally portrayed as collaborating or even colluding with the state's efforts to rehabilitate former terrorists at the expense of other considerations. That is the argument articulated by Silvia Perrone, who accuses politicians, the state and the media of establishing 'between them a conspiracy of silence, which bears down like a lead weight over the democracy of this country' (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 87). Perrone's is, however, an extreme position. More common throughout the corpus of victim-centred narratives are criticisms of the media for the paucity of attention afforded to survivors and relatives of the victims of terrorism, especially in comparison with the amount of media attention granted to former terrorists. Several contributors to the edited volumes lament the injustice of finding it impossible to have their perspective represented in the media, with letters to newspapers consistently going unpublished, while former terrorists appear 'on television as stars' (Vanna Bertelé, quoted in Specchia and Canteri 2007, 302).¹⁶ The particular role played by television in promoting the perpetrators of the *anni di piombo* to celebrity status is harshly criticised by a number of commentators, among them Giovanni Berardi, who laments that 'every time ex-terrorists are interviewed, a media image is constructed around them and false heroes are created, they have become stars to be put on TV, intellectuals who write books and pontificate on every single thing' (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 106).¹⁷

A number of different media practices are singled out for criticism within the corpus of victim-centred narratives. One of the charges brought against the media is that, in their lenient treatment of former terrorists and their failure to clearly condemn the past actions of the same, they are guilty of rewriting the history of the *anni di piombo* and distorting the balance of responsibilities. Mario Calabresi, himself a journalist, is particularly critical of the media's failings in this regard. He writes:

... it is still hard to utter categorical condemnation of political violence. The terrorists have been repudiated as assassins but all too often described as losers, people who fought a battle of ideals but failed to win. . . . The mass media have particular responsibilities in this regard. (Calabresi 2007, 98)

Calabresi also berates the media for their failure to recall the crimes committed by former terrorists, even when their very presence in the media is motivated by their criminal activity: 'the most annoying and dangerous thing are the standard interviews: the crimes and responsibilities of the terrorists who speak are almost never mentioned, and this is unacceptable especially if they have been called on to discuss the *anni di piombo*' (2007, 98). A similar criticism is brought to bear by Giovanni Berardi, whose rhetorical question, 'But who reminds us that they have been stained with the blood of the people they killed? Who remembers the dead?' (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 106), provides a clear condemnation of the incongruity and inequity of the media's whitewashing of the violent past.

Equally offensive to victims of terrorism are the inequality of space and the lack of consideration afforded representatives of victims who are invited to participate in television studio discussions that also include former terrorists. In Specchia and Canteri, Berardi observes that 'on television they invite the perpetrators to narrate their story and every so often they give

three seconds to the victims and then say thank you and goodbye' (2007, 192); the inequity of the relative treatment of victims and perpetrators alluded to here is underscored in Berardi's longer contribution to Fasanella and Grippo (2006, 110):

When they invite us . . . we are called on to make a walk-on appearance, play the role of an extra: they have us say hello, state who we have lost, to whom we are related, and then they force us to listen for hours to the epic of the ex-terrorists.

For Maurizio Puddu, media practices such as these, in which the relatives of victims are 'treated like second-class citizens, forced to hear [ex-terrorists] recount how they killed our nearest and dearest', constitute 'a wound which is reopened every time' (Specchia and Canteri 2007, 367). Puddu's use of the wound metaphor parallels the recurrent employment of that metaphor in victims' accounts of their relationship with the state. As in that instance, so too in this case the metaphor of wounding serves to construct the media as an injurious and antagonistic force and to fashion the survivor of the *anni di piombo* as a victim of its iniquitous actions. The metaphor is reiterated with even greater rhetorical force and clear moral condemnation by Antonio Iosa, who constructs the psychological impact of Italian media practices that facilitate the rehabilitation of the former terrorists as both comparable to, and a prolongation of, the experience of being subjected to a punishment shooting.¹⁸

. . . the physical pain is nothing in comparison with the pain caused by the wounds to the soul. It's there that they continue to shoot and attack us, in the soul. I read the newspapers, watch television, listen to the declarations of certain politicians and intellectuals. And every time it's as if they wanted to force me to my knees to shoot me once again, just like that night in the Christian Democrat offices. That is what they do every time they allow ex-terrorists to talk on and on, or when they indulge them in their silence. (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 169–170)

Iosa's equation of the media practices with terrorist action provides strong evidence of the extreme sense of injustice reserved for the institutions of the bystander society in the corpus of victim-centred narratives addressing the *anni di piombo*. However, it is important to acknowledge that, despite its focus on institutions, the corpus does not absolve the wider Italian public of responsibility for the well-being of survivors of political violence. While the public is often tacitly implicated in the series of accusations targeting the state and media, it is also quite directly invoked and called to account when the object of criticism is the common cultural expectation that survivors and relatives of the victims should pardon the perpetrators of terrorist attacks. The extraordinary nature of that expectation is exposed by Massimo Coco, who observes in Fasanella and Grippo (2006, 58): 'Today I am told that I should forgive his assassins. Okay, fine, we should be merciful. But, first, can I please know who it was who killed him?' The use of the rhetorical question reveals the incongruity of the cultural expectation of forgiveness in a context where not only has a full explanation of events not been provided, but where the perpetrator remains unidentified and unpunished. A second use of rhetorical questioning towards the close of Coco's narrative – 'Why does nobody ask mafia victims to forgive the assassins?' (ibid. 70) – reinforces the extraordinary nature of the expectation that victims of terrorism – and victims of terrorism alone – should forgive those responsible for their suffering.

Attempts to explain or account for the public expectation that survivors and relatives of victims of terrorism pardon those responsible for their suffering are rare. However, a sensitive and eloquent expression of the psychological mechanisms at work in such expectations is provided by Benedetta Tobagi (2009). Here, Tobagi recalls how she was compelled at a public gathering, and against her will, to come face to face with Mario Marano, one of the men involved in the murder of her father. She recounts how she found herself momentarily paralysed by the encounter, unable to respond, but wracked by tears and trembling as she listened to Marano's awkward attempt to explain himself.

Recognising his need for her forgiveness, but unwilling and unable to bear responsibility for his well-being, she managed to make her excuses before running out into the street to be sick. For Tobagi, the misplaced desire on the part of the man who introduced her to one of her father's killers typifies Italian society's disregard for the psychological state of individual survivors in its drive to advance reconciliation and healing. In terms reminiscent of Anna Cento Bull's identification of a tendency to subordinate individual victims' needs to the task of achieving closure, Tobagi writes of:

... a widespread superficiality in the Italian mentality which often tends to consign the chance of a 'way out of the *anni di piombo*' to the reconciliation between victims and perpetrators, pushing the most devastated individuals to the forefront in order to avoid a long and complex process of cultural elaboration. (2009, 24)

According to this reading, survivors and relatives of the victims are doubly burdened, charged not only with the task of healing themselves – often in isolation and without the support of public, state or media – but also with that of accelerating the healing of a society that remains disinclined to ascertain the exact cause of the symptoms.¹⁹

Consequences and conclusions

Having considered what is being invoked to achieve and what kinds of subjects and objects are produced by the particular conceptualisation of victimhood constructed in the corpus of victim-centred narratives arising from the experience of political violence in the *anni di piombo*, it is apposite to close with some consideration of the ramifications of the corpus's fashioning of survivors and victims of terrorism as victims of the Italian state and media in the present day.

The first observation to be made is that the corpus has largely succeeded in its mission to articulate the traumatic legacy of the political violence of the *anni di piombo* for the survivors and relatives of the victims, and to engage the Italian public in their plight. The sudden emergence of a cluster of texts treating the experience of those who suffered injury or loss in the *anni di piombo*, the media presence subsequently enjoyed by the author-protagonists of the texts and the para-textual work done by those same individuals in promoting the interests of survivors and of relatives of the victims have all contributed to the creation of a more victim-centred approach to the memory of the *anni di piombo* in recent years. Recognition of the changed cultural landscape is provided by Alfredo Radiconcini (n.d.), writing for the Railibro website: 'In recent years, something that had become almost a taboo has been broken: the victims were silent, the assassins were speaking. Now it is completely different: today, at last, the new generation can listen to both sides of the story of those years.' Radiconcini (n.d.) thus construes victim-centred narration as an unequivocally positive form of 'talking back' to the dominance of former terrorists in the narratives of the 1990s and as an ethical rebalancing of the relationship between victim, perpetrator and society in Italian culture.

That positive construction of the contribution made by the corpus of victim-centred narratives could, however, be countered by a number of more critical evaluations of the corpus's refashioning of the survivors and relatives of victims of terrorism. For instance, in shifting discourses of survivor suffering away from the context of injuries inflicted in the violent past of the *anni di piombo* and onto the perceived failings of the state and media in the present day, it could be argued that the corpus de-historicises the events of the *anni di piombo* and their impact. Moreover, in focusing readers' attention on the institutional failings of the bystander society, the corpus could be accused of distorting the collective imaginary of the *anni di piombo*, displacing the figure of the terrorist and diminishing the extent of culpability attributed to individual perpetrators and the armed organisations to which they belonged. By the same token, it could be

charged not only with obfuscating distinctions between right-wing and left-wing violence but also of generating an undifferentiated model of victimhood. Finally, it could be argued that, in favouring the language of victimhood over that of survival and thereby emphasising the continuing effects of the violence on those affected, the corpus actively encourages survivors to identify as victims and inhibits the healing of individual survivors and the wider society alike.

A number of these more negative interpretations emerge in the key texts comprising the critical backlash against the recent 'turn to the victim' in Italian culture. The backlash has been spearheaded by Giovanni De Luna (2011), but the historian's thesis is in fact heavily indebted to an article published in the online magazine *Nazione indiana* by Christian Raimo (2008). Although both Raimo and De Luna frame their discussion of the Italian turn to the victim in relation to wider developments in Western culture, both the timing of their critique and the substance of their arguments may be seen to respond directly to the emerging protagonism of the victims of the *anni di piombo* quite specifically. Raimo's (2008) analysis is focused almost exclusively on what he sees as the distortions and inequities wrought by victim-centred accounts of Italian terrorism, and he bemoans the fact that 'the social status of the victim seems to have become the only subject of rights, worthy of being listened to and the bearer of the truth'. De Luna's critique, though broader in its scope, explicitly attributes the very emergence of the turn to the victim in Italy to the 'unresolved issues' (2011, 16) of the *anni di piombo*.

It is pertinent to consider the prompt critical backlash in Italy against the cultural ascendancy of the victim (and the victim of the *anni di piombo* more specifically) in relation to the psychological dynamics of post-conflict societies. Herman (2001, 7–8) has theorised that, in the aftermath of political violence, the victim may pose an even greater psychological threat than the perpetrator; while the perpetrator may be silenced and banished from society, the victim's continuing presence in society serves as a reminder of the violence inflicted and as a threat to the process of psychological repression at work in the wider community. The tension between the need for recognition and remembrance on the part of the victim and the desire to forget the violent past on the part of the wider society often results in a tendency 'to discredit the victim or to render her invisible' (Herman 2001, 8). On that reading, the critical backlash spearheaded by Raimo and De Luna may be understood to function as a form of psychological defence against the memory of the violence provoked by the victim and, by extension, as an attempt to evade the charges brought against the bystander society within the corpus of victim-centred narration.

However, the particular formulation of Raimo's (2008) and De Luna's (2011) arguments suggests that psychological factors alone do not fully explain the critical backlash against the turn to the victim in Italian culture. Also at stake, I would argue, are issues relating to the correct approach to the legacy of the *anni di piombo* and the shifting balance of power – in Italy as elsewhere – between the traditional discipline of historical studies and the emergent field of memory studies. A direct association between the turn to the victim and the ascendancy of memory studies is posited by Raimo (2008), who laments that:

... memory, like the victim ... 'has invaded the field'; it captures the past within itself and does so with a net that is wider than that of the discipline called history, depositing therein a much larger dose of subjectivity and of 'the lived'.

De Luna (2011, 83), for his part, argues that the contemporary 'triumph of the victim' is due not only to the victim's ability to engage emotional understanding rather than the cognitive understanding associated with historical interpretation but also to the transformation of Italy's media culture from one that is objective and informative to one that is subjective and entertainment-led (*ibid.* 102–103; 112–117). The attention paid to these broader cultural issues indicates that the anxieties associated

with the Italian turn to the victim are also bound up with the victim's articulation of 'a history that is less arid, more touching, more "human"' (Raimo 2008) and with the diminishing cultural capital held by historians in what has been termed 'the era of the witness' (Wieviorka 2006).

Regardless of which theoretical frame is deployed to explain the phenomenon, the complex issues at play in the reception of victim-centred narration serve to illustrate the ongoing tensions surrounding the legacy of the *anni di piombo*. If, on the one hand, the commercial success of the corpus of victim-centred narration suggests that the Italian public has now gained the psychological distance necessary to engage with the plight of those who suffered injury and loss in the violence of the *anni di piombo*, on the other the critical backlash against the turn to the victim suggests that the corpus's indictment of the failings of the bystander society has not been universally welcomed. Moreover, while it is certainly the case that the corpus of victim-centred narration has been instrumental in reshaping the cultural imaginary of the *anni di piombo* in the 2000s and in rebalancing the relationship between victim, perpetrator and society, the new-found prominence afforded the victim does not in itself amount to a more even-handed construction of the experience of political violence and its legacy. Much work – psychological and cultural – remains to be done before such a balance may be achieved.

Notes

1. Less well known than the published material, important television series include the ground-breaking *La notte della repubblica* (Zavoli 1989) and *La storia siamo noi* (Minoli 1997–present). Yet to be shown in Italy but available online is the recent French-language television series, *Ils étaient les Brigades Rouges* (Levi Boucault 2011). Among the more recent documentary films dedicated to the protagonists of the *anni di piombo* are *Il sole dell'avvenire* (Pannone 2008) and *Giusva: La vera storia di Valerio Fioravanti* (Patierno 2011).
2. Sossi (1979) is the only memoir that has been in print on a regular basis; it entered its fifth edition in 2004. On the negative reactions of publishers to victim-centred writings on terrorism, see Tutino (1988).
3. The cinematic corpus of the 1990s includes *La seconda volta* (Calopresti 1995), *Le mani forti* (Bernini 1997) and *Per non dimenticare* (Martelli 1992). The more recent corpus includes *Attacco allo stato* (Soavi 2006), *Il divo* (Sorrentino 2008) and *Romanzo di una strage* (Giordana 2011).
4. The preference for 9 May (the anniversary of Aldo Moro's death in 1978) over 12 December (the anniversary of the Piazza Fontana bombing in 1969) was the source of some considerable debate and an uncomfortable compromise for a number of victims' organisations.
5. Excluded from consideration here on account of its unique format is D'Antona and Zavoli (2004), which treats the aftermath of Massimo D'Antona's death at the hands of the 'New Red Brigades' in 1999.
6. Specchia and Canteri's (2007) exclusive focus on left-wing violence implicitly equates terrorism with the actions of the left alone, thereby explicating and perpetuating the political divisions that tend to characterise debates and campaigns pertaining to the *anni di piombo* and their legacy. Other limitations of the volume include the hyperbolic style of the Introduction, which is at odds with its claim to present events 'with a detached and journalistic tone' (ibid. 17), and the untenable assertion that it is 'the only publication which has exclusively gathered the testimonies of those who suffered ... the macabre ritual of mass murder' (ibid. 15).
7. Exceptions to the extreme youth of the authors of this text type are Sabina Rossa and Andrea Casalegno; the former had just turned 16 at the time of her father's murder, the latter was 33 when his father was killed.
8. The need to counter ceremonial rhetoric alongside terrorist rhetoric is elucidated by Tobagi, who observes that 'The identity of the victim is crushed. What remains is only the sparkling but empty simulacrum of the hero' (2009, 14).
9. Lotta Continua had falsely nominated Luigi Calabresi as the person responsible for the extremely controversial and still unexplained death of Giuseppe 'Pino' Pinelli during an interrogation at the Milan police headquarters in the days following the Piazza Fontana bombing in December 1969.

10. As Calabresi subsequently clarifies, while the photograph depicts Giuseppe Memeo in the act of shooting, it was in fact his comrade, Mario Ferrandi, who shot dead police officer Antonio Custra (2007, 24–25).
11. A similar stance is taken by Anna Di Vittorio, whose brother Mauro was killed in the Bologna bombing. In the words of her husband, Giancarlo Calidori, Anna ‘rejected the status of “relative of the victim” from the very outset. She has always considered herself an Italian citizen, above and beyond the sister of a victim, and wants to stand as a citizen before the State’ (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 203).
12. Hackett and Rolston similarly observe, in relation to post-conflict Northern Ireland, that certain forms of testimony tend to direct victim narratives to the structural ends desired by the state, rather than to provide the free form of expression desired by the victims (2009, 357, 370).
13. These two institutions are addressed directly in the Introduction to Fasanella and Grippo (2006, 10), where the victims’ demands are deemed to comprise: ‘two collective requests. One to the institutions: that the perpetuity of State secrecy be abolished The other to the world of the mass media: . . . that it not content itself with the truth of the State or become entrenched in convenient, supposed truths’.
14. Although the majority of anti-state criticism is focused on the state’s perceived disregard for the well-being of its employees in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, contributors to Specchia and Canteri (2007) also accuse the state of doing too little to protect its servants at the height of the terrorist threat. In relation to Prima Linea’s murder of policeman Giuseppe Lorusso in 1979, for instance, it is suggested that ‘his colleagues protested harshly during the funeral and castigated the State for not protecting them but for protecting the terrorists, especially by granting outright provisional freedom to those who were arrested’ (ibid. 99); similarly, Roberto Anzalone – a doctor who was shot by Prima Linea in 1977 – laments: ‘The State didn’t protect us, it didn’t react in the face of terrorism’ (ibid. 93).
15. The phrase is that of Luigi Ramundo, a Carabinieri officer who was shot by the BR in 1980 (Specchia and Canteri 2007, 264). A similar accusation is made by Roberto Anzalone: ‘The State has proved to be “indulgent” [*buonista*] with the terrorists and very much less so with the victims’ (ibid. 133).
16. Bertelé is the widow of Luigi Marangone, who was shot dead in 1981 for his outspoken resistance to the presence and influence of the BR within the Milanese hospital where he worked.
17. For some survivors, the criticism of the celebrity status afforded former terrorists in the Italian media is expressed in a more personalised form. Remo Cacciafesta, for instance, writes of his reaction to the media profile enjoyed by the BR’s Adriana Faranda, who shot him in the legs in 1977: ‘I am tired and sickened now by what certain newspapers write about ex-terrorists, like Faranda, who attend international tennis tournaments with VIPs and write books’ (Fasanella and Grippo 2006, 161–162).
18. Iosa was shot, along with three others, in a branch of the Christian Democrat party offices in Rome, in retaliation for the controversial deaths of four BR members in a Carabinieri raid on an apartment in Via Fracchia in Genoa in 1980.
19. A similar assessment of the unreasonable burden placed on survivors is presented in the closing pages of Specchia and Canteri (2007, 356): ‘The victim is often invited to clarify whether he or she has forgiven or not – writes Maurizio Puddu – and to take responsibility for matters that should be devolved to others.’

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Television/Filmography

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