

1 Introduction

This study inquires into the emergence and performativity of the state martyr figure from the perspective of a discourse and cultural analysis-oriented study of religion. It locates itself in the wake of investigations into the performative force of religious language, rhetorical patterns and narrative models in modern and contemporary political discourses. It specifically addresses the strategies by which social actors have tried to frame, give meaning to and relate a whole series of circumstances, facts, actions and reactions to each other, surrounding the kidnapping and assassination of Italian politician Aldo Moro in 1978. Focusing on practices of representation and memorialization of Moro's death as a sacrifice and martyrdom, this investigation aims to develop historical-philosophical reflection on the relationship between language and discourse, procedures of legitimization of political authority, the construction of political community and events of political violence. More generally, it aims to make a contribution to the debate about the relationship between religion, politics and violence.

The investigation is situated at the intersection of the disciplines of the study of religion and political philosophy. This transdisciplinarity requires the distinction of two different research levels. As an enquiry into the study of religion, it is especially interested in the individuation and analysis of religious significance within political discourse. More precisely, it aims to grasp the significance of the martyr figure within discursive practices surrounding and referring to the historical, cultural and political circumstances of Aldo Moro's death. As an enquiry into political philosophy, it aims, on the one hand, to focus on and criticize the political, ideological and instrumental use of the state martyr figure within a hegemonic discursive formation and, on the other, to explore the possibility of resistance through to the use of alternative, subversive forms of representation and memorialization.

1.1 The Event of Political Violence

The point of departure for this investigation is a series of events that began on March 16, 1978, with an attack by the Red Brigades (BR), in which the terrorist organization kidnapped Aldo Moro, and ended on May 9, 1978

with his murder and the discovery of his body. On the morning of March 16, 1978, the Christian Democrat politician was ambushed together with his security guards in via Fani, Rome. Four officers were killed in the ambush; a fifth officer died a few hours later in hospital. The politician was on his way to parliament to begin debates aimed at ratifying a new government. It was to be the first implementation of the political vision as defined by the *compromesso storico* («Historic Compromise»), a historical political alliance and accommodation between the Christian Democracy (DC) and the Italian Communist Party (PCI). This strategy originated from within the PCI, but Moro had promoted it within his own party and was considered the architect of the new government headed by Giulio Andreotti, who assumed the office of Prime Minister on the same day as the kidnapping. For the first time in Italian history, the PCI, despite not being part of the government, would surrender its oppositional role by agreeing not to contest the executive. After the ambush, Moro was abducted and held in captivity in via Montalcini, Rome.

During the 55 days in which Moro was held captive, the BR published nine communiqués through the press, which on the one hand attacked and accused what they called the «Imperialist State of the Multinationals» (SIM), and on the other hand addressed the Italian «proletariat», promising the imminent beginning of the revolution. Moreover, they did not only send their communiqués to the media, but also some of the letters that Moro wrote during his captivity. From within the so-called «people's prison» Moro wrote several letters, among others to co-workers at the university, cabinet ministers, colleagues from the DC, members of other parties, the Secretary General of the United Nations, his family, friends, and Pope Paul VI.¹ In these letters, Moro tried to convince the government, his own party, the Catholic Church and civil society of the moral imperative

1 Most of Moro's letters were not delivered and appeared in three separate historical moments. Twenty-six autographs—the letters written by Moro's hand that were known to have been delivered and were recovered from their addressees—appeared during the period of time in which Moro was held prisoner. A second set of the letters became public in October 1978. Twenty-eight letters were found in a BR hideout, an apartment in via Montenevoso in Milan, by the Italian anti-terrorist unit headed by Carabinieri general, Carlo Alberto dalla Chiesa. The Carabinieri found the set, which consisted of photocopies of typed, unsigned letters. In addition, a part of the so-called *Memoriale*, Moro's responses to BR interrogations, was found alongside the photocopies. The last collection of letters became public in June 1990, when a second cache of letters was found in the same apartment in via Montenevoso, behind a plasterboard discovered (at least according to the official version) by workers during some renovation works. It consisted of 419 handwritten

and political utility of negotiations for his release. In one of their eight communiqués, the BR proposed exchanging Moro's life for the freedom of thirteen prisoners. The choice to make some of Moro's letters public, especially those in which he asked the representatives of his own party and of the government to open negotiations for his liberation, was part of their communications strategy. They «used» the media, propagandistically, for the diffusion of their political convictions and to accuse their enemies and, strategically, to force, through the dissemination of some of Moro's letters, political parties to choose the path of negotiations. This strategy soon proved to be a complete failure.

The new «government of national solidarity»—formed a few hours after the abduction with the votes of the major parties—decided straightway, even before some explicit requests could be made, to adopt the so-called *linea della fermezza* («line of firmness»), a political strategy which consisted of the categorical refusal to negotiate with the terrorists for Moro's liberation. The leaders of both the DC and the PCI as well as most of the media considered it unacceptable to negotiate with the terrorist organization. Indeed, the latter claimed that any negotiation would legitimize the position of the terrorists and probably open the path for other acts of politically motivated violence. The DC was divided into two factions: a minority of Moro's friends and allies argued in favor of negotiations, while most party representatives were worried, for similar reasons to those of the Communists, but mostly because they feared the possible political consequences of leaving the PCI as the only opposition to negotiations with the terrorists.²

Threatened by the rejection and radical critique of the «line of firmness» expressed by Moro in his letters, politicians began to say, and most parts of the media repeated this, that Moro was no longer himself. The Interior Minister Francesco Cossiga established a so-called *comitato degli esperti*, consisting of well-known linguists and graphologists as well as the American adviser and expert on international terrorism Steve Pieczenik, which concluded that the letters were the product of an alienated mind. This allowed the Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti to inform the Chamber of Deputies that «a careful and competent evaluation of the text of the letter addressed

and two typed pages, which reproduced most of the letters and the *Memoriale*. Miguel Gotor, who has edited the letters, trying to order them chronologically, dedicated an extensive study to them and to the history of their appearance and estimates that forty-eight of Moro's letters were not delivered during the time he was kidnapped. See Gotor 2008, 223–235.

2 See Glynn/Lombardi 2012, 2.

to Mr. Cossiga led experts to believe that the letter was actually written by Aldo Moro, but it is not morally attributable to him.»³ On April 25 the Christian Democrats in their Roman headquarters, distributed to reporters a document signed by fifty people, who declared themselves «old friends» of Moro, stating that «[h]e is not the man we know, who with his spiritual political and legal vision, has contributed to the drafting of the Republican Constitution.»⁴ The operation of delegitimizing Aldo Moro's letters also played out massively in the press. Several hypotheses were made in different newspapers, for example, that he was writing under duress or was suffering from the psychological effects of the Stockholm syndrome.

On May 9, Aldo Moro was assassinated. His body was found in via Caetani in Rome, halfway between the headquarters of the DC and the PCI, in the trunk of a red Renault 4. In the final days of his life, Moro seems to have realized that he would soon be killed. On April 24, in a letter to the secretary of the DC Benigno Zaccagnini, which was published on the same day as the BR's eighth communiqué, Aldo Moro once more vehemently criticized his party's categorical refusal to negotiate, asking that «neither an authority of the State nor a party man attend my funeral» and «to be followed by the few who truly loved me and so are worthy of accompanying me with their prayers and their love.»⁵ Moro's family took his request seriously and, following the recovery of his body, issued a statement requesting «that the will of Aldo Moro be fully respected by the State and party authorities»⁶ and organized a private funeral that was held on May 10, in Torrita Tiberina, a small town near Rome where Moro spent his summers. Three days later, in the absence of Moro's body, a state funeral was held in the Archbasilica of St. John Lateran in the presence of the majority of the representatives of the political establishment and Pope Paul VI. The funeral was televised and followed throughout Italy.

3 See Bianconi 2001, 174; it.: «Una attenta e competente valutazione del testo della lettera indirizzata all'onorevole Cossiga ha indotto gli esperti a ritenere che la lettera è stata materialmente scritta da Aldo Moro, ma non è moralmente a lui ascrivibile.»

4 Quoted in Sciascia 1978, 102; it.: «Non è l'uomo che conosciamo, con la sua visione spirituale, politica e giuridica che ha ispirato il contributo alla stesura della stessa Costituzione repubblicana.»

5 Moro 2008j, 100; it.: «[...] chiedo che ai miei funerali non partecipino né Autorità dello Stato né uomini di partito. Chiedo di essere seguito dai pochi che mi hanno veramente voluto bene e sono degni perciò di accompagnarmi con la loro preghiera e con il loro amore.»

6 Quoted in Glynn/Lombardi 2012, 4; it.: «[...] che sia pienamente rispettata dalle autorità dello stato e del partito la precisa volontà di Aldo Moro.»

During his 55 days of captivity, the media strongly influenced the way in which Moro's kidnapping and imprisonment were handled by the institutions and presented to the public. Newspapers, radios and televisions provided daily reports on the status of the investigation and on the debates about the political strategy to be adopted by the government and political parties. But the majority of the media did not limit themselves to providing information on the investigation and on the decisions (or lack of decisions) of political parties and institutions. In fact, they largely served as a platform for the justification of the «line of firmness» adopted by the government and most of the parliamentary parties. Not only journalists, but also writers, artists, politicians, representatives of the clergy and academicians intervened in the press, expressing moral and political judgments about what was happening, accusing some and absolving others, offering possible interpretations and proposing plans and strategies of action. The media were a stage for political, philosophical and ethical statements as well as for the rhetorical celebration or demonization of certain individuals, social groups or political parties by other individuals, social groups and political parties.

Despite Moro having categorically denounced «the sacrifice of innocents in the name of an abstract principle of legality»⁷ as morally unjust and politically unsustainable, most of the political and civil society and the media represented his death as a sacrifice for the state and as martyrdom for the salvation of the Italian Republic and its citizens. Indeed, since the day of the kidnapping in via Fani, Aldo Moro was glorified as a great statesman, thus beginning what Alessandro Silj has pointedly defined as a «beatification process.»⁸ The construction of a state martyr is definitely a key element within this process of beatification. This beatification process and the politico-ideological strategic instrumentalization of this event of political violence have never ceased and continue to persist into the present. State apparatuses, representatives of the government, political parties and the established media represented and still represent Moro as a martyr. In fact, in September 2012 the Diocesan Tribunal of Rome gave the green light for an investigation into the potential beatification and canonization of Aldo Moro. The main argument of the promoters of the beatification is that Moro's death is a *martyrium in odium fidei*, namely martyrdom that occurred because of the executioners' aversion to Christian faith. Although

7 Moro 2008b, 8; it.: «[...] il sacrificio degli innocenti in nome di un astratto principio di legalità.»

8 Silj 1978, 185.

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the process began in recent times, this model of an explicitly Christian representation of the event has been present from the beginning, as this research will demonstrate.

1.2 *Status Quaestionis*

The circumstances of Moro's kidnapping, detention and assassination were the subject of an enormous amount of discursive practices and were debated in many lengthy institutional procedures. They have been the subject of five trials and three debates in parliamentary commissions of enquiry, one of which is still active. They were recounted and presented using many perspectives adopted by different social actors within different media. These include movies, novels, journalistic investigations, monuments, interviews, documentaries, theatrical plays, songs, as well as essays in criminology, history, law, and psychology. Despite this plurality of voices, narrative forms, mediums and perspectives, there is a theme or a recurring motif in the discourse on the Moro case: his death was and is still represented as a martyrdom and a sacrifice for the sake of national security and unity.

Both the renewal of terrorist actions in Italy—the assassination of Massimo D'Antona in 1999 and of Marco Biagi in 2002 by the self-declared «New Red Brigades»—at the turn of the century and the importance of the global security agenda nowadays are surely among the basic causes behind the increasing interest in the dissemination and implementation of the culture of violence that characterized the seventies and the first half of the eighties in Italy.⁹ Although the BR were only one of many terrorist groups and despite the fact that between 1974 and 1988 they claimed to have committed 86 murders, the killing of Aldo Moro was an act of political violence that dominated public debates and the collective memory the most.¹⁰ It is undoubtedly the most *significant* act of political violence in Italian history from the World War II onwards and one of the most serious cases of political assassination worldwide, only comparable with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, John Kennedy and Yitzhak Rabin.¹¹ Never before had an event of political violence in Italy been addressed this significantly through novels, journalistic investigations, interviews, movies, documentaries and theatrical plays.

⁹ See Antonello/O'Leary 2009, 1.

¹⁰ See Zavoli 1994, 467.

¹¹ See Formigoni 2016, 378.

Despite the BR having already carried out a number of kidnaps and murders, the kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro in 1978 was undoubtedly their most striking act. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is an enormous number of publications of different kinds on the Moro case. These publications can be divided into two broad categories. The first category includes all research exploring the factual and historical circumstances of the kidnapping, imprisonment and assassination of Aldo Moro. They aim to answer the following questions: Who did what, when, where, how and why? The studies in the first category can be divided into two sub-categories. Many of these studies have the characteristics and style of investigative journalism and apply the methods and instruments of forensics and criminal investigation. This interest in the crime's factual circumstances predominates them, as does the goal of clarifying who did what, when, how and where. The second sub-category of studies is interested in clarifying the historical setting, processes and responsibilities that led to the event of political violence. In these studies the prevailing question remains: why could these events occur? However, the boundary between forensic investigations and historical research is often fluid and blurred. Moreover, public interest in general focuses on the particular factual circumstances of spectacular events, such as the bombings in piazza Fontana and piazza della Loggia, and on the attack in via Fani—just to name a few—rather than on the causes and contexts of these events of political violence.¹² This is also the case in a wide range of publications addressing the Moro case, which focus more on the allegedly inexplicable elements of the circumstances of Moro's kidnapping and assassination, rather than on the political, social and cultural context in which they occurred.

The second category of studies addresses the way in which this event of political violence has been narrated and represented in different kinds of media. These studies seek to describe, analyze and interpret the impact, the importance and role of the event in literature, journalism, cinema, art and, in more general terms, in the Italian cultural and social imaginary. These studies—their ways of approaching the event, their interests and questions, their methods and analytical tools—generally belong to or are influenced by academic fields dealing with semiotics, media representation and procedures of cultural production, regulation and reception. This research is clearly located in this second category of studies, retaining and elaborating their results and their general hermeneutic horizons. In a recent publication on the rhetoric and representation of political violence in Italy from

12 See Antonello/O'Leary 2009, 7.

1969 to 2009, Pierpaolo Antonello and Alan O’Leary identify and isolate three key narrative modalities that were used to account for events of political violence in these intervening years: the oedipal, the conspiracy and the sacrificial models. As they point out, all three can be considered «forms of textualization of the events which perform both an interpretative and representational function.»¹³

These three narrative models were generally used to frame and to give meaning to a wide range of events of political violence that happened in the whole period of the so-called «years of lead» (*anni di piombo*), somehow attempting to give a generalized explanation of the conflicts depicted. Within the first narrative modality, the escalation of political violence between 1968 and 1982 has been interpreted and represented as the outcome of a generational conflict, in which militant and utopian sons and daughters were revolting against fathers and mothers considered to have been responsible for fascism or, at least, to have betrayed the revolutionary values and principles of the *Resistenza*. Significantly, this kind of narrative and representation can be found in many books and interviews with former members of the BR, which understood Aldo Moro as the paternal figure and symbol of the nation and bourgeois authority, which they rejected.¹⁴ Similarly, the second narrative has been and is still used to represent and to interpret the *anni di piombo*, especially the circumstances of Moro’s kidnapping and assassination. The so-called *dietrologia*—the production of conspiracy theories—is characterized by the attempt to find a *fil rouge*, a plot that would connect all the events of political violence that occurred in Italy in the *anni di piombo*. As Antonello and O’Leary observe, conspiracy theories were employed in particular by the Italian left, which was averse to recognizing the emergence of an ideology of violence within the working class and the student movement and its own inability to prevent it. Moreover, «conspiracy theory tends to confirm the extreme right’s conception of a society ruled by violence, and implicitly validates the view that the effective exertion of authority and power is the only real question of importance.»¹⁵ The third narrative model is what interests this study, since it analyzes the ways in which the sacrificial narrative of the kidnapping, imprisonment and assassination of Aldo Moro has emerged and been consolidated, and the use, within that narrative, of semantic units, rhetorical patterns and images that make reference to and iterate elements of Chris-

13 Antonello/O’Leary 2009, 5.

14 See Tricomi 2009, 16–29.

15 Antonello/O’Leary 2009, 6.

tian martyrology. The theme of this thesis can thus be conceptualized as the *martyrological representation and narration of the kidnapping, imprisonment and assassination of Aldo Moro*.

The presence of very divergent and conflicting representations and interpretations of the Moro affair is the sign of a very difficult relationship between narrative and history. There is long tradition of the questioning of this problem in Italian culture.¹⁶ In recent times, it has been interrogated in the writings of Carlo Ginzburg, who is interested in the rhetorical construction of historical events and their reference to «objective» reality.¹⁷ With regard to the *anni di piombo* and in particular to the events related to the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro, in Italy there is widespread dissatisfaction with judicial sentences as well as with «official» narratives, which is linked to a perceived need for supplementary justice. The diffusion of a wide range of narratives, hypotheses and interpretations in different media such as films, novels, essays, journal articles and TV documentaries, which are structured according to different «genres» and «modes», «has created the sense that history, above all in the Italian case, could and should also be written and interpreted outside the courtrooms or historical archives.»¹⁸ There are many artistic (at least in their intention and self-understanding), fictional representations of the Moro case, which try to fill an explanatory vacuum, that is, to give meaning to Aldo Moro's death, to explain not only *what* happened, but *why* it happened. As Antonello and O'Leary observe, «fiction has become the pre-eminent means to account for [...] missing pieces of our recent history and to keep the memory of certain events alive among non-experts. Fiction, and artistic representation more broadly, persistently supplement history, and function as an instrument that the tradition of Manzoni or Sciascia may contribute to challenging the *verosimile* of official history, to uncovering the *vero* of reality, to constructing a collective experience of justice.»¹⁹

Perhaps it is precisely because of this proliferation of divergent narratives and memorialization practices that, instead of producing a consensual collective memory, which reproduces and reflects social and political divisions, in recent years there has been a rapid increase in studies on representations of political violence in Italy. Interestingly, most of the scientific studies that focus on cultural productions related to the Moro case were

16 See Antonello/O'Leary 2009, 10.

17 See Ginzburg 1991.

18 Antonello/O'Leary 2009, 10.

19 Antonello/O'Leary 2009, 10.

conducted in the Anglophone academic world.²⁰ Robin Erica Wagner-Pacifici's *The Moro Morality Play* is the first academic study that explicitly addresses the representations and narratives of the Moro case and focuses on the «dramatic/narrative [...] modes of structure», namely the ways in which the kidnapping and the murder of the Italian politicians were framed as «social drama.»²¹ This is undoubtedly a very important and pioneering investigation. The theoretical framework of Wagner-Pacifici's study is based on Victor Turner's social drama theory. Referring to the famous cultural anthropologist, the author addresses historical events as intrinsically representational, as they are interpreted through certain given models of narrative emplotment. Wagner-Pacifici also refers to Paul Ricoeur's reflections on the relationship between history and interpretation, according to which an event becomes «historical» only if there is an interpreter who organizes the facts of the event according to a narrative structure.²² The choice of using Turner's theory as a heuristic tool of analysis is due to the fact that it does not only «assert and employ a posteriori the narrative analysis of events but also regards the social actors themselves as proceeding through and attempting to direct certain events with, among other kinds of consciousness and motives (e.g., political, moral, economic), a theatrical self-consciousness.»²³ The theatrical self-consciousness of social actors is the main topic of the last chapter of Wagner-Pacifici's investigation. The researcher defines her own methodological approach as «ethnography of the social text» and the object of the analysis as the «intertextuality of the written, spoken, and gestured world.»²⁴ She analyzes a broader body of sources²⁵ and distinguishes between three levels of analysis: a) modes of address, b) stylistic variations and c) different codes and channels. In a second

20 See Glynn/Lombardi 2012, 11–12.

21 Wagner-Pacifici 1986, 5–7.

22 See Wagner-Pacifici 1986, 6.

23 Wagner-Pacifici 1986, 7.

24 Wagner-Pacifici 1986, 15.

25 Radio news program transcripts (firsts and second national RAI, independent left-wing *Radio Onda Rossa* and *Radio Città Futura*); television news program transcripts (first and second national RAI channels); newspaper articles, editorials, letters to the editor and photographs (in *L'Unità*, *Il Popolo*, *Il Messaggero*, *Corriere della Sera*, *La Repubblica*, *Lotta Continua*, *Il Manifesto*, *Il Giornale*, *Il Tempo*); all publicly available letters by Aldo Moro; the nine communiqués of the BR (and the false seventh communiqué); the texts of speeches delivered during this period by Prime Minister Andreotti, Pope Paul VI and former Secretary General of the United Nations Kurt Waldheim; the places established as the spatial frames of the event (via Fani and via Caetani). See Wagner-Pacifici 1986, 16–17.

analytical step, she analyzes the totality constituted by this heterogeneous pool of «texts» as «social drama.»

Other scholars focus on the emergence, strategies and goals of left-wing terrorism in Italy. Political scientists David Moss and historian Richard Drake analyzed the documentation produced during the legal proceedings against the BR and the first Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry and interpreted the significance of the event in the light of those documents.²⁶ In two articles, David Moss also analyzes the terrorist operations of the BR as a sequence of symbolic actions and communicative acts.²⁷ Drake also deepens the theme of Italian terrorism in a series of articles, in which he examines the cultural, political and social contexts of both right-wing and left-wing terrorism and further analyzes the way in which the Moro case was politically and legally handled.²⁸ In recent years there has been an increasing interest in the media's representation of the Moro case in different academic fields. Several recent publications focus their attention on the investigation of cinematic representations. This is the case in the survey conducted by Alan O'Leary, who analyzes the representation of terrorism in Italian cinema and dedicates one chapter to the representation of the Moro case in different movies.²⁹ The same author has edited, along with Ruth Glynn and Giancarlo Lombardi, an anthology on the subject of terrorism in the cinema.³⁰ The films that deal with the Moro case were analyzed and compared in a number of other academic articles.³¹ One of the cinematic productions dealing with the kidnapping and killing of Aldo Moro that has been analyzed and discussed the most is Marco Bellocchio's *BUONGIORNO, NOTTE* (Italy, 2003).³² Other scholars address the representation of the kidnapping and murder of the Italian politician in theater, television and literature. With regard to the theater, special attention was paid to the theatrical piece by Marco Baliani *Corpo di Stato. Il delitto Moro: una generazione divisa*, which was broadcast live on the RAI network in 1998.³³ Isabella Pezzini has analyzed the debate and the representation of the Moro affair in documentaries and television services, in particular in Sergio Za-

26 See Moss 1989; Drake 1995.

27 See Moss 1981; Moss 1983.

28 See Drake 1984; Drake 1999; Drake 2001; Drake 2008.

29 See O'Leary 2011.

30 See Glynn/Lombardi/O'Leary 2012.

31 See Testa 2007; O'Leary 2009; O'Leary 2012; Lombardi 2009.

32 See Lombardi 2007; Glynn 2009; Mancino 2014.

33 See Marini-Maio/Nerenberg 2012; Marini-Maio 2012.

voli's *La notte della Repubblica*.³⁴ Last but not least, several authors have examined the representation of the events of spring 1978 in literature.³⁵

1.3 *The State Martyr Figure*

Given this extensive bibliography, one cannot but pose the legitimate question: is further research on the representation and rhetoric of the Moro case really necessary? Is there still something of importance left to investigate? The answer is of course: yes, there is. There are still many issues and problems that, through a thorough analysis of the representations and narratives with which different social actors framed what happened over the last four decades, have to be brought to light. However, this research would not have been possible if a considerable number of studies had not already identified key issues, important questions, and drawn attention to a number of cultural practices and media representations linked to the case. These studies will be a constant reference point within this investigation, providing interesting impetus for reflection and discussion. This study is a contribution to the series of research studies that have tried to understand and to explain how a single event of political violence could impact upon Italian culture so deeply, affecting language, media communication, categories of historical understanding, artistic representation, practices of representation and memorialization. Moreover, despite Wagner-Pacifici and other scholars having already drawn attention to sacrificial narratives of the event of political violence in specific media, a systematic analysis of the use and function of sacrificial and martyrological representations and narratives is lacking. This study makes up for this by analyzing and placing representations and narratives that have emerged in different media in a time frame that spans almost four decades in relation to each other. Furthermore, this investigation addresses the allocation of the martyr role and the representation of the event of political violence as a sacrifice and martyrdom from the point of view of discourse and cultural analysis and focuses on the questions of how, through such allocation and representation, a political community is constructed and political authority is legitimized.

The thematic fulcrum on which this investigation turns is the performativity of martyrological representations and of the sacrificial narrative that has been and is still used to account for the event of political violence. As

34 See Pezzini 2009; Pezzini 2012.

35 See Testa 2007; Mecchia 2012.

has been mentioned above, the sacrificial narrative has been identified as one of three key modes of representing political violence in Italy. In *Narratives of Sacrifice: Pasolini and Moro*, Pierpaolo Antonello adopts the Girardian theory of the scapegoat mechanism to explain how, within the sacrificial narrative mode, Moro's assassination assumes the significance of sacrifice for the sake of the political community: «a man's death is exploited by political power to repair the worn-out fibers of its authority, to reaffirm the «ragioni dello Stato», to «mythically» rebuild the Republic anew.»³⁶ Following an interpretative path already traced by Leonardo Sciascia and addressed by Wagner-Pacifici, the author highlights how, during the 55 days of captivity, the «rhetoric of the State and of the mass media forced Moro's image to make the [...] symbolic trajectory: from «uomo solo», and «creatura» to «personaggio», to a fictional character, a character that was politically and mythically exploited by the sacrificers, by the «purgers», who toyed with the idea that Moro was morally subjugated by the BR, deprived of his reason and his usual rhetoric, and had become «mad.»»³⁷ Antonello argues that this negation of the human traits of the victim was functional in justifying the sacrificial act as a way of excluding Moro from the political community. Moreover, he highlights the presence in Aldo Moro's letters of a sort of Christological counter-narrative. Shifting from the perspective of the «sacrificers» to that of the «victim», he argues, the mythological scapegoat assumes the connotation of the Christian martyr: «Moro cannot interpret his fate according to the logic of this political «myth», but through the figural ur-example of the victim who was unjustly scapegoated: Christ.»³⁸ The argument goes further saying that the «martyr» Moro used his body as testimonial evidence, since the language of the body was the only thing that was left to him; he is the «anti-hero that refused to be part of the collective ritual in which his body would be exhibited and sanctified by the same authorities that contributed to his death.»³⁹ Antonello mentions four examples of anti-sacrificial cultural productions, namely Leonardo Sciascia's *L'affaire Moro*, an article by Italo Calvino which appeared on May 18, 1978, in the newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, Marco Baliani's theatrical performance *Corpo di Stato*, and Marco Bellocchio's *BUONGIORNO, NOTTE*. In the latter especially he sees the «plenitude of the *figura Christi*» realized and he interprets its final scene as a «symbolic and Christological resurrection», as

36 Antonello 2009, 38.

37 Antonello 2009, 40.

38 Antonello 2009, 40.

39 Antonello 2009, 41.

an «attempt to reconcile ourselves to the trauma of that event, with the collective responsibility for that murder, to undo (were it only possible) the tragic trajectory taken by events, asking for a redemptive, symbolic form of collective forgiveness.»⁴⁰

Antonello's article indicates the general coordinates of a possible analysis of the sacrificial narrative model and undoubtedly offers an interesting point of view, which this investigation will further develop and discuss. The author adopts a bipolar scheme of interpretation. This scheme postulates the presence of two opposing models, two ways of narrating violence: on the one hand mythological–sacrificial narrative, which represents Moro's death as necessary for the salvation of society; on the other hand there is the Christological–martyrological narrative, which instead unmasks and brings out the immorality and iniquity of the scapegoat mechanism. Despite this interpretative scheme, which allows the identification and exposure of two different ways of narrating and representing political violence and to rightly point out the subversive nature of *a certain kind* of martyrological representation, it tacitly obscures the fact that the figure of the martyr has played and still plays a very important role within those representations, through which state mythology is constructed and sustained. This study will demonstrate that the martyr figure is not an exclusive character of the Christological narrative or, more precisely, that in many representations Christological and mythological narratives overlap to the point of becoming, in certain cases, indiscernible. The interpretative scheme adopted by Antonello cannot explain this phenomenon—it was not the goal nor the issue in his article—because it implicitly relies on the Girardian anthropological presupposition that sacrifice is a ritual form that «restrains» violence understood as something rooted in human nature. According to René Girard, violence is an inevitable expression of mimetic desire, which he considers a universal human trait.⁴¹ For Girard there are two ways to restrain violence from its socially destructive excesses: on the one hand there is the sacrifice of the scapegoat, which is expressed and elaborated linguistically in the myths of non-Christian societies, and on the other hand there is the Christian martyr, who is represented in the Christological narrative. Girard, in other words, hypostatizes the relationship between ritual and narration, between event and representation, in the belief that there are two spheres of meaning, two essentially distinct and separate ways to attribute meaning. This interpretative scheme, which in my view is already

40 Antonello 2009, 43.

41 See Girard 1979.

questionable when used to explain phenomena of violence in pre-modern societies, is even more problematic when it comes to explaining phenomena of violence and the way in which meaning is attributed to them in modern and contemporary society. Because of its universalistic anthropological approach, the scapegoat theory does not pay enough attention to the historically changing relationship between language and violence, discursive and non-discursive events, or to the way in which violence is represented differently in different pragmatic and hermeneutic contexts.

This is the reason why this study approaches political violence and martyrological representations from the perspective of discourse analysis. One of the central goals of this study is to demonstrate that the figure of the martyr does not have an essential and unchanging meaning and function, but rather that it has undergone a series of signatures, through which it has become part of a mythological narrative that, instead of exposing, conceals the political use of violent events. Instead of considering the martyr figure to be fundamentally and essentially external and «oppositional» to the political myth justifying the «reason of state», this study wants to show how it became part of this myth, becoming even one of its central and most important figures. The first novel element of this study can therefore be formulated in the following way: instead of assuming two distinct strategies of representation which always recur as two essentially distinct semiotic spheres, it assumes that to grasp the meaning and function of martyrological representations of Moro's death, one must first carefully analyze the pragmatic and hermeneutic context in which they appear. In other words: instead of assuming a fixed, universal function of the martyr figure, this study aims to analyze it in a context of appearance and figure out, from time to time, the different functions it assumes. Only through this approach, this study claims, can one get to the bottom of the strange phenomenon of the emergence of the state martyr figure.

The second novel element is deeply connected to the first. Since the goal is to analyze the martyr figure in its various media and contexts of appearance, it is necessary to examine a large body of the media. In this respect, the approach is similar to that of Wagner-Pacifi, but differs from it in three respects. First, this study also examines media and representations missing in her research, which examines almost only representations produced during or shortly after the 55 days of Moro's imprisonment; I analyze representations that were produced over a period of almost 40 years. Secondly, the focus of this study is neither the dramatic construction of the event nor the dramatic self-awareness of the social actors, but the performativity of the martyrological representation of the event. In other words,

this study is not so much interested in the intentions of the acting subjects, but rather on the efficacy of the discursive practices themselves. Thirdly, this study approaches the representations according to the theoretical and methodological framework of discourse analysis and not that of the «ethnography of the social text.» The focus lies not in the intertextuality that gives shape to a social drama, but in the identification of regularities and exceptions within a discursive formation. Moreover, it focuses on the hegemonic, doxological practices of representation as well as on the attempt to subvert them.

The third novel element of this study lies in its genealogical analysis of the martyr figure. As Wagner-Pacifici observes, social actors reacted to the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro through the recurrence of «their culture's stock of sedimented symbols, archetypal characters, and rhetorical appeals.»⁴² The question of imitation or iteration of historically «sedimented» forms of representation is the «center of gravity» of this investigation. The central questions are: What exactly happens during the process of the iteration and dislocation of the martyr figure from its «original» context of appearance, which as we will see is that of the early Christian communities, to the modern and contemporary context which is at issue here? How was it possible for the martyr figure to be transformed into the figure of the state martyr? This study considers martyrological representations as discursive practices with a performative force, as they are able to *appeal* to individuals, *affect* their feelings and *determine* the way they perceive, understand and relate to the political community and to authority. Obviously, the martyr figure could not exercise such a performative force without appearing with certain regularity. In other words, the more frequent its materialization and media manifestations in the public space, the higher its efficacy and ability to appeal to people. The spatial, temporal, and multimedia diffusion of the martyr figure can thus be regarded as a condition of possibility for the figure's own success and efficacy.

But the diffusion of the martyr figure alone does not explain its success; on the contrary: this quantitatively successful dissemination must be qualitatively justified. This study argues that this success depends on the aesthetic potential of secularized Christian language: «Christianity produced language. It has been and still is a potentiated linguistic genius [*Sprachgeist*].»⁴³ The figure of the martyr has played a fundamental role in this «linguistic genius» since the beginning. Despite, as I argue in the third

42 Wagner-Pacifici 1986, 7.

43 Schleiermacher 2012, 17.

chapter, the signification of martyrdom as a bodily act witnessing the truth of the soteriological power of Christ's death and resurrection emerged in the second century AD (and not already in the New Testament), the interpretation of the Passion of Christ as a form of martyrdom soon became a central and generally accepted *topos* of Christian theology. The death of the Messiah on the cross was soon framed as a sort of martyrdom prefiguring and empowering all other coming forms of martyrdom. Within Christianity, it represents to some extent *the* act of witnessing absolute truth *par excellence*. In Catholic theology, martyrdom is today still conceptualized not only as the imitation of Christ, the most radical and powerful act of witnessing the absolute truthfulness of Christian religion, but also as a practice that *in itself* has a soteriological power.⁴⁴ As we will see, the martyr figure is intrinsically connected to an eschatological understanding of history: in its original context of appearance, a Christian martyr was both someone who witnesses the soteriological power of Christ, the truthfulness of the final salvation of the ἐκκλησία, the Christian community, at the end of time, and someone who accuses the profane political authority as based on the mythological glorification of power and on the exercise of violence. Now this study argues that despite or, more precisely, *because* of the process of secularization, the idea of martyrdom as an act of witnessing an absolute truth could be successfully transposed and reutilized in modern and contemporary representations of events of political violence. The martyr figure that was originally part of a narrative of rebellion, which radically rejected any kind of exercise of violence, became part of a narrative in which the exercise of violence by the sovereign is basically represented as a legitimate means in the fight against the enemies of society. In the context of modernity, with the emergence of nation-states, martyrdom assumed the meaning of an act that witnesses the necessity of the state as this absolute entity, which saves the secular political community called the «nation-state» from its destruction. Moreover, the mystical relationship between the Christian martyrs' bodies and the body of the Christian community reappears in state mythology as a mystical relationship between state martyrs' bodies and national communities.

This is the perspective with which this study addresses the martyrological representation of Aldo Moro. In the last four decades, Moro's death has been repeatedly represented as a form of martyrdom necessary for the salvation of the Italian Republic and for the sake of national unity. Through the allocation of the martyr status, Moro's death has come to assume the

44 See Rahner 1937.

meaning of a (voluntary) witness to the absolute and transcendent truth of human rights guaranteed by the Italian Constitution, as well as the necessity of the Italian State to guarantee these rights. This study argues that the martyrological representations of Aldo Moro's death serve to mythologize and de-historicize the event of political violence, that is, to make it appear as the necessary and unavoidable outcome of a cosmic conflict between good and evil forces. Within this mythological framing, the state assumes the connotation of the absolute sovereign, who is necessary to restrain and contain the forces of absolute evil that seek to destroy order and society. Following the research path outlined by Walter Benjamin, Carl Schmitt, Jacob Taubes and Giorgio Agamben, this study addresses state mythology as a secularized theological-political narrative in which the state assumes the meaning of the «katechontic» restrainer that impedes the «war of all against all.» While, in their original context of appearance, martyrological representations were part of a narrative of rebellion that opposed and subverted hegemonic narrative glorifying sovereign authority by revealing its power-preserving function, state martyrology has the opposite function of sustaining and concealing the mechanism of the glorification and legitimization of power. Moreover, by mythologizing violence as the unavoidable outcome of a perennial fight between good and evil, state mythology and martyrology conceal the intrinsic relationship between state and non-state violence, that is, between the sovereign exercise of power and terrorism. In other words, they serve to obscure the utility of terrorism for the subsistence of established power relations.

A central reference point in this study is in particular Giorgio Agamben's *homo sacer* theory.⁴⁵ Far from wanting to demonstrate the universal validity of this theory, this study uses it as an heuristic tool to grasp the complicated relationship between sovereign power over bare life, practices of sacralization and events of political violence. Rather than understanding the sacralization of a political community as the result of a ritual act of (self-)sacrifice, this study understands sacralization as the result of the exclusion of Aldo Moro from the profane and political sphere during his captivity by the means of discursive practices, which made him appear as someone who already appertained to the sacral sphere and thus could no longer participate in political debate. This reduction to bare life was, from this point of view, the outcome of a strategy necessary to silence Moro's voice, who from the «people's prison» tried to subvert the rhetoric of the «reason of state.» When he was actually murdered, the government, major

45 See Agamben 1998.

political parties and most of the established media were able to retrospectively represent him as the sovereign-martyr who died for the sake of national security and unity. From this point of view, reduction to bare life and the allocation of the martyr role are two sides of the same coin or, more precisely, two moments within the same process of sacralization.

To sum up, this study argues that the effectiveness of martyrological representations depends on a) the historically stratified meaning and aesthetic potential of the martyr figure, b) their repetitive materialization and media manifestations in the public space, c) their ability to appeal to the audience, that is to say, to appeal to the «consumers» of the discursive practices through which Aldo Moro is represented as a state martyr. Discursive practices produce an emotional and ideological response in the public that is capable of putting mechanisms of identification with a constructed political collectivity into motion, delimitating it from other (existing or possible) forms of collectivity. The construction of the symbolic unit of the community itself can be seen as a result of discursive practices. Moreover, through his serial representation as a martyr, Aldo Moro acquires a sacred status and his death, the connotation of being a witness to the meta-historical or absolute truth of civil and human rights and, more importantly, of the necessity of sovereign political authority for the defense of citizens. By virtue of this sacralization, the martyr serves as a symbolic body of national community, which is experienced as sacred.

1.4 Organization of the Investigation

Political violence is first of all a real, non-discursive phenomenon, the result of a clash between material bodies and things, but like every phenomenon it needs to be narrated and represented, in order to become *meaningful*; only in language and through language can it acquire a certain meaning. The next chapter outlines the basic hermeneutic horizon and the conceptual, theoretical and methodological framework of this study. Moreover, it presents and in particular distinguishes between two different and opposite models of representing and narrating events of political violence. This distinction is fundamental to this study, since it serves as the starting point for the development of its path of investigation. Starting from the assumption that those acts of violence that occur in the context of a struggle between at least two groups of individuals are political, the chapter describes two oppositional discourses within which such acts of violence are represented and narrated as acts of resistance or of terrorism. Referring to

Michel Foucault, this study defines these discourses respectively as the discourse of rebellion and as the discourse of sovereignty. I argue that the martyr figure, in its «original» context of appearance, was a central figure within the discourse of rebellion, which had the function of delegitimizing a given political authority. The chapter continues by addressing the problem of the emergence of state martyrologies, arguing that the martyr figure has undergone a long process of re-signification, at the end of which it became part of the narrative of sovereignty, thus begging to serve as a figure for the legitimization of state authority. The conceptual and methodological apparatus of discourse analysis will be set out in the last three sections of this chapter. The establishment of this apparatus has a strategic and tactical function. The goal is to put a coherent system of heuristic tools in place as well as lay the interpretative path that shall allow me to face and to analyze the discursive practices related to the aforementioned event of political violence. Section 2.4 presents the characteristics and specificity of the discourse analytical approach to the martyrological representation of the kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro. Section 2.5 discusses the performativity of martyrological representation as discursive practices, which have the power to appeal to individuals and groups and to construct and sustain national political identities. Finally, the last section presents the organization of my corpus of sources and the methodological framework of the study.

The third chapter discusses the relationship between sacrifice, martyrdom and political violence from a theoretical point of view and reconstructs the history of the martyr's figure signatures. First, it summarizes and discusses the state of research into the martyr figure in various academic disciplines and exposes this study's approach, which is concerned with two aspects: on the one hand, the focus on the emergence of the state martyr figure, which has so far been largely ignored, and on the other hand, the transition from an approach that addresses martyrdom as a ritual practice to an analysis in which the martyr figure is considered a product of discursive practices. The thesis can be summarized as follows: the performative force of the martyr figure—understood as the ability to appeal to individuals and to produce collective identification with social and political order through the sacralization of the same—is not necessarily the result of a ritual act of self-sacrifice performed by a voluntary subject, but rather the product of the allocation of the martyr role through discursive practices. Secondly, the chapter exposes the advantages of choosing to use the *homo sacer* theory to analyze how Aldo Moro has been represented and memorialized over the last four decades. Thirdly, the chapter deals with the geneal-

ogy of the figure of the Christian martyr, drawing attention to the specificity of the use of the term *μάρτυς* in the social and political context of the first Christian communities, and showing how the term no longer referred to the linguistic act of witnessing in a trial, but to the act of self-sacrifice as a witness to Christian faith. The last part of the chapter describes the signatures of the martyr figure over the centuries, that is, the most significant pragmatic and hermeneutic dislocations that preceded and determined the emergence of the state martyr figure in modernity. It shows how, with the institutionalization of Christianity, the figure of the martyr takes on a new meaning and a new function. The figure of the soldier martyr, who dies in battle in defense of the Christian faith and is functional for the legitimization of «holy wars», emerged. It also describes the development of the martyrs' cult and especially of the *martyria*, that is, places of worship around which a ritual for the glorification and sacralization of power and political authority took place. Finally, it shows how with the birth of the nation states the figure of the state martyr emerged and how, at the least from the French Revolution on, it became part of a mythological narrative of the state.

The fourth chapter describes the pragmatic and hermeneutic context in which martyrological representations of Aldo Moro emerged and were consolidated. The first part of the chapter discusses the ideological and cultural heritage of the *Resistenza* and of the *Risorgimento*. Its focus is mainly on the rise of national martyr figures in Italy from the nineteenth century onwards and the importance of this in the formation of national identity. The second part of the chapter describes the sociopolitical and cultural context in Italy after the World War II, illustrating the political history of the first three decades of the First Republic, namely from the Italian Constitution's entry into force in 1948 to the killing of Aldo Moro in 1978. It reconstructs the history of the two major parties, the DC and the PCI, and their relationship with the forces of the two blocs (especially the Soviet Union and the United States) during the Cold War. Particular attention is also given to the figure of Aldo Moro, his political career, his ethical, legal and political conception of the state, and the difficult and controversial role he played in the DC. Finally, it addresses the role played by the secretary of the PCI Enrico Berlinguer and of the Christian Democrat Aldo Moro in drawing up the *strategia dell'attenzione* and the *compromesso storico* to counter the danger of an authoritarian drift and possible *coup d'état* in Italy (which found articulation in the so-called *strategia della tensione*). The third part faces the political conflicts and struggles that began with the movement of 1968 and in particular in the period of the *autunno caldo* (1969), as

well as the emergence and evolution of Fascist terrorist groups on the one hand, Anarchist and Marxist-Leninist groups on the other. Particular attention is paid to the birth of the BR, their relationship with the worker and student movements, as well as the formation and development of the ideology of the «armed struggle.» Finally, the last part of the chapter briefly summarizes the facts and gray areas of the Moro case and the various theories concerning the possible involvement of state apparatuses (Italian or foreign), secret services and occult groups in the events that led to death of the Christian Democrat. The purpose is not to strive for one or another interpretation, but rather to draw a clear line of demarcation between what is established as a fact, what is just hypothetical, and what is clearly the product of a simplistic reading of events and untenable conspiracy theories. It also aims to provide the readers with information to enable them to understand the reasons why, almost four decades since the murder of Aldo Moro, there is still no shared and accepted representation and memory of what happened in the spring of 1978.

The fifth and sixth chapters examine the media's representation of the Moro case in the time period from the day of the kidnapping (March 16) to the day on which the state funeral was held in the Archbasilica of St. John Lateran in the presence of Pope Paul VI (May 13). The first part of the fifth chapter identifies and describes three distinct models of representation used by different social actors during and after Moro's abduction and imprisonment. First of all, there is the model of representation used by the BR in their communiqués, in which the killing of Moro's escort is framed as a revolutionary guerrilla act and the captivity of Moro as a proletarian trial against the DC. Then, there is the model of representation adopted by both the DC and the PCI, as well as by most of the established media, which firstly represents Aldo Moro as a great statesman willing to sacrifice himself (before the publication of his first letter), then as a man robbed of all political dignity and reduced to a mere instrument in the hands of the BR (after the publication of his first letter), and finally as a state martyr (after his death). Finally, there is the model adopted by Moro and by very few other social actors, aiming to oppose and to highlight the ideological character of the other two representative models. The second part illustrates the public image of Moro before the abduction, in order to make clear the radical change that it underwent in a very short time. This part specifically addresses a famous newspaper article by Pier Paolo Pasolini, in which Aldo Moro is represented as a man of power, but also as «the least involved of

them all.»⁴⁶ The allegations directed at the DC in early 1978 concerning the Lockheed scandal are also mentioned. This part also discusses a speech held by Moro in defense of the Christian Democrats Luigi Gui and Mario Tanassi, who were likewise accused of being involved in the system of corruption that emerged with the Lockheed scandal, in which the then party president clearly expresses his aversion to any attempt «to offer [...] a victim to the reason of state.»⁴⁷ The fourth part examines in the first place the rhetoric of national unity in the press, the symbolism of the flags, the different ways of constructing and representing the attack in via Fani as an attack on the whole community, and secondly, the representation of the BR as an external entity that is not attributable to Italian society. In particular, it highlights a tendency by the media and representatives of the major parties to use semantic units and rhetorical forms aimed at representing the conflict of the BR versus the Italian State in terms of a struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. Finally, the last part focuses on the representation of Aldo Moro as a «great statesman» willing to sacrifice himself in order to save the Italian Republic and its society, and of the BR as «monsters» or «beasts», whose only aim was the destruction of social order and of the well-being of citizens. Particular attention is paid to the reproduction and description in the media of the first photograph of Moro delivered to the press by the BR. Finally, the chapter concludes by showing how on Easter Day (March 26, 1978) the rhetoric used in several newspaper articles tended to represent Moro's imprisonment as a form of «Calvary» analogous to that of Christ, that is, how the Passion of Christ has been rhetorically used as a prefiguration of the passion of Moro.

The sixth chapter resumes the analysis of the media's representation from March 30, 1978 onwards, the day when Moro's first letter addressed to the then Interior Minister Francesco Cossiga was published by different newspapers. The first part describes Moro's and very few other social actors' attempts to let the argument of the «the sanctity of human life» of every single citizen prevail over the argument that negotiations for the prisoner's liberation would betray the «reason of state» and undermine the legitimacy of state institutions and apparatuses. The chapter goes on to show how some few intellectuals and journalists as well as Aldo Moro himself, in the letters he wrote during his imprisonment, tried to resist the widespread hegemonic representation of the events in the media, offering

46 Pasolini, Pier Paolo, «Il vuoto del potere», *Corriere della Sera*, 2.2.1975, 1; it.: «[...] il meno implicato di tutti [...].»

47 Moro 1979, 353; it.: «[...] offrire [...] una vittima alla ragione di Stato.»

an alternative reading of what was happening. It also describes the formation of the so-called «party of the negotiation» and analyzes, in particular, the position paper in favor of negotiation published by the radical-left newspaper *Lotta Continua*. The first part of the chapter highlights how Moro, aware of the media operation to deny the authenticity of his letters, began to distance himself from his own party («I do not want, I repeat, the men of power around me»)⁴⁸ and finally accepted his imminent death, understanding and expressing it in Christological terms («I have only understood in these days what it means to be necessary to add our own suffering to the suffering of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world»)⁴⁹. The second part of the chapter reconstructs the way in which, at first, the established media denied the authenticity of Moro's letters or disbelieved the psychological and physical integrity of the prisoner, but then went on to represent Aldo Moro as a man denuded of all political dignity and concerned only with his individual salvation. This strategy is interpreted in light of the *homo sacer* theory as a hegemonic practice functional to the exclusion of Moro from the political sphere. It also shows how this operation is related to the rhetoric of the «reason of state.» The last part of the chapter finally analyzes the consolidation of the representation of Moro as a state martyr after the finding of his corpse on May 9, 1978. It shows how Moro is re-sacralized as a great statesman, a sovereign-martyr who died for the salvation of the Italian Republic.

The seventh chapter focuses on different practices of memorialization and commemoration of Aldo Moro, on the way in which the Moro case has been represented in literature and cinema, and finally discusses briefly the reason and arguments behind the launch of an initiative promoting the beginning of a process for the beatification and canonization of Aldo Moro by the Catholic Church. The aim of the chapter is to describe the attempt to construct an official memory, as well as to draw attention to the forms and practices of subversive and alternative representation that challenge official memorialization practices. The first part of the chapter examines memorialization practices which attempt to construct an official memory of the events of spring 1978. It focuses on monuments erected in memory of Aldo Moro and on the ritual practices of commemoration

48 Moro 2008k, 143; it.: «Io non desidero attorno a me, lo ripeto, gli uomini del potere.»

49 Moro 2008f, 60; it.: «Ho solo capito in questi giorni che vuol dire che bisogna aggiungere la propria sofferenza alla sofferenza di Gesù Cristo per la salvezza del mondo.»

which happen on the occasion of the anniversaries of the attack in via Fani (March 16) and the discovery of Moro's body (May 9). The chapter continues with an analysis of critical interventions by three important Italian intellectuals and writers: Umberto Eco, Italo Calvino, and Leonardo Sciascia. This part, in particular, brings to light the way in which Sciascia and Eco deconstruct both the rhetoric of the BR as well as the dominant representation of Moro's abduction and death in the media. It further shows how Calvino, despite being aware of the instrumental dimension of the hegemonic discourse on the abduction and killing of Moro, basically reproduces a sacrificial and mythological conception of political violence. The third part deals with the representation and memorialization of the events of 1978 in television and cinema. Since there are many television and film productions which deal with these events, documentaries and films in which the use or criticism of martyrological representations play a leading role have been chosen. The last part of the chapter addresses the initiative launched in 2012 by the *Federazione dei Centri studi Aldo Moro e Renato dell'Andro* to obtain the beatification and canonization of Aldo Moro by the Catholic Church. This final part reconstructs the procedural steps of the first phase of the process of beatification and canonization; secondly, it analyzes the arguments for the recognition of Moro's death as a form of *martyrium in odium fidei* expressed by two of the promoters of the case, Luigi Ferlicchia and Monsignor Andrea Venezia, and by Postulator Nicola Giampaolo.

The final chapter summarizes the results of the study and draws attention to aspects and questions that still have to be explored. In particular, it develops reflections on the actuality of the issue of the performative force of the martyr figure and, more generally, of the iteration of language units, rhetorical forms, and narrative models which belong to one or more religious traditions, when it comes to framing or giving meaning to events of political violence. The study ends with some reflections concerning the problem—which is difficult because of its ethical, political, and even esthetical implications: What kind of representations and narrations of events of political violence could continue to deploy performative force, appealing to people to reject all kinds of implementations of violence, both by state and non-state organizations, without falling into the trap of mythicization?