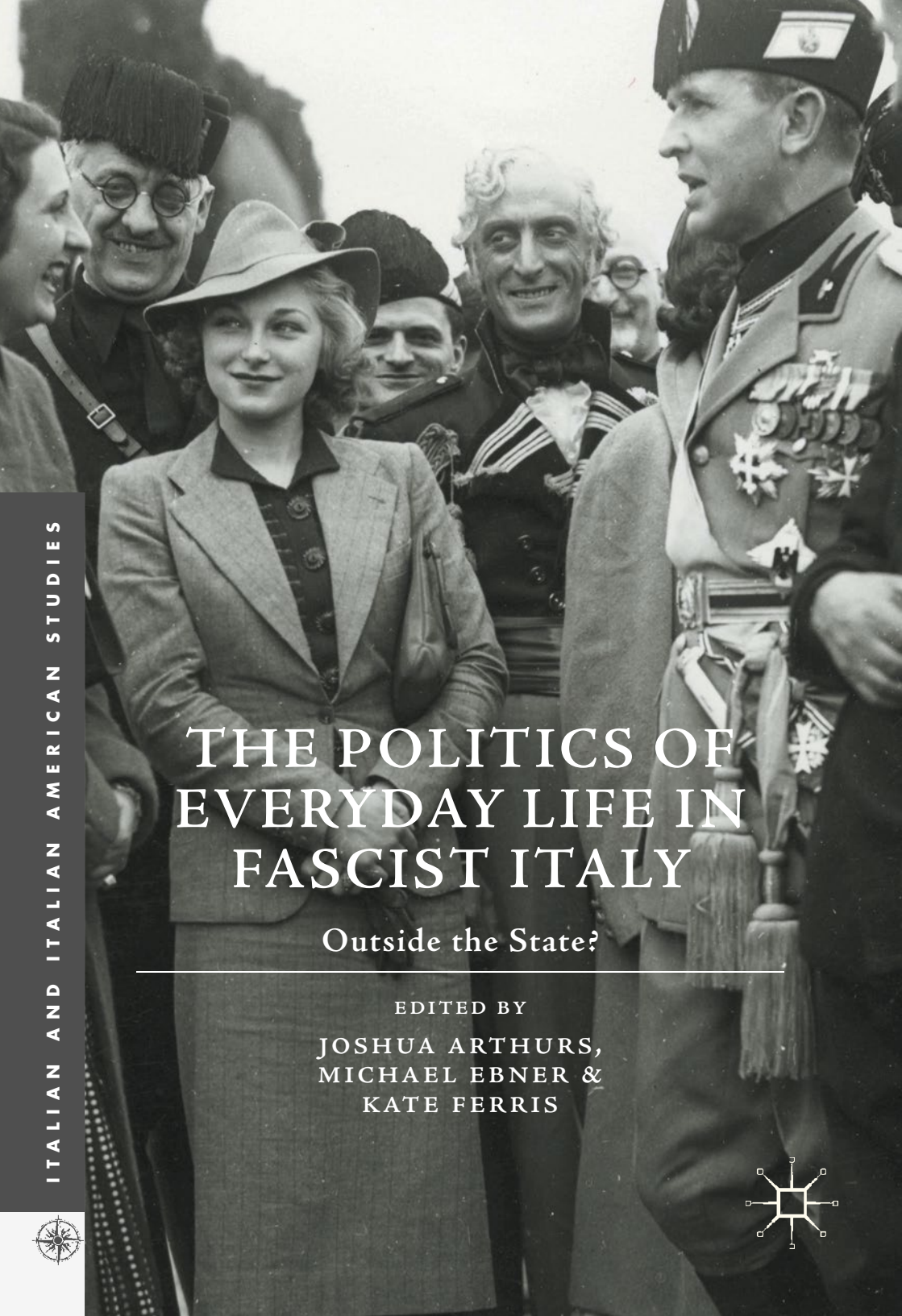

ITALIAN AND ITALIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

THE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN FASCIST ITALY

Outside the State?

EDITED BY

JOSHUA ARTHURS,
MICHAEL EBNER &
KATE FERRIS

Italian and Italian American Studies

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Editors

The Politics of Everyday Life in Fascist Italy

Outside the State?

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Joshua Arthurs, Michael Ebner, and Kate Ferris

"Everything in the State, nothing outside the State, nothing against the State." In an October 1925 speech marking the third anniversary of his party's accession to power, Benito Mussolini presented Fascism's "formula" for the transformation of Italian society.[1] The announcement arrived at a pivotal juncture in the development of his regime. The dictatorship had been proclaimed the previous January and by October was in the midst of dismantling all vestiges of civil society, including opposition parties, the independent press, and autonomous associational life. Under the aegis of an all-encompassing "Ethical State" and guided by its omniscient Leader, the nation would be regenerated and revolutionized. Minds and bodies would be rendered muscular and steadfast, disciplined at home and aggressive abroad; families and farmland alike would be fertile and

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plentiful; Italy's endemic discord, corruption, backwardness, and self-interest would all be overcome, relegated to a bygone era.[2]

Much of this grandiose vision was, of course, belied by reality. Mussolini's proclamation notwithstanding, many aspects of Italian life remained stubbornly outside, and not inside, the state. Despite the regime's best efforts, for example, Catholicism was never supplanted by a new "political religion"[3] nor did Fascism eradicate deeply rooted traditions of working-class *sovversivismo* (subversivism).[4] Even the Fascist Party itself remained largely "outside" the state, having failed in its attempts to wrest political and economic power from the monarchy, the military, and the industrial establishment.[5]

Italian Fascism therefore poses a conundrum to scholars of twentieth-century totalitarianism. On the one hand, Mussolini's 1925 formulation remains one of the pithiest, and most enduring, definitions of the phenomenon. His regime was the first to identify itself explicitly with this new conception of the body politic and to attempt to put this totalizing vision into effect. On the other hand, Fascist Italy was at best "imperfectly" totalitarian or, in the words of no less an authority than Hannah Arendt, "just an ordinary nationalist dictatorship."[6]

For over 70 years, this tension has remained at the core of debates—both scholarly and public—over the Fascist era. In the initial postwar decades, historiography and "official" memory alike hewed to an orthodoxy that emphasized the coercive and unrepresentative nature of the regime, the vacuousness of its ideology, and the essential anti-Fascism of the majority of the populace.[7] According to this interpretation, Mussolini's regime was the product of a small, malevolent minority, imposed by force on Italians, who—as congenitally *brava gente* ("good people")—remained impervious to its dictates.[8] The wartime Resistance, not Fascism, was the genuine expression of the popular will and provided the political and moral foundation upon which to build the postwar Italian Republic.

Beginning in the late 1960s, and accelerating thereafter, the "anti-Fascist" narrative was challenged by a new wave of revisionist historiography (sometimes labeled the "anti-anti-Fascist" school). Its leading proponent, Renzo De Felice, argued that far from representing an alien and unwelcome imposition, Fascism had sought, and been supported by, a widespread *consenso* (translatable both as "consent" and as "consensus").[9] Scholars have fruitfully explored the ways in which the regime cultivated and mobilized support using mechanisms that ranged from propaganda to pedagogy to after-work leisure organizations.[10] De Felice's account

also emphasized Fascism's "modernizing" achievements and its relative "mildness" compared to German National Socialism; these aspects of his argument in particular have appealed to the political and intellectual right, eager for new respectability and seeking to undermine the "leftist" monopoly over the heritage of the Resistance (and, thereby, the moral legitimacy of the postwar Republic).[11]

For different reasons, the emphasis on *consenso* also underpins the so-called culturalist school, which since the early 1990s has arguably been the dominant paradigm in the historiography of Mussolini's regime, especially among Anglophone scholars. This approach centers on Fascism's intentions and self-representation, its utopian vision of a New Italy, and its efforts to manufacture consent (or inculcate faith) through a form of "sacralized" or "aestheticized" politics, as expressed through didactic exhibitions and mass rituals; artistic production and the transformation of public space; or political myth and the cult of personality.[12] This work has been crucial in revising blanket characterizations of Fascism as "merely" reactionary and rhetorical, and has the merit of taking it seriously as an ideology, a cultural project, and a response to modernity.

However, while all of these perspectives have yielded crucial insights, they have also resulted in entrenched, dichotomous, and often politically charged orthodoxies. The "anti-Fascist" position, while emphasizing the gap between the regime and Italian society, tends to rely on a Manichaean distinction between anti-Fascists and Fascists, overlooking the fact that ordinary Italians were more likely to simultaneously support and oppose the regime, advance and evade its initiatives, and benefit and suffer from its policies. Conversely, approaches that stress Fascism's "totalitarian" command of consent often pay little attention to the complex ways in which ordinary people embraced, rejected, avoided, or appropriated the regime's aggressive overtures. Italians encountered the Fascist state not only in official rituals and propaganda but also in everyday settings and interactions—in the bakery, the bicycle race, the bar and the bedroom, or through daily practices involving language, clothing, gesture, and comportment.

This volume explores precisely these kinds of venues and behaviors. By accessing different dimensions of everyday life under Fascism, we hope both to provide novel perspectives on long-standing historiographical problems—about totalitarianism, consent, coercion, culture, and society—and to pose new questions about the complexities of lived experience in Mussolini's Italy. In so doing, we employ many of the analytical tools associated with *Alltagsgeschichte*, or the history of everyday life, initially

pioneered in Germany in the 1980s by the likes of Alf Lüdtke and Detlev Peukert and further developed by Sheila Fitzpatrick in the field of Soviet history.[13] Historians of the everyday have reconstructed regimes' attempts to condition personal relationships, social interactions, and community bonds; their efforts to inculcate values through symbols, objects, and language; and, reciprocally, the range of "ordinary" responses to these pressures, which fall on a spectrum ranging from enthusiasm and participation to adaptation or indifference, to grumbling and resentment, to refusal and resistance. In order to bridge the "macro-micro gap," practitioners of everyday history frequently assemble collages of "miniatures," or multiple stories of individual or small episodes, which, viewed together, point to patterns of behavior.[14] They also trace deviations from such patterns, helping to establish what constituted normative and non-normative modes of behavior in past individuals and societies, in an approach not dissimilar to the analysis of the "exceptional/normal" adopted by microhistorians like Carlo Ginzburg.[15] The analytical sites of the everyday include social encounters, relationships, and work; gestures, clothing, and comportment; and language, emotion, and memory. What people wore and ate, how they greeted one another, how they negotiated the demands of daily life—all these choices have much to tell us about the "microphysics" of power under a repressive and interventionist regime.[16] How did individuals and communities adopt, enforce, reconfigure, or subvert behavioral norms dictated by the state? What happened to pre-existing and often long-rehearsed practices in the encounter with the prescriptions of dictatorship? How did this "extraordinary" context frame the parameters of "ordinary" existence?

In addition to the new light it sheds on questions of consent, participation, and coercion, the historiography of everyday life also opens new possibilities for the cultural history of Italian Fascism. Instead of confining its analysis to formal artifacts of aesthetic or intellectual production or to the regime's "official" self-representations, everyday history understands culture in its semiotic, anthropological sense, as an array of meaning-making processes—what Clifford Geertz described as the "webs of significance that [man] himself has spun."[17] Mussolini's regime worked to spin its webs in every corner of Italian life, disseminating "quotidian incarnations of the state."[18] These could be microscopic (forms of address, lapel pins and children's nursery rhymes) as well as macroscopic—for example, the effort to reorganize time by fixing 1922 as "Year One" of the Fascist Revolution, or the transformation of urban and natural landscapes.[19] This

symbolic order could variously be adopted, played with, subverted, and ignored in the course of daily experience. Furthermore, other cultural producers—whether religious institutions, clandestine parties and political exiles, or foreign film and fashion-makers—spun their own "webs of significance" that could rival and occlude, as well as complement, those woven by the Fascist state. Exploring the "cultural praxis of historical subjects" thus opens a window into ordinary Italians' reception or, better yet, navigation of Fascism's brand of "sacralized" or "aestheticized" politics.[20]

A deeper exploration of everyday life under Mussolini is also relevant to ongoing controversies over memories of the Fascist era. Interestingly, in its original German incarnation, *Alltagsgeschichte* was sometimes accused of relativizing or normalizing the Nazi past.[21] Reconstructing quotidian mundanities, critics charged, risked trivializing the atrocities of the Third Reich, and neglected the experiences of its victims in favor of those of passive bystanders who—in many instances—enjoyed a "normal" existence as members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. In our view, this criticism is misplaced. Far from providing an apologia for Hitler's regime, *Alltagsgeschichte* helped map the extent to which Nazi ideology managed to penetrate German society—forming "a fatal continuum … between daily discrimination and racial prejudice"—as well as spaces for resistance and opposition.[22] Put differently, it was often Nazism's "normalcy," its "banality," that rendered its crimes possible.[23] Everyday history showed that there were few passive bystanders; its examination of the extension of state authority, capillary-like, into the minutiae of daily experience actually implicated more, not fewer, "ordinary" people in the functioning of the dictatorship.

The Italian context presents a different—even inverse—challenge. With the demise of the postwar anti-Fascist consensus (discussed above), daily life under Mussolini has been presented in "indulgent," "colorblind," or "humanizing" terms, permeated with nostalgia for shared cultural reference points and, supposedly, a simpler and more innocent time.[24] Television documentaries on "the way we were" (*come eravamo*) feature scenes of adorable children in uniform performing the Roman salute or beach holidays organized by Dopolavoro (the "after-work" organization)[25]; elders approvingly recall how their mothers were provided with free milk or how the "trains ran on time." In such popular representations, little mention is made of the regime's mechanisms of surveillance and repression; the failure of its economic and social policies; or its aggressive and often illegal prosecution of war in Africa and the Balkans. The contributions to this volume challenge apolitical, nostalgic narratives of

the Fascist era. Some chapters—like Kate Ferris' on consumption practices and Alessandra Gissi's on clandestine abortion—highlight the impact that the regime's policies had on the lives of ordinary people; others, like Matteo Millan's on *squadrismo* or Michael Ebner's on coercion, demonstrate the extent to which violence permeated political and social relations throughout the *Ventennio*. While Fascism's excesses certainly paled in comparison to Nazism's, it is worthwhile recalling that Mussolini's regime rested on coercion as well as consent and that its decisions had disastrous consequences in Italy and beyond.

To date, there has been little attempt to apply the framework of *Alltagsgeschichte* to the Italian context.[26] Our hope is not only that this approach will yield new insight into Mussolini's Italy but that it will bridge the divide between cultural, political, and social history or between representation, implementation, and reception. Furthermore, by explicitly borrowing a framework used in other national contexts, we hope to facilitate comparisons between Italy and the Third Reich, the Soviet Union, and other regimes. Fascist Italy has too often been excluded from debates over totalitarianism; we therefore seek to identify both common experiences across different manifestations of dictatorship and the peculiarities of the Italian case.

What Is Everyday Life?

Clearly, this volume's central challenge is to provide a meaningful definition for the category of "everyday life." As is apparent across various contributions, we prefer not to present the "everyday" as a static, immovable object of study whose remit can be easily identified and contained. Rather, we frame it as an "apparatus," a heuristic device with which to "capture, orient, determine, intercept … the gestures, behaviors, opinions or discourses of living beings."[27] Understanding the everyday in this way—as a kind of analytical frame whose flexibility allows historians to focus on individual human agency and in turn recognize the multivalent, transitory, and ephemeral nature of past lives—relieves us of some of the knots into which we might otherwise tie ourselves. While some scholars of the everyday have focused on routine acts, things repeated literally day after day, most have examined practices and behaviors that are both routine or normative and "exceptional" events, actions, and modes of behavior that constitute interruptions to the norm.[28]

This flexibility and diversity notwithstanding, we believe that the historiography of everyday life is held together by a methodological and interpretive core. The first among these is a focus on the subjective experiences of individuals and on their role as historical agents capable of shaping their own lives, even if in a limited way. The first practitioners of *Alltagsgeschichte*, and similarly scholars of microhistory like Carlo Ginzburg, were in large part driven by the conviction that too little historical analysis had explored how "ordinary" people actually experienced political, social, economic, and cultural changes.[29] Large-scale transformations seldom proceeded in a uniform and linear fashion, and responses to them have always varied from person to person. This effort to recover subjective experiences is reinforced by the recognition of individual agency. Of course, behavior is always bounded by the parameters of possible thought and action, what Ginzburg eloquently called the "flexible and invisible cage" in which human beings operate.[30] This is especially true of authoritarian societies, in which such limits are often policed through violence, fear, and other forms of compulsion. Nevertheless, even in such repressive circumstances, individuals are able to make choices about how to think and act, and respond creatively to "macro-impositions"—whether government policies, economic conditions, or a state of war—through complex processes of negotiation, accommodation, and adaptation.

Michel de Certeau's concept of "tactics" is also useful in this regard.[31] De Certeau highlights the fundamental creativity of everyday practices, arguing that ordinary people respond to pressures "from above"—whether from the state or any other form of dominant ideology—as "consumer producers." They employ flexible, opportunistic modes of behavior, eking out the possibility of (partially) autonomous action even as they inhabit a space that they do not design, govern, or control. Such opportunism is evident, for example, in Alf Lüdtke's study of workers under National Socialism. He emphasizes combinations or "patchworks" of support for Nazi policies, in which ordinary Germans supported some of the regime's initiatives but not others; the prevalence of what he called "complaisance," a "wait and see" attitude of tolerance or indifference; and the concept of *Eigensinn* or "self-willed" action, meaning modes of workplace behavior that punctuated daily routines and provided individuals with (temporary) breathing space. Whether through jokes, pranks, or taking advantage of machinery breakdowns, workers found opportunities to carve out breaks in their days, just as they responded to the political intrusions of Nazism through similarly individual acts of (temporary) evasion. Many chapters in

this volume reveal Italians' recourse to de Certeauian tactics in response to the exigencies of the regime, as with Roberta Pergher's discussion of how settlers in Libya skirted and subverted Fascist colonial policy and expectations without fundamentally challenging or exiting its dominance.

Many everyday historians also emphasize a spatial dimension, mapping "the everyday locations in which larger, imagined communities are constituted—or dismantled."[32] Space and place helped define, and were in turn defined by, the ways in which people worked, moved, and encountered one another. For Lüdtke, the factory floor was an essential location for informal articulations of power under the Third Reich; for Sheila Fitzpatrick in the Soviet context, it was the shopping queue, the *kolkhoz* market, the local housing allocation department, or the communal dormitory.[33] We believe that the same holds true for Mussolini's Italy. "Fascism"—that is "actually-existing Fascism"—was constructed not only in Palazzo Venezia but also in state ministries, provincial prefectures, and party headquarters. Just as crucially, it was enacted in the places inhabited and traversed by Italians in their day-to-day lives: in markets, streets, squares, bars, trains and train stations, factories, homes, shops, parish churches, and so on. It was where ordinary people worked, played, shopped, consumed, and interacted that "unofficial relations of power" were articulated and exchanged.[34]

This spatial approach points more broadly to the ways in which everyday life historians "play with scales," examining the unit of the individual, the street, or the city not just to identify microscopic historical practices but to understand how macroscopic structures, processes, and power relations operated at the level of the everyday and vice versa.[35] Again, it tended to be in familiar places that the national politics and political culture of Fascism were lived out. Our approach is therefore not merely—or even particularly—dedicated to illuminating the "bigger picture" of Mussolini's Italy, using small-scale anecdotes about how Fascism played out on the ground to bring color to an analysis that otherwise fundamentally privileges top-down understandings of politics, culture, and society. On the contrary, it is to highlight dynamic, reciprocal relationships—between institutions and individuals, state and society, center and periphery, and among historical actors themselves—and to examine the processes of movement between these scales of experience. In this volume, for example, Maura Hametz problematizes our understanding of the regime's "Italianization" of Slavic minorities by exploring the lives of teachers and students in the eastern borderlands; similarly, by examining the fall of Mussolini through the eyes of ordinary Italians, Joshua Arthurs recasts the significance of this pivotal

political transition. Everyday history, then, traces the conjunctions and conjunctures, the encounters and interactions, between different levels of historical analysis.[36] This conception contrasts with more unidirectional approaches, whether totalitarian pressures "from above" (as in much of culturalist historiography) or social history's reconstruction of resistance "from below."

The historiography of the everyday also embraces the complications and contradictions—the "messiness," for lack of a better word—of historical experience that do not always emerge easily from analyses that privilege official policies or grand narratives of political, social, and economic transformations. In the context of dictatorship, this can mean capturing the interplay of rationality and irrationality, of subjectivity and emotion, that guides individuals' choices and beliefs, and recognizing the multiplicity of individuals' relationships to the regime. At different moments, and in a myriad of ways, Italians could be "inside," "outside," and "against" the state. People who were effectively supporters of, and participants in, the Fascist project could also become its "victims" and vice versa; this is perhaps most evident in the story of Italian Jews under Fascism, but as the contributions to this volume suggest, it equally shaped the lives of colonial settlers, soldiers, housewives, and schoolchildren. As pioneers of "history from below" noted long ago, ordinary people do not necessarily consent to an entire system of governance and all of its policies and their effects; to the contrary, they are more likely to be both perpetrators and victims, supporters and dissenters, participants and evaders. They could also change their minds, and actions, over time. Consent and repression could co-exist, ebb and flow, according to changing circumstances and exigencies. Beyond the binaries that have characterized the study of Mussolini's regime—repression and persuasion, compulsion and enticement, perpetrators and victims, consent and resistance—there is therefore scope for investigating the complex ways that people lived and worked within this system, resisting it, appropriating it, accommodating it, ignoring it, and reproducing it.

Inevitably, historians of everyday life have to contend with a scarce and incomplete source base in answering the questions they pose. Of course, "ordinary" Italians left a comparatively scant record of their daily lives within historians' reach. Even extant sources present problems and limitations. Censorship—whether official or self-imposed—and an atmosphere of intimidation heavily conditioned how people expressed themselves on paper; it can therefore be difficult to locate "genuine" attitudes

or sentiments through documentary evidence. Furthermore, we must acknowledge our dependence on (predominantly) written source material to gain access to everyday actions and practices that were often spoken and performed. Still, while what remains of our historical subjects' past lives is necessarily incomplete, this is a complication that presents itself to any historian, whether they study renowned statesmen, famous artists, or people who led "unremarkable" lives. Even the most voluminous archival repositories may leave some aspects of their dealings obscured (sometimes intentionally).

Although the partial nature of everyday life sources can present difficulties, there are nevertheless ways in which historians can work around or mitigate gaps, recover fragments, and interpret documentary silences. So-called ego-documents—meaning source material "in which an author writes about his or her own acts, thoughts and feelings," like diaries or private letters—are especially useful, though not without limitations of their own.[37] They tend to be produced by individuals possessing the necessary literacy skills and cultural propensities to commit thoughts to paper, and they are also inherently subjective, presenting a partial and "curated" version of reality. One must therefore be careful to view them less as unmediated accounts of events and attitudes, and more as subjective, historically contingent expressions of how people made meaning of their lives.[38] It is also possible—as many of the contributions to this volume demonstrate—to interpret "official" sources creatively in order to access the everyday worlds of "ordinary" historical actors. Although such documents foreground moments in which individuals came into contact with the state, they also often provide (filtered) access to their words and writings. This is the case, for example, with *confino* and other police records which often reproduce verbatim the speech acts (as well as physical actions and writings) of individual Italians, through witness statements, intercepted telephone conversations and letters, records of graffiti, and other forms of physical and written evidence. In using these kinds of officially produced sources (as well as others, like newspaper articles), it is crucial to heed Carlo Ginzburg's advice to "read between the lines," to pay close attention to the "discrepancies" between prescriptions on the one hand and "actually-existing" behaviors and attitudes on the other hand.[39] In this way, just as the records of the interrogation and trial of a sixteenth-century Friulian miller set out for us the parameters of religious thought in a corner of Reformation Europe, material generated by regime-affiliated institutions and individuals can reveal the contours of sanctioned expectations

and norms of everyday behavior; equally, and vitally, it can also shed light on the ways in which it was possible to deviate from those same expectations and norms.

Conclusion

In our view, *Alltagsgeschichte* presents an important new direction in the study of Italian Fascism and a way forward—even an escape hatch—from entrenched, dichotomous, and politically charged debates. Importantly, none of the contributions to this volume claim that this is the only valid approach to the study of Mussolini's regime, or any other past society or political system for that matter. Indeed, as the editors of this volume, we have sought to avoid a monolithic conception of the "everyday" and have encouraged the contributors to define this terrain in their own terms. As indicated by their titles, each chapter is devoted to a long-standing theme or problem in the historiography of Fascist Italy; at the same time, each is also grounded in focused empirical case studies that provide new perspectives on these topics. They are organized in a loose chronological order but frequently transcend narrow periodization. In "Origins," Matteo Millan examines early Fascist paramilitary groups through the actions, emotions, and experiences of individual *squadristi* and the communities in which they operated. Michael Ebner's chapter on "Coercion" shifts the focus to the years of the regime (1922–1943), exploring its mechanisms for intimidation and repression, as well as the role played by ordinary people in policing behavior and dissent. In "Masculinity" and "Reproduction," Lorenzo Benadusi and Alessandra Gissi look at how Italian men and women responded to Fascist dictates relating to gender and the body—the former in terms of masculine identities and the latter through the prism of contraception and abortion. Other chapters explore the ways in which ordinary Italians responded to, adapted, and resisted impositions "from above." In "Consumption," Kate Ferris traces transformations in Venetians' diets and shopping practices in the wake of League of Nations sanctions following the invasion of Ethiopia; Maura Hametz takes a similar approach in "Borderlands," looking at how minority populations on the northeastern frontier variously negotiated, avoided, and exploited the regime's efforts at "nationalization." Roberta Pergher's chapter on "Empire" reconstructs the experiences of Italian colonists in Libya, with an emphasis on individual agency and subjectivity, while Joshua Arthurs examines the production of "Memory" through acts of retributive violence, denigration, and

iconoclasm following the fall of Mussolini in 1943. In the concluding chapter, Geoff Eley offers reflections on the historiography of everyday life, the Italo-German comparison, and the significance of Italian Fascism within the larger context of twentieth-century European totalitarianism.

Notes

1. Mussolini's first official use of this phrase was in a speech in Milan on 28 October 1935. See Benito Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 21, eds. Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel (Florence: La Fenice, 1951), 425.
2. On Fascism's vision of national regeneration or "palingenesis," see Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). On demographic and social transformation, see for example Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Barbara Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); and David Horn, *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction and Italian Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
3. On Fascism as a "political religion," see especially Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). For a nuanced discussion of Fascism and faith, see Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Random House, 2012).
4. On working-class identities and radical politics, see for example Tobias Abse, "Italian Workers and Italian Fascism," in *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: Comparisons and Contrasts*, ed. Richard Bessel (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 40–60; Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, trans. Robert Lumley and Jude Bloomfield (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
5. On the Fascist Party and its relationship to the Italian state, see especially Paul Corner, *The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion in Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). See also Salvatore Lupo, *Il fascismo: la politica in un regime totalitaria* (Rome: Donzelli, 2005).
6. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1994), 257. On Italian Fascism as a "totalitarian" project, see Emilio Gentile, *La via italiana al totalitarismo. Il partito e lo stato nel regime fascista* (Rome: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1995).

7. For a comprehensive survey of debates over the interpretation of the Fascist regime, see R. J. B. Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
8. See Claudio Fogu, "*Italiani brava gente*: The Legacy of Fascist Historical Culture on Italian Politics of Memory," in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, eds Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 147–76. The historiography of Italian memory politics is vast, but useful overviews include John Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Robert Ventresca, "Debating the Meaning of Fascism in Contemporary Italy," *Modern Italy* 11, no. 2 (2006): 189–209; Donald Sassoon, "Italy after Fascism: The Predicament of Dominant Narratives," in *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s*, eds Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 259–90.
9. Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il duce. Gli anni del consenso 1929–1936*, vol. 3.1 (Turin: Einaudi, 1996); Renzo De Felice, *Intervista sul fascismo*, ed. Michael Ledeen (Rome: Laterza, 1975). For an overview of De Felice's work and its significance, see Borden W. Painter, "Renzo De Felice and the Historiography of Italian Fascism," *American Historical Review* 95, no. 1 (1990): 391–405. An important reflection on the ambiguities of *consenso* is Roberta Pergher and Giulia Albanese, "Introduction. Historians, Fascism, and Italian Society: Mapping the Limits of Consent," in *In the Society of Fascists: Acclamation, Acquiescence, and Agency in Mussolini's Italy*, eds Giulia Albanese and Roberta Pergher (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1–28.
10. See, for example, Doug Thompson, *State Control in Fascist Italy: Culture and Conformity, 1925–1943* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); Tracy Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy 1922–1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Victoria De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Philip Cannistraro, *La fabbrica del consenso* (Rome: Laterza, 1975).
11. Philip Cooke, *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Andrea Mammone, "A Daily Revision of the Past: Fascism, Anti-Fascism, and Memory in Contemporary Italy," *Modern Italy* 11, no. 2 (2006): 211–26; Paolo Pezzino, "The Italian Resistance between History and Memory," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 10, no. 4 (2005): 396–412; Roberto Chiarini, *25 aprile: la competizione politica sulla memoria* (Venice: Marsilio, 2005); Filippo Focardi, *La guerra della memoria. La Resistenza nel dibattito politico italiano dal 1945 a oggi* (Rome: Laterza, 2005).

12. On sacralized politics, see Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*; on aestheticization, see Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Other important works of cultural history include Joshua Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity: The Roman Past in Fascist Italy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012); Claudio Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945*; Emily Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism: Art and Politics under Fascism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Marla Stone, *The Patron State: Culture and Politics in Fascist Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); and Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).
13. See, for example, Alf Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, trans. William Templer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times—Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). More recent applications include Shannon Lee Fogg, *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France: Foreigners, Undesirables, and Strangers* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Andrew Stuart Bergerson, *Ordinary Germans in Extraordinary Times: The Nazi Revolution in Hildesheim* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); and Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
14. See Alf Lüdtke, "Introduction: What Is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are Its Practicioners?," in *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. Alf Lüdtke, trans. William Templer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 20–1; as well as Joachim C. Häberlen, "Reflections on Comparative Everyday History: Practices in the Working-Class Movement in Leipzig and Lyon during the Early 1930s," *The International History Review* 33, no. 4 (2011): 687–704.
15. See Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Edoardo Grendi, "Micro-analisi e storia sociale," *Quaderni Storici* 35 (1977): 506–20; Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni, "Il nome e il come: scambio ineguale e mercato storiografico," *Quaderni Storici* 40 (1979): 181–90; Matti Peltonen, "Clues, Margins, and Monads: The Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research," *History and*

Theory 40, no. 3 (2001): 347–59; Axel Körner, "Culture et structure," *Le Mouvement Social* 200, no. 3 (2002): 55–63.

16. Phillipp Sarasin, quoted in Paul Steege et al., "The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter," *Journal of Modern History* 80, no. 2 (2008): 361.
17. Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5.
18. Leora Auslander, *Cultural Revolutions: Everyday Life and Politics in Britain, North America, and France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 2.
19. On the Fascist "colonization of time," see Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self*.
20. Wolfgang Kaschuba, "Popular Culture and Workers' Culture as Symbolic Orders: Comments on the Debate about the History of Culture and Everyday Life," in *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. Alf Lüdtke, trans. William Templer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 172.
21. Martin Jay, "Songs of Experience: Reflections on the Debate over Alltagsgeschichte," *Salmagundi* 81 (1989): 29–41; David F. Crew, "Alltagsgeschichte: A New Social History 'From Below'?," *Central European History* 22, no. 3/4 (1989): 394–407; and Geoff Eley, "Labor History, Social History, 'Alltagsgeschichte': Experience, Culture, and the Politics of the Everyday—a New Direction for German Social History?," *The Journal of Modern History* 61, no. 2 (1989): 297–343.
22. Jay, "Songs of Experience," 34.
23. On the appeal of Nazi "normalcy," see Bergerson, *Ordinary Germans in Extraordinary Times*.
24. Stephen Gundle, "The Aftermath of the Mussolini Cult: History, Nostalgia and Popular Culture," in *The Cult of the Duce: Mussolini and the Italians*, eds. Stephen Gundle, Christopher Duggan, and Giuliana Pieri (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 241–56; Andrea Mammone and Giuseppe A. Veltri, "La memoria daltonica del fascismo," *Il Ponte* 62, no. 3 (2007): 89–97; Mammone, "A Daily Revision of the Past," 216.
25. See, for example, *Cartoline del Ventennio*, an episode of the RAI series *La Grande Storia*, first aired on 22 July 2011. On *come eravamo* and the representation of the Fascist period on television, see Mammone and Veltri, "La memoria daltonica del fascismo"; Fogu, "Italiani Brava Gente," 159; Guido Crainz, "The Representation of Fascism and the Resistance in the Documentaries of Italian State Television," in *Italian Fascism: History, Memory, Representation*, eds. R. J. B. Bosworth and Patrizia Dogliani (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 124–40.

26. To be sure, there are many works whose approach is very much compatible with *Alltagsgeschichte*; these include, for example, Paul Corner, "Collaboration, Complicity and Evasion under Italian Fascism," in *Everyday Life in Mass Dictatorship: Collusion and Evasion*, ed. Alf Lüdtke (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 75–93; Corner, *The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion in Mussolini's Italy*; Duggan, *Fascist Voices*; R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy: Life Under the Dictatorship, 1915–1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006); Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory*.
27. Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus? And Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 11.
28. Peter Borscheid, "Plädoyer für eine Geschiche des Alltäglichen," in *Ehe, Liebe, Tod: zum Wandel der Familie, der Geschlechts- und Generationsbeziehungen in der Neuzeit*, eds Peter Borscheid and Hans J. Teuteberg (Münster: Coppenrath, 1983), 1–14; Ben Highmore, *Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Alf Lüdtke, "Whatever Happened to the 'Fiery Red Glow'? Workers' Experiences and German Fascism," in *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. Alf Lüdtke, trans. William Templer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 198–251.
29. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, xiii; Lüdtke, "Introduction," 3–5.
30. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, xii.
31. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 29–39.
32. See especially Steege et al., "The History of Everyday Life," 364.
33. Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 40–66.
34. Belinda J. Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 5; Steege et al., "The History of Everyday Life," 361.
35. Jacques Revel, ed., *Jeux d'échelles: la micro-analyse à l'expérience* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996); Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris, and Jacques Revel, "Introduction: Space and Scale in Transnational History," *The International History Review* 33, no. 4 (2011): 573–84.
36. As Katherine Pence and Paul Betts put it, *Alltagsgeschichte* examines "the … interplay of state power and individual subjectivity from a number of vantage points … [and] local contexts in which citizens made sense of the state in which they lived through myriad acts"; see Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, "Introduction," in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, eds Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 6. Similarly, Sheila Fitzpatrick

describes "everyday interactions that in some way involved the state"; Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 3.

37. Rudolf Dekker, "Introduction," in *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical Writing in Its Social Context Since the Middle Ages*, ed. Rudolf Dekker (Hilversum: Verloren, 2002), 7. An important example of recent work on Fascist Italy grounded in ego-documents is Duggan, *Fascist Voices*, which draws heavily on the collections of the *Archivio Diaristico Nazionale* in *Pieve Santo Stefano*.
38. See for example Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack, "In Relation: The 'Social Self' and Ego-Documents," *German History* 28, no. 3 (2010): 263–72.
39. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, xiii–xxvi.

CHAPTER 2

Origins

Matteo Millan

On 6 March 1921, brothers Galileo and Silvio Lodovico Grinzato, among the most important agrarians in Correzzola—a small town in the province of Padua, in the northeastern part of the Po Valley—were killed under uncertain circumstances while traveling down a country road. The local *Fasci di combattimento* (Fascist associations) mobilized immediately and carried out attacks against Socialist groups and day laborer associations in the region. Whether the Grinzato brothers were actually registered as Fascists is unconfirmed, even if they were undoubtedly among the principle organizers of anti-Socialist action in the region.

Based on eyewitness testimony, the *carabinieri* arrested brothers Cesare, Giuseppe, Adolfo, and Angelo Perin for the double homicide. In July 1922, a year after the events, the Perin brothers were released because of lack of evidence.[1] A month later, on the night of 4 August 1922, a truck carrying about 20 people "believed to be Fascists based on the uniforms they were wearing" was stopped at the station in Pontelongo, just a few

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miles from Correzzola. Slowly and carefully, the *squadristi* surrounded the Perin family home. At about three in the morning, they started shooting at the house, yelling to the people inside to open the door. Terrified, the members of the Perin family refused. To drive them out, then, the Fascists lit a wooden pigsty next to the home on fire and tried to break down the door. Finally, driven by fear and the flames, the Perins decided to open the door and "beg for mercy." Assunta and Giulio Perin were the first to come out, but before they could even get through the door, they were struck in the throat by two musket shots, "discharged in rapid fire." "As if that were not enough," the Fascists then made the other members of the Perin family come out one by one, forcing them to pass over the bodies of their family members who had just been killed. Once outside, they were lined up against a wall, threatened by ten or so Fascists armed with rifles. The *squadristi* then lined up like a firing squad and prepared to shoot. Suddenly, the head of the mission ordered them to lay down their guns: there were already two dead, and thus the "the Grinzato brothers' murders had been sufficiently avenged." Before they left, they beat Antonio Perin and his son Adolfo with "clubs and maces," with the latter ending up hospitalized in serious condition. In the hours that followed, the *carabinieri* found at least 30 cartridges for combat rifles and revolvers. "The façade of the house was riddled with bullets," which had also destroyed the windows and lodged themselves in the ceiling and interior walls. Among those suspected of the double homicide were two Fascists, "both known for being violent." At first glance, the mission seemed to have been conducted at random. Coming back from the funeral of one of their fallen companions, the *squadristi* might have thought of avenging the killing—a full year earlier—of Galileo and Lodovico Grinzato, pouncing on the Perin brothers shortly after they had been released by the court. In fact, other factors soon became evident that indicated extensive planning: the Fascists had been preparing their weapons for some time, and—even more incriminating—the truck used for the mission had been procured in advance with the help of a few directors of the Fascio of Padua, first among them the ex-general Francesco Bertolini.[2]

The episode in Pontelongo—in some ways common and ordinary—was just one of many in the constellation of violent *squadrista* acts that bloodied the Italian peninsula in the years after World War I. For precisely this reason, however, it is indicative of some of the typical features of *squadrista* violence. First, it arose from an atmosphere of tension and violence that in part preceded, or ran parallel to, the one unleashed by Fascism: the

murder of the Grinzato brothers in 1921 took place at the very beginning of Fascism in Padua, during a long (and often violent) period of conflict between Socialist associations and so-called defense and labor bands armed and funded by agrarians.[3] But this episode is also illustrative of some of the distinctive dynamics of *squadrista* violence: acting as a group, and organizing and planning according to paramilitary procedures; the use of military weapons as well as clubs and nightsticks; the performative and intimidatory nature of the violence, focused above all else on instilling terror and distress; the refusal of legal justice and the recourse to summary forms of justice and vengeance; and the support of large swaths of the elite establishment, like the former general Bertolini.

Brutal episodes of this kind did not necessarily involve hardened criminals. In the vast majority of cases, acts like these were carried out by young men who sincerely believed that violence was just a means to reinstate order and patriotic values, but who also never missed a chance to sing and carouse with their *squadra* companions. In this chapter, I will analyze the causes and effects of *squadrista* violence, especially at the level of individuals and of primary groups, like families, friends, and local communities. Within this framework, the "emotional impact" and mobilizing ideals like "nation" and "class" were mediated first and foremost by local and personal factors, which played a crucial role.[4] This approach allows us "to give (back) a human face" to early Fascist violence and to understand the choices, values, and individual behaviors of its ordinary perpetrators, placing them in relation to models of behavior condoned by their culture and more generally by the social and political contexts of their time.[5] This does not mean, of course, denying adherence to Fascist ideology, nor granting some kind of political legitimation to *squadrista* violence. But neither is it possible to reduce Fascism to a phenomenon of hooligans and degenerates. Major exponents of *Alltagsgeschichte*—like Alf Lüdtke and Sheila Fitzpatrick—have sought to give voice to "dependent groups," calling attention to strategies of adaptation and opposition, employed by the underprivileged in their interactions with political power.[6] In this chapter, I will adopt a perspective that is in some senses contrary, but also complementary, and seek to understand some of the dynamics of the actions and behaviors of the ordinary perpetrators of Fascist violence.[7] Examining the causes and the effects of the violence of the *squadristi* in their everyday lives will allow us not only to understand the reasons and rationale behind their actions but also to make sense of why terrible and brutal forms of violence enjoyed pervasive legitimation from large segments of Italian society.

The "Holy Rogue"

Post–World War I Italy was characterized by bitter and violent unrest, both political and economic, which derived not only from the recent experience of war but also from older conflicts as well.[8] Within this troubled political context, however, the *Fasci di combattimento* stood out from the start for their remarkable propensity for using violence as an instrument of political action. Founded on 23 March 1919 in Milan, the Fasci underwent an initial stage of consolidation that proved difficult and saw more than a few moments of political humiliation. Nevertheless, by November 1919 a police report had already defined the organization as an outright "armed corps," with the "deliberate purpose" of "making use of any means whatsoever, even if illegal." Its members "resort[ed] to the use of firearms to an excessive degree," with a great deal of "personal injuries" and "homicides," in order to carry out an "excessive and violent reaction" against the propaganda—often "simply verbal"—of the Socialists.[9] Starting in the fall of 1920, the movement experienced a rapid phase of expansion, in which the duties carried out by its armed component, the action squads, played a decisive role.

If, from this moment onward, Fascism succeeded in embodying one of the largest and most aggressive political forces within a broader patriotic and anti-Socialist revival, the motivations that drove many young people to join the action squads were varied. Despite its political values and aims, Fascism, and especially *squadrismo*, also proved attractive because it was able to provide an organizational framework within which to experiment with violence and to express deep-seated sentiments and expectations prevalent among large segments of the society. These traits proved particularly strong for the young men who constituted the better part of the action squads. Varying by region, the average age for *squadristi* ranged from 20 to 25 years old.[10] During the liberal period in Italy, patriotic youth movements—like student battalions and university organizations—had constituted an important institutional and organizational framework in which the practice of politics was characterized by patriotic values, if not militaristic and chauvinistic ones, and often a degree of familiarity with firearms as well. Within these groups, young people were able to explore new forms of sociality and political involvement, which took on a decisive role in the months leading up to Italy's entry into the war in May 1915.[11] Similar dynamics emerged in Italy with an even greater intensity in the years following the war. Of course, the global conflict was a devastating

experience, especially in generational terms. Among those who comprised the *squadre*, however, only about 50 percent had actually fought in the Great War, and among the veterans, many were members of elite corps like the *Arditi* (assault troops) or specialized branches like the Alpine Corps or the light infantry units (*bersaglieri*). As Umberto Fabbri, secretary of the National Fascist Party in Rome, acknowledged, only these elite corps allowed for individual valor and courage to be put to the test.[12] For these combat veterans, certainly, militancy in the *squadre* also meant defending the ideals for which the war had been fought. According to a 1921 report from the police headquarters in Florence, the *squadre* were led by "former officers … of exceptional courage and heroism, some of whom act in good faith and selflessly, and others who instead are driven by their ambition or hopes for personal gain."[13] At the same time, fighting in the *squadre* provided an opportunity to acquire prestige and to feed the hunger for power that had been experienced during the war.[14] For others, *squadrismo* meant the possibility of postponing reentry into the poorly paid life of a worker or university student, or even of avoiding unemployment. For many young officers in the reserves who knew no other profession but "commanding men," the future in post–World War I Italy looked anything but rosy.[15]

There were, of course, not just veterans. In the "Italy of *squadrismo*," many high school and university students learned violent techniques from veterans. For many young men who were unable to fight in the war because of age restrictions, the militancy of the *squadre* provided a long-awaited opportunity to put to the test the courage and patriotism that they had not been able to demonstrate in the trenches. The very young Mario Piazzesi—soon to become a member of one of the most infamous *squadre*, the *Disperata* of Florence—remembered the compulsion to "release" the myths, images, and grandeurs of the epic battles fought by the army and "all the spirit of Victory that boiled up in our veins."[16] Another very young *squadrista* Guido Fracastoro di Fornello believed that in Gabriele D'Annunzio's expedition in Fiume, "my great dream, to be able one day to accomplish something for the good of the Fatherland, was here transformed into reality."[17] Nationalist and militarist propaganda seems to have been much more resonant on the home front than it was for the soldiers in the trenches. For many *squadristi*, skirmishes in piazzas became a "substitute" for the adventure of war, made more stimulating and exciting by the risk of injury or death. The younger *squadristi* in particular did not hesitate to compare their experiences to their idealized vision of heroic

soldiers on the front lines. Many could not wait to emulate the deeds of the *Arditi*, who became outright role models. Meeting a "kind of crazy" *Ardito* who hoped to take to the streets with daggers and hand grenades, to inflict on the Socialists what had been done to the Austrians, was a real turning point for Piazzesi, and shortly thereafter he joined the Florentine Fascio.[18] *Squadrista* militancy therefore served, in a certain sense, as an explosive form of socialization and education. The use of pistols and other firearms, for example, was transformed into a kind of game, especially for the younger ones who had never had a similar experience in the trenches of World War I. The *squadrista* Guido Fracastoro remembered unabashedly the heinous "games" he played with his friends, including turning the rooftops of Verona into a shooting gallery.[19] Drills often seemed like stunts, except of course that those guns were not simply toys but, for all intents and purposes, machines for killing. Within the *squadra*, a gun was an instrument of self-aggrandizement and prestige.[20] It is therefore not surprising that often the younger *squadristi* compensated for their lack of experience in combat with a radicalism and a cruelty which, fed by the desire to emulate their heroes, exceeded that of their elders.[21]

For many youths who had not fought in the war, the militancy in the *squadre* also expressed generational conflict between younger and older members of the bourgeoisie.[22] Large swaths of the nationalist bourgeoisie certainly saw *squadrismo* as a positive and "healthy" phenomenon and as a manifestation of youthful regeneration, but also viewed it with a certain skepticism or even contempt.[23] One young *squadrista* Pietro Girace clashed several times with his father, an old liberal from Castellamare di Stabia, who could not understand how a young man from a good family could "show an interest in politics, and in the violent approach of the Fascists."[24] The lawyer Nicola Panicali, too, clashed repeatedly with his son Mario, who had not only neglected his studies but had fallen gravely ill after going to Fiume and joining the *squadre* from Fano (in the province of Pesaro-Urbino). In a letter to the secretary of the *Fasci di combattimento* Umberto Pasella, Panicali forbade the officer from sending propaganda materials to his son. For Pasella it was quite the opposite: the young Mario was only doing his duty as a true Italian, as opposed to his father, who was perhaps even a "Bolshevik sympathizer." In a subsequent letter, Mario himself highlighted the narrow-mindedness of his father, "who [felt] a mythic terror for any avant-garde movement."[25] Although from the second half of the 1920s onward the Fascist regime forcefully affirmed the values of hierarchy, discipline, and obedience toward both the family

and the state, in the period preceding the March on Rome, the militancy of many young *squadristi* (especially middle-class boys) was characterized by instances of family rupture or disobedience toward parental authority. As a Fascist propagandist wrote in 1921, "it is necessary to live with more irreverence and to have the civil courage to overturn that which is old, because it is old; we must choose our leaders from the body and spirit of the young, who know enough to get by on their own in the current circumstances."[26] Involvement in the *squadre* could not be prevented by parents who were apprehensive, or even worse, anti-patriotic.[27] This did not exclude that generational ruptures could be overcome in the name of shared ideals. While they could not initially agree on a course of action, Mario Piazzesi and his father found themselves side by side during the March on Rome.[28] Even though Guido Fracastoro's father was another "old-fashioned" man, "mild-mannered and generous," he nevertheless registered with the *Fasci di combattimento* in 1921.[29] Cases of brothers or cousins fighting side by side in the *squadre* were even more common.[30] Brothers Attilio and Armando Fugagnollo, for example, fought together in the Fascio of Vicenza. During a punitive mission Armando was killed, and Attilio—who since 1921 had been the captain of the Fascio—subsequently had a brilliant career, driven in part by his ability to capitalize politically on the death of his "martyred brother."[31] Similarly, brothers Federico and Cesare Gaschi, who first fought together in the action squads from Turin, later played important roles in the *Mutua squadristi*.[32]

If, all things considered, the differences in age and opinions about courses of action carried a certain weight, *squadrismo* often transcended traditional differences in class, culture, and language. For *squadristi* coming from good families, the militancy of the *squadre* also meant experiencing the thrill of conflict alongside the degraded and "degenerate." The "new faith" of Fascism brought together and united "the most diverse social realities," from the "man-at-arms" to the "mathematics professor," from the "feeble only child" to the rich bourgeois, from the "tobacconist" to the "laundry worker."[33] For Mario Piazzesi, the new headquarters of the Florentine Fascio took on the role of a "mixer" and "combined the most socially disparate elements of society, like students and factory workers, shopkeepers and professionals."[34]

In this context, the figure of the madman seems to have wielded a unique appeal.[35] The clinically insane did not seem to be overrepresented among the *squadristi*, and it is clear that *squadrismo* cannot be reduced to hooliganism.[36] Nonetheless, the values of *squadrismo*—courage, disregard

for danger, and brutality against the "internal enemy"—offered important opportunities for those who previously would have been branded criminals or psychopaths. The Fascist propaganda machine would always remain particularly attentive to this component of *squadrismo*, creating the myth of the "holy rogue."[37] The fact remains, however, that persons with recognized psychiatric disorders were able to take on important jobs and a certain level of autonomy during the early years of the movement and the regime. This was the case, for example, with Giuseppe Berti, who had been admitted several times to a psychiatric hospital during World War I for "acute neurasthenia." Despite this condition, he became a lieutenant in the Royal Army and a brave *squadrista*, first in the ranks of the Fascio of Padua (as commander) and then in the Fascio of Florence, where he was put on trial 11 times "on behalf of the Fascist Revolution."[38] The Genoese *squadrista* Aldo De Feo was "one of the members most sought after by local supervisors" for "his patriotic sentiments, for his actions and for his courage" but was also considered a "neurasthenic."[39] Dante Mariotti, former lieutenant in the *Arditi* and commander of several of the *squadre* in the Fascio of Turin, was renowned for his brutality and readiness for violence, which were usually seen as resulting from an injury to the head he had suffered during the war. After the March on Rome, the leadership assigned Mariotti to the role of agent provocateur.[40] This was also the case for Alessandro Carosi of Pisa, a pharmacist, Fascist official, and longtime mayor of Vecchiano, who was considered a "bloodthirsty madman" suffering from a "mental infirmity." Despite the fact that his often brutal and gratuitous acts of violence caused Fascism problems and embarrassment, he played an essential role in consolidating Fascist control over the province of Pisa, both on the eve of the March on Rome and subsequently.[41]

Both prior to and immediately after the March, the ideal *squadrista* was savage, or perhaps even insane, and capable of making a strong impression on his companions, who valued his disregard for danger, his brutality, and his transgressive nature. This type of *squadrista* was also an important pawn in the imposition of Fascist order by means of intimidation and violence. A positive association thus emerged between mental illness, social marginality, criminality, and committing "heroic" acts. In the political climate of postwar Italy, individuals who in a traditional context would have been marginalized came to the fore, both within the microcosm of the *squadre* and in the macrocosm of politics: they became role models in no uncertain terms.[42] If, therefore, the disruptiveness and effectiveness of *squadrismo* cannot be reduced to the "pathological madness" of (very few

of) its members, the fact remains that the role played by these "madmen" is indicative of a paroxysmal political and social climate characterized by a redefinition of political and moral boundaries regarding violence, or at least its widespread acceptance for "patriotic" reasons.

Participating in acts of collective criminality and violence helped cement bonds of camaraderie within the *squadre*, creating masculine subcultures of militant radicalism that were tested every day in clashes with so-called subversives.[43] For many *squadristi*, courage and looking "death in the face without batting an eye, and even smiling at it and deriding it," selflessness, and brotherhood were held up as demonstrations of "virile audacity" and faith in the cause. Guided by these virtues, victory was inevitable over the "infirm virility" of the "shepherds-of-the-crowds" Socialists, all the more so as they were identified as doomsters, defeatists, and the opponents of the recent war effort. The image of the Fascist warrior was continually juxtaposed to that of the "windbag" Socialist.[44] Violent virility also needed to be advertised publicly, for example, through the wearing of "soldierly uniforms."[45] Mario Piazzesi, for example, remembered an instance when some female tourists were attracted to the "'strong men' who fought 'against the Bolsheviks.'" Other times, however, girls had the opposite reaction. On another occasion, Piazzesi recalled, a girl reacted coolly upon learning of his participation in the *squadre* and especially the fact that he carried and used a pistol.[46]

These generational and gendered elements contributed to the "war after the war" functioning as an initiation rite that marked the passage not only from adolescence to adulthood but also from one era of politics to another.[47] The conduct of the *squadristi* was indeed a new way of doing politics, consisting not of speeches and intrigues but of action and violence. This also made *squadrismo* lively and joyful, in sharp contrast to delegitimized parliamentary institutions and the traditional political class.

Performance and Terror

Through violence, Fascism burned bridges with the past, completely overturned the rules of political conflict, and earned itself a decisive advantage against its adversaries and against the liberal state itself. For example, while the old politicians of the Alliance for the Civic Defense of Florence limited themselves to issuing an order for a day of protests against the aggression carried out by a few Socialists against some wounded veterans, the Fascists organized a punitive mission "because one [had to] respond to violence

with violence."[48] And if initially the *squadristi* from Parma had tried to persuade militant Socialists, they soon realized that "beatings" were much more effective: "now Fascism is feared and respected."[49] Only a politics of violence and the occupation of piazzas were effective against the "old fogeys" and the "Asian follies" of Russian Bolshevism, according to Mario Piazzesi.[50] Violence allowed for the destruction of the praxis of traditional politics, banishing dialogue and compromise and bringing political debate into the realm of physical combat. At the end of the day, no language possessed a greater persuasive force than the language of violence.[51] The young Luigi Freddi exalted the "punch" and especially the "pistol shot": it "arrives at its destination with the initial velocity of three hundred meters per second. It is serious, finishes things quickly … [and is] terribly efficient because it prevents the discussion from ever being reopened."[52] In the words of Italo Balbo, "we are stronger because we are more decisive. And those who are stronger are always right."[53] This sentiment was shared by another member of the quadrumvirate in charge of the March on Rome: Cesare Maria De Vecchi, the leader of *squadrismo* in Piedmont. As told in an anecdote by Dante Maria Tuninetti, a *squadrista* and future party secretary for the Province of Turin, during the Fascist occupation of Novara in July 1922, De Vecchi addressed the prefect with these words, forcing him to nominate a royal commissioner to replace the Socialist mayor: "You are a clever man, I am a strong mayor: and since I believe I was born a fool, have lived a fool, and intend on dying a fool—if only because I have a dislike for those who are clever—and since I am strong, I will break your skull. You will go to sleep and in the meantime I, fool that I am, will win the game. Simple, no? Clear and straightforward."[54] Stressing the clear effectiveness of violence in comparison to traditional and legal political means, De Vecchi was proudly asserting the moral and therefore also the political superiority of Fascism over its opponents, whether Socialists or even state authorities. Respect for public officials, laws, and traditional political rules, along with privileging discussion and mediation over conflict, had all become wasteful and ultimately old-fashioned principles, to be overcome by the overwhelming use of political violence.

Squadrista violence also assumed a clear performative significance. The forcefulness of the violent act, its visibility and its concreteness, and its long-lasting effects all resulted in a political message sent not only to the people directly involved but to a much broader audience. This performative quality rendered violence an everyday experience, constantly present even when it was not concretely put into action. Violence thus struck

not only its victims but also its spectators.[55] Every new act of violence evoked past acts and induced new terror. Whoever fell victim to murder or to injury, or heard them recounted, understood immediately whom they were dealing with: utterly determined young men, lacking any scruples, and ready to go beyond any legal or moral limit just to assert themselves.[56] In some of the most notorious episodes, like the massacre at Roccastrada, the *squadristi* unleashed their brutality to its fullest: militants in opposing parties, or even just casual victims, had their throats cut or were shot or stabbed repeatedly, and many of the wounded were left to suffer for hours; others were killed in front of their parents.[57]

Very often, however, other forms of violence proved just as effective. There were many cases of nighttime missions to the homes of Socialist or labor leaders, who were forced outside under the threat of their house being set of fire "with their wife and children" inside. Bound and naked, they would be brought out to an open field, beaten, whipped with riding crops, clubbed, and water-boarded. Sometimes the victims would be killed, but more commonly they were left tied to a tree unconscious.[58] Mock executions were also common, as in the case of the Perin brothers. These savage rituals were above all a way of inducing fear, by constantly threatening death and making the fate of the victims entirely dependent upon the whim of their assaulters, making them constantly "fear the worst."[59] One of the apparently paradoxical effects of Fascist violence was that it was the victims themselves who contributed to the impunity of the *squadristi*. The brutality and sometimes even banal violence of Alessandro Carosi created "a true sense of terror" and a widespread silence among the local population, helping to eradicate any form of organized opposition.[60] Similar episodes unfolded in Molinella, traditionally a stronghold for Socialist cooperativism in Emilia, where a "horrifying silence" reigned.[61] Historians have long emphasized the genuine approval that law enforcement officials gave to the *squadristi* and that their broad support helped make the Fascist takeover possible.[62] It is interesting to note, however, that Fascist domination was also achieved by committing acts of violence against groups not directly involved in so-called subversive activities. Attacking not just its own adversaries but ordinary people as well, Fascism aimed at hegemonic control in the political arena and sought to establish violence as a legitimate instrument of political action. An anonymous letter sent to the Prefect of Bologna denounced the violence and threats of the Fascists against local doctors in rural areas of Emilia, who "either gave themselves entirely to Fascism" or "if they remained faithful to their per-

sonal and professional dignity, continued to file medical reports for those poor wretches who had been beaten up or wounded by the Fascists" and thus lived "in fear … often beaten up, and always in danger."[63] Newspaper vendors were often threatened with being clubbed or having their shops set on fire if they continued to sell Socialist or subversive newspapers.[64] Attacking doctors or the press impeded the news from publicizing the full extent of *squadrista* violence, further contributing to the isolation of its victims and exacerbating their sense of abandonment.

The paroxysmal postwar atmosphere also provided an excuse to exploit political conflicts for distinctly private ends. During the massacre at Roccastrada, for example, one *squadrista* participated in the mission only out of "revenge" and killed an old man who "some time before had refused to let him marry his daughter."[65] Among the most violent *squadristi* from Emilia was Augusto Regazzi, founder of the Fascio of Molinella and member of a well-to-do family of farmland owners. Between 1914 and 1918, taking advantage of wartime conditions, he resorted to using non-unionized day laborers on his land. Starting in 1919, however, the Socialist associations mandated that only unionized day laborers be hired, and with a 20 percent increase in pay. This declaration by the Socialist leagues became the pretext for the founding of the local *Fascio di combattimento* and its *squadre*.[66] Through a campaign of intimidation, oppression, and generalized violence, Regazzi and the *squadristi* from Molinella created a situation of "fear and panic" and threatened the day laborers, hoping to "obtain a refund" for the additional amount added to their wages. At the same time, the recourse to *squadrista* violence allowed Regazzi to satisfy his lust for "games," "women," and "entertainment."[67] Although violence was sometimes driven by private motivations, it always acquired a social and political meaning. Reaching a position of power—because it also meant support for the party—was deemed virtuous and not the result of mere ambition: greed, for example, in this way became a fair pretense and took on positive political value. Legitimizing and justifying private ambitions as patriotic initiatives, *squadrista* violence thus contributed to the reconfiguration of the boundaries between the public and the private.[68]

At other times, however, *squadrista* violence did not originate from personal vendettas but rather popped up suddenly for reasons that were, on the surface, banal and smacked of stunts and cruel tricks. In such cases, the search for a motive, however futile and trivial it might have seemed, could have the indirect purpose of making the subsequent Fascist reaction

seem legitimate and "just."[69] In Molinella, for example, the *squadrista* Francesco Forlani would make fun, in a local tavern, of the local Socialist leader Giuseppe Massarenti, or pretend to have heard a scornful "razz" against the Blackshirts, just to have "the slightest pretext" for threatening "a lesson by the Fascists" and for justifying "the spilling of some blood."[70] On the other hand, if it is important not to overlook the functionality of such violence, it must also be noted that the growing sense of dominance and power and the effective impunity and forms of self-legitimization that the *squadristi* propagated in many areas of Italy, contributed to an increased propensity for violence. Beneath its "patriotic and anti-Bolshevik motives," a deeper and more autonomous dimension to this violence took shape, a kind of "gruesome carnival," in which weakened constraints and virtual Fascist impunity fueled a downward spiral into further violence.[71] This spiral, moreover, manifested itself in everyday customs and behavioral norms and in traditional settings for socializing, like inns and taverns.[72] In January 1922, a few Fascists, having just left a tavern, started shooting haphazardly at streetlamps with their rifles and revolvers and, frisking passersby, passed themselves off as police officers.[73] Later that same month in the province of Bologna, another group of "young thugs" armed with pistols, pretending to be public security officers and knocking on the doors of countryside farmhouses, carried out acts of violence and threatened to kill anyone who refused to open their door; the victims included not just "Communists" but also simple farmers.[74] Undertaken purely for fun, as typical jokes and pranks (like shooting at streetlamps), such practices actually contributed to the "frightening" of passersby and common citizens and demonstrated the effective invincibility of the Fascists, in addition to fueling their own sense of pompousness. In this environment, even the most meaningless rationales were used to justify a recourse to violence. A group of *squadristi* in the province of Bologna killed the son of a tenant farmer simply because, a few days before, he had accused the Fascists of scaring his chickens as they passed through his courtyard in a truck.[75] A few months before that, a small group of Bolognese Fascists amused themselves by shooting their revolvers in the air in front of a farmer's house. After exhausting every form of verbal protest, the farmer went outside and chased the "young thugs" with a club and threw rocks at them. The Fascists managed to get away but returned promptly that afternoon; as soon as the farmer came to the door, they shot and killed him. In another instance, again near Bologna, a local restaurant owner refused to serve *tagliatelle* to a group of very hungry Fascists since it was already quite late;

that was enough for them to beat her up.[76] Other times, the violence was even more vicious and gratuitous. Sandro Carosi of Pisa became infamous because he was given to "demonstrating his sharpshooting skills" by firing "his pistol at the hats people wore atop their heads"; during one of these "demonstrations of skill," in October 1923, he killed the farmer Pietro Pardi.[77]

Even though such actions seem banal, the motives behind them pointless, and their effects counterproductive, the political effect they produced was tremendously important, in that it profoundly influenced the local state of affairs, making Fascist violence seem much more efficacious than arbitrary. Even when it seemed gratuitous at first glance, violence never failed to have a political impact since it was aimed not only at neutralizing the enemy but also at instilling fear, resignation, and despondency. One of the best ways to maximize this effect was to strike at random. This violence was therefore rampant—almost endemic—and ingrained in everyday life: no one could feel safe from it because everyone was subjected to it, regardless of fault. It was an arbitrary form of violence, but, precisely for that reason, also a very effective one.

Particularly in the early days, even the mere presence of the *squadristi* was enough to instill fear: according to one s*quadrista*, "you walked into a café and someone would say hi to you out of fear, and others would pretend not to notice you. As soon as you left everyone would say the rosary."[78] A police functionary affirmed that the sight of the "skulls" embroidered on the black shirts of the Fascists was enough to instill "a real sense of fear" and of "deep depression" among the Socialist farmers.[79] It is clear, on the other hand, that such symbols only provoked fear and anguish because they represented the experience, whether direct or mediated, of real, brutal violence.

Silence, aphasia, and widespread terror were the products of *squadrista* violence and led to a growing acquiescence on behalf of adversaries. With its spectacular qualities, its ubiquity and randomness, and the impunity enjoyed by its proponents, it served as a powerful instrument of terror.[80] Such practices remained well-rooted not only in the minds of anti-Fascists and even common people but also of their perpetrators and had enduring effects. Although the issue is surely broad and complex, such long-lasting continuity should be taken into account to fully understand the rise of the repressive apparatus of the regime after 1926.[81] Moreover, the familiarity with torture and terror campaigns displayed by Fascists—among whom "old *squadristi*" were fairly numerous—in the last and more brutal phase

of Fascism (1943–1945) would not be comprehensible without considering its genesis more than 20 years before.[82]

Two Sides of the Same Violent Coin: Cruel Jokes and Suicide

What rendered *squadrista* brutality even more unsettling was the cheerfulness displayed by the Blackshirts. Punitive missions had an undeniable social, recreational, and even playful component, which played a fundamental role in forging camaraderie and fostering a lifestyle.

Early on, missions would happen on Sundays: not only were students or workers who fought in the Fascio free from other commitments, but it was also the day when local populations would meet. This added to the propagandistic and intimidatory effects of the Fascists' missions since it often involved the symbolic and physical occupation of traditional gathering places for workers and farmers, like taverns and piazzas.[83] The "liberation" of a village from Socialist "tyranny" could thus be presented as a cause for celebration so that political missions became occasions to eat, drink, and be merry with others.[84] And when the bill was too steep, the owner would be paid via "Fascist means."[85] The assault on Socialist cooperatives was not just an opportunity to destroy the enemy's organizational network but also to eat and drink on someone else's tab.[86] The *squadristi* also encountered company, forms of entertainment, and food that contrasted sharply with the refined and sophisticated customs of the bourgeoisie, whence some *squadristi*, like Mario Piazzesi, originally came.[87] According to some memoirs, these elements played a crucial role both in unifying the *squadre* and in demoralizing their adversaries. Emilio Papasogli recalled that *squadristi* would upset and scatter their enemies "more with the sarcastic self-assuredness resulting from their reckless nature, more with the songs and exuberance stemming from their youth, more with scornful smiles and enthusiasm than with shots from pistols and blows from clubs." What actually distressed the "subversives" was thus the "carefree and cocky air of the *squadristi*," which was contrasted—almost anthropologically—with the "subversive's menacing scowl."[88] This allure of the young *squadristi* was not a mere figment of propaganda if it was recognized and appreciated by the considerable portion of the population that sympathized with the Blackshirts. According to the anonymous author of the article "Long Live the Happiness of Fascism," "those young lads were happy. […] Hallowed is the happiness of the Fascists, since happiness means good physical and

moral health, and their march in rows of four means discipline. […] Those glowing faces, those mouths that sang as God would have wanted, were a delight: they expressed, like a glass of good wine, the joy of living." A happiness that, as was always pointed out, the Socialists certainly did not display during their parades.[89] It was, of course, not by chance that the cheerfulness of the Fascists went hand in hand with the sadness, the menacing gloominess, the grayness, and the pessimism with which their adversaries were described. In this way, the brutality reserved for these so-called subversives was not a contradiction of the *joie de vivre* displayed by the Fascists but rather a consequence of it: there was no mercy to be shown to those who refused to, or who were considered not worthy of, taking part in the joyous national community.[90]

At the same time, these forms of congeniality toward *squadrista* violence were also signs of its implicit legitimation. It is within this context of cockiness and self-assuredness that the adoption of the prank as a violent practice, aimed first and foremost at ridiculing and humiliating the adversary but also at fostering a complicity and a devious sense of pleasure in the spectator, must be situated. It can be understood in part within a series of customary activities, which also included cruel jokes carried out in taverns or in barracks. This is also the framework within which the use of the *manganello* (truncheon or billy club) can be understood. A weapon for pranks, the *manganello* in the *squadrista* tradition had a pedagogical function: "given the relative inoffensiveness of this weapon," wrote psychologist Giulio Cesare Ferrari, "bludgeonings, for as serious and common as they were, did not really shock the Authorities, nor the public, but they were extremely disheartening for anyone who thought they might become a victim of them."[91] And not by chance, in Fascist propaganda, the nightstick was defined as "a silent and intelligent weapon."[92] On the other hand, the Fascists themselves knew that when "the fight became a bitter battle" the "clubs" would give way to "pistols, bombs, and rifles": when the enemy could not be convinced, he had to be eliminated.[93] The beatings were actually anything but gentle, and their effects, even if not immediately lethal, were often lasting and could lead to the death of the victim months or years later. When a beating victim died, moreover, it was never the fault of the Fascists but—via an inversion as paradoxical as it is macabre—the fault of the victim himself. This was the case for the union leader Attilio Boldori, who died after having been beaten by the *squadristi* of Cremona. According to the Fascists, his death was due "to the frailty of his skull, with which he was born."[94] The exaltation of the nightstick and

of its "pedagogical" effects contributed in no small way to the significant underestimation—one that lasts to this day—of the brutality of *squadrista* violence.

Another classic example of a Fascist "game"—relatively uncommon until 1922—involved forcing the enemy to swallow large quantities of castor oil. Mario Piazzesi recounted that during one mission a few Socialists were forced by the *squadristi* to play cards, with a bottle of castor oil on the line, to the great entertainment of those watching.[95] Gulping down castor oil became a purification ritual in which the Socialist leaders freed themselves of their deranged ideas: purging the body to purge the mind. But such practices prevented the victim from becoming a martyr or setting an example, for which humiliation and obliteration had to be absolute. It was precisely the "non-lethal and almost carefree nature of such violence" to which the Fascists pointed to induce the laughter, and the implicit complicity, of judges, police officers, and common sympathizers.[96] This "carefree" and ritualized quality often led to the significant underestimation of the cruel nature and magnitude of the violence—physical and psychological—that the administering of castor oil entailed. Even a measured legal journal like the *Rivista penale* did not fail, the day after the March, to highlight the "lasting service" provided by castor oil, which "without the spilling of any blood" replaced incapable officials in the "political suppression of socialism … criminal, wimpy, and cowardly, even at the sight of a … purgative."[97] In other cases, however, official institutions understood the level of intimidation and "moral violence" underlying the administering of castor oil. Two months after the March on Rome, three *squadristi* broke into the home of Antonio Bolzoni, manager of the food cooperative in Barate Gaggiano, in the province of Milan. The mere presence of the *squadristi* was enough to make Bolzoni drink a tankard of castor oil. This—according to the Fascists—would purge him of his political ideas, which had led him to insult Fascism and its leader, who had recently become Prime Minister. The defense of "Fascist honor," though, must be considered alongside other motives as well. One of the *squadristi* was, in fact, the son of the keeper of the inn in Barate Gaggiano, a competitor of Bolzoni's cooperative. In the atmosphere of victory and vendetta that characterized the months immediately following the March on Rome, the "fear" instilled by the "attitude" of the *squadristi* was enough to "paralyze" Bolzoni's "willpower" and "violate" his "individual freedom." According to the court of appeals called upon to hear the case, the Fascists had a "habit of submitting their adversaries to forced purges,

using violence in the case of opposition." Bolzoni must have been aware that he could not resist against the "menacing nature" of the three men, "young, unyielding, known for being fearless, who showed up at night in the house of a man living alone and of rather advanced years"; even before "physical violence"—the judges concluded—the case was one of "moral violence."[98] Therefore, even if some *squadrista* practices seemed to resemble traditional *charivari*-style rituals, they actually went far beyond a mere symbolic compensation.[99] The performative effects of violence were so potent, and the air of intimidation so ingrained, that the mere presence of the *squadristi* sufficed to push the victim to humiliate himself, with, however, a certain measure of disapproval of the Blackshirts, who were "disappointed" by his compliant behavior. A Fascist source even admitted, with regard to administering castor oil, that "when the taste for and the pleasure derived from the suffering of the enemy no longer has limits, the notion of a limit and of humanity grow dim."[100]

While many Fascists derived satisfaction from such displays of abuse and intimidation, *squadrista* violence had an even more disturbing—and certainly less well known—effect on its perpetrators. For some, the experience of violence was so totalizing, and the investment in it so unconditional, that it bore tragic consequences. In the years after the war—and especially between 1921 and 1928—official statistics show a noticeable uptick in the number of suicides compared to the period before the outbreak of global conflict. Suicide seems to have hit those age groups directly involved in the conflict and its aftermath the hardest.[101] This constitutes an important social phenomenon, which must be kept in mind when trying to understand the suicides of *squadristi*.[102] A *squadrista* who took his own life represented a taboo and an embarrassment for the entire movement. When the body of Pietro Marcolin was found in his home in Padua in August 1922, police and Fascist leaders immediately believed it to be an act of aggression by the "subversives," so much so that the Fascio of Padua publicly threatened an act of retaliation. Soon thereafter, however, they realized it had been a suicide, and Marcolin suddenly went from martyr to a mere casualty and would not be remembered in any of the Fascist records of heroic deaths.[103] Even while taking great care not to include cases of suicide in the official register of "Martyrs of the Revolution," these same Fascist sources often tried to present suicide as an extreme act of moral allegiance and the result of inner torments caused by the harshness of combat. In this way, responsibility for a suicide was frequently placed on the subversives. Upon the death of 16-year-old Ampellio Scurri, killed by

a bullet fired accidentally as he was unloading his pistol, the Fascist journalist Marcello Gallian alluded to the possibility of suicide: "even sixteen-year-olds can be tired" and "experience despair," "perhaps" as a result of "continued strife," of "rebellion against themselves," and of "the fear of succumbing to the attacks of enemies who prove to strong."[104] Other times, the blame was placed with the state bureaucracy, obtuse and unable to appreciate the patriotic struggle of the Fascists, as in the case with *carabiniere* Pinna, who "took part in missions against the Communists with us. Exposed and punished, caught in the struggle between Fascist faith and formal discipline, he took his life."[105] In both these cases, suicide thus became further proof of the necessity of the Fascist revolution.

The fact that *squadrista* suicides continued even after the March on Rome shows that the choice to embrace violence was inherently a tormented and intense one, demonstrating that "the sentimental and almost mystical passion for conscious sacrifice for the Fatherland" or the "cheerful bravado" of the *squadristi* constituted just one side of the coin.[106] There was perhaps a sense of guilt underlying the suicide of Aldo Giovannardi, a soldier in the Volunteer Militia for National Security, ex-*squadrista*, and decorated serviceman. Giovannardi's death came a few months after killing a farmer in cold blood who had started singing songs in support of the subversives and insulting the government.[107] Paradoxically, the realization of revolution and the subsequent demobilization of *squadrismo*, the progressively crumbling bonds of camaraderie, and the loss of the position at political center stage all had tragic consequences. Once their main objective had been reached, for many *squadristi* life no longer seemed to make sense. This was the case, for example, with Renato Grassetti, who committed suicide in November 1924: "death, which he had defied so many times in hundreds of dangerous endeavors and hundreds of ambushes," wrote one Fascist journalist, "armed the hand that he raised against himself. On a day, perhaps, when perhaps his existence no longer made sense to him. Because he had reached Ideal beauty."[108] It was also the case with Giulio Grimaldi of Florence, who killed himself in 1927 after having been expelled from the Fascio because he had been involved in the uprisings of October 1925.[109] Some cases of dedication to the cause had extreme consequences, like that of Francesco Baldi. Born to a wealthy Tuscan family of agrarians, Baldi was a first lieutenant during the war and later an active and violent *squadrista* as his criminal record testifies.[110] If *squadrismo* formed the basis of Baldi's success, however, it would also, paradoxically, prove to be the ultimate reason for his ruin. An unusual character—both a financier

and a perpetrator of violence—Baldi's career and personal prestige were inextricably tied to the success of Fascism. After the March on Rome, he was placed in charge of the 95th Legion of the Voluntary Militia and carried out important duties for the provincial federation of the National Fascist Party in Florence. His dedication to Fascism was absolute, to the point that he squandered the better part of his personal and family assets bankrolling first *squadrista* missions and then political and economic activities linked to Fascism, always with the goal of preventing "the good name of Fascism" from being undermined (though in actuality, he also used a part of his estate to pay and support his lover).[111] On 23 March 1931, the unstable financier met his tragic end. At 8:45 AM, Baldi, dressed in his pristine uniform as consul general of the Militia, discharged a bullet from his pistol into his right ear. Suicide remains, of course, a private act that is very difficult to analyze from a historical point of view. An analysis of historical, cultural, and political contexts, however, alongside biographical details, can allow for some light to be shed on certain cases of suicide, particularly within political regimes in which factors like conformism and ideological consistency play a key role.[112] In a certain sense, this case can be considered a consequence of the reconfiguration of the boundaries between public and private that *squadrismo* had brought about. Émile Durkheim famously defined anomic suicide as a result of the complete distortion of values and norms that produces an intolerable inconsistency between public life and personal psychic balance.[113] In the case of Baldi, one can speculate at least in part that *squadrista* militancy and a life lived under the aegis of Fascism ended up setting a trap for him. The pressures exerted by conformism and the need to defend an image of Fascism that converged dreadfully with his personal reputation led to a continuous raising of the stakes that proved to have no way out, especially in a cultural and political context that subordinated the individual and his personal freedom to the exigencies of the Fascist and Catholic state.[114] Not by chance, then, the Fascist authorities, and even Mussolini himself, immediately hushed up the true circumstances of Baldi's death, and his name was never recorded in official Fascist publications.

If, for many *squadristi*, militancy and the experience of group violence represented a social opportunity, vital to constructing collective and individual identities, for others they turned out to be traumatic. For as difficult—and perhaps conjectural—as it is to retrace the true circumstances and motivations that lie beneath indeterminate personal choices, paying close attention to the phenomenon of suicides among *squadristi* can help

to better contextualize—as much as elements like Fascist exuberance or the apparent naturalness with which banal and brutal acts of violence were carried out—the explosiveness and the profound social and psychological damage caused by violence in post–World War I Italy.

Fears and Anxieties

The practice of violence turned out to be momentous not only for its victims but also for its perpetrators, and its effects were often numerous and contradictory. It is thus perhaps advisable to shift perspectives and to examine not only the fear originating from *squadrista* violence but also the violence itself as originating in and fueled by fear. This does not mean, of course, addressing the complex and boundless issue of the origins and causes of Fascism. But behind the decision to join the *squadre* or to legitimate their violence were deep-seated fears and anxieties, which are deserving of consideration.[115] Some fears were more recent, like that of losing something recently acquired, from a plot of land to an honor earned during the war, or the fear of being excluded from the course of important events. *Squadrismo* created an extraordinary social opportunity for many men who had up until that point been relegated to the margins of society or for young men in search of a purpose for their lives in a time of profound political upheaval. As I have tried to demonstrate, *squadrista* violence shouldered a variety of motivations at a powerful crossroads between the public and the private. Addressing some of the expectations and actions—as individual and psychological as they were collective and political—of the perpetrators of this violence is also important for understanding subsequent developments within Fascism.

For large segments of Italian society, *squadrismo* also provided the opportunity to resolve profound anxieties and to reestablish orders and hierarchies thrown into crisis by the rise of Socialism and expanding democratization. The overload of physical and psychological violence that characterized the activities of the *squadristi*, as well as to some degree those of the so-called subversives, seems to have originated in deeply rooted conflicts and fears.[116] What emerged was an "excessive" kind of violence, one that went beyond the aims of the conflict and that often incubated in times of peace and surfaced and multiplied under particularly favorable conditions. To explode, grow, and legitimate itself, then, *squadrista* violence needed more than just a lit fuse: it had to graft itself onto political culture, language, memories, and deeply rooted experiences

that would then render it possible, conjure it up, and legitimate it.[117] In the years after World War I, a "coming-together of interests and solidarity among the landowning classes" in both urban and rural areas was realized and also witnessed among intellectuals, small business owners, and workers in the middle classes, all of this within a heavily anti-Socialist framework. These convergences contributed to creating a social landscape particularly opportune for the large-scale development of Fascism.[118] If Fascism was able to become a mass movement, it was in part because it knew how to respond—even if it was through the violence of *squadrismo*—to widespread fears, anxieties, and expectations that the war and the process of democratization had accentuated; it provided satisfying answers to the fears, as well as to the aspirations, of the bourgeoisie. In a certain sense, *squadrismo* knew how to drag "the bourgeoisie towards an enormous collective exorcism"; it was not, therefore, just a "savage attack on the systems organized by the proletariat" but also an "impetuous act of revenge carried out by the ruling classes," who for at least 20 years had seen their role in the foreground fade in the face of collective life and its ritualistic nature.[119] Through the radicalization of political and social conflict, *squadrismo* served as a kind of political and symbolic ritual, aimed at reinstating—even if in different forms—social order. These widely popular hopes and expectations, which not only involved active participants in Fascism but also embraced much broader swaths of society, created a climate of "license," an early and vital nucleus of support for Fascism and of legitimization for its explicit, showy, heroized use of violence.[120] On the one hand, this convergence of views prevented many groups within the ruling classes, as well as within the bourgeoisie, from recognizing the seditious motives of Fascism and its eventual plan to take control of the state. On the other hand, without such support, we would be unable to explain the expansion and significant legitimization that Fascism enjoyed as it was seizing power.

In many ways, *squadrismo* represented a response to a largely artificial democratization. In this framework, the suppression that the *squadre* never faced from law enforcement agencies, the seditious plans within the entire state and governmental apparatus, the support for and tolerance of the "holy rogue" by large parts of the ruling classes and Italian society, and the disregard for liberal and democratic institutions were not the direct causes of the rise of Fascism but were rather the product of a widely popular authoritarian culture onto which Fascism was able to graft itself.[121] At the same time, Fascism—and its use of political violence—constituted a new

and disturbing phenomenon. The effectiveness and the specific features of *squadrista* violence played a decisive role in allowing the possibility for such forms of support—or at least of acceptance and resignation—to emerge and grow. In this summary of relatively new fears and deep-rooted anxieties, of favorable conditions and the explosiveness of violence, of expectations and new forms of sociality, it is possible to trace the origins of the legitimizing core of *squadrista* violence and the widespread support for it and at the same time to understand the paradoxical "normality" of its perpetrators.

Notes

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2. Reports from Prefect Serra Caracciolo, 21 and 30 August 1922, Archivio centrale dello Stato, Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale di PS, Divisione affari generali e riservati, categorie annuali (herefter ACS, PS), 1922, 141, 34. See also Piva, *Lotte contadine*, 163, 92.
3. "Importante riunione agraria," *La Provincia di Padova*, 20–21 March 1921; "Le spedizioni agrarie di lavoro e di difesa nel Padovano," *La Provincia di Padova*, 1–2 March 1921; "Una grandissima impresa di collaborazione di lavoro di agrari," *La Provincia di Padova*, 5–6 March 1921.
4. Abram de Swaan, *The Killing Compartments: The Mentality of Mass Murder* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 64.
5. Alf Lüdtke, "Introduction: What Is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are Its Practitioners?" in *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. Alf Lüdtke, trans. William Templer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 4–5, 21. See also Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (London, 1975), 185–6; Paul Steege et al., "The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter," *Journal of Modern History* 80, no. 2 (2008): 363–8. On the *squadrista* habitus, see Sven Reichardt, "Fascismo e teoria delle pratiche sociali. Violenza e comunità come elementi di un concetto praxeologico di fascismo," *Storiografia* 12 (2008): 176–7; Pierre Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1980), Chaps. 3 and 5.

6. Lüdtke, "Introduction," 13. See for example Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Two Faces of Anastasia: Narratives and Counter-Narratives of Identity in Stalinist Everyday Life," in *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside*, eds Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 23–34; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times—Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Alf Lüdtke, "The 'Honor of Labor': Industrial Workers and the Power of Symbols under National Socialism," in *Nazism and German Society, 1933–1945*, ed. David F. Crew (New York: Routledge, 1994), 67–109.
7. Steege et al., "The History of Everyday Life," 368. Although Christopher Browning adopts different methodology and reaches different conclusions, see also Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998).
8. On the complexities of post–World War I Italy, see Roberto Vivarelli, *Storia delle origini del fascismo. L'Italia dalla grande guerra alla marcia su Roma*, 2 vols (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1991); Emilio Gentile, *Storia del Partito Fascista 1919–1922. Movimento e milizia* (Rome: Laterza, 1989); Fabio Fabbri, *Le origini della guerra civile. L'Italia dalla guerra al fascismo (1918–1921)* (Turin: UTET, 2008).
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10. Roberta Suzzi Valli, "The Myth of Squadrismo in the Fascist Regime," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 2 (2000): 135; Sven Reichardt, *Camicie nere, camicie brune: milizie fasciste in Italia e in Germania* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009), 204–7. See also Alberto Cappa, *Le generazioni nel fascismo* (Turin: P. Gobeti, 1924).
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15. Gaetano Salvemini, *Le origini del fascismo in Italia: Lezioni di Harvard* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1966), 132.
16. Mario Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano: 1919–1922* (Rome: Bonacci, 1981), 78. See also Alberto Mario Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento: parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000).

17. Guido Fracastoro di Fornello, *Noi squadristi* (Verona: Albarelli-Marchesetti, 1939), 96.
18. Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano*, 78.
19. Fracastoro di Fornello, *Noi squadristi*, 146.
20. Reichardt, *Camicie nere, camicie brune*, Chaps. 3–4, 267–8. Emilio Papasogli, *Fascismo* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1923), 109; Bruno Frullini, *Squadrismo fiorentino* (Florence: Selecta, 1933), 70 and 162.
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22. Emilio Gentile, *Storia del Partito fascista*, 525.
23. Roberto Cantagalli, *Storia del Fascismo fiorentino 1919–1925* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1972), 61; Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano*, 77 and 107–8.
24. Piero Girace, *Diario di uno squadrista* (Naples: Rispoli, 1941), 33–4.
25. Letters from Nicola Panicali to Umberto Pasella, 19 June 1920; from Pasella to Nicola Panicali, 22 June 1920; from Nicola Panicali to Pasella, 26 June 1920; from Mario Panicali to Pasella (no date); and from Pasella to Mario Panicali, 22 June 1920, all in *Archivio Centrale dello Stato*, *Archivi Fascisti*, *Mostra della Rivoluzione fascista*, *Carteggio col. Comitato Centrale* (hereafter ACS, MRF), 28, 188.
26. R. Brizzi, "Sostanze differenti," *Giovinezza*, 19 March 1921, quoted in Paolo Nello, *L'avanguardismo giovanile alle origini del fascismo* (Rome: Laterza, 1978), 168.
27. Emilio Gentile, *Le origini dell'ideologia fascista (1918–1925)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), 186; Reichardt, *Camicie nere, camicie brune*, 226; Nello, *L'avanguardismo giovanile*; Luca La Rovere, *Storia dei Guf: organizzazione, politica e miti della gioventù universitaria fascista, 1919–1943* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003).
28. Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano*, 248–9.
29. Fracastoro di Fornello, *Noi squadristi*, 12.
30. Roberta Suzzi Valli, "The Myth of Squadrism in the Fascist Regime," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 2 (2000): 138.
31. Report from the prefect of Padua to Ministry of Interior, 10 July 1922, ACS, PS 1922, 141; Secret reports from the Political Police, 27 March 1931, 11 August 1932, and 31 October 1934, *Archivio Centrale dello Stato*, *Ministero dell'Interno*, *Direzione generale di PS*, *Divisione Polizia Politica*, Personal files (hereafter ACS, POL.POL.), 536. See also Giorgio Alberto Chiurco, *Storia della rivoluzione fascista* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1929), 4, 169–70; Mario Passuello and Nevio Furegon, *Le origini del fascismo a Vicenza e le lotte sociali fra il 1919 e il 1922* (Vicenza: N. Pozza, 1981), 121–32.

32. Matteo Millan, *Squadrismo e squadristi nella dittatura fascista* (Rome: Viella, 2014), 65–72.
33. Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano*, 130.
34. Ibid., 85.
35. Adrian Lyttelton, *La conquista del potere: il fascismo dal 1919 al 1929* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1974), 116; Ferdinando Cordova, *Arditi e legionari dannunziani* (Padua: Marsilio, 1969), 11.
36. Gentile, *Le origini dell'ideologia fascista*, 7; Marco Palla, "I fascisti Toscani," in *Storia d'Italia. Le regioni dall'Unità a oggi. La Toscana*, vol. 4, ed. Giorgio Mori (Torino: Einaudi, 1986), 473; Mario Isnenghi, *L'Italia in piazza: i luoghi della vita pubblica dal 1848 ai giorni nostri* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1994), 271. See also, Gerwarth, "The Central European Counter-Revolution," 192.
37. Papasogli, *Fascismo*, 100; Camillo Pellizzi, *Problemi e realtà del fascismo* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1924), 80 and 101; Bruno Spampanato, *Idee e baionette* (Naples: A. Morano, 1932), 493–4.
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39. Report from the *carabinieri*, 4 December 1927; report from the medical committee, 31 October 1927; and letter from De Feo to Mussolini, 6 January1928, *Archivio Centrale dello Stato*, *Direzione generale di Pubblica Sicurezza*, *Divisione Affari generali e riservati*, *Ufficio confino di polizia*, Personal Files (hereafter ACS, UCP), 324.
40. Report from the General Inspector Giuseppe Console, ACS, *Ministero dell'Interno*, *Direzione generale di Ps*, *Divisione personale di Ps*, *Affari Generali*, *Inchieste e Ispezioni*, *166 bis* (*versamento* 1963).
41. Reports from the prefect of Pisa to the Ministry of Interior, 7 August 1923 and 14 October 1923, ACS, PS 1924, 82.
42. Peter H. Merkl, *Political Violence and Terror: Motifs and Motivations* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1986), 49; Reichardt, *Camicie nere, camicie brune*, 397.
43. Gerwarth, "The Central European Counter-Revolution."
44. Virgilio Fiorentino, *Renato Ricci* (Rome: Casa editrice Pinciana, 1928), 11. See also Reichardt, *Camicie nere, camicie brune*, 363–90; Lorenzo Benadusi, *Il nemico dell'uomo nuovo: l'omosessualità nell'esperimento totalitario fascista* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2005), 30–4; Lorenzo Benadusi, "Borghesi in Uniform: Masculinity, Militarism, and the Brutalization of Politics from World War I to the Rise of Fascism," in *In the Society of Fascists Acclamation, Acquiescence, and Agency in Mussolini's Italy*, eds Giulia Albanese and Roberta Pergher (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

45. Chiurco, *Storia della rivoluzione fascista*, 5 and 489.
46. Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano*, 107–36.
47. Reichardt, *Camicie nere, camicie brune*, 226; see also Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano*, 64.
48. Letter from Ezio Lascialfare to the Central Committee, 29 June 1920, ACS, MRF, 29, 188.
49. Letter from Rino Ranieri to Umberto Pasella, 3 July 1921, ACS, MRF, 24, 64.
50. Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano*, 77.
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52. Luigi Freddi, "Sintesi," *Il Fascio*, 20 November 1920, quoted in Gentile, *Storia del Partito fascista*, 497–8.
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54. Dante Maria Tuninetti, *Squadrismo squadristi piemontesi* (Rome: Pinciana, 1942), 68.
55. Bettina E. Schmidt and Ingo Schröder, eds, *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
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58. Speech by Giacomo Matteotti, 10 March 1912, in Giacomo Matteotti, *Discorsi parlamentari di Giacomo Matteotti*, vol. 1, (Rome: Stabilimenti tipografici Carlo Colombo, 1970).
59. Marletti, "Immagini pubbliche e ideologia del terrorismo," 187.
60. Report from the prefect of Pisa to Ministry of Interior, 22 August 1922, ACS, PS 1922, 102.
61. Report from the Deputy Commissioner Terranova to prefect, 12 August 1921, Archivio di Stato di Bologna, Gabinetto di prefettura (hereafter ASBo), 1345. See also Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano*, 126.
62. Marco Mondini, *La politica delle armi: il ruolo dell'esercito nell'avvento del fascismo* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2006).
63. Anonymous letter to the prefect of Bologna, 8 June 1922, ACS, PS 1922, 113.
64. Anonymous letter to the prefect of Padua, 1 September 1922; and telegram from the prefect of Padua to Ministry of Interior, 3 September 1922, ACS, PS 1922, 141; see also Giulia Albanese, "Il coraggio e la paura. Emozioni e violenza politica nell'Italia del primo dopoguerra," in *Politica ed emozioni nella storia d'Italia dal 1848 ad oggi*, eds Penelope Morris, Francesco Ricatti, and Mark Seymour (Rome: Viella, 2012).

65. Telegram from General Inspector Paolella, 28 July 1921, quoted in Mimmo Franzinelli, *Squadristi: protagonisti e tecniche della violenza fascista, 1919–1922* (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), 130.
66. Report from the *carabinieri*, 20 April 1921, ASBo, 1345.
67. Report from the *carabinieri*, 6 October 1921; and report of Bologna chief of police to prefect, 6 October 1921, ASBo, 1345.
68. Swaan, *The Killing Compartments*, 64–5.
69. Libertario Guerrini, "La provocazione fascista per giustificare la repressione del movimento operaio e la repressione titolo preminente e permanente del carrierismo," in *La Toscana nel regime fascista (1922–1939)*, eds Andrea Binazzi and Ivo Guasti (Florence: Olschki, 1971).
70. Telegram to the prefect of Bologna, 12 August 1921, ASBo, 1345.
71. Lyttelton, *La conquista del potere, cit.*, 90; Isnenghi, *L'Italia in piazza*, 297.
72. R. J. B. Bosworth, "Everyday Mussolinism: Friends, Family, Locality and Violence in Fascist Italy," *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 1 (2005): 23–43.
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75. Telegram from the prefect of Bologna to Ministry of Interior, 8 August 1922, ACS, PS 1922, 115.
76. Verdict of the appeal court and report from the prefect of Bologna, 16 February 1922, *Archivio di Stato di Bologna*, *Fondo Corte d'Appello*, *Atti penali*, 125. See also Marco Fincardi, "I riti della conquista," *Contributi: rivista semestrale della Biblioteca A. Panizzi Reggio Emilia* 11, no. 21–2 (1988): 45–6.
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78. Giuseppe Maria D'Alicandro, *Lo squadrista* (Milan: Tip. Goffredo Veronesi, 1931), 47.
79. General Inspector Di Tarsia to Ministry of Interior, 15 July 1922, *Archivio Centrale dello Stato*, *Direzione generale di pubblica sicurezza*, *Divisione affari generali e riservati*, *Atti speciali* 1898–1940, 3.
80. Marletti, "Immagini pubbliche e ideologia del terrorismo."
81. On the long-lasting memory of suffered violence and its importance in fueling revenge during the civil war (1943–1945), see, for example, Luisa Passerini, *Torino operaia e fascismo: una storia orale* (Roma and Bari:

Laterza, 1984), 114–5; Santo Peli, *Storie di Gap: terrorismo urbano e Resistenza* (Turin: Einaudi, 2014), 192–5. On the continuity between the phase of the origins and the development of an omnipresent repressive system, see Mauro Canali, *Il delitto Matteotti: affarismo e politica nel primo governo Mussolini* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997), 354–5; Mariuccia Salvati, "La fascistizzazione del sistema giudiziario. Il caso Zamboni," *Italia Contemporanea*, 225 (2001): 680; Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Matteo Millan, "The Institutionalisation of Squadrismo: Disciplining Paramilitary Violence in the Italian Fascist Dictatorship," *Contemporary European History* 22, no. 4 (2013): 551–73; Millan, *Squadrismo e squadristi*.

82. Cf. Peli, *Storie di Gap*, 215, who seems to underestimate this aspect.
83. Fincardi, "I riti della conquista."
84. Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano*, 155.
85. Papasogli, *Fascismo*, 108–9.
86. Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano*, 125.
87. Ibid., 165.
88. Papasogli, *Fascismo*, 114.
89. "Evviva l'allegria fascista," *La Provincia di Padova*, 26–27 April 1921.
90. See Mark Steinberg, "Emotions History in Eastern Europe," in *Doing Emotions History*, eds Peter N. Stearns and Susan J. Matt (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 83.
91. Giulio Cesare Ferrari, "La psicologia della Rivoluzione fascista," *Rivista di psicologia* 18, no. 1 (1922): 154.
92. Fracastoro di Fornello, *Noi squadristi*, 39–40.
93. Giorgio Pini, Giulio Giacchero, and Federico Bresadola, *Storia del fascismo: guerra rivoluzione impero* (Rome: Unione editoriale d'Italia, 1940), 179.
94. Angelo Tasca, *Nascita e avvento del fascismo: l'Italia dal 1918 al 1922* (Bari: Laterza, 1967), 263.
95. Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano*, 219. See also Passerini, *Torino operaia e fascismo*, 113–5.
96. Passerini, *Torino operaia e fascismo*, 116. On the memory of *squadrista* violence, especially with regard to castor oil, see Joshua Arthurs' chapter in the present volume.
97. Verdict of the appeal court of Milan, quoted in *Rivista penale*, 98, second semester 1923, 264–5.
98. Ibid., 264–5.
99. See Edward Palmer Thompson, "Rough Music Reconsidered," *Folklore* 103, no. 1 (1992); Ilaria Favretto, "Rough Music and Factory Protest in Post-1945 Italy," *Past & Present* 228, no. 1 (2015).

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101. Adrian Lyttelton, "Fascismo e violenza: conflitto sociale e azione politica in Italia nel primo dopoguerra," *Storia contemporanea* 6 (1982): 972.
102. Istituto centrale di statistica, *Cause di morte 1887–1955* (Rome: ISTAT 1958), 156–7.
103. Report from the prefect of Bologna to Ministry of Interior, 6 August 1922, ACS, PS 1922, 141. See also Giacomo Di Giacomo, *Panorami di realizzazioni del fascismo. I grandi scomparsi e i caduti della rivoluzione fascista,* vol. 2 (Rome: Casa editrice di Panorami di realizzazioni del fascismo, 1942); Manfredo De Simone, *Pagine eroiche della rivoluzione fascista: raccolta degli episodi piu drammatici di cinque anni di battaglie fasciste* (Milan: Casa editrice "Imperia" del Partito nazionale fascista, 1925); Tullio Pin, "Ricordi d'un vecchio fascista padovano. I martiri fascisti," *Padova. Rassegna mensile del comune* 12, no. 3 (1939), 10–3.
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110. Report from *carabinieri*, 13 October 1927, ACS, SPD, CO 98.261.
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113. Émile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1952 [1897]), 219; see also Goeschel, *Suicide in Nazi Germany*, 94 and 170.
114. See, for example, N. Molinini, *Il suicidio e il duello nella concezione fascista* (Corato: Edizione "La Disfida," 1934).
115. Joanna Bourke, "Fear and Anxiety: Writing about Emotion in Modern History," *History Workshop Journal* 55, no. 1 (2003): 111–33; Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London: Virago Press, 2005), 190–1.
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118. Gentile, *Storia del Partito fascista*, 86.
119. Fincardi, "I riti della conquista," 12.
120. Aristotle Kallis, "'License' and Genocide: From the Chimera of Rebirth to the Authorization of Mass Murder," in *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism. Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Antonio Costa Pinto (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
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CHAPTER 3

Masculinity

Lorenzo Benadusi

The statues in the Stadio dei Marmi in Rome's Foro Italico furnish an example of the image of the ideal Fascist man. With their "virile and chaste nudity" they were meant to create such a visual effect as to condition the young athletes of the Farnesina and to promote their acquisition of a masculine identity.[1] According to Marcello Piacentini, the new architectural complex was endowed with "the features of eternal Rome" and offered "a picture of Hellenic beauty," while Mario Pancioni saw the Foro as "almost like an anthem to Fascism, a solemn celebration of eternal Italic youth and vigor, which this youth has regimented, organized, and revived, to steer it toward its most elevated, inevitable destiny."[2] The 60 statues, which came from all of Italy's provinces, were "spectacles of virile—and at the same time grandiose—beauty" that provoked "solemn and heroic thoughts."[3] The fascination of Fascism was based in part on this image of the young and virile man, an image that was idealized but so attractive precisely because of that idealization.[4] However, this bodily representation of the ideal Fascist man scarcely corresponded to the actual physical build of Italians: these Herculean marble sculptures were greatly different from

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many Fascists, who were scrawny, short, and little accustomed to sport. Sironi emphasized how unrealistic the artistic representation of the male body had always been: "Michelangelo's David, at which, it seems, stones were thrown in his day, is so polished and gigantic as to be an extravagance, Cellini's Perseus, with his biceps inflated like tires and with so much bronze-work spread across his body … is abnormal, excessive, unusual, strange."[5] The Fascist representation of a male youth, marching in uniform, acted as a counterpart to this other Italian, who was tired, weak, and emaciated from poverty and hard work. Even among the images at the Istituto Luce one finds many more traces of farmers and members of the petite bourgeoisie than the new strong and virile man promoted by Fascism. And even documentaries of the day continued "to show a pacific and industrious Italy, peace-loving, bourgeois, without conflicts or irrational outbursts"[6]: an Italy, in short, that was more prosaic and rural than heroic and martial.

The relationship between masculinity and Fascism seems obvious at first glance. The regime rendered this link self-evident, conveying an image of itself centered on virile ardor and the martial force of men in black shirts. Owing above all to the development of gender studies and men's studies, the relationship between masculinity and Fascism recently has become an object of historiographical analysis. Nevertheless, contemporary historiographical scholarship on Fascism and questions of gender has added little to our understanding of the characteristics of the martial, virile Fascist male, often embellishing, with rhetoric and too much psychoanalysis, an existing and well-known description. In particular, some Anglo-Saxon scholars have overly embraced a cultural approach that is too attentive to language and representations.[7] These studies have paid particular attention to the literary and artistic production of intellectuals and have often read the provocations of the avant-garde movements too literally, imagining Fascist masculinity as a sort of incarnation of the super male theorized by F. T. Marinetti: seducer, rapist, and untiring lover.[8]

Scholars thus often end up describing the ideal of masculinity rather than its real expression, more the fantasies than actual realizations. Virility tends to seem a discursive and symbolic invention, devoid of any link with actual male self-perception. The concept of hegemonic masculinity—developed, using a definition of hegemony in the Gramscian tradition, by the Australian sociologist Robert Connell—or rather a connotation of man that is hyper-virile, traditional, misogynist, homophobic, and aggressive, that stigmatizes any different form of self-expression, refers to an ideal type that is valid more as an ideal model than as a realistic example.[9]

Such an approach also overemphasizes the aspects of continuity linked to gender identity. The problem is not due so much to the use of the *longue durée* as an instrument of analysis. Instead, the concept of virility—interpreted simply as honor, courage, violence, and sacrifice in defense of the homeland and the family—is abstracted from individual historical contexts, tending to appear the same in every geographical setting, unchanged over time. This happens, for example, in Alberto Mario Banti's studies on gender in the canon of the Risorgimento, in which the virile ideal passes unchanged in a continuous thread from the French Revolution to the Risorgimento, from the Great War to Fascism.[10] The risk of this approach is not being able to grasp the particularities of single moments and privileging continuity over breaks and permanence over change. This risk is also present in studies that are more attentive to the psychological dynamics inherent to masculinity; I am referring in particular to research on the mass psychology of Fascism, which considered Fascism to be the result of the authoritarian and reactionary psychology expressed by a bourgeois, sexually repressed male. I am thinking, for example, of the works of Theweleit and Littell on the male fantasies of the *Freikorps* or of German soldiers deployed in the Russian campaign. In these studies, Fascism is born from the need of the male soldier to equip himself with a body that he has transformed into muscular armor, into a kind of cuirass to defend himself from every possible external contamination.[11] In short, Fascism was born from the attempt to give order to a disordered world, where impulses and emotions risk calling into question traditional masculinity. Here again fantasies and desires are prevalent, while, in my opinion, moving beyond this discourse and focusing on behaviors and identities can better help us to advance our historical understanding of the relationship between Fascism and masculinity.

War, Postwar, and *Squadrismo*

Demonstrating virility meant above all being ready to fight for the homeland, donning the uniform to distinguish oneself even at the cost of one's own life. The Great War has been analyzed in light of these aspects and was viewed as a conflict that tested the virility of youths eager to become real men. The effects of life in the trenches and of direct contact with death remain, however, more ambiguous than they appear at first sight. On closer view, "hegemonic masculinity" emerges from the war both reinforced in its aggressive elements and weakened by the danger of moving

toward a gradual emasculation and dangerous depletion of prewar martial heroism.[12] The view of the First World War, upheld by historiography, as stimulating and fortifying stereotypical male attributes and reinforcing the nexus between masculinity and militarism, does not, however, take into account how the war experience caused soldiers to perceive their own diminished virility and the fragility of their bodies. In some cases, it was the harshness of life at the front that softened the virile traits of the combatants, as Piero Calamandrei confided to his girlfriend:

> They say that war renders one, physically and morally, more masculinely crude and insensitive: I find in myself, however, at least as far as morale is concerned, that each day of this absurd life that passes my soul becomes more and more open, almost femininely, to every incitement toward softening.[13]

First to be challenged was the distinction of gender roles, as demonstrated emblematically by the instance of artillery Sergeant Ottone Costantini and war pen pal (*madrina di guerra*) Sandra Andenna, two lovers who married at the end of the conflict. Their relationship began with all the rituals of bourgeois respectability: first, they had to overcome the difficulty of informing their families of their relationship, a difficulty generated by an upbringing that, founded on strictness, coldness, and modesty, had "impeded emotional expression and thus reciprocal intimacy."[14] Further, they tried to conform themselves to established gender ideals: the woman who ennobles the man, preventing him from transforming into a brute "with an embittered soul," and the virile man who fights without complaining, and stifles his tears "because [they are] not very warlike."[15] Little by little both began to move toward an inversion of roles. Ottone, due directly to his relationship with Sandra, discovered with astonishment that he preferred domestic intimacy to war, as he explained to her:

> I once felt that I was destined to wander the earth toward the novel, the adventurous, the exciting, in feverish activity, in keeping with my aspirations. And today my inclinations have all changed! Two years of emotions and exhausting efforts, and a sweet voice coming from the marvelous Roman sky, have extracted the insanity from my heart, replacing callous restlessness with a strong feeling of desire and affection. Now I too am looking for my peaceful nest, hidden beneath a roof overlooked by everyone, like that of my little swallows, which I have left to their happy fate. I want joy, rest, and, above all, love. I want to drown in an ocean of love.[16]

Sandra's path, however, was the opposite, as she was overcome with patriotism and intoxicated by the heroism of her boyfriend, wanting to give up her peaceful life and dress like a man to take part in the conflict. At this point her womanhood was holding her back, and she confessed to feeling the weight of her "weak sex" that caused her to envy Ottone and all of his "bold companions."[17] After the defeat of Caporetto her desire to make herself useful to the *patria* was even stronger, and with a firm and decisive tone she wrote:

> I envy you, I envy you! … Don't talk to me about too much enthusiasm and recklessness or I will get very upset this time! … A few times I tried to study the way to become a little soldier … but there's too much indecency! … To be discovered and put in all the newspapers is a type of publicity I've always avoided![18]

With even more insistence she continued to make clear to her companion her refusal of that "troublesome quality of women who can't follow the path of duty and vengeance!"[19] This non-acceptance of her own womanhood, combined with an all-encompassing passion for the nation, annoyed her beloved artilleryman, who with this earnest letter tried to re-establish the "correct" division of gender roles, curbing his girlfriend's heroic passions:

> My dear little Sandra, wouldn't it seem more rational to you for a woman to passively accept her destiny … lightening our sacrifice with a little of that selfish, saintly love that is family affection? Isn't this more noble and holy than the other?! […] Why invert the order established by nature and by God at such an inconvenient time? If you only knew how lovely is that saintly woman, free of heroic sentimentality, who lends a tone of sadness to every sentence that mentions the slaughter of humanity! Nor have I heard many of these lovely phrases from you! Why, then, let yourself be led, because of a noble feeling of scorn, to forget, or at least, to misinterpret your very important mission, which is that of all women? Believe it! The example of the Spartan mothers (if they even existed!) isn't meant for our civilization.[20]

Antonio Gibelli correctly points out how in the private sphere of this romantic relationship are reflected "the dilemmas of an encounter-clash between genders which runs through the entire history of the war"; in fact, Ottone was forced to admit the "curbing of that virility" that the conflict should have enhanced instead:

> My dear little Sandra, to call it a torrent of sadness, a whirlwind of ill humor, would not be enough to fully describe my mood in this moment. […] I am experiencing the desolate isolation of a lost man, forgotten, indifferent to everyone. If I had to describe my feelings in symbols I would draw an infinite, oppressive series of perfect circles, decentered, and large and small, intersecting, where the eye is unable to find relief in a straight line, and the mind is forced to whirl around in a thousand turns. It is a tiresome turmoil, a physical depression.[21]

Ottone thus made a painful confession that clearly demonstrates the gradual deterioration of the soldier's martial image, with the resulting risk of beginning a process of feminization and infantilization.[22] The trauma of the war created anxieties and fears—all clear signs of weakness—and even a new way of experiencing emotions. These could include loss of self-control, cowardice, panic, and terror, which inevitably called into question the hyper-virile model of the officer grounded in stoicism and heroism. The wounded, maimed, and disabled took on even more clearly feminine traits: passivity, dependence on others (almost always women), vulnerability, feminine aptitudes and duties such as sewing, gardening, the weaving of wicker baskets, and regression into an infantile state, demonstrated by pleasure in holding a teddy bear or by employment in the production of toys. It was chiefly the loss of mobility, strength, and action, all essential traits for a soldier, which created a terrible shock and a problematic relationship with one's own gender identity.[23] The attempt to erase this image of impotence and insufficient virility—caused by the absence of the male traits of knowing how to work and to fight—began with the use of prostheses and cosmetic surgery, diminishing the disfiguring effects of wounds to the body or to the face, and above all with the glorification of heroic wounded figures. The first such figure to be celebrated in magazines and newspapers as "a champion of warlike virility" was Enrico Toti who, disabled in a work accident, managed to recover his status as a valiant fighting man at the front, brandishing his crutch against the enemy.[24]

Behind the rhetoric of the wounded soldier as a symbol for the wounded homeland in its rightful aspirations was concealed the often much sadder reality of the war-wounded. Resented by society, soldiers faced difficulties that society attempted to resolve through welfare and charity. War wounds also signaled a destabilized masculinity, since only rarely was a wound, like a virile tattoo, seen as a symbol of heroism; much more often it was seen as an irreversible disfigurement or mutilation. Disability suffered in war

could also affect emotional bonds, as is clear from the words of the writer Elio Bartolini: "Tobia was destined to become his son-in-law, had he not lost an arm on the Carso: and of this wounded man, even with a pension, my aunt Giulia, his lover, no longer wanted anything to do with him."[25]

The war seemed to have undermined the foundation of the archetype of virility, showing the fragility of its ideal expression: the male warrior. In the trenches, young men in the prime of their strength experienced exhaustion and physical deterioration, but above all they saw the principal masculine qualities put to the test: courage, sense of duty, self-control, and self-discipline. Thus it was no longer an age of heroes, since in the face of the total arbitrariness of death, almost any chance to present oneself as a valiant soldier vanished. In short, if success in combat no longer depended on individual merit, but rather on fortune or fate, then military virtues were no longer linked to virile ardor, but to the capacity to endure and to obey. Historians have begun therefore to focus on the emasculating effects of the conflict, considering the Great War as the moment of crisis of the "virile-military" nexus.[26] In the end, there were too many expectations placed upon men to be able to overcome the trials of war. The code of masculinity was so centered on courage and the capacity to fight that it provoked grave concerns about not being able to live up to it. Elaine Showalter has shown, for example, how shell shock represented a form of escape from this overly rigid model of virility.[27] Since men could not show themselves to be weak and vulnerable, then to express fear meant to refuse more or less consciously not only war but also the very idea of masculinity.

Even camaraderie had a double valence. On the one hand, it allowed soldiers to experience corporeality in a collective environment, reaffirming their own gender through rapport with others of the same sex; on the other hand, soldiers "created an imaginary universe where they could temporarily live with the idea of going outside the norms of masculinity, experimenting with 'feminine' emotions," without wanting to destroy traditional gender dichotomies.[28] From this perspective, it is significant that an institution like the army, completely centered on relationships among men, adopted the most repressive means when confronted with the erotic expressions of these relationships, supporting Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's thesis of the existence of an interdependence between "homosocial desire" and "homosexual panic."[29]

The last challenge to masculinity came from the transformation of gender roles, due to the greater freedom experienced by women in the absence of their husbands. The new female role came to be perceived by veterans

as a threat, and the greater public visibility of women, who were becoming more and more active, scared men, who were determined to defend their predominance at any cost.[30] The traumas caused by years spent at the front led to a need to reinforce traditional masculinity; because of this defensive reaction, "the fragility of men ended up paradoxically reinforcing the virile ideal."[31]

This aspiration toward an authoritative restoration of masculinity in an anti-modern key has been considered by historians as one cause of the rise and success of Fascism.[32] Using George L. Mosse's reflections on war as brutalization, Fascism has been understood as a movement intent on emphasizing the violent and hyper-virile traits of the soldiers in gray-green. Fascism, then, is interpreted here as a response to the crisis of masculinity, in order to maintain warlike conditions during peacetime and to militarize Italians with a view to new battles.[33]

With the birth of *squadrismo*, the organization of the Fascist militia-party was meant to create an armed phalanx based on the virile daring of young men, united by camaraderie and by a shared faith in an ideology.[34] The rites and symbols of the Blackshirts were based on myths of conquest and the glorification of regenerative violence. Through a warlike aesthetic, they were meant to imbue a hyper-virile temperament into the male body. From this perspective, the political juxtaposition with rivals took on an anthropological connotation, which made the body of the enemy the symbol of irreconcilable difference among contrasting types of humans (thin/fat; soldier/non-soldier; young/old; active/inactive; virile/effeminate; strong/weak; and healthy/sickly). Even the young Communists of the "Ordine Nuovo" opposed the old sterile and impotent reformism, hoping for the recruitment of a "mighty proletarian army," formed by a "mass as numerous as possible of well-built and developed men, […] balanced in harmonious development in all parts of their bodies."[35] After all, if it was a matter of civil war from both sides, it was necessary to have members capable of fighting it; but from this perspective Fascism could count on veterans and their younger brothers, determined to demonstrate that they were capable of bravely facing the enemy within. The whole universe of bravery, built on violence, fearlessness, hatred of the quiet life, and glorification of unbridled virility both martial and sexual, came together in the *fasci di combattimento*. Ferruccio Vecchi's *arditismo civile* was also "a true kind of sexual bravery," imbued with Futurism and D'Annunzianism, in which for men everything was permitted and everything was licit.[36]

The virile characteristics of *squadrismo*, its military camaraderie, its display of force, and its capacity to glorify the masculinity of its members have been closely analyzed by historians who have emphasized its total challenge to bourgeois respectability, which was based on self-control, temperance, and the preservation of good manners.[37] The young *squadristi* rejected not only the socialists but also all the "conformist petit bourgeois." Little by little, the *squadristi* felt the great distance that separated them from the "upright people" and even their own relatives.

> I realize that I am, or rather that we are, changing [wrote Mario Piazzesi in his diary]. We have become hard, rude, always irritated, with a colorful, but very popular style of speech. My mother thinks that we are hardening our spirits, we who talk of guns, who remember past conflicts, and who hope for new ones insistently, as if this were the only purpose of our lives.[38]

In their eyes, "bourgeois" was synonymous with cowardly, and the struggle against "anti-national" forces took on the contours of a no-holds-barred fight to assert one's virility at the expense of that of the enemy, who was forced to surrender because of his lack of it. In fact, in the account of Marcello Gallian, it was not men but women—the wives of the Communists—who thrashed the Fascist martyrs like beasts.

> Dragging him, they had almost stripped him, and the women had to tear him from the hands of the men. They all scratched him, tore out his hair, enjoying it as if he were their own rebellious son, from their own womb: then they grabbed him. "Not dead, no, but you must return to your mother disfigured," and, crazed, they began to squeeze where a man shows himself to a woman, when they are alone. Gustavo struggled, his eyes bulging—"Don't maim me, don't maim me, kill me instead." When they had covered him with hateful spit and scratches and bite marks, they abandoned him and he began to run, crying: he cried not because of the blows he had taken, but because they had disfigured him in that place that is the source of man's pride at being born different from woman: and so, feeling sorry for himself, he walked.[39]

Contrary to what Klaus Theweleit has argued, even though the Fascist man lived in a state of perpetual war, where the essence of virility derived from courage and heroism, wartime experiences did not inevitably brutalize the servicemen. Only a relatively few among them (the Italian *arditi* or the German *Freikorps*) continued to use violence. Moreover, if during the

20-year span of Fascism, the s*quadrista* apostle-warrior became a model of the new man, at the same time, for the regime, this model risked appearing somewhat excessive, with his overtones of anarchic individualism, heroic volunteerism, intimations of an aristocracy of combatants or a caste of the elect based not on lineage but on courage, the unrestrained expression of violence, and masculinity. Not coincidentally, then, immediately after the seizure of power, Fascist representations of the *squadristi* tended to downplay their aggressive and martial traits, portraying them instead as elegant young dandies, occasionally even implying a hint of homosexuality.[40]

Love, Sexuality, and Marriage

After rising to power, Fascism had to curb its original anti-conformist and rebellious tone in a difficult compromise between revolutionary thrusts and the maintenance of established order. In terms of virility, it was not easy to synthesize the ideal type of the strong and courageous warrior, thirsty for blood and in the grip of his own virile fervor, and that of the bourgeois who was frugal, hardworking, attentive to decorum, and in control of his passions. In short, on one side was a combative masculinity: heroic, martial, military, and violent; on the other was a disciplined masculinity: prosaic, domestic, civil, and peaceful.[41] This plurality of models obviously offers an interesting starting point for reflection, both on the difficulties encountered by Fascism in realizing the total politicization of existence and the total resolution of the private and the public. Fascism necessarily had to pragmatically and strategically calibrate its proposals for various audiences and different circumstances.

In any case, especially after Mussolini's "Speech of the Ascension," the regime openly expressed its desire to give a political valence to private behavior, trying to model masculinity, as well as femininity, on the needs of the state.[42] From this perspective, the first priority was to favor demographic growth and to adapt moral tradition to Fascist ethics. Virility was to be demonstrated through the ability to reproduce and to fight. At the time, there was, in fact, a photomontage in circulation that featured 12 photographs of the same number of families, with the caption: "Twelve wounded and 114 children—The war wounded in Italy certainly don't need demographic encouragement!"[43] Those who avoided their duty as soldiers, husbands, and fathers were obliged to pay the price for their shortcomings.[44] The attempt to invade the private life of individuals was enough to create resistance and a number of ploys to avoid such

regimentation. These non-conforming behaviors, while they cannot be automatically interpreted as conscious anti-Fascism, show the stubborn will of the population to adapt the rules imposed from on high to their own personal needs. The tax on unmarried men, for example, was seen as an intolerable political interference that could be avoided by claiming to be unemployed. The hostility toward a similar provision is shown in the words of Renzo Anselmo, a laborer from Turin interviewed by Luisa Passerini:

> A person at my workplace—the Fiat sawmill in Via Passo Buole—a person introduces himself to me and starts to say that they have given him a card to fill out to pay the bachelor tax, because in those days there was a bachelor tax, and men who weren't married after the age of 25 paid a tax. So this individual had already had six or seven operations. He was mutilated a little bit all over his body from it having been cut so much, and he complained, saying, "It's a shame that I have to pay the bachelor tax. I won't ever marry because I'm not fit to be married or to support a family, or to even have one. On the contrary, it would be shameful for me to have a family in my condition." And I say, "You see how things are? We live in a world of theft, because if I want to get married, I'll get married, but if I don't want to get married I should have the freedom to do what I want, without paying a tax. This is highway robbery."[45]

The bachelor tax, the impossibility of receiving career promotions without being a veteran, and even the risk of being subject to disciplinary measures for practicing sexual behaviors which did not conform to the norm all served to outline the ideal model of a man. Marriage loans and birth prizes, honors, and promotions, on the other hand, were useful incentives to induce citizens to conform to this model, which in many cases had already been internalized without the efforts of the party. The Church, with *Casti conubii*, advanced a family model centered on procreation within marriage, on opposition to abortion and contraceptive methods, on a hierarchic model of gender relations, and on the subordination of family members to the authority of the man, whom the woman "was meant to serenely and nobly obey out of love, not obligation."[46] The desire for discipline was also common, in this case exerted by priests charged with not allowing "the faithful entrusted to them to err" and with keeping themselves immune from the "pernicious doctrines" on contraception.[47]

Studies on the family under Fascism have widely shown the failure of the demographic policies promoted by the regime. Not only birth rates

but also marriage rates offer evidence of the impossibility of imposing overly prescriptive behavioral models.[48] More than conformism and faith in ideology, there was the indifference of those who tried to keep politics out of the private sphere, as expressed in Alberto Moravia's literary representation of a bourgeoisie absorbed with its own individual drives and composed of "stupid and small figures, hopelessly lost in the larger world."[49]

Furthermore, tradition, customs, and established practices made changing behavior extremely difficult, especially when it came to sexuality. Certainly, as far as masculinity was concerned, Fascism tended to reiterate and reinforce a virile model already largely established, legitimizing a chauvinism so intensified as to take on more and more pronounced characteristics of *machismo*. Marinetti's critique against romanticism, moonlight, and the *femme fatale* was revived, exalting the virile fervor of the man who loves passionately but without letting himself be carried away by sentimentalism. In this way, gender roles tended to become even more polarized, attributing languishing, sentimental feelings to women and uncontrollable passions to men. The correspondence between a young couple from Ancona clearly shows how these models were fully internalized. Faced with repeated refusals from his girlfriend, one young man wrote:

> You women think you will get a man's love by making him wait. You're wrong! Love today is a sickness that enters the bloodstream upon contact: the rest is romantic literature from the past, it's chatter, it's rhetoric, it can be at the most a side dish, but without sauce. […] You are a woman, and being a woman you are able to wait. But I, Lyda, am a man, and to be a man means to be a hunter, that is, to desire a woman, any woman.[50]

This virile audacity was more talk than reality. The same man ended up "fighting against the body, against this base body" and little by little rejected "the urges of the restless flesh," even considering premarital chastity a source of pride. Ultimately he began to criticize the double standard and even to accept true gender equality.

> Man seeks absolute purity in a woman. Few men would keep the company of a woman who would give free rein to her presumed or actual sexual needs. With what spirit of justice and righteousness do we ask from others an act of will that we have not known how to or not been able to achieve ourselves? Here then is a criterion of basic honesty: either giving up feminine purity or giving up our relations until marriage.[51]

But it is above all the world of the farmer that shows itself to be impenetrable to the lifestyle changes imposed by Fascism. First we see the old habits, unchanged by time, and the deeply rooted taboos regarding sex that prevented men from having relations with women, if for no other cause than the rigid separation fixed by society:

> Sex. In those days many young men were so timid that they were unable to even talk with a girl. […] Making love was difficult; the girls were not at all free like today. While out in the pasture one might say to a girl "Do you need a laborer?" And if the daring proposal hit the target, so much the better.[52]

The conditioning and restrictions imposed on women were much harsher:

> Ah, sex was a sin. And even dancing was a sin. Those who went to church to confess and said that they went dancing would no longer be given absolution, no. […] We grew up without knowing anything about sex, or misunderstanding things. It's not true that we in the country understood because we were closer to nature. Yes, we saw the animals, but we didn't understand. We saw calves born, piglets. … We saw animals coupling, but we didn't put it together that people were like this, never. I think that many marriages failed because we knew little or nothing. […] It was a mortal sin, it was scandal, an indecent thing, they raised us that way. The woman was rigid, restrained, tense as a wire, full of uneasiness, of fear. She experienced the sexual act as a scandal, not as a natural, spontaneous thing, and after a while the man got tired of it and went to look for sex from other women.[53]

This female rigidity, together with the potential of experiencing sexuality only with prostitutes before marriage, created a division between physical passion and emotions, constricting the emotional sphere. Male jealousy was born from this image of virility as uncontrollable sexual desire and from the idea that the glimpse of a woman was enough to drive a man to try to seduce her. There is record of a man who openly confessed to his girlfriend, "I don't know why, but when I know that you're home, I'm happier and more relaxed"; one who made his girlfriend promise not to go down into the street; another who forbade her from "sticking out [her] tongue" or laughing in public; one who forbade her from going to the beach in a swimsuit or riding a bike in a skirt.[54] The code of honor was based on male control of the family's morality; fathers and brothers performed a close surveillance over women, rendering relationships between

couples extremely cold and formal. In this arena, Fascism seems to have introduced some changes, since, as it favored the participation of women in public life, it triggered some emancipatory processes, facilitating more free association among boys and girls. Even the waiting time before marriage tended to grow shorter, because, as Vanna Piccini noted in 1938:

> Long-term engagements, important to families at one time, don't work anymore. They were suitable in the days when it was required for the groom to have a solid position, and for the wife to have sewn with her own hands sixty dress shirts and thirty sets of bed sheets. Today, because the Regime, with the appropriate intentions, allows young people to provide for the wedding expenses, it is not only those who have a considerable estate who are allowed to set up house. Thus, brief engagements.[55]

Fascism pushed for a greater openness in sexual education in attempt to treat these subjects without bias or the influence of Christian doctrine. The fact that the call to have children had implicit libertarian valences that could conflict with bourgeois respectability and Catholic moralism is clearly evident in the directives issued to the perfect Fascist:

> There is nothing more thoughtless and ridiculous than that which is taught by certain jaundiced educators and certain seminaries, which we would venture to call dens of sudden, uncontrollable, sputtering urges toward ignominious homosexual masturbations; the sexual education in the *collegi*, both of males and females, leads to violent anxieties, crises of spirit, probable disgraces, gloomy doubts, and even the habit of lying. For males let the education be more frank, open, almost daring, and let it begin earlier. […] This way we will have more men and fewer flirts, more seriousness and less shame, more loyalty and less pretense, and more health: and most importantly, we will have the resulting Demographic Reawakening willed by the Sage Mind of the DUCE.[56]

From this hygienicist and natalist viewpoint, the regime's premarital "certificate of health" was considered useful to provide the highest guarantee of the health of the future husband and wife. The proposal was opposed by the Catholics and by advocates for marriage as a spiritual tie that "still rests upon a sufficiently moral foundation, despite illness, [because] the health of the body cannot be separated from the health of the spirit."[57]

Married life tended to alter gender relations; now it was up to the couple to take on—although with different roles—the management of the

family, and in the case of working women, this could entail a redefinition of the figure of the head of household. In any case, the wife tended to transform herself little by little into a partner—into the confidante, the friend, the one who helps and supports. Of course, this all happened in the usual "doll house" frame, but on closer view this gender imbalance was sometimes an expression of a female subjection more illusory than real.

Even the choice of a partner was beginning to be more removed from the economic interests of the families, who, however, continued to have the last word on marriage proposals. One can see here the first signs of a challenge to the traditional role of the father and to the rigid patriarchal authoritarianism that prevented children from living their own emotional and sexual lives more freely. A generation accused of being too sanctimonious seemed incapable of grasping the changes caused more or less deliberately by Fascism. An adventurous spirit, dynamism, and fearlessness were all values that in some way challenged the bourgeois respectability of the oldest generation, who in fact tried to preserve the code of good manners by appealing to tradition.[58]

The persistence of this traditional ethos pushed the Italian population to refuse the antibourgeois campaign of the 1930s, which was viewed as undeserved meddling in private life. Despite public opposition, Fascism continued to press the issue of anthropological revolution, which shows that consensus was important but not essential.[59] The Italo-Ethiopian War generated a sincere enthusiasm and voluntary participation, particularly on the part of young men wanting to display their virile masculinity in the colony.[60] However, even militarism raised passions more performed than sincere, as would be shown tragically with the Italian intervention in the Second World War. The rigid repetitiveness, the exaggerated conformism, and the hierarchical order imposed by military training had already begun to feel tiresome to many young men; in fact, one former *balilla* from Fossano recalled, "a certain displeasure began to spread among us adolescents for the incessant assemblies and parades, the stomping in the mud interspersed with long periods of dead time."[61] The problem of a gradual rejection of training practices was perceived from on high, as can be seen from this report of the *federale* of Piacenza on the pre-military instruction of young men:

> The instruction takes place in total disorientation, the lack of discipline among the *premilitari* is due to the fact that they present themselves for training on Saturdays simply because they are threatened by disciplinary

> measures or by the resigned belief that otherwise they would be reported to the Military Authority for habitual unjustified absences. The young men show themselves to be lacking in enthusiasm and unprepared for the duties and obligations imposed by pre-military training.[62]

To all this was added the fact that now, facing a real war rather than a simulated one, in the moment when the public sphere most required individual sacrifice, private interests overwhelmingly won out. One young man recalled that the heroism of enlistment in the army was no match for the security of employment in a bank:

> You understand that I am giving up service so as not to lose the job at the Bank, seeing as my three months of probation have not yet passed. I don't know if you are happy with my decision, I found it to be right, being the most secure; the Bank of Italy for me means a career and a secure future. It means being able to marry you with confidence and in a short time to give you a safe and almost comfortable life. Right now this means everything to me. Sure, for a young man military life, as an officer, is nicer, full of entertainment, satisfaction, etc., but for me none of this is appealing, my only goal is you, and it's only you that I want to join.[63]

This inability to take on such important responsibilities, as Gibelli has noted, was also due to the process of infantilization of the Italian population set into place by the regime in order to discipline them, make them obey unappealing commands, and to further tie them to the paternalistic bond with authority.[64]

Masculinity, the Fascination of the *Duce*, and Post-Fascism

Mussolini personified the complete realization of the figure of the masculine ideal. The appeal exuded by Mussolini was strong. His appeal had already been noted before he became the Duce of the Italian people. This carried weight especially with women but also with the many Fascist men who were seduced by his virile temperament and his statuesque physicality. The *squadrista* Piero Girace, for example, describes him thus:

> Although I looked at him and observed him at length—his bald, square-shaped head, his ample chest under the black shirt that, damp with sweat, clung to his skin, outlining his powerful torso—Mussolini to me was not a

> physical reality. He was one of those great characters that Tommaso Carlyle wrote about in his book *On Heroes*. […] The face of the Chief stiffened. It seemed to be made of stone. He didn't bat an eyelash. Silence fell; and this time it was a religious solemnness. I felt like I wasn't breathing. I didn't see anything but Him. And he abruptly began to speak.[65]

The posture, the gaze, the bodily features, the solemn rhythmic gait, and the shrill voice, all emphasized the unbridled physicality of the Duce, whose charismatic power was due in part to this expert performance of the characteristics of the superman.

Little by little, hero worship became a mass phenomenon in Italy through the figure of the Duce, while elsewhere it was tied more to movie actors or members of royal families. Women deified Mussolini to the point of transforming their adoration into attraction, as can be inferred from the many letters sent to him day after day from every corner of the country. The fascination was owed to the combination of normal, simple, and prosaic traits of the everyday man with the extraordinary characteristics of a unique figure, the unattainable hero, the uncommon person. In an exchange of views between two young women from Turin, both mentioned these aspects:

> I never saw him that way, I couldn't imagine him as a person to hug, to kiss: to me he was a god.
> – I don't know, I wouldn't know. … Yes, I like him, but as a lover …, I can't do it.
> – I like him as a man, too. He's very handsome, strong, dominating; I would like a man like that.
> – Her words seemed as decisive, as irrevocable, as mine were uncertain. Then there was the issue of age.
> – How old is he? I asked timidly.
> – I don't know for sure; but what does it matter? He's charming and healthy. I like him so much.
> – I was still perplexed; I walked in silence while Fiorenza smiled talking to me about him.[66]

The Duce's superman image reassured Italian men and women, giving them a sense of protection. They felt "in unison, bound to Him with pure passion, and enthralled by His lofty virtues, [adoring him] as one honors a supernatural being, favored by God who clearly protects Him and renders Him invulnerable in the face of most certain danger."[67] A God, however,

who was near to his people, and who they addressed in a friendly and direct way, as is clear in this letter sent by a young *balilla*: "forgive me if I address you informally [with the *tu*], but even when I pray, speaking to God, I speak with such familiarity, because all of the Great are Good and indulgent."[68] In short, there was the glorification of the figure of Mussolini, like a charismatic leader, a superman hero, a myth, and a living legend, but, at the same time, he was the ordinary Italian, the common man, that remained close to the people and embodied the model whom all were supposed to emulate.[69]

Mussolinism and the personalization of politics contributed both to the strength of Fascism and to its weakness. The intense hero worship risked provoking a counterproductive media overexposure, and the undisputed faith in the leader tied the fate of the regime exclusively to that of its head. As Sergio Luzzatto has pointed out, the body of the Duce, which from the beginning was a metaphor for the body politic, became, during the dramatic events of the civil war, the emblem of the nation's fate. The two images—one of the pale and sickly prisoner, freed by the Germans from the Campo Imperatore, and the other of the man hung upside down bare-chested from the scaffolding of a gas station in Piazzale Loreto, insulted by the crowd and mutilated by their blows—symbolized both the end of Fascism and, at the same time, the tragic consequences of an irrational exaltation of its figurehead.[70] According to Giorgio Fenoalta, only then was revealed the intrinsic weakness of the regime and its leader who "was no more of a masculine leader than anyone else: on the contrary, he was a little less of one," because he hid his cowardly and feminine traits.

> Now your Duce, broad-chested and swaying, greedy for applause and admiration, fearful of personal danger, cowardly and at the same time cruel, was just like a woman: but his large, prominent jaw, to which physiognomists ascribe a particular meaning, was enough to excite the physical and psychic inferiority complex of a multitude of people, the description of which you will be able to find in any manual of psychoanalysis, and to earn them the reputation for strength that no one less than him deserved.[71]

During the epuration process after Mussolini's death, the journalist Virgilio Lilli wrote that the Duce and his followers had physical and character traits that rendered them similar to women:

> Actually [Giovanni] had always seen something feminine in all the expressions of the both the leader and the men around him, almost as if they were girls who were playing at being men, and who as part of the game put all of their effort into form rather than substance, into the scowl, the tone; in short, into the costume or the theater.

> In Mussolini, particularly in his crude and soft physique, he had often seen the features of a fat woman, a vain and restless woman, to be considered with a certain pity, if at all: and his love for uniforms, for ranks, for the court; that vanity comprised of the mirror, the tailor's scissors, the shimmering frills, the devotion to the scale as a weapon against one additional gram of flesh; even his military passion, all exterior, like that of a princess or a queen; […] that exquisitely feminine audacity with which he pronounced certain verdicts or covered himself with feather plumes or affected hard and furious facial expressions; yes, yes, that jutting out of the lip for photographs, that apprehension, that monitoring of photography, as is the custom of women who are always afraid of "not looking good," disappointed if the photographer has "fattened" or "aged" them; […] all this enormous burden of femininity was unable to stir in Giovanni's soul any real suffering; on the contrary it created the surprising, and at the same time ridiculous, spectacle of the woman in pants, fated to go down in history.[72]

The fascists and Fascism were either too virile or not virile enough. The new republican Italy, having left behind the militarized virility of the fascist era, tried to recuperate the seductive virility of the Latin lover or the moderate virility of the Catholic and the good father. The change is evident in the juxtaposition of the figure of Mussolini with that of the new head of government, the Christian Democrat leader Alcide De Gasperi:

> From out of the shadows, the Italy of the lost war—writes Indro Montanelli—saw this unusual character emerge, and for this very reason maybe he reassured her much more than the gurus from before Fascism or the thundering tribunes like Nenni. De Gasperi was an anomaly. […] An aura of cold air seemed to perpetually surround him. He was a man in gray, with gray, dry, unadorned oratory, with un-imperial gray eyes, with a face of stone, also gray. He was calm, patient, resistant to rhetoric and to ostentation. He was not a man of ideology, he was a man of ideals, which are two very different things. He was an unshakeable bourgeois, that one.[73]

Notes

1. See Terry Kirk, "Les lieux du stade: fascisme et contrôle des corps," *Vacarme* 45 (Fall 2008): 51–4; see also Carlo Cresti, "Forum Beniti," *FMR* 26 (1984): 102–11.
2. See Marcello Piacentini, "Il Foro Mussolini in Roma, arch. Enrico Del Debbio," *Architettura e arti decorative* 2 (February 1933): 74; Mario Paniconi, "Criteri informativi e dati sul Foro Mussolini," *Architettura* 2 (February 1933): 76–89.
3. Mario Morandi, "Il Foro Mussolini," *Critica fascista* 7 (1934): 651.
4. On the fascination of Fascism, especially in terms of the male image, see Susan Sontag, *Sotto il segno di Saturno* (Turin: Einaudi, 1997); and Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "Fascinating Fascism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 2 (1996): 235–44.
5. Mario Sironi, "Mal sottile," *La Rivista illustrata del popolo d'Italia* (June 1934): 23–32.
6. Gabriele D'Autilia, "Il fascismo senza passione. L'Istituto Luce," in *L'Italia del Novecento. Le fotografie e la storia*, vol. 1, *Il potere da Giolitti a Mussolini, 1900–1945* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005), 111.
7. John Champagne, *Aesthetic Modernism and Masculinity in Fascist Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 4.
8. On the relationship between Futurist and Fascist virility see Barbara Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
9. Robert Connell, *Mascolinità, Identità e trasformazioni del maschio occidentale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1996). On the concept of hegemonic masculinity, see Nikki Wedgwood, "Connell's Theory of Masculinity: Its Origins and Influences on the Study of Gender," *Journal of Gender Studies* 4 (December 2009): 329–39; Demetrakis Demetriou, "Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique," *Theory and Society* 3 (June 2001): 337–61; Jeff Hearn, "From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men," *Feminist Theory* 1 (January 2004): 49–72; Simonetta Piccone Stella, "Due studiosi della mascolinità a confronto: Pierre Bourdieu e Robert Connell," in *La costruzione dell'identità maschile nell'età moderna e contemporanea*, ed. Angiolina Arru (Rome: Biblink, 2001), 89–96. For a new clarification of the concept of masculine hegemony, see Reawyn Connell [the female name, after a sex change, of Robert Connell] and James Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender & Society* 6 (December 2005): 829–59; and R. Connell, *Questioni di genere* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006).
10. Alberto M. Banti, *L'onore della nazione. Identità sessuali e violenza nel nazionalismo europeo dal XVIII secolo alla Grande Guerra* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005).

11. Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987–1989); Jonathan Littell, *Le sec et l'humide: une brève incursion en territoire fasciste* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008).
12. On the coexistence of both traditional and transgressive masculine traits during the war, and on the transformation of virility. See Jason Crouthamel, *An Intimate History of the Front: Masculinity, Sexuality, and German Soldiers in the First World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion, 1996); Kate Hunter, "More than an Archive of War. Intimacy and Manliness in the Letters of a Great War Soldier to the Woman He Loved, 1915–1919," *Gender & History* 2 (2013): 339–54; Anthony Fletcher, "Patriotism, the Great War and the Decline of Victorian Manliness," *History: The Journal of the Historical Association* (January 2014): 40–72.
13. Letter of 22 July 1916, in Piero Calamandrei, *Zona di guerra. Lettere, scritti e discorsi, 1915–1924* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2006), 96.
14. Ottone's letter to Sandra of 12 May 1917, in Claudio Costantini, ed., *Un contabile alla guerra. Dall'epistolario del sergente di artiglieria Ottone Costantini (1915–1918)* (Turin: Paravia, 1996), 130.
15. Letter of 18 September 1915, in ibid., 86. On soldiers' crying and other bodily manifestations of their emotions, see André Loez, *Tears in the Trenches: A History if Emotions and the Experience of War*, in *Uncovered Fields. Perspectives in First World War Studies*, eds Jenny Macleod and Pierre Purseigle (Boston: Brill, 2004), 211–66.
16. Letter of 26 June 1917, in Costantini, *Un contabile alla guerra*, 141.
17. Letter of 25 October 1917, cit. in Antonio Gibelli, *La guerra grande. Storie di gente comune, 1914–1919* (Rome: Laterza, 2014), 143.
18. Letter of 27 October 1917, cit. in ibid., 144.
19. Letter of 8 December 1917, cit. in ibid., 146.
20. Letter of 16 December 1917, in Costantini, *Un contabile alla guerra*, 212–3.
21. Letter of 21 June 1918, cit. in Gibelli, *La guerra grande*, 148–9.
22. See Paola Di Cori, "Il doppio sguardo. Visibilità dei generi sessuali nella rappresentazione fotografica (1908–1918)," in *La Grande Guerra. Esperienza, memoria, immagini*, eds Diego Leoni and Camillo Zadra (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986), 765–99.
23. See Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
24. Barbara Bracco, *La patria ferita. I corpi dei soldati italiani e la Grande guerra* (Florence: Giunti, 2012), 224.
25. Elio Bartolini, *L'infanzia furlana* (Treviso: Santi Quaranta, 1998), 61.

26. See Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, "La Grande Guerre et l'histoire de la virilité," in *Le triomphe de la virilité. Le 19. siècle*, vol. 2, *Historie de la virilité*, ed. Alain Corbin (Paris: Seuil, 2011), 403–11.
27. Elain Showalter, "Rivers and Sassoon: The Inscription of Male Gender Anxieties," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, eds Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 61–9.
28. Crouthamel, *An Intimate History of the Front*, 8; see also Thomas Kühne, "Comradeship: Gender Confusion and Gender Order in the German Military, 1918–1945," in *Home/Front: The Military, War, and Gender in Twentieth Century Germany*, eds Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002), 233–54.
29. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
30. See Françoise Thébaud, "La Grande Guerra: età della donna o trionfo della differenza sessuale?," in *Storia delle donne. Il Novecento*, eds Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2003), 25–90; Michela De Giorgio, "Dalla «Donna Nuova» alla donna della «nuova Italia»," in *La Grande Guerra*, eds Leoni and Zadra, 307–32; Rosella Prezzo, "Il genere e la guerra," *Italia contemporanea* 180 (September 1990): 547–52.
31. Jean-Yves Le Naour, "'Il faut sauver notre pantalon.' La Premiére Guerre mondiale et le sentiment masculin d'inversion du rapport de domination," *Cahiers d'histoire. Revue d'histoire critique* 84 (2001): 44.
32. On this topic, Sandro Bellassai's interpretation of fascist masculinity as a restoration of a traditional and anti-modern virility is not entirely convincing, considering that the glorification of an aggressive and martial virility is also present in movements like Futurism that explicitly refer to modernity and are not at all reactionary or anti-modern. Bellassai, *L'invenzione della virilità. Politica e immaginario maschile nell'Italia contemporanea* (Rome: Carocci, 2011).
33. For some critical observations on this thesis, see Lorenzo Benadusi, "Borghesi in Uniform: Masculinity, Militarism, and the Brutalization of Politics from World War I to the Rise of Fascism," in *In the Society of Fascists. Acclamation, Acquiescence and Agency in Mussolini's Italy*, eds Giulia Albanese and Roberta Pergher (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 29–48; Lorenzo Benadusi, "A Fully Furnished House: The History of Masculinity," in *George L. Mosse's Italy: Interpretation, Reception, and Intellectual Heritage*, eds. Lorenzo Benadusi and Giorgo Caravale (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 29–46.
34. See the contribution by Matteo Millan in this volume.
35. Caesar, "L'esercito socialista—Educazione e disciplina," *L'Ordine Nuovo* 11 (October 1919): 164–5.

36. Cit. in Giulia Belletti and Saturno Carnoli, *L'ardito. Vita provocatoria di Ferruccio Vecchi* (Ravenna: Edizioni Moderna, 2013), 57.
37. Sven Reichardt, *Camicie nere, camicie brune. Milizie fasciste in Italia e in Germania* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009); Cristina Baldassini, "Fascismo e memoria. L'autorappresentazione dello squadrismo," *Contemporanea* 3 (July 2002): 475–505; Emilio Gentile, *Storia del partito fascista 1919 – 1922. Movimento e milizia* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1989); Mimmo Franzinelli, *Squadristi. Protagonisti e tecniche della violenza fascista, 1919 – 1922* (Milan: Mondadori, 2003); Matteo Millan, *Squadrismo e squadristi nella dittatura fascista* (Rome: Viella, 2014).
38. Mario Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano, 1919–1922* (Rome: Bonacci, 1980), 166.
39. Marcello Gallian, *Il soldato postumo. Romanzo* (Milan: Bompiani, 1935), 64–5.
40. See Enrico Sturani, "Il fascismo in cartolina," in *Modernità totalitaria*, ed. Emilio Gentile (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2008), 113–7.
41. On the contrast and overlap between a domestic masculinity and a martial one, see Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); for analogous conditions in the United States, see Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
42. See Chiara Saraceno, "Costruzione della maternità e della paternità," in *Il regime fascista: storia e storiografia*, eds Angelo Del Boca, Massimo Legnani, Mario G. Rossi (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1995), 475–97.
43. Sharo Gambino, *Fischia il sasso* (Catanzaro: Edizioni Internazionali, 1974), 60.
44. See Alberto De' Stefani, "L'obbligo del matrimonio e della filiazione," in *Commenti e discorsi* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1938).
45. Luisa Passerini, *Torino operaia e fascismo: una storia orale* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1984), 183.
46. Icilio Felici, *La famiglia. Sulle orme dell'enciclica "Casto Connubi"* (Milan: Del Duca, 1938), 21.
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CHAPTER 4

Coercion

Michael R. Ebner

Giovanni Pinna was an excellent mechanic. Employed by the state railway in the small town of Macomer, Sardinia, Pinna earned a salary higher than any other colleague, even those more senior to him. He also regularly worked side jobs, which further enhanced his earnings. Coworkers informed Pinna's supervisor about his moonlighting, but he apparently was not violating the terms of his contract. Pinna's special status and considerable earnings "often gave rise to complaints" and "jealousy" among his coworkers. He was also engaged to a young woman of "irreproachable morality" from an "honest family of farmers." Another railway worker had already requested the young woman's hand in marriage, but the family had rejected him. Pinna had lived and worked in Macomer since 1929 and was described as "rather simple, of youthful character, [and] timid." He was "devoted to his family" and supported his father with whom he lived. His older sister, a school teacher in the neighboring province of Sassari, belonged to the Fascist Party, and her work with the girls' section of the Fascist youth organizations had earned her a bronze medal from the Ministry of Education.[1]

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Before moving to Macomer, Pinna had lived in Sassari, where he allegedly professed "Communist ideas" and associated with subversives. However, during his eight years in Macomer, Pinna had never attracted any attention for political reasons. In fact, while not joining the Fascist Party, he participated in almost every patriotic event, often carrying the pennant of the railway *Dopolavoro* (Fascist recreational organization) in parades. During the war against Ethiopia, he regularly extolled the Duce's decision to invade, a fact corroborated by letters written to his sister. After Mussolini declared victory over Ethiopia in 1936, Pinna took part in the victory celebrations in Macomer's town square. His closest friend, an employee of the local communal government, could not recall a single instance in which Pinna expressed opinions contrary to the Fascist regime.[2]

In late March 1937, Pinna and several coworkers were at the train station discussing the recent crash in Sardinia of an Italian plane *en route* to Spain in support of Franco's nationalist rebellion. All onboard had died. According to his coworkers, Pinna exclaimed, "Well done! That's what should happen to anyone who wants to go to Spain." He then allegedly insulted Mussolini and criticized the Fascist syndicates (unions). The shift leader overheard these comments and reported them to the local secretary of the Fascist Party, who then interviewed Pinna's coworkers. Based on this episode, the local *carabinieri* determined that Pinna had never given up his "antinational" attitude. Nonetheless, the *carabinieri* reported that "local authorities, on the whole, were surprised" by Pinna's statements against the regime because, despite his political past, "they considered him an upstanding young man." Pinna was sentenced to two years of political confinement in a southern village.[3]

Official reports portrayed Pinna as a young man who formerly espoused Communist ideas but had settled down, focusing on his work, supporting his ailing father, and enthusiastically endorsing the regime and its policies by participating in parades, ceremonies, and other events. However, the Spanish Civil War appeared to push him to make oppositional statements in a conversation at work. Was he now an "anti-Fascist?" Or did he simply oppose Italy's policies on a case-by-case basis, extolling a colonial war in Ethiopia in one moment, then railing against involvement in Spain in the next. Police reports, not to mention historians, often try to essentialize their subjects—Fascist or anti-Fascist, victim or perpetrator—without accounting for ambiguity, cognitive dissonance, or change over time. The motives of his accusers remain equally murky. Although authorities reported that Pinna and his coworkers had good relations, several of them

had complained about his high salary and side jobs. He was also engaged to a woman whose family had rejected one of his coworkers. Did some view this episode as an opportunity to deliver Pinna his comeuppance? Under different, less contentious circumstances, would his boss have reported him, and would his colleagues have corroborated the accusations? Whatever the answers, the story of Giovanni Pinna does not fit neatly into binary categories, and yet it does tell us something about society under Fascism. Repressive practices, not to mention foreign and domestic policies, established the parameters within which these railway workers acted, but the episode was equally shaped by local conditions, relationships, and individual decisions.

Fascist state and party coercion shaped the contours of daily life throughout Mussolini's 20-year dictatorship. However, political and social repression was never constant or evenly distributed. It also evolved over time. New Fascist policies gave rise to new codes of behavior and speech and often created new categories of victims. Historians have tended to debate these matters in oppositional terms: Fascism and anti-Fascism, perpetrators and victims, and consensus and resistance. Such binaries are certainly useful for understanding aspects of police-state repression and resistance to it, yet they do not take into account what Alf Lüdtke called "fascism's everyday face."[4] Drawing mainly on police files, this chapter focuses not necessarily on the tragic stories of Fascism's victims. Instead it examines the way that coercion, low-level violence, and political "culture" (in the Geertzian sense of a web of meanings or significances) created a set of practices and parameters within which many Italians navigated their everyday lives.[5] The goal, then, is to better understand how party or state repression created a context that affected lives, posing quotidian dangers and opportunities, informing and constraining decisions, and forging pathways to success, stasis, and, in some cases, trauma.

This approach differs substantially from most previous understandings of the role of violence, repression, and social control in Fascist Italy. On both sides of the debate over De Felice's "consensus" thesis, Fascist authoritarianism has not been sufficiently addressed. The De Felician view ignores, downplays, or denies political repression and atrocity.[6] Indeed, in 6000 pages, De Felice's biography of Mussolini and his regime rarely mentions the police—an oversight so astounding (particularly for a scholar intimately familiar with the way Mussolini governed) that it suggests some degree of calculated omission. The "anti-Fascist" scholars, meanwhile, insisted that ordinary Italians largely did not support the Fascist regime

and, in fact, resisted it.[7] Though diametrically opposed, these two camps have agreed on one point: after Fascism, most Italians had no uncomfortable past to confront because either the Mussolini regime committed no crimes or, conversely, it did do so but most Italians were not complicit in them—indeed, for the anti-Fascist view, most Italians were victims (of Fascism, of the German occupation, of Allied bombings, and so forth).

Anti-Fascist scholarship attempting to show that some critical mass of Italians were "anti-fascist and dissident" has in some ways obscured our understanding of Fascist coercion.[8] Particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, historians and archivists set about the very important task of cataloging the names of Italians persecuted for explicitly "political" reasons.[9] Mainly dealing with sentences by the Special Tribunal and the provincial commissions that assigned *confino politico* (political confinement), these studies, while very useful, were largely inadequate for understanding the relationship between Fascist state repression and society. Once the tens of thousands of anti-Fascists had been counted, and all the acts of dissent cataloged, there was little left to say about the millions of other Italians who never had a rap sheet, nor landed in a jail cell.[10] Moreover, by looking for "anti-Fascists," these studies sometimes ignored Italians who, while not resisting the regime, were nevertheless persecuted by it.[11]

Popular works of fiction and film have in some ways also done a disservice to our understanding of Fascist repression, none more so than Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*.[12] Published in 1945 and subsequently translated into numerous languages, Levi's memoir depicts his one-year exile in a small village in the Italian South (Basilicata). While *Christ Stopped at Eboli* certainly reveals aspects of life in a remote southern village, the takeaway for most readers has been that Fascist political punishment was not that bad. In Basilicata, Levi rented a large house, employed a local woman for cooking and cleaning, painted landscapes, and began clandestinely practicing medicine to help local peasants (Levi was trained as a medical doctor). His exile was not enjoyable, but it was awfully productive! As a well-educated professional with considerable economic resources, not to mention family connections, Levi was exceptional and received special treatment. His experience was representative of a certain kind of "soft" repression inflicted on a small but important group of prominent anti-Fascist suspects. However, his widely read book (and the award-winning film adaptation) have come to represent Fascist authoritarianism writ large. Silvio Berlusconi, the dominant Italian politician of the last two decades, once quipped (falsely) that "Mussolini never killed anyone," lauding how

he sent his enemies "on vacation in internal exile."[13] One could perhaps argue that the biography of Communist leader Antonio Gramsci, whose 20 years in Fascist prisons killed him, might offer a corrective to this view, but even his was an exceptional case.[14]

In a 2002 article in the *Journal of Modern History* entitled "Italian Fascism: What Ever Happened to Dictatorship?," historian Paul Corner launched a bold and incisive condemnation of scholars' failure to examine and understand Fascist authoritarianism. Mostly critical of the De Felician view, Corner's article laid out the myriad ways in which the Mussolini regime engaged in heavy-handed political and social control through policing, surveillance, and intimidation, as well as by controlling access to jobs, welfare, housing, scholarships, and other state resources.[15] In many ways, Corner's article signaled the beginning of a new stage in the study of Fascist repression. Around the same time, Italian scholars produced several groundbreaking works on the Fascist "OVRA" (secret political police) and political police, exposing the regime's harsh methods of surveillance, interrogation, and punishment.[16] A few new studies have explored the experiences of political and, in particular, social outsiders, including midwives, homosexuals, Jews, and others.[17] Finally, military and colonial historians have built upon the work of historians like Giorgio Rochat and Angelo Del Boca, revealing a regime that used military violence gratuitously to brutal effect.[18] Still, many of these studies have been interested in the "extraordinary"—victims, brutality, and harsh penal institutions—and less on the lived experience of Fascism. Indeed, many of the features of Fascist dictatorship outlined by Corner can only be revealed through focused local studies that examine the place of Fascist coercion comprehensively within the spheres of family life, work, public space, education, reproduction, religion, and so on.[19] For most of its existence, up until the Second World War, the domestic repressive apparatus did not produce mass confinement. Instead, the police, the party, and other perpetrators were engaged in low-level repression, physical attacks, intimidation, and discrimination.[20]

Comparisons with Germany's reckoning with the Nazi past are instructive.[21] Historians of Nazi Germany explored the crimes of National Socialism much earlier, but they initially ignored issues of complicity. Historians of Italian Fascism, by contrast, quickly acknowledged the complicity or "consent" of Italians, but under the assumption that the Italians had consented to nothing morally, ethically, or legally wrong. In both the German and Italian cases, we see postwar societies distancing

themselves from the brutality of dictatorship—the German society by acknowledging the reprehensible crimes of National Socialism, but viewing them as the product of a few evil men; the Italian society by exploring the *consenso*, which meant, as Corner noted disapprovingly, that if most Italians supported Fascism, then there was nothing wrong with it.[22] In both cases, then, the impulse was to either whitewash or simply deny society's responsibility for the crimes, atrocities, or unpleasantness of dictatorship. Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s, however, historians began exploring the complicity of ordinary Germans in National Socialist crimes.[23] The circle was now complete: historians had identified both the perpetrators—institutions, persons, and social groups—and the many categories of victims, both domestic and foreign.

In Fascist Italy, the trajectory has been quite different in many ways. First, much remains unclear—unstudied or understudied—with regard to the perpetrators of political repression and military atrocity. In Germany, the birthplace of *Alltagsgeschichte*, historians had already developed a relatively clear picture of the Nazi institutions involved in terror, atrocity, and genocide. *Alltagsgeschichte* was in part born out of what some historians viewed as an impasse between well-developed intentionalist and structuralist approaches to understanding culpability for Nazi crimes. For Italian Fascism, the same well-developed historiography is not in place. How can we produce microhistories of Fascism's victims if we do not know who they are? For example, do we fully understand the scope and social impact of the squad violence that engulfed Italy between 1920 and 1922? We know roughly how many died, and about Fascist methods, and have some vague, qualitative sense of the impact of squad violence, but society under squadrist rule has not really been studied.[24] What about the counter-insurgency fought in Libya during the 1920s and early 1930s? Or Fascist policies in Somalia during Cesare Maria De Vecchi's tenure as colonial governor? Do we have a systematic understanding of the role of the Fascist Party and the militia in policing or controlling Italian communities? What about studies of political policing at the local level? The answer to all of these questions, with a few notable exceptions, is a resounding no.[25] Moreover, new studies that have shed light on the crimes of Fascism simply cannot be reconciled to the earlier scholarship on *consenso*, in which crimes, terror, and repression do not factor. Finally, most studies of Fascist repression have largely ignored the bigger questions of ordinary Italians' complicity in political crimes and repression, though some work on denunciation has been done.[26]

Despite these gaps in the historiography, the *Alltagsgeschichte* approach is particularly well suited to understanding coercion in Fascist Italy. The approach insists on putting people—ordinary people—back into history by examining, according to Alf Lüdtke, "the life and survival of those who have remained largely anonymous in history—the 'nameless' multitudes in their workaday trials and tribulations."[27] Focusing on the "little people"—the vast majority of Italians—allows us to recover a qualitative understanding of the role of state-sponsored coercion in everyday life, whether at home, within the family, at work, at school, among neighbors, at the bar, and so forth. While *Alltagsgeschichte* has focused most intensely on "history's victims and the multiple contours of their suffering," it is equally well suited to examine history's perpetrators. Indeed, *Alltagsgeschichte* challenges and complicates binary categories of perpetrator and victim, making it ideal for studying a society like Italy's under Fascism. As Giulia Albanese and Roberta Pergher have argued in a recent essay, "nowhere was the balance between pressure and voluntarism, imposition and contestation, allegiance and evasion, high-flying rhetoric and grubby reality more complex than in Fascist Italy." Moreover, they argue, "choices were constrained, opposition brutally suppressed." "What," Albanese and Pergher ask, "can consent or consensus mean in these circumstances?"[28]

To the study of repression and violence under Fascism, *Alltagsgeschichte* offers a way forward. As studies of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union have shown, the history of everyday life is much more finely attuned to the nuance and ambiguity of various categories of behavior (victims, perpetrators, opponents, accommodators, opportunists, etc.). These categorizations can never be exhaustive, nor, most importantly, are they always mutually exclusive. It is not only possible, but certain, that the proponents of Fascism often became its victims and those victimized by Fascism often exercised, appropriated, and reproduced state repression by inflicting it on others. Ordinary Italians, and even extraordinary Italians (the main perpetrators, or even opponents, of Fascism), played dual- and multiple-roles in the interplay between violence, repression, consent, and acclamation.

Everyday Coercion: The 1930s

In order to understand the experiences of "ordinary people" and their relationship to Fascist police-state political repression, the focus of this study falls on the decade of the 1930s.[29] During the previous decade, the 1920s, Fascist political repression was aimed mainly at organized

anti-Fascism—Communists, Socialists, Anarchists, Republicans, and others. While the regime's struggle against anti-Fascism affected daily lives, particularly in the communities that harbored anti-Fascists, it did not affect the mass of ordinary Italians whose attitudes toward Mussolini and Fascism ranged widely. In the 1930s, however, something changed. Party-state repression increased in an absolute sense and became nationalized in a geographic sense. The number of people in "political confinement" nearly quadrupled in the second half of the 1930s, and the years 1938 and 1939 featured the third- and fourth-highest number of Special Tribunal sentences after the years 1928 and 1929 (years in which the regime fought and won its struggle against clandestine opposition movements).[30] During wartime, moreover, the regime established concentration camps for all sort of suspects, minorities, and "socially dangerous" Italians.[31]

Political repression not only increased in absolute terms, but it also appeared more widespread geographically. During Mussolini's first ten years in power, explicitly political repression mainly affected northern and central Italy, as well as a few pockets in the South. Provincial police commissions, charged with sentencing Italians to "political confinement," were most active in the north.[32] Indeed, most political offenders were sent to islands and villages in the Italian South, a region viewed as less troublesome, at least politically speaking. Meanwhile, southern provincial police commissions passed hardly any sentences between 1926 and 1935, but then passed dozens during the period 1935–1943. The biggest city in Sicily, Palermo, sentenced only 17 Italians to political confinement before 1935 and 93 afterward.[33] Some provinces emitted a large number of sanctions during the first few years of Fascist dictatorship, but then went dormant until 1935.[34] It should be noted that the forces of public order were just as active in the South during the regime's first decade in power, but they mainly focused on repressing common crime and the mafia.[35] Police commissions in the South thus mainly sentenced Italians to "common" as opposed to "political" confinement during this earlier period.[36] Even in the north, many provinces saw little or no major political repression before the 1930s.[37] Therefore, by the 1930s, party-state repression and coercion had spread throughout the peninsula and could appear, geographically speaking, anywhere. During this same period, the apparatus of political repression began persecuting a wide array of social outsiders—homosexuals, alcoholics, prostitutes, Evangelicals and Jehovah's Witnesses, and ethnic minorities—as well as ordinary Italians, particularly those who were vulnerable economically, socially, or politically. Additionally, police and party

authorities amplified the range of acts that could be deemed "subversive." Even trivial criticisms or thoughtless quips about relatively unimportant personages or policies might bring down some form of punishment.[38]

Within the context of the 1930s, the regime's anti-Semitic Racial Laws in particular stand out as a critical development in Fascist practices of identifying and persecuting internal enemies. Although some of the best scholarship on Fascism has been done on the Racial Laws, the history of Jewish life—ordinary, everyday life, which is the stuff of a discriminatory racial state—has, for the most part, yet to be written.[39] How did ordinary Italian Jews experience being reclassified as racially inferior and having their professional, social, and religious lives compromised by the state? While many Italian Jews were anti-Fascists or apolitical, a large number supported the regime enthusiastically.[40] With the implementation of the Racial Laws, Fascist Jews suddenly found themselves labeled anti-Fascist and anti-Italian. The consequences reverberated throughout their daily existence. Federico Levi, an insurance agent in Turin, learned in October 1938 that the Grand Council of Fascism had banned marriages between "Aryans" and Jews. Levi was devastated by the news as he was engaged to be married to a Catholic woman. Shortly after the breaking of his engagement, his officemates, who knew about the canceled wedding, were discussing the Racial Laws. According to Levi, they made "biting comments" that were clearly directed at him.[41] In response, Levi called Mussolini a "bastard" for introducing measures against Italian Jews. His colleagues reported him to the local Fascist Federation, and the local police were informed of the matter. When questioned, Levi stated that he was "irritated by the behavior of his colleagues, who commented on the measures and the irony of his situation" and that "he was exasperated because [the laws] impeded him from marrying a Catholic."[42] For "offending the Duce," Levi was sentenced to "political confinement" in a small village in southern Italy.

Levi's police file suggests that he had been an exemplary citizen under Fascism. He had joined the Fascist Party in 1932 and carried out his military service during the 1920s. He had never been considered politically suspect and had no criminal record, though he had been found not guilty of manslaughter in 1934 (strangely a matter upon which no police reports commented). He lived with his father (a widower salesman), his younger brother and sister, and his aunt. None of them had any anti-Fascist political precedents.[43] In a letter begging Mussolini for lenience, Levi claimed that he had been part of the Fascist movement "since infancy," joining

the Fascist youth organization in 1923, the Fascist Militia in 1925, and the Fascist Party in 1932. He informed the Duce that he had "sincerely repented" and "still professed ideals that are purely Italian, Fascist, and Patriotic."[44] A supporter of the Fascist regime throughout most of his life, Levi then found himself not only persecuted by the regime but also by his coworkers. Although the Fascist Racial Laws offer an extreme example of the regime's persecution of minorities, such incidents do reflect prevailing patterns in the relationship between individual subjectivity and the Fascist state. Mussolini's supporters became his natural born enemies. Coworkers morphed into perpetrators. For many, opinions about the regime might continually shift as new policies fundamentally changed individuals' relationships to the Fascist state.

Setting aside the persecution of clear-cut categories of enemies, Fascist state repression also affected ordinary people involved in trivial altercations, typically in public or semipublic spaces and especially where alcohol was sold. Such incidents could become politicized, leading to the intervention of police and, ultimately, political sanctions. One example occurred on a night in early July, in Refrontolo, an idyllic town located 50 kilometers north of Venice, where Giuseppe Lot served wine to around 20 young men in his kitchen. Lot had a temporary license for the resale of wine, and thus his home served as makeshift *osteria* (tavern). In the cramped room, with just a few tables to sit around, most of the men stood shoulder to shoulder, "happily singing traditional songs." Several patrons were from a neighboring town, San Pietro di Feletto, and one of the songs, popularized by veterans of the First World War, contained the refrain "If you don't know us, watch out, we are the assault battalion of San Pietro!" Because a certain *rivalità di campanile* (bell tower rivalry) took shape, the proprietor tried to quiet down the men from San Pietro Feletto. One of the men then began singing "Bandiera Rossa" (a socialist hymn) and another "youth" joined in. At this point, Giovanni Balbinot, a Fascist militiaman in plain clothes, told the men to desist, but his efforts were in vain. Balbinot then left to find another militiaman, Ernesto Bianco, a man of "considerable muscular force and energetic character," requesting him to intervene. Bianco came quickly and demanded the two men cease singing the song. The proprietor, Lot, whose niece coincidentally was engaged to militiaman Bianco, then cleared out his kitchen, sending everyone home.[45]

Eyewitness reports diverged regarding what happened next. The *carabinieri* surmised that as the men in the bar walked off in small groups toward their homes, militiamen Bianco's two brothers arrived on the scene,

and the three began shouting at the group of men from San Pietro Feletto, which included one Giovanni De Stefani, who had courted Bianco's fiancé (Lot's niece) at one time. After threats and shouting on both sides, one of Bianco's brothers threw a rock, striking one of the men in the head, and a melee ensued in which Bianco was beat up. The Bianco brothers reported what had happened to the authorities, who judged their stories "partly false and partly exaggerated," and four of the other men were arrested and sentenced to political confinement, including one Germano Pradal. Police and *carabinieri* reported that Pradal had either left the scene before the altercation or had played a very limited role. But because there were no eyewitnesses, beyond the Bianco brothers and their five or six adversaries, the police had to put "their faith in Bianco's detailed denunciation," which included the claim that all six men had sung "Bandiera Rossa" (an accusation that the proprietor, Lot, and the other Fascists actually present, later denied).[46]

Local *carabinieri* noted that Pradal exhibited "good moral conduct," and although not enrolled in the Fascist Party (PNF), he "had always demonstrated sympathy toward the regime, love for order, deference to the law, and devotion to the institutions of the fatherland [*patria*]." He had done military service in the Seventh Alpine Regiment. He lived with his parents and two sisters, a sharecropping family, "all laborious farmers, property-less, of the best moral and political character." Because his parents were elderly, Pradal conducted most of the farming. Authorities deemed his presence in the family "indispensable." In a letter to the Commission of Appeals, Pradal denied Bianco's accusations and insisted that he had "always loved the Patria" and was "hostile to all subversive ideas."[47] Even the Prefect of Treviso concluded that the incident was not "of a political nature" but rather driven by "motives of hate and rancor" between the militiaman and the accused.[48] Despite all this, police arrested Pradal and sentenced him to one year of internment on the island of Ventotene. Fortunately for Pradal, Mussolini granted a massive amnesty for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome and he was released in November 1932.

On the one hand, Pradal's case speaks to the reach and pervasiveness of Fascist authoritarianism. An utterly insignificant altercation at a makeshift bar between young men from rival villages was fully investigated by provincial officials, who reported to the Fascist Chief of Police in Rome, who may have actually discussed the matter with Mussolini. Moreover, local Fascists wielded significant coercive power. The regime empowered

militiamen like Bianco to confront and challenge the behavior of ordinary Italians and Bianco's word was taken as definitive proof of Pradal's guilt, despite credible evidence to the contrary. On the other hand, despite the singing of a "subversive" popular song, the arrest and confinement of Pradal had little to do with Fascism or politics, and more to do with local rivalries, personal conflict, and alcohol. The power of the Fascist regime, located in Rome, did penetrate to far-flung localities, but those localities shaped outcomes. Even the priorities of local Fascists had little to do with those of the regime, overlapping only superficially.

Another among the local forces shaping, and being shaped by, everyday coercion was religion, Catholicism in particular. Early in the morning of 21 May 1940, in a hilltop town southeast of Florence, two priests, Don Severo Brunini and Don Agostino Boncompagni, led a procession of 1500 people through the streets to the town's principal church, signing songs and reciting prayers as they walked. Although they carried no signs or other explicit symbols of intent, the pilgrims, authorities alleged, all understood they were marching in the name of peace.[49] The priests had sought permission for the procession, but civil and ecclesiastical authorities had repeatedly rejected their requests. Just 11 days earlier, Italy had declared war on France, entering a conflagration that was engulfing Europe. As local authorities expected, Brunini and Boncompagni's march infuriated local Fascists. By the end of the morning, the secretary of the local Fascist Party and the *Federale* of the province of Arezzo had informed the provincial police chief of a "protest" masquerading "as a religious procession" that opposed "the intervention of Italy in the war" and constituted "an open demonstration of hostility to the directives of the regime."[50] Immediately after Don Severo had finished saying mass, the *carabinieri* took him to their station "as a precaution, in order to avoid reprisals from local fascists."[51] Police arrested him on 1 June, and he was subsequently sentenced to political confinement for three years.

Don Severo Brunini was a man of good character, with no criminal history. Rumors of alcoholism, licentiousness, and corruption, which often swirled around priests who fell afoul of Fascist authorities, were completely absent from his police file. Although he did not serve in the First World War, he did work as a chaplain at a military hospital in Rome during the conflict.[52] At the end of the war he returned to the town of Monterchi, where he was born, to live with his sister Natalina (age 54) and his stepmother Maria Giovecchini (age 83).[53] Don Severo Brunini already had a reputation as an opponent of Fascism. Authorities reported that from the

very beginning, he had remained aloof from the regime, and most recently he refused to vote in local, communal elections. According to the province's police chief, local "squadrists gave him the lesson he deserved."[54] The *carabinieri* stated even more explicitly that "since the rise of Fascism, he has demonstrated little sympathy for the party, so much so that in one circumstance … he was beaten by local fascists."[55] Thus, by the time of his alleged antiwar procession, the priest was on the blacklist of the Fascists of Monterchi.

In an appeal, Brunini denied that he and his parishioners had intended to criticize the regime and its policies. They carried no signs, standards, or flags and sang and prayed for "the prosperity of our great people, for the sacred person of the King, [and] for the great leader the Duce." He added that the event was purely religious, carried out with "the spirit of Italianità, with full devotion to the Regime, [and] with sentiments of obsequiousness and obedience to Authority."[56] In a note in support of Brunini's appeal, the Bishop of Arezzo chalked the whole incident up to a miscommunication, denying any political motive.[57] However, the Prefect rejected these claims, stating that there was "no doubt" that Brunini had acted in "bad faith," because he had been warned against the pilgrimage several times. Moreover, Brunini's punishment had been "well received by the population of Monterchi, especially among the fascist milieu."[58] Overturning his sentence would send the message that Brunini had acted in "good faith."

Authorities in Arezzo were clearly worried about the influence of Brunini and, more generally, Catholicism, on the local population, particularly with regard to a war that was unpopular with many Italians. A known opponent of the regime, or at least of local Fascists, Brunini likely organized an antiwar protest masquerading as a religious procession, although Brunini's parishioners may not all have been of one mind. The priest, for his part, was well aware of the constraints the regime had put on outward political behavior, hence his insistent denial of any anti-Fascist intent.[59] Although local authorities claimed they were not fooled by Brunini, and Brunini paid the price, his action was also successful in that it organized and channeled Catholic sentiment in Monterchi and its environs. A captain of the *carabinieri* noted that Brunini's "ceremony undoubtedly succeeded in lowering the morale of the people, who are very religious [*molto credente*]."[60] Whether against the war, against the regime, or simply as an expression of faith, the demonstration created a sphere of ideas and actions outside and potentially opposed to the regime, its policies, and its ideology.

In the face of Fascist coercion, even Italians who were neither active proponents nor opponents of Fascism still had to consider accommodation and conformity. For many ordinary Italians—some of whom were former Socialists, Anarchists, Communists, and Liberals who did not actively resist the regime—accommodation, or learning to live under Fascism, required more than just feigned support or indifference. Whatever one's private thoughts, accommodation required a skillful reshaping of one's public and personal life. In his novel *Bread and Wine*, Ignazio Silone wrote about a Socialist lawyer Zabaglione, who in the years before Fascism defended the rights of common people. "Many of his famous speeches," Silone wrote, "had become proverbial." With the arrival of the dictatorship, however:

> he had had to make tremendous efforts to cause his rhetorical feats to be forgotten. He had transformed his old Mazzini-style beard, which he had worn since he was a young man, into a Balbo-style goatee; and he shortened and thinned his hair, changed the way he knotted his tie, and tried, though vainly, to lose weight. But if these were the most visible and hence the most painful sacrifices to which the former tribune of the people had had to subject himself, there was no counting the minor mortifications that he had to endure, such as having to sacrifice his ideas, being careful in what he said about the government, and breaking off relations with his suspect friends. In spite of the undeniable determination he had put into all this, he had not succeeded in completely rehabilitating himself, and he was consistently left out in the cold by the new institutions.[61]

And so it was throughout Italy. Archives, memoirs, and novels from the era are filled with stories of former leftists and ordinary people refashioning their lives in accordance with Fascist ideals—ideals enforced by an authoritarian and discriminatory system of governance and social control. Wardrobes were purged of red ties and handkerchiefs; libraries self-censored; portraits of Marx, Bakunin, and other leftist heroes were burned or hidden away. Fascism brought new ways of dressing, walking, greeting, and speaking about life, politics, and the outside world. Former socialists and syndicalists unable to join the PNF enrolled their children in the Fascist youth and set aside significant sums of money for uniforms, hoping to improve their lot in the education system and the labor market. In sum, for many Italians, employment and social standing depended upon accommodating one's values, appearance, family, and everyday rituals to the political and social codes of Fascism. Just like Zabaglione, many succeeded in avoiding disaster but otherwise fell short.

A life of support, or calculated accommodation, or conformity, might not necessarily shield one's family from political misfortune. For example, after her son was arrested by the police for a minor political offense, Luigia Balocco wrote letters to police authorities and the queen. She identified herself as a "Fascist woman of the *fascio femminile*" and "one of the first women in the town to give her wedding band to the *Patria*." Of her five brothers, four had fought in the [Great] War, and the fifth, youngest brother was with Gabriele D'Annunzio at Fiume, for which he received a certificate for having "done his duty." Her husband joined the party in 1927. He also belonged to the MVSN (Fascist Militia) and had recently been called up for service. Her son, who had been arrested, joined the ONB (Opera Nazionale Balilla, Fascist youth organization) in January of 1927 and "without interruption passed to the *Fasci Giovanili di Combattimento*." "Therefore," she begged, "do we not thereby deserve a little bit of mercy?"[62] Another woman, Maria Lafasciano, the illiterate wife of a Communist who had been arrested in the province of Bari, described how her husband's fate had left her destitute and her children with nothing to eat. Nevertheless, she proclaimed, they "continue to go to school so that tomorrow they will be children worthy of Great *Italia*." "Duce," she exclaimed, "they are even members of the Opera Nazionale Ballila!"[63] Included with her letter was a photograph of her children in their uniforms. For many Italians, accommodation, party membership, child rearing, and the family economy were all connected to the regime's capacity to inflict violence and repression but also clemency.

The perpetrators and beneficiaries of Fascism did not necessarily have it easy either. Party bosses big and small, and even ordinary Fascists, operated within a system of authoritarian repression, coercion, and discrimination. They regularly fell victim to what Salvatore Lupo has called the politics of "cannibalism"—interparty, factional feuding, involving denunciation and character assassination of the most salacious type.[64] What better example than PNF party secretary Augusto Turati? Accused by Roberto Farinacci of being a homosexual, a pedophile, and a "sexual-psychopath," Turati not only lost his position within the party but also his job as editor of the Turin daily newspaper, *La Stampa*. As the tide turned against Turati, he was committed to a mental institution. New party secretary Starace then accused him of plotting against Mussolini, leading to his expulsion from the PNF and an exile, or *confino*, to Crete. Mussolini knew Turati was guiltless of the charges against him, but he supported Turati's complete destruction and humiliation because it was politically expedient. Turati had

been betrayed and ultimately consumed by Fascism. He had his very livelihood stripped from him. Then, after the war, despite his years of victimization by the Fascists, Turati was put on trial for perpetrating Fascism.[65]

In an excellent study of Italian colonists in Libya, Roberta Pergher examines "ordinary" settlers, also finding the binary categories of perpetrator/victim or consensus/resistance inadequate. According to Pergher, the settlers' memories reveal a "mixture of incentives, hardship, repression, and condescension." Moreover, Pergher shows how their motives for going to Libya, and their activities while there, often explicitly contradicted the directives and larger goals of the regime. They chaffed under authoritarian restrictions the regime established regarding work, travel, family, commerce, and leisure. Pergher compares the attitude of the settlers to Lüdtke's notion of "Eigensinn," the small strategies that industrial workers in Nazi Germany used to exercise agency within their own work and lives.[66] That said, their land, their livelihood, and their entire colonialist project all owed to Fascist military violence and expropriation of land. Indeed, Pergher notes, the settlers were fully aware that the land they worked—the dreams and opportunities afforded to them by the regime's settlement program—had been stolen from the Arabs. In other words, they were complicit in and beneficiaries of Fascist crimes.[67]

Studies of coercion and everyday life, then, reveal Fascist rule as shaping a way of living that was distinctly, though not entirely, different from pre-Fascist liberalism or postwar social democracy. In most of the "little" stories presented here, local Fascists served important roles—as perpetrators of violence, recipients of denunciations, and arbiters of appropriate political or social behaviors. Their Fascism was not always the Fascism of Rome, and their political affiliation often provided a pretense for motives that were personal or local. Though always shaped by locality, the Fascist system of ruling society, conducting politics, and implementing policies was nevertheless based, at least in part, on violence, authoritarian repression, discrimination, intimidation, fear, and Fascist political culture (e.g., Fascist policies and Fascist ideas about them). In addition to Fascist Party members, ordinary Italians, sometimes themselves victims of Fascist authoritarianism, often helped to set the apparatus of repression into motion by informing party or state authorities of minor transgressions. The regime's willingness—often its eagerness—to deploy repression, violence, and warfare attracted many Italians to Fascism, even as this attraction of Fascism victimized Communists, Liberals, Socialists, Anarchists, labor leaders and union members, the poor, many categories of workers,

the socially marginalized, religious minorities, homosexuals, Jews, foreigners in Africa and the Balkans, and many categories of ordinary Italians.

Certainly in some places, among certain groups, there existed uncomplicated consensus or opposition during Fascism. Some Italians believed that repression and discrimination at home and colonial warfare abroad were acceptable or desirable policies. Others chafed under Fascist authoritarianism. However, looking beyond this binary view—the attractions of perpetrating Fascism versus the consequences for its victims—we see a much larger, complex phenomenon of how ordinary people lived and worked, and suffered and prospered, within this system, at turns resisting, ignoring, and perpetuating Fascism.

Notes

1. Guido Mensitieri (Comandante del gruppo) to Comando Generale dell'Arma dei carabinieri reali, 20 August 1937, in Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Ministero dell'Interno (MI) Direzione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza (DGPS), confinati politici, fascicoli personali, busta 799, "Pinna, Giovanni."
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Alf Lüdtke, "Introduction: What Is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are Its Practitioners?," in *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed., Alf Lüdtke (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 4.
5. Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, Basic Books: 1973), 3–30.
6. For an introduction to De Felice's work, and the controversies surrounding it, see Borden W. Painter, "Renzo De Felice and the Historiography of Italian Fascism," *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 2 (April 1990): 391–405.
7. For these and other debates, see R. J. B. Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1998).
8. See Adriano Dal Pont and Simonetta Carolini, *L'Italia dissidente e antifascista: Le Ordinanze, le Sentenze istruttorie e le Sentenze in Camera di consiglio emesse dal Tribunale speciale fascista contro gli imputati di antifascismo dall'anno 1927 al 1943*, 3 vols (Milan: La Pietra, 1980).
9. See, for example: Adriano Dal Pont and Simonetta Carolini, eds, *L'Italia al confino: le ordinanze di assegnazione al confino emesse dalle Commissioni*

provinciali dal novembre 1926 al luglio 1943, 4 vols (Milan: La Pietra, 1983); Adriano Dal Pont et al., eds, *Aula IV: Tutti i processi del Tribunale Speciale fascista* (Milano: La Pietra, 1976); Salvatore Carbone, *Il popolo al confino: la persecuzione fascista in Calabria* (Cosenza: Lerici, 1977); Salvatore Carbone and Laura Grimaldi, *Il popolo al confino: la persecuzione fascista in Sicilia* (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1989); Donatella Carbone, *Il popolo al confino: la persecuzione fascista in Basilicata* (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1994); Katia Massara, *Il popolo al confino: la persecuzione fascista in Puglia* (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1991); and Rosa Spadafora, *Il popolo al confino: la persecuzione fascista in Campania*, 2 vols (Naples: Athena, 1989).

10. Notable studies of popular dissent include Luciano Casali, "E se fosse dissenso di massa?," *Italia contemporanea* 144 (1981): 101–20; Enrico Mannari, "Tradizione sovversiva e comunismo durante il regime fascista, 1926–1943: Il caso di Livorno," in *Annali della Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli*, vol. 20: *La classe operaia durante il fascism*, ed. Guido Sapelli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979–1980), 837–74; Gianpasquale Santomassimo, "Antifascismo popolare," *Italia contemporanea* 140 (July–September 1980): 39–69; Gianpasquale Santomassimo, "Classi subalterne e organizzazione del consenso," in *Storiagrafia e fasciscmo*, eds Guido Quazza et al. (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1985), 99–116; Pierluigi Orsi, "Una fonte seriale: I rapporti prefettizi sul'antifascismo non militante," *Rivista di storia contemporanea* 2 (1990): 280–303.
11. One four-volume inventory of all "confino politico" sentences deliberately excluded homosexuals, midwives, Jehovah's witnesses, prostitutes accused of violating the racial laws, and other groups because they were not "really" political offenders. See Dal Pont and Carolini, eds, *L'Italia al confino.*
12. Carlo Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli: The Story of a Year*, trans. Frances Frenaye and Mark Rotella (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006).
13. Thomas Fuller, "Survivors of War Camp Lament Italy's Amnesia," *New York Times*, 29 October 2003.
14. Giuseppe Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of Revolutionary* (New York: Verso, 1990).
15. Paul Corner, "Italian Fascism: Whatever Happened to Dictatorship?," *Journal of Modern History* 74 (June 2002): 325–51. See also Paul Corner, "Collaboration, Complicity, and Evasion under Italian Fascism," in *Everyday Life in Mass Dictatorship*, ed. Alf Lüdtke (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 75–93.
16. Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004); Mimmo Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra: agenti, collaboratori e vittime della polizia politica fascista* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1999); Mimmo Franzinelli,

Delatori: spie e confidenti anonimi: l'arma segreta del regime fascista (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2001).

17. See, for example, Lorenzo Benadusi, *The Enemy of the New Man: Homosexuality in Fascist Italy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012); Alessandra Gissi, *Le segrete manovre delle donne. Levatrici in Italia dall'Unità al Fascismo* (Rome: Biblink editori, 2006); Giorgio Rochat, *Regime fascista e chiese evangeliche* (Turin: Claudiana, 1990); and Michael Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
18. See, for example, Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani brava gente?: un mito duro a morire* (Vicenza: N. Pozza, 2005); Giorgio Rochat, *La guerre italiane, 1935–1943: dall'impero d'Etiopia alla disfatta* (Turin: Einaudi, 2008); Davide Rodogno, *Fascism's European Empire: Italian Occupation during the Second World War* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare: Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002); *The Hidden Pages of Contemporary Italian History: War Crimes, War Guilt, And Collective Memory*, special issue of *Journal of Modern History* 9, no. 3 (2004); Carlo Capogreco, *I campi del Duce: L'internamento civile nell'Italia fascista, 1940–1943* (Turin: Einaudi, 2006); and Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, *Italian Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
19. Several local studies have provided this kind of close examination of communities under Fascism. See, for example, Lidia Piccioni, *San Lorenzo: Un quartiere romano durante il fascismo* (Rome: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 1984); Massimo Giuffredi, ed., *Nel rete del regime: gli antifascisti Parmense nelle carte di polizia, 1922–1943* (Rome: Carocci, 2004); and Luisa Passerini, *Torino operaia e fascismo: una storia orale* (Bari: Laterza, 1984).
20. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence*.
21. For an extended discussion, see Giulia Albanese and Roberta Pergher, "Introduction: Historians, Fascism, and Italian Society: Mapping the Limits of Consent," in *In the Society of Fascists: Acclamation, Acquiescence, and Agency in Mussolini's Italy*, eds Giulia Albanese and Roberta Pergher (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 11–20.
22. Paul Corner, "Whatever Happened to Dictatorship?"
23. Robert Gellately. *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy, 1933–1945* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Gerhard Paul, eds, *Die Gestapo: Mythos und Realität* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche-Buchgesellschaft, 1995); and Eric A. Johnson, *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews, and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

24. For recent work on squad violence, see Matteo Millan, *Squadrismo e squadristi nella dittatura fascista* (Rome: Viella, 2014) and Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde: Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadrismus und der deutschen SA* (Cologne: Böhlau 2002).
25. For local policing, see Jonathan Dunnage, *Mussolini's Policemen: Behaviour, Ideology and Institutional Culture in Representation and Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).
26. See Franzinelli, *Delatori*.
27. Alf Lüdtke, "Introduction," 4.
28. Albanese and Pergher, eds, *In The Society of Fascists*, 2–4.
29. Many historians have noted a radicalization of Fascism during the decade of the 1930s, describing a "totalitarian turn" or Fascist "social mobilization," especially during the second half. Most of the regime's most radical policies—invasion of Ethiopia, the alliance with Hitler, the Racial Laws, and so on—were implemented beginning in 1935. See MacGregor Knox, "Conquest, Foreign and Domestic, in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany," *Journal of Modern History* 56, no. 1 (1984): 2–57.
30. On political confinement, see Ebner, *Ordinary Violence*; for Special Tribunal sentences see Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il Duce*, vol. 2: *Lo stato totalitario, 1936–1940* (Turin: Einaudi, 1981), 46.
31. See Capogreco, *I campi del Duce*.
32. See Katia Massara, *Il popolo al confino: la persecuzione fascista in Puglia*, 14n5.
33. Carbone and Grimaldi, *Il popolo al confino: la persecuzione fascista in Sicilia*, 554–5.
34. For example, Messina, Cosenza, Reggio Calabria, Catanzaro, Salerno, Potenza. See Donatella Carbone, *Il popolo al confino: La persecuzione fascista in Basilicata*, 262–4 (Potenza); Salvatore Carbone, *Il popolo al confino: La persecuzione fascista in Calabria*, 520–7 (Cosenza).
35. This experience would also constitute fertile ground for an exploration of everyday life, yet it is necessarily beyond the scope of this chapter.
36. On Sardinia and Sicily, see Chief Director of the Police Division, "Appunto per la Onorevole Divisione Affari Generali e Riservati," no. 1150, 13 August 1927, MI, DGPS, UCP, b. 11, fascicolo 710–12/1926–1930, sottofascicolo 1927. On the mafia, see Salvatore Lupo, *Storia della mafia: dalle origini ai nostri giorni* (Rome: Donzelli, 1993), 203–25.
37. See Dal Pont and Carolini, eds, *L'Italia al confino*.
38. See Ebner, *Ordinary Violence*, 166–215.
39. See, however, the work of Valeria Galimi, "The 'New Racist Man': Italian Society and the Fascist Anti-Jewish Laws," in *In the Society of Fascists*, eds Albanese and Pergher, 149–68.

40. See Alexander Stille's depiction of Ettore Ovazza in *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families under Fascism* (New York: Picador, 1991), 17–90.
41. Federico Levi to Benito Mussolini, 13 January 1939, in ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, fascicoli personali, b. 565, "Levi, Federico."
42. T. Colonnello Comandante il Gruppo, Mario Quarcia, Legioni territoriali Carabineri reali di Torino, Gruppo interno di Torino, to Comando Generale dell'arma dei Carabinieri Reali, 27 February 1939, in ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, fascicoli personali, b. 565, "Levi, Federico."
43. Carabinieri reali di Torino, compagnia interna, to Regia Questura di Torino, 4 November 1938, in ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, fascicoli personali, b. 565, "Levi, Federico."
44. Levi to Mussolini, 13 January 1939.
45. Carabinieri reali di Padova, Divisione di Treviso, to Comando Generale dell'Arma dei Carabinieri Reali, 9 November 1932, in ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, fascicoli personali, b. 823, "Pradal, Germano."
46. Ibid. and Questura di Treviso to Prefetto di Treviso, 28 July 1932, in ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, fascicoli personali, b. 823, "Pradal, Germano."
47. Germano Pradal to Commission of Appeals, 9 August 1932, in ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, fascicoli personali, b. 823, "Pradal, Germano."
48. Prefect of Treviso to Ministry of the Interior, 13 October 1932, in ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, fascicoli personali, b. 823, "Pradal, Germano."
49. Capitano Comandante G. Battista Lagorio, Legione Territoriale dei Carabinieri Reali di Firenze, Compagnia di Arezzo interna, to Questura di Arezzo, 5 June 1940, "Proposte per provvedimento di polizia a carico di Brunini don Severo," in ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, fascicoli personali, b. 158, "Brunini, Don Severo."
50. Questore to Prefect of Arezzo, 31 May 1940, "Proposta di assegnazione al confine di Brunini Don Severo," ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, fascicoli personali, b. 158, "Brunini, Don Severo."
51. Carabinieri to Questura, 5 June 1940.
52. Questore to Prefect of Arezzo, 31 May 1940.
53. See Commune di Monterchi, "Stato di Famiglia: Brunini don Severo fu Oreste," in ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, fascicoli personali, b. 158, "Brunini, Don Severo."
54. Questore to Prefect of Arezzo, 31 May 1940.
55. Carabinieri to Questura, 5 June 1940.
56. See Brunini to "Commissione di Appello per il Confino press il Ministero dell'Interno," in ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, fascicoli personali, b. 158, "Brunini, Don Severo."

57. Mons Pompeo Ghezzi, Vesco di Sansepolcro, to Il Capo Del Governo, 20 June 1940, in ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, fascicoli personali, b. 158, "Brunini, Don Severo."
58. Prefect of Arezzo to Minister of the Interior, Direzione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza, Confino Politico, July 8, 1940, in ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, fascicoli personali, busta 158, "Brunini, Don Severo."
59. On such oppositional behavior and denial to authorities, see Corner, "Everyday Life," 79–80.
60. Carabinieri to Questura, 5 June 1940.
61. Ignazio Silone, *Bread and Wine*, in *The Abruzzo Trilogy* (South Royalton: Steerforth Italia, 2000), 327.
62. See Luigia Balocco to Queen, 10 June 1940, and to Mussolini, 4 April 1942, in ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, b. 63, "Bardina, Carlo."
63. See letter of Maria Lafasciano to Mussolini, 22 July 1936, in ACS, MI, DGPS, confinati politici, b. 173, "Caldara, Cataldo."
64. Salvatore Lupo, *Il fascismo: la politica in un regime totalitario* (Rome: Donzelli, 2000); see also Paul Corner, *The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion in Mussolini's Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), and R.J.B. Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy: Life Under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915–1945* (New York: Penguin, 2007).
65. The episode is recounted in Benadusi, *Enemy of the New Man*, 243–7.
66. Roberta Pergher, "The Consent of Memory: Recovering Fascist-Settler Relations in Libya," in *In the Society of Fascists*, eds Albanese and Pergher, 176.
67. Pergher, "Consent of Memory," 180.

CHAPTER 5

Reproduction

Alessandra Gissi

A Terrible Penalty

Maria C.: "Listen, where did you go all those times for that errand?"
Rosa S.: "Did you fall for it?"
Maria C.: "Yes." […]
Rosa S.: "In that case you should quickly write down the address. … It's in the Trastevere area […]."
Maria C.: "How much would it be?"
Rosa S.: "Give her one hundred lire."
Maria C.: "She doesn't take more?"
Rosa S.: "No. Listen, I am scared, if something were to happen to you it would send me to prison; look, I was about to die last time; they sent me to the hospital where they had to operate on me; they wanted to know but I did not say anything, so be careful."

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> Maria C.: "Alright, do not doubt me."
> Rosa S.: "But I warn you that nowadays there is a terrible penalty[1] and it was put in place precisely by Mussolini, and that is the predicament. If they find out, we are done."[2]

This conversation between two maids was intercepted during an investigation in the summer of 1928 into the operations of Elisa M., a midwife living in the popular Trastevere district of Rome. One of these maids was a 30-year-old "Austrian subject" Maria C., employed by the *Romano* guesthouse in via di San Basilio who, fearing she was pregnant, turned to Rosa S. Rosa was a 40-year-old woman who had come to Rome from Abbruzzo and was a maid in the *dei Pontefici* guesthouse. Rosa had already turned to Elisa M. in 1919 in order to obtain an abortion "via the insertion of a cannula." The operation had resulted in her hospitalization in the *Policlinico*, where her life had been threatened by a serious infection.

The midwife, Elisa M., had already run into trouble with the justice system in 1916. In fact, "following a denunciation she was arrested for helping a woman, Delia M., aged 27 years, to procure an abortion which resulted in her death." In 1917 she was sentenced to prison for four years and eight months, but was acquitted in a later appeal. The midwife's criminal record, however, did not stop her from continuing to practice abortions, and news of her service apparently continued to (secretly) circulate.[3] However, to what did Rosa refer when she talked of the "terrible penalty" that had been put in place "precisely by Mussolini?" Why would a maid believe that her reproductive sphere was intertwined with the will of the *Duce*?

Both the political discourse and the public cult surrounding maternity, which posited the bearing of numerous offspring as a service to the nation's destiny, had deep roots in the decades that linked the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Between the unification of Italy and the colonial mission in Libya in 1911, questions around the control of procreation and especially around the issue of abortion had become crucial issues within public debate and within judicial, penal, and medical spheres.[4] This was the period during which "medical justifications against birth control" and the "declared purpose of increasing the conscription of soldiers and colonizers" were consolidated.[5] At the same time, the liberal bourgeoisie increasingly came to understand maternity to be an inherently political issue. Indeed, "the almost exclusively biological formulation of the maternal function—which reduced women to makers of the *razza*—as

well as its connection to national interests" was a defining characteristic of the Fascist *ventennio* that followed.[6] Mussolini himself directly outlined this very notion during his famous Ascension Day speech given at the Chamber of Deputies on 26 May 1927. In essence a political and ideological manifesto of Fascist demographic politics, the speech enunciated the conviction that "power" lay in "numbers"; the nation consequently required extensive population growth. Such convictions were already part of the *Duce*'s ideological baggage, even if they did not form the most urgent and immediate of his political preoccupations before 1927.[7] At this point, Mussolini took "the entirely political decision to 'discover' that Italy too was affected by a slowdown in births and that this was to be considered negatively."[8]

The demographic policies and related propaganda had the (not unintended) virtue of being perfectly aligned with contemporary attempts to restore the *status-quo-ante* in gender relations, which in Italy as elsewhere had been forcibly shaken up and subject to significant tensions by the war. The urgency of reconstructing the *ordre de genre* can be traced, for example, in the writings of several doctors. One such doctor was Professor Furio Travagli—a student of the noted medic, scholar, and politician Umberto Gabbi—who wrote: "one can acknowledge that the European war and the influence of this dynamic period have in part modified the differentiating criteria [between man and woman], but [...] female sexuality [remains] *supra-individual.* [...] Sexual life (mating and procreation) absorbs every female faculty completely."[9] Indeed, it might be said that much of Fascism's gender ideology "hinged around a pro-natalist demographic campaign."[10]

The new Penal Code of 1930 gave legal sanction to the political emphasis placed on the power of demography and on women's roles and bodies as tied exclusively to the function of procreation. Article 545 of the new code added the offense of criminal abortion to a new category of crimes: those against "the integrity and health of the race." These crimes were considered in the *Titolo Decimo,* which included all offenses against procreation. The sole intent to abort, in other words the crime of instigating abortion through the supply of appropriate equipment, as well as the crime of abortive acts upon women believed to be pregnant, were also included in the law's provisions. Articles 548 and 550 provided for two complementary crimes, which introduced a variation in the law, undoubtedly indicating the state's intent to amplify its field of action and control: the first provided for the incitement to abort independently of whether or

not the abortion occurred, whereas the second considered personal lesions caused by the maneuvers performed on a woman *believed to be* pregnant.[11] In this way, maternity was definitively configured as a patriotic duty, while "the juridical object of the crime" was now, according to the law, "the interest of the State." As Alfredo Rocco explicitly stated in his *Relazione al Re* [Report to the King] regarding the new legal code,

> It is not negated that […] other interests are offended by so-called abortive practices […] like the offense against the life and safety of the unborn child […] or the offense against the life and safety of the mother. […] But it is certain that it has to be considered an offense against the interest of the nation to ensure the continuity of the race [*stirpe*], without which the very personal foundation of the existence of the Nation and of the State would cease to be.[12]

At the same time, through the *Casti Connubii* encyclical (1930), which conceived "marriage as a primary and natural right anchored in the procreative dimension," the Catholic Church brought to fruition the articulation of a discourse on the subject of conjugal morality and sexual discipline, which would significantly influence the twentieth-century public sphere.[13] In addition and simultaneously, Catholic elites embraced a vocabulary that explicitly connected procreation with the nation.[14]

"Everyone Knew and Nobody Talked"

Another incident was recorded in 1928. Isolina R., the wife of an office worker and the municipal midwife of Erba, was suspected by investigators of being "qualified in the art of obtaining abortions" and of having "ruined a number of young female workers, carrying out her perverse activity with great circumspection and prudence, usually looking for clients among adult women and those with families, thereby to have greater security and assurance of impunity for fear of scandals." The royal *carabinieri* officers investigating her case had to "overcome many demanding obstacles in the past year in order to be able to denounce her," and concluded that "everyone knew and nobody talked."[15] Indeed, the culture of silence, imposed by fear of criminalization on the one hand and social control on the other, was growing stronger. An analysis from the perspective of everyday lived experience shows that despite the renewed strategy of control and repression upon which the Fascist state had focused enormous organizational

efforts, abortion continued to exist, just as the midwives who could help procure it and the social networks that made it possible continued to exist. As one woman, interviewed by Luisa Passerini for her seminal oral history study of *Fascism in Popular Memory* in working-class Turin, remembered: "you went so far as to do a pretend wash and hang out the pieces of cloth used during menstruation for the neighbor, who wouldn't get suspicious … because you were even afraid of the air that you breathed."[16]

The criminal nature of the misdemeanor as outlined in the Rocco Code and the unprecedented repressive strategies implemented by the Fascist authorities constituted a genuine caesura with the liberal age,[17] but the examination of everyday practices allows us to see that the *modus operandi* around abortive practices instead reveal traces of continuity with the past.[18] Thus, under Fascist rule, there was an urgency to limit the phenomenon of procuring abortion, all the more so as maternity became configured as a patriotic duty and as "the juridical object of the crime" became, according to the law, "the interest of the State." Despite this, the extreme difficulties of finding what was effectively the crowning piece of evidence—namely the aborted fetus—and of ensuring a full confession constituted an impossible obstacle for the securing of convictions in the courtroom. What's more, the authorities were compelled to search for an alternative solution that might lead to potentially *exemplary* punishments.

In the event, the regime punishment of *confino di polizia*, designed to "isolate the classes harmful to society and the state system," was, according to the Consolidated Acts on Public Security of 1926, formally an administrative sanction. As such, it did not require the full procedures of prosecution and defense during the trial process. This made it easier to secure a quick prosecution than if the full legal process were followed. Thus it offered a deft solution, with the aim of achieving certainty in obtaining penal convictions against midwives accused of procuring abortions. As an administrative sanction, the recourse to *confino*, which eliminated "the elements of proof and of defense from the decision-making process of the judicial organs, effectively permitted police methods and political convenience to dominate the terms and conditions of repression."[19] As such, it is imperative to seek out the reception/construction of hearsay, which in the case of *confino* could easily be transmuted into *proof*. In fact, in the headquarters of the provincial commission for the assignment to *confino*—an effective substitute to the courtroom—hearsay was promoted to the status of proof and became substantive material sufficient to secure a conviction. In these cases, it was more a matter of *hearsay* than of, say,

constructing a bad reputation, which would not correspond easily to the widespread diffusion of the crime.[20] In fact, we can see from the *confino* sources that otherwise irreproachable mothers were also (and especially) embroiled in these affairs, as were qualified midwives, who were both enrolled in the regime's Register of Midwives and equipped with a Fascist Party membership card. Quite unexpectedly, therefore, these rumors and hearsay strike us not as residue of previous times, outdated and anachronistic to a modernizing society, but rather as the integrative material that allowed a particular procedure of justice to operate.

The Fascist investigative organs themselves, in a similar context, became particularly sensitive to stories and hearsay, setting themselves up as agencies not only for their reception but also for their creation, articulation, and diffusion. Both the inspectors for public security and the royal *carabinieri* remained attuned to local demography surveys and often found themselves facing reductions in the numbers of births as humiliating as they were telling, as was the case, for example, in Montalbano d'Elicona in the Messina province. Angela S. was a 45-year-old woman, the wife of an ex-*carabiniere* officer who at the time of the events described was the director of the municipal Electric Society. She was the municipal midwife in Montalbano d'Elicona and in 1933 was absolved of involvement in procuring a number of abortions due to insufficient proof at the criminal trial brought against her. The royal *carabinieri* of Messina reported that Angela S. was a woman of "decent education [… who] is able also to impede insemination thanks to the application of contraceptive methods." The *carabinieri* set in motion further investigations during the summer of 1934 in the hope of formalizing a conviction of *confino* against the woman, having arrived at their suspicions on the basis of the *fact* of "the perceptible diminution in the number of newborns in the town, given that from 289 births in 1895 the number has perceptibly decreased in subsequent years until it reached the figure of approximately 140 between 1925 and 1932."[21] Moreover, according to the verbal transcript of her trial, "by means of a payment of £5," the midwife appointed a certain "G., a woman of bad morals" to leave the bundle containing the aborted fetus "in a hidden spot within the walls of the cemetery."[22] This discovery contributed to cracking the wall of silence surrounding Angela's activities, who "with her cunning and the assistance of the code of silence or of reticence on the part of the interested parties [was able] to frustrate the objectives of the penal justice system." In fact, the role played in these events by "the code of silence and secrecy" effectively mirrored that played by the hearsay that had inevitably penetrated them.

Surprisingly, no forensic examination was carried out on the buried bundle. From the verbal records supplied to the Provincial Commission for the Assignment of *Confino* it seems that it was not the discovery of the fetus but the manner and the place in which it was found—within the walls of the cemetery—that had the desired effect of acting as a litmus test with respect to "town chit-chat." The place of discovery, so very evocative of witchcraft practices, was believed by the investigators to have worked particularly to activate that stockpile of rumors, judgments, and prejudices—a certified *topos*—that had long been associated with midwives.[23]

As an experienced midwife, Angela was equipped with a solid network of relationships—of the type described for this area of Sicily by the anthropologist Nancy Triolo—which had been built up thanks to her position within the local community. On the island, the midwife, whether self-taught or officially educated,

> took part in children's baptisms, acquiring the status of a sort of spiritual kin; she was designated as 'godmother' […] and rather than the father, mother, or godparents, it was traditionally the midwife who presented the newborn child to the community, when, at the head of the procession, she carried the child in her arms all the way along the road from the house to the church where the child was to be baptized.[24]

It was not least the midwife's willingness to practice abortions that encircled her within norms of complicity and even recognition and ensured her a public reputation that could not be unequivocally negative. Indeed, investigators focused their energies precisely upon the construction of bad reputations. Angela S. was accused of having recently bought the house in which she lived for the sum of 40,000 lire. Such wealth, according to the investigators, could only be the fruit of the performance of abortions, each of which would have cost around 500 lire. This was a high price that many women were not able to pay, as in the case of a village girl (Angela P.) who had apparently been encouraged by the midwife to insist that the sum be paid by "the individual who had impregnated her."[25]

In the end, the choir of rumors, which according to the verbal transcripts of the *carabinieri* "spread throughout the town," was made official in an anonymous letter addressed directly to the *Duce*. The letter indicated that "numerous women in that municipality habitually underwent abortions carried out by the municipal midwife, who used a particular herb, known as *elleburus niger*."[26] The emphasis placed on the use of a medicinal

plant points to the midwife's holding of specific archaic herbal knowledge, thereby, through the additional connection to the midwife/witch's supposed ability to 'hatch a plot', intended here as a secret or hidden event, reinvigorating the stereotype that linked midwifery to witchcraft.

Upon closer inspection, the regime investigators' task was somewhat demanding. In Susegana, for example, a small town near Treviso in the Veneto region, it took "months of assiduous work to plumb and penetrate a public opinion that was obstinately closed behind a dense veil of secrecy and silence" in order to obtain relatively little information on Carlotta M., a housewife suspected of practicing abortions.[27] The *confino* transcripts contain interminable lists of obstacles and frustrations that were similar across all regions and affected both urban and rural areas without bias. Another midwife, Maria A., was 51 years old in 1938, lived in Tortona, a town just outside the city of Alessandria, and oftentimes assisted the municipal doctor with his work. Although her house was "difficult to put under surveillance," according to the investigators, it was situated in piazza Duomo n. 1 and was therefore located in a central position within the community. Maria was described as being "exceptionally able and clever, [and] very much protected in Tortona." All the information that the *carabinieri* managed to gather about her came from "confidential" revelations, which made them inadmissible and thus worthless in a courtroom. These revelations divulged that the system used by the midwife was

> such that it leaves no trace […], a steel probe covered in a hard rubber case, known by the name of *cannetta* or *caterere* [cane or catheter], which is left in contact with the uterus in order to produce the reflex of abortive contractions. The consequent abortion leaves no lacerations and thus gives the appearance of a natural and spontaneous occurrence. […] With other clients she would use a nail with an ogive tip and recommend that the expectant mothers go on long bicycle rides until the movement provoked an abortion which would also have the characteristics of a natural and spontaneous miscarriage.[28]

The only piece of evidence at their disposal was the decline in the number of births, such that in the "ex district of Tortona, during the whole of 1935, 1936 and 1937 121 cases of miscarriages were reported to the provincial doctor […]; since the midwife Maria A. has been imprisoned, while awaiting the *confino* order, no abortions have been reported in Tortona."[29]

In their attempts to convert their ignorance into knowledge, the investigators were obliged to analyze the fine line that distinguished a spontaneous miscarriage from an induced abortion. In this, an effectual collection of rumors could be more useful than a forensic evaluation. The authorities investigating the matter oftentimes played on their ability to camouflage their activity and modified their language in such a way as to appear as an intermediary rather than investigative force aimed at the penetration of the world of "women's secret tactics," often—justly—considered to be impenetrable.[30]

Ancient Witches?

> The act that can lead to the victory of life over death, that can make of the newborn a healthy or wretched being, is that of the *ostetrica* [midwife]. […] Therefore only the most worthy are called to the task. […] These superb supporters of the demographic battle have rediscovered that beauty and that joy. We no longer have the figure of the ignorant midwife in perpetual battle with the very science that she declares to serve, humiliated by her very name, even more full of prejudice than the very same ignorant mothers, [a figure] who, appointed to that most noble purpose became the curious priestess of a mysterious and ridiculous rite. Confusing her marvelous mission with complaisance towards sin, she managed to become one of those odious beings that nineteenth-century reporters called *angel makers.* It seems as though a hurricane has swept away these miseries and these terrors, these close relations of medieval poisoners, these enemies of humanity, who, just like the ancient witches, truly deserved to be burned at the stake.[31]

Was this really the case? Had a hurricane really swept away those "ancient witches" deserving "to be burned at the stake?" And were these women truly "enemies of humanity" in the eyes of the men and women with whom they came into contact?

The immense difficulty of putting the regime's decrees, set out in its repressive legislation, into effect in everyday life derived from the significant discrepancy that existed between the brutal image assigned to the abortion-procurers and the effective diffusion of abortive practices that were most certainly not relegated to degraded or marginal milieus. These "harpies, authors of horrible crimes," clearly did not emanate the smell of sulfur. On the contrary, it was often midwives themselves who could lay claim to possessing the full spectrum of professional requisites. In 1926, in parallel to the organization of the national labor unions [*sindacati*]

instigated by the Undersecretary for Corporations, the National Fascist Union of Midwives was established. From 1934, this organization boasted its own magazine, *Lucina*, directed by Maria Vittoria Luzzi.[32] One year later, the passing of the Royal Decree-Law of 5 March 1935 required the creation of a professional midwifery register; membership of this register became obligatory for any midwives wishing to participate in any of the public competitions held for appointments to state-assigned professional practices.[33] The power and competencies of midwives, who from 1937 were officially termed '*ostetriche*', were diminished in practical terms and further subordinated within medical and political hierarchies.[34] It is therefore difficult to sustain the argument that the ultimate goal of these innovations brought about by the regime was to professionalize this category of workers. Without doubt, the mechanisms of coercion and control that these organizations were able to put in train had some successes. Nancy Triolo, for example, has shown that the number of women registered in the midwives' union grew from a few hundred members at the end of the 1920s to reach approximately 13,000 members by the end of the 1930s.[35] Given that enrollment in the Fascist Union was not obligatory in itself, Triolo interpreted the high percentage of midwives who joined up as a sign of enthusiasm for much longed-for professional recognition.[36] Even if union membership was not compulsory, it was in fact crucial to being able to practice the profession; this is evident in the story of Rosalinda R., who, despite "holding a degree in obstetrics, could not practice her profession since she was not enrolled in the Union due to her criminal record, and who, in order to get by, gave occasional medical assistance, and, according to rumors, performed abortions."[37] By exaggerating the importance of professionalization, the regime attempted to use the figure of the midwife to disseminate eugenicist regulations aimed at guaranteeing the birth of healthy offspring, but, above all, to control abortive practices.

Fascist rhetoric emphatically divided the "new obstetricians," guardians of scientific knowledge, from the "old witches", but also from free practitioners. Fascism also attempted to create a generational rift, attributing misdeed and carelessness of every sort, from the diffusion of puerperal fevers to the performance of abortions, to the old handy-women [*mammane*]. Such representations were entirely artificial constructs. The recent organization of midwives into federative syndicates on the exigencies of the Fascist regime could not have changed midwives so radically. Even prior to their fulfillment of a professional role, midwives continued to fulfill complex and multifarious social roles that were inextricably bound to longstanding, consolidated practices.

Giovanna S., "a midwife who graduated in 1903 from the University of Milan at the age of 22, with almost full marks, was then, as assistant to the Illustrious—now defunct—senator of the Kingdom, Prof. Mangiagalli, praised for [her] special talents of ability in assisting with childbirth and birthing mothers. […]." As she narrated herself: "I chose to recently graduate in pedology and received the highest grades from the *Opera Marternità e Infanzia*. Prof. Andrea Boni, director of the local maternity ward, can attest that during the war I volunteered at the local orphanage."[38] Giovanna S. asked that certain people who knew her well be heard as witnesses at her *confino* hearing, especially the "girls, abandoned by everyone" whose childbirths she had assisted and those who, unable to be accommodated in orphanages, were "helped in their search for identity documents and in meeting their midwifery costs." In her description of herself, Giovanna S. considered these merits, which fell between the spheres of caregiving and of welfare assistance, no less relevant than her strictly professional career. Within this narrative, the ample social roles played by midwives, who were at times able to guarantee a sort of individual welfare for assisted women, can be identified.

It is reasonable to suppose the above depiction(s) to be true, as it is realistic also to infer that such qualities were not unconnected to the ability to procure abortions. For example, Teresa Anna S. was assigned two years of *confino* by the Provincial Commission of Turin in 1929 while she was on bail awaiting her trial for having performed an abortion for an underage girl. The midwife's daughter wrote a letter to Mussolini, asking him to pardon her, and thus narrated the events that her mother had been involved in[39]:

> When you, *Duce*, know the truth, you will not defame my mother, you will understand her innocence. […] In 1924 a colleague of my mother from Cuneo came to her … she had to bring a child to the maternity ward, but, not being familiar with Turin, had to ask my mother for help. At the maternity ward the child was not accepted because it had been born in the province of Cuneo. Since I was an only child, my mother was moved by the situation and, following my pleas, we kept the child, […] who was given to a wet-nurse, to whom we paid 150 lire a month for a good three years. […] On 6 January 1928 a young woman in labor showed up and asked to receive the necessary care from my mother. On the 8th of January she gave birth to a beautiful baby girl and after three days the degenerate mother ran away from our house unnoticed, without leaving any trace and having left us with fake personal details. Yet again, moved by compassion, we decided to raise this

> little angel who is now 27 months old. Both these poor little creatures are so beautiful that I am convinced that if you saw them you would be moved, especially considering your generosity towards abandoned children.[40]

This scene is not so different from that described by Margherita Pelaja with respect to nineteenth-century Rome. Pelaja noted how: "to give birth to an illegitimate child, and even more so if one intended to abandon it, one actually had to be very organized: at the start of labor pains, one had to find a midwife, if possible one who could arrange intermediaries—these too usually women."[41] In the same letter, the young daughter of the midwife, demonstrating undeniable naivety, confirmed that her mother, as a midwife, had divulged her knowledge to her, teaching her "what one had to do" in order to interrupt a pregnancy. From this, one has the impression that there was no clear caesura between the normal caring-related duties and expertise in the field of abortions, such that the latter was conceived also as a form of assistance and *care*, as part of an understanding between women to solve existential difficulties:

> In the first days of June 1929 a woman that my mother knew came to her, a mother with a 14-year-old girl, both were in a pitiful state, both down on their knees in front of my mother begging. […] This woman's daughter, though still a child, was one month pregnant. They told my mother that it was a delinquent [who was responsible]. […] My mother, out of compassion and because she too was mother to a daughter, taught the wretched mother what she had to do to her daughter. It is true that my mother examined her and even performed a vaginal irrigation, for her cleanliness more than anything. […] For this mistake she was condemned to 2 years and 5 months of imprisonment and, what's more, discovered during the trial that the girl had been seduced by her own father. The father, who was the guiltiest of them all, was condemned to only 20 months. […] My mother appealed this and it is still awaiting a resolution.[42]

This story strikes us as being of increased significance in that it demonstrates the perpetuation, almost literally, of all of the habits already advised against by Louise Bourgeois, the midwife at the French Court chosen by Maria de' Medici to attend to her during her first pregnancy. In a 1617 pamphlet titled *Instruction à ma fille*, Madame Bourgeois advised her daughter that she would only become an *ideal* midwife if she eluded "the clandestine paths that solidarity between women could evince," by avoiding receiving laboring women in her own house or letting oneself be

moved or corrupted by personal stories of mistakes, undesired pregnancies, and betrayals.[43] Nevertheless, those "clandestine paths" seemed to remain stubbornly part of the everyday experience of Italian midwives into the 1930s and 1940s.

The difficulty of creating a functional divide between abortion practices and the multitude of services offered by midwives becomes even more evident when one examines the clemency request sent by an acquaintance of Giuseppina C., a midwifery practitioner in San Remo: "Once again we invoke mercy for the pitiful 70-year-old, who has suffered for some years in both prison and in exile [*confino*]. Observing that so severe convictions, which have emanated from various courthouses, stand in direct contrast to twentieth century science, this so unlucky woman, having saved hundreds of mothers during tempestuous nights and hurricanes, is obviously the victim of her specialized profession."[44]

Midwives continued to describe their expertise as multifaceted and many of them considered themselves capable of helping people in situations that were well beyond their own authority (which, moreover, given the Fascist regulations, was somewhat restricted). Isabella D., who was a midwife in the province of Venice, wrote that "for 24 years she had carefully and zealously carried out her duties as a midwife, even in the most terrible cases such as, for example, during the cholera epidemic of 1911 […] continuously at the bedside of those suffering from cholera," and that she had been, "a fervid Fascist who had been a card-carrying member of the Fascist Corporative Union for the Sanitary Professions [*Sindacato Fascista della Corporazione dell'Arte Sanitaria*] since its very beginning, with membership card numbers 384 and 850 from 1922, as well as a member of the first female *Fascio*."[45]

On the question of midwives, the authorities tasked with assigning the penalty of *confino* found themselves faced with recurrent paradoxes. Constantly sustaining that they were interpreting the will of the people by "eradicating such terrible weeds for the sake of the nation's wellbeing," they received letters such as the one addressed directly to His Excellence the *Duce* in favor of Irma B.:

> The undersigned citizens of Rimini have the pleasure to declare that Miss I., midwife of this city, […] has always shown herself to be a talented professional in her relations with them. […] To be truthfully honest, they have been very satisfied by the assistance she has given to women in labor and they beseech a provision of clemency for her […] so that she can return to

> carry out her functions as midwife with the tact and experience that make her so precious […] to the good and healthy families of the city.[46]

In the spring of 1929, the *carabinieri* company in Fermo arrested Giacinta A., a 37-year-old housewife who was "insistently indicated by public hearsay as being a woman who, in exchange for money, was able to carry out criminal and secret abortive procedures on pregnant women, married or single."[47] The woman, who was unmarried and lived with her elderly father, had been initiated "into the sad expertise of abortions by her mother, who, having procured abortions for other women, did the same to herself, which had cost her her life."[48] This story, painfully exemplary, contains within it a certain circularity: the mother, who has passed on her knowledge to her daughter, applies this to herself and dies.[49] However, the crux of the contemporary discourse on the female body is contained within this episode. Women have long assisted and cared among, by, and for themselves, through the repetition of manual movements, sometimes archaic in nature, which remain outside the realm of scientific rules and theories that have long preoccupied men.[50] The emphasis on the female body as a reproductive body, controlled by Fascism, probably resulted in reinvigorating the transfer of knowledge that in some cases was transmuted into a trade or profession, but which sometimes remained, unaltered, within the vaster baggage of knowledge inherited along matrilineal lines. As part of this, abortion practices remained tenaciously within the remit of midwifery care.

"Pulling Down Stationary Blood" [*Tirar giù il sangue fermo*]

In June 1927, Pasquina F., a 40-year-old midwife was arrested in Bologna, accused of "performing abortions on a vast scale" in her home. A number of women, "particularly those from Bologna, would come by in the morning and leave in the evening; others would stay there for a longer period of time."[51] The midwife's house was a sort of a clandestine clinic.

> Approximately three clients were admitted as patients each week. Shortly after being been operated on and having gone to bed, the hired help, [a woman named] Salvi, received the client's linens, which consisted of a bed sheet, gauze and rags, soaked in blood, to be washed immediately in the

> courtyard. The same servant would then bring the patients the typical breakfast for patients in such conditions, that is to say warm broths and cordials.[52]

According to the servant's very detailed confessions,

> halfway through last August, amongst others, a woman was admitted for an abortion, a certain Rina from Cattolica, with dark blonde, curly, uncut hair, very skinny, about 30 years of age. She remained two days, during which time she complained of strong pains in her abdomen and was worried that she would not be set free—to use her literal expression. When leaving the next day she said: I suffered a little bit but I have finally freed myself.[53]

The frequency of spontaneous abortions due to excessive physical effort or working conditions and the inevitability of resorting to the termination of a pregnancy in the absence of other contraceptive methods led often to an absence of feelings of guilt, as testified by the language used. Question of perceptions of guilt and of remorse were inextricably tied to questions as to what an *abortion* actually was.

There is no doubt that induced abortion, the practices tied to the act, and the debates surrounding it, have a long and complex history.[54] The term "abortion" is in fact a "mobile category,"[55] whose definition and identification depends on different elements, connected to the context and—last but not the least—to the complex question of individuating the degree of voluntarism involved in the act. Expressions like "freed," "clean," or "rid of," which are found in the police statements and testimonies, refer to a sense of liberation or, as in the case of "pulling down stationary blood" [*tirar giù il sangue fermo*] to the reinstatement of a situation of physiological normality.[56] Zeno Zanetti, a doctor from Perugia and folklorist of the Paolo Mantegazza school of thought, wrote in a volume published in 1892 and dedicated to medical practices and theories that circulated among the Perugian popular classes, that the expression that referred to an abortion was "to pull down."[57] Even the peasant women from the Cuneo plain used the same expression: "It was all a secret when we decided to free ourselves. They threw themselves down from the hayloft, my mother used tell me about her friends."[58] In her analysis of the experiences of abortion narrated by predominantly rural Sicilian women belonging to different generations, the anthropologist Nancy Triolo noted that the older women, born between 1892 and 1931, had a "surprising nonchalance and lack of remorse when talking of these happenings."[59]

Conclusions

The Fascist authorities thus appeared to be fully aware that induced abortions "dominated in the upper as well as the lower classes"; at the end of the 1920s, the true number of all abortions in Italy is quantified as approximately equal to 18 percent of all pregnancies—an increase that was mostly due to the rapid spread of criminal abortions. As previous studies have already shown, such figures are based more on hypothesis than concrete data. Of course, the true number of abortions actually carried out was much higher than the number recorded in criminal cases.[60]

Year	*Total abortions*	*Therapeutic*	*Suspected*	*Procured*
1932	65,679	2041	271	754
1933	68,440	1717	150	731
1935	73,754	1467	1425	15
1936	75,812	1317	2039	13
1937	86,011	988	2647	22
1938	90,334	894	2547	45
1939	91,987	847	1406	33

The Fascist regime tried to control the reproductive health and capacities of Italian women, to whom they assigned the exquisitely political task of "producing" children for the fatherland. However, such totalitarian aspirations to discipline reproductive behavior were very often frustrated, to the extent that the birth rate continued to decrease.[61]

Individual choices to facilitate or limit the number of births proved to be a highly complex field both for the Fascist state and, later, for historians to investigate because of their private nature but also because the passage of time leaves inconsistent and distorted traces of these decisions and acts, making it difficult to form a clear overview or to categorize these under a single heading (e.g., that of "resistance").[62] In fact, these *confino* sources individually and collectively relate the stories of how women, families, and communities interacted with norms, laws, discretion, control, repression, and violence. In addition, these stories recount how Italian women lived in a moment of profound redefinition of the categories of public and private, political and nonpolitical, spheres. In these stories, we see how women endured this redefinition but also how these redefined categories were performed and acted by and through them. It is possible that the entirely ideological importance attributed to bearing children, the new knowledge

surrounding childcare, and the introduction of more widespread schooling gave rise to a certain (unexpected) effect of making large families less convenient and of pushing women to have fewer children so as to be able to provide them with more.[63] Nevertheless, it is evident that Italian women demonstrated a capacity for agency to which the historiography has thus far paid insufficient attention.

What's more and finally, an examination of trends in everyday life helps us to better understand society in all of its complexities. Within the grand narrative of "modernization," considered valid at least until the 1950s, we find a depiction of an impersonal, atomized society within which the dimension of community has become obsolete "tradition" and everything is brought back to the dominant relationships between individuals and institutions. In this view, a theoretical separation—assumed constitutive of modernity—is supposed to have been effected between the private and public spheres, realized through the redefinition of means of communication. New tools and methods are assumed to have monopolized the ability to control and manipulate public opinion.[64] In the specific case of controlling reproduction in the 1930s and 1940s, an updated legislative apparatus and penal code, considered among the most "modern" and effective of tools, were added to the governmental arsenal. According to contemporary canons, these were held to have fundamentally recast and shored up both the function of procreation as well as, more specifically, a notion of motherhood transformed into a patriotic duty pertaining to the public sphere. Within this analytical framework, concepts like reputation, public hearsay, networks, and relationships have long appeared useless or obsolete. On the contrary, this examination of the everyday "lived experience" of procuring abortions under Fascism demonstrates that these remained obstinately center stage and testify to the complex interactions between individuals, communities, and public institutions.

Notes

1. "A terrible penalty" has been adopted as the preferred translation of the Italian "*un rigore terribile*", which in the original refers to both the process—the terrible experience of being suspected and potentially criminalized—and the end result—the criminalization/punishment.
2. The conversation was intercepted on 23 July 1928 and was subsequently transcribed. Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Fondo confino politico, Fascicolo personale "M. Elisa," busta 696. From here on referred to as ACS, F.c.p., Fasc. pers., b. 696.

3. It is worth mentioning that both Gittins and McLaren have connected a higher incidence of abortive practices and, more generally, birth control to areas associated with a female workforce where women could more easily access information, thanks to the relational networks created within workplaces. Diana Gittins, *Fair Sex: Family Size and Structures 1900–1939* (London: Hutchinson, 1982); Angus McLaren, "Women's Work and Regulation of Family Size: The Question of Abortion in the Nineteenth Century," *History Workshop* 4 (1977): 70–81.
4. Alessandra Gissi, "L'aborto procurato. 'Questione sociale' e paradigmi giuridici nell'Italia liberale (1860–1911)," *Genesis* 14, no. 1 (2015): 141–61.
5. Rosanna De Longis, "In difesa della donna e della razza," *Nuova DWF* 19/20 (1982): 176.
6. Chiara Saraceno, "Costruzione della maternità e della paternità" in *Il regime Fascista. Storia e storiografia*, eds Angelo Del Boca, Massimo Legnani, and Mario G. Rossi (Bari and Rome: Laterza, 1995), 480.
7. See Anna Treves, *Le nascite e la politica nell'Italia del Novecento* (Milan: LED, 2001), 136.
8. Ibid.
9. Furio Travagli, "L'istinto sessuale nella donna moderna," *Rassegna di studi sessuali demografia ed eugenetica*, May/July 1927.
10. Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-Century Italy* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 61.
11. Author's italics.
12. See A. Dolcini, "Codice penale," in *Digesto discipline penalistiche*, vol. 2 (Turin: Utet, 1988), 282. Alfredo Rocco was a legal expert and one of the principal theorists on nationalism in Italy. He was among the first to legitimize Fascism and served as the minister of clemency and justice from 1925 to 1932.
13. See Emmanuel Betta, "«De usu imperfecto matrimonii». Il Sant'Uffizio e il controllo delle nascite," *Quaderni Storici* 145 (2014): 163–4; Lucia Pozzi, "Chiesa cattolica e sessualità coniugale: l'enciclica Casti connubii," *Contemporanea* 3 (2014): 387–412.
14. In 1936, in a speech directed to the midwives of his diocese, Cardinal Ildefonso Schuster, archbishop of Milan, declared that "the right to life […] is not only a religious question, but also a social one, especially for the defense of the nation." Ildefonso Schuster, "Il diritto alla vita," *L'arte ostetrica* 3 (1936): 73.
15. From the verbal transcript of the assignment of *confino*, transmitted by the Questura di Como to the Ministero dell'Interno, ACS, F.c.p., Fasc. pers., b. 874.
16. Luisa Passerini, *Torino operaia e fascismo* (Bari and Rome: Laterza, 1984), 199.

17. On the attainability of induced abortions, Luigi Lucchini, professor of penal law at the Regia Università di Bologna and author of the entry for "Induced Abortion" in *il Nuovo Digesto,* wrote in 1884: "we lack recent data for Italy and thus the absence of detailed, uninterrupted statistical data prevents us from offering a survey of past years. We can only show that in 1869 (not including Venice and Rome) there were only 5 cases of accused induced abortions with 8 individuals accused, one of whom was acquitted. Of the 7 who were convicted, 6 were women, four of whom were married all under the age of 21. Five of them were illiterate. In 1870 we see an even smaller contingent. Only four convicts, all women, only one of whom was between 18 and 21 years of age and one other older than 60; 2 were single and 2 widows. All were working class and illiterate. This accords with the lack of maximum sentences (only 6) that we have been able to trace over 15 years. It is also explained by one or other of the following; either it is the case that in Italy it is very rare to have confessions to these crimes or it is the case that the law and justice are eluded and derided by the nature of the crime, the difficulty in obtaining proof and the precautions taken by the offenders." L. Lucchini, "Aborto procurato," *Digesto Italiano* (Turin: Utet, 1884): 106–23.
18. See Alessandra Gissi, "Between Tradition and Profession: Italian Midwives during the Fascist Period," in *Gender, Family and Sexuality: The Private Sphere in Italy 1860–1945*, ed. Perry Willson (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 122–38.
19. See Leonardo Musci, "Il confino Fascista di polizia: l'apparato statale di fronte al dissenso politico e sociale," in *L'Italia al confino 1926/1943*, eds. Adriani Dal Pont and Simonetta Carolini (Milan: La Pietra, 1983), lxi; Alessandra Gissi, "Un percorso a ritroso. Le donne al confino politico 1926–1943," *Italia contemporanea* 226 (2002): 31–60; Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary violence in Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). During the Fascist period many midwives were condemned to *confino* for being abortionists. On the magistracy's attitude toward abortionists see Denise Detragiache, "Un aspect de la politique démographique de l'Italie Fasciste: la répression de l'avortement," *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome* 92 (1980): 691–735; Guido Neppi Modona, "La magistratura e il Fascismo," in *Fascismo e società italiana*, ed. Guido Quazza (Turin: Einaudi, 1973), 125–82.
20. "In addition to 'honor'—and closely linked to it—were the concepts of public reputation (fame/notoriety), which were somewhat blurred and which, for women, went beyond the sexual dimension." Guido Ruggiero, "«Più che la vita caro»: onore, matrimonio e reputazione femminile nel tardo Rinascimento," *Quaderni storici* 66 (1987): 756.

21. Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Fondo confino comune, Fascicolo personale, busta 131. From here on referred to as ACS, F.c.c., Fasc. pers., b. 131. This case confirms the trend identified in Sicily which, with the lowest birth rate of Italy's southern regions, had already entered a phase of demographic decline in the first years of the twentieth century. According to Livi Bacci, during the years 1920–1944 the average number of children per Sicilian family was 3.82. Toward the mid-1920s, the birth rate was so low that an effective means of birth control was held to have been in operation, which Livi Bacci herself identifies as abortion. Massimo Livi Bacci, *A History of Italian Fertility during the Last Two Centuries* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1977). On the "control of the reproductive process" among artisans in the village of Villamaura in Sicily, see Jane Schneider and Peter Schneider, "Demographic Transition in a Sicilian Rural Town," *Journal of Family History* 9, no 3 (1984): 245–72.
22. The decision to involve a socially vulnerable subject, a woman who by her own admission was a prostitute, during a criminal trial against the midwife, surrounded by the notoriety of "bad morals" and therefore an easy target of rumors, is particularly useful to such investigations. On this, see Ulinka Rublack, *The Crimes of Women in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
23. See, for example, Maurizio Bettini, *Nascere. Storie di donne, donnole, madri ed eroi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1998). Sometimes the aborted fetuses were wrapped up in a blanket and left next to a cemetery or near a church, so as to guarantee their burial.
24. Nancy Triolo, "Famiglia, aborto e ostetriche in Sicilia 1920–1940," in *Madri: storia di un ruolo sociale*, ed. Giovanna Fiume (Venice: Marsilio, 1995), 247–65. The status as spiritual guardian, although an acquired one, made the midwife responsible for the child's wellbeing if this were needed. This ceremony is narrated by Giuseppe Pitrè in his monumental work *Biblioteca delle tradizioni popolari siciliane* published between 1871 and 1913. On the fundamental role of midwives, see also the novella by Luigi Pirandello, "Donna Mimma," *La lettura*, (January 1917); in *Un cavallo nella luna* (Milan: Treves, 1918); and in *Novelle per un anno*, vol. 2 (Milan: Mondadori, 1985).
25. ACS, F.c.c., Fasc. pers., b. 131.
26. This probably refers to the *Helleborus niger*, a poisonous plant known also as the Christmas rose. *Helleborus* derives from a Greek word, which indicates a deadly food. It should be remembered that in ancient poetry texts, the hellebore flower symbolized calumny.
27. ACS, F.c.p. Fasc. pers., b. 656.
28. ACS, F.c.c. Fasc. pers., b. 31.
29. Ibid.

30. On the indispensible recourse to the reception/construction of rumors, which in the case of *confino* were readily transmuted into *proof,* see Alessandra Gissi, "Voci che corrono. Levatrici, procurato aborto e confino di polizia nell'Italia Fascista," *Quaderni storici* 121 (2006): 133–49.
31. "Più pazienza che scienza," *Lucina* 8 (1934), 7–8. The Fascist Midwives' Union was founded in 1926, alongside other Fascist trade unions; its periodical, *Lucina*, was founded in 1934, under the direction of the midwife (and Union leader), Maria Vittoria Luzzi. '*Ostetrica'* has been left in the original Italian in order to avoid confusion with the usage in English of 'obstetrician' to designate a medical doctor specialized in obstetrics. In contemporary Italian usage *ostetrica* is synonymous with *levatrice* and indicates a midwife. As the entry for *levatrice* in the Treccani *Enciclopedia Italiana* of 1934, written by Paolo Gaifami, indicates, the *levatrice* is "the duly qualified woman who assists pregnant, laboring and post-partum women and neonates. One notes, in recent years, the desire to use the name of '*ostetrica'*, which has received initial official recognition from the syndicate, which is indeed termed the "[*sindacato*] *delle ostetriche* [Midwives' Union]". *Enciclopedia Italiana* (Treccani, 1934) http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/levatrice_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)/, date accessed 01/20/17.
32. The national Midwives' Union was abolished in 1944. On 28 June 1945, the Federation of Italian Obstetric Colleges was founded, as were the provincial midwifery colleges.
33. The Decree-Law was concerned with the "new juridical discipline for the exercising of the health professions" [*Nuova disciplina giuridica dell'esercizio delle professioni sanitarie*].
34. Until, that is, the creation of the "regulation for the exercising of the profession of midwife" [*Regolamento per l'esercizio della professione delle ostetriche*] in 1940, which rigidly regulated the behavior of midwives in 13 articles. See "Maternità e Infanzia," (January–April 1941).
35. The Union went from having a few hundred members in 1929 to having 5000 in 1932. This growth continued during the following years. In 1933 the membership numbered 7141, 8394 in 1934, and over 10,000 in 1936. Calculating that there were 15,972 midwives in 1936, the percentage that were members of the Union was around 60 percent. See "Rilevamento degli esercenti le professioni sanitarie," *Le forze sanitarie* 5 (1936), 45. According to the *Censimento generale della popolazione* of 1936, midwives instead numbered 15,954.
36. Nancy Triolo, "Fascist Unionization and the Professionalization of Midwives in Italy: A Sicilian Case Study," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 8 (1994), 267.
37. ACS, F.c.c., Fasc. pers. Rosalinda R., b.118; Archivio di Stato di Matera, Fondo Questura, II Divisione V.2 confinati b.67.

38. The midwife Giovanna S. came from a well-off family, with two elderly parents, a brother and two sisters, one of whom had married and lived in Switzerland. The other sister, who was single, was a Director of Education by profession and lived in Turin, as did her brother. Following her first appointment to a small rural practice near Milan, the midwife was first accused of practicing abortion in 1918, though was not charged due to lack of evidence. Subsequently, she was appointed as the municipal midwife in Como. In 1928 she was arrested and "after several days of detention and completely in the dark as to the charges that had brought about such a serious procedure" against her, she was sentenced to five years of *confino*. ACS, F.c.p., Fasc. pers., b. 960.
39. It is important to consider that all of the episodes narrated here were proven by the *carabinieri*'s own investigations.
40. ACS, F.c.p., Fasc. pers., b. 986.
41. Margherita Pelaja, *Matrimonio e sessualità a Roma nell'Ottocento* (Bari and Rome: Laterza, 1994), 74. See also Gianna Pomata, "Madri illegittime tra Ottocento e Novecento: storie cliniche e storie di vita," *Quaderni storici* 44 (1980): 497–542. On the controversial nature of Fascist politics regarding illegitimacy see A. Bresci, "L'Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia nel ventennio Fascista," *Italia Contemporanea* 192 (1993): 433–9; Maria Sophia Quine, *Italy's Social Revolution: Charity and Welfare from Liberalism to Fascism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).
42. ACS, F.c.p., Fasc. pers., b. 986.
43. Louise Bourgeois, the first female French author to write a pamphlet on obstetrics, published a number of manuals including, *Observations diverses sur la stérilité, perte de fruict, fecondité, accouchements et maladies des femmes et enfants nouveaux naiz* in 1609. In 1617, in a subsequent edition, she added a second volume, entitled *Instruction à ma fille*. See Giulia Calvi, "Manuali delle levatrici XVII–XVIII," *Memoria* 3 (1982): 114–6; Lianne McTavish, *Childbirth and the Display of Authority in Early Modern France* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2005). See also Wendy Perkins, *Midwifery and Medicine in Early Modern France: Louise Bourgeois* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1996).
44. ACS, F.c.p., Fasc. pers., b. 227.
45. ACS, F.c.p., Fasc. pers., b. 325.
46. The woman was exiled on the last day of 1928. While she was undergoing *confino* in San Fele, Potenza, she was acquitted due to lack of evidence of her involvement in the abortion by the court of Forlì, a sentence that was then also confirmed by the Court of Appeal. ACS, F.c.p., Fasc. pers., b. 82.
47. ACS, F.c.p., Fasc. pers., b. 26.
48. The woman, who underwent a lawsuit for helping a married 32-year-old woman have an abortion, was sentenced by the Ascoli Piceno Tribunal on

27 March 1929 and was sentenced to two years of prison, which never took place because the Tribunal awaited the Appeal court decision. According to the *carabinieri*, "despite this, she continued in her evil ways, such that she was involved in the abortions of N.V. and of A.V., a married woman […]." A few days later, she came face to face with the provincial commission of Ascoli Piceno and was sentenced to three years of *confino* and sent to Lipari. ACS, F.c.p., Fasc.pers., b. 26.

49. It is not possible to dwell on this argument here; however, the self-administered abortion achieved by inserting a stem of parsley into the uterus or the ingestion of quinine or magnesium sulfate was still very common at the end of the 1930s, even in big, industrial cities like Turin. See Passerini, *Torino operaia*, 196–7.
50. Calvi, "Manuali della levatrici," 114–5.
51. ACS, F.c.p., Fasc. pers., b. 421.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. "Abortion is therefore not ahistorical. On the contrary, its history is very complex," wrote Jean-Yves Le Naour and Catherine Valenti in the introduction to *Histoire de l'avortement. XIX-XX siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 2003), 15.
55. Emmanuel Betta, "Tra il non nato e la donna: le scelte della Chiesa cattolica," in *In scienza e coscienza. Maternità, nascite e aborti tra esperienze e bioetica*, ed. Patrizia Guarnieri (Rome: Carocci, 2009), 101.
56. According to Passerini, the expression "'*tirar giù il sangue fermo*' might also echo the ancient practice of phlebotomy (draining of blood) of the foot to induce abortions." Luisa Passerini, "Donne operaie e aborto nella Torino Fascista," *Italia Contemporanea* 151/152 (1983), 101. This refers to the only occasion on which phlebotomy, tied to a particular body part, was banned by the *Protomedicato* of Bologna during the seventeenth century, given that taking blood from the saphena vein, or the mother vein, represented a recognized means of inducing abortion, quite commonly put into use by *comari* and also by barbers at the request of midwives. See Gianna Pomata, "Barbieri e comari," in *Cultura popolare nell'Emilia Romagna, Medicina erbe e magia*, ed. A. Pizzi (Milan: Silvano, 1981), 162–83.
57. Zeno Zanetti, *La medicina delle nostre donne* (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1892). On the same argument, see also Passerini, *Torino operaia*, 208. Zanetti's work lists different names used to refer to menstruation, all of which were positive because they were considered a sign of good health and proof that one was not undesirably pregnant. See Raffaella Malaguti, *Le mie cose. Mestruazioni: storia, tecnica, linguaggio, arte e musica* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2005), 110–1.
58. Nuto Revelli, *L'anello forte* (Turin: Einaudi, 1985), 89.

59. Triolo, "Famiglia, aborto e ostetriche in Sicilia," 247. Yvonne Knibiehler wrote: "abortion was indeed practiced by women: women had always aborted themselves or helped one another when necessary and with no sense of guilt, since they were convinced that the fetus was not alive until it moved, that is, in the fourth month." Yvonne Knibiehler, "Bodies and Hearts," in, *A History of Women in the West: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War* ed. Geneviève Fraisse (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 345.
60. These were the figures published by the *Direzione generale della Sanità Pubblica*, while the "Notiziario dell'amministrazione sanitaria del Regno" (n.2) of 1940 reported slightly different numbers. On the argument, see Passerini, *Torino operaia*, ch. 4; Denise Detragiache, "Un aspect de la politique démographique de l'Italie Fasciste: la répression de l'avortement," *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome* 92 (1980): 691–735; Anna Muraro, "Figure maschili nei processi per aborto. Le sentenze del Tribunale di Perugia 1920–1943," *Problemi di Storia Contemporanea* 24 (1999): 201–26.
61. On resistance to Fascist pro-natalist policy see Chiara Saraceno, "Costruzione della maternità e della paternità"; Passerini, *Torino operaia*, ch. 4; Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women. Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). On the same theme, in relation to Franco's Spain, see Mary Nash, "Pronatalism and Motherhood in Franco's Spain," in *Maternity & Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s–1950s*, eds. Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 160–77.
62. Erwin Ackerknecht, *Medicine and Ethnology. Selected Essays* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971).
63. Chiara Saraceno, "Constructing Families, Shaping Women's Lives: The Making of Italian Families Between Market Economy and State Intervention," in *The European Experience of Declining Fertility: A Quiet Revolution, 1850–1970*, eds. John R. Gilles, David Levine, and Louise A. Tilly (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), 260.
64. Georg Simmel, *Sociologia* (Turin: Edizioni di Comunità, 1998).

CHAPTER 6

Consumption

Kate Ferris

In the aftermath of the First World War and during the so-called *biennio rosso* (1919–1921), when left–right political violence, strikes, and occupations of factories, streets, and squares marked everyday life in many Italian cities and towns, the high cost of living, or *caroviveri*, became one of the country's hottest political topics. Rocketing inflation and the first tentative steps to dismantle wartime controls on food prices and distribution led to violent cost-of-living riots in the early summer of 1919.[1] Debate over proposals to end the wartime bread subsidy even brought down the government (led by Francesco Nitti) in June 1920. From their inception in Spring 1919, Mussolini's Fascists made the politics of everyday consumption a cornerstone of their "project" to remake and regalvanize Italy. Styling themselves the defenders of ordinary consumers, blackshirted thugs marched down local high streets, including Via Condotti in Rome, examining the prices and provenance of goods on sale, often meting out violence to retailers perceived to have stepped out of line.[2] Their actions prompted the president of the Venetian Chamber of Commerce to wonder if the Fascists thought that their bullying tactics could "protect the price of every last chicken?"[3] Fascist concern with the price and

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availability of basic consumer goods, especially food, continued to the very end. The volume of informants' reports collated by the regime during the Second World War, recording their observations on the "cost of living" and "wine situation[s]" and directly relating changes in the availability of key foods and wine to the state of the "popular mood" and morale, demonstrates the continued degree to which the Fascist regime identified political acquiescence and support as being intimately tied to the state's ability to ensure for its population the ready provision, at affordable prices, of basic consumer goods.[4]

The Fascists' concern, both for the price and availability of essential goods and for their provenance, which should be Italian, was reflected in Fascist food policy throughout the *ventennio* (Fascist 20 years).[5] After early measures such as the dismantling of Socialist consumer cooperatives indicated to retailers that the new government might protect their interests, the Fascist regime moved to exert control over the retail trade. In 1925, as part of the drive to incorporate employers and workers into syndicates, shopkeepers were brought under the ambit of the Confederazione Fascista dei Commercianti Italiani. A year later the city-based Chambers of Commerce were replaced by provincial Economic Councils under state control.[6] The measures introduced from 1926, which re-asserted maximum prices on key goods, forced temporary shop closures and prevented the opening of many new establishments, made use of state-run cooperatives (a measure received with some irony by Socialists), and ultimately introduced licensing for all retailers, were prompted by fears of increasing inflation and aimed to reduce Italians' basic consumption levels. Such policies, which effectively "disciplined commerce" and cast shopkeepers as suspect societal pariahs, would-be defrauders of honest consumers, suggest that far from representing the interests of the Italian *piccola borghesia*, as many early assessments of Fascism assumed, the regime's concern was above all to "protect consumers from retailers."[7]

From the mid-1920s and (with far greater intensity) the 1930s, the regime's drive for autarky, which included national self-sufficiency in basic foodstuffs, projected the idea that austerity and patriotism must become the keystones of Italian consumer habits. National self-sufficiency in essential foods was seen as integral to the regime's imperialist and demographic policies. In the words of Elisabetta Randi, author of an autarkic cookbook, "the spiritual principle of economic autarky in fact lies in the very idea of the independence of the state and of the Italian nation."[8] A healthy, virile population able to produce soldiers in sufficient number to prosecute

imperial war would be achieved in part by controlling what people ate. Moreover, the conquering and pacifying of African land (in Libya and Africa Orientale Italiana [AOI]), idealized as vast swathes of potentially abundant, fertile earth that Africans were failing to cultivate effectively, was expected to furnish the future larder and bread basket of Italy's new empire. The move toward autarky was driven by large-scale industrial-agrarian projects to increase the amount of cultivatable land on the peninsula (e.g., via the land-reclamation schemes) and to improve yields, by restrictive policies to control and reduce what people ate, for example by closing down Italian export markets, and also by propaganda campaigns intended to persuade Italians to modify their consumer practices. In line with its connection to imperial foreign policy aims, autarky drives were frequently presented in militarized terms, as battles, like the "Battle for Grain" to increase Italian wheat production launched in 1925, or as a means to celebrate traditional Italian produce and customs, as was the case with the festivals celebrating the grape, bread, and national rice day. The regime's own Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR) and other scientific institutions were corralled into legitimizing the autarkic diet, which entailed less meat, less variety, and reduced consumption overall, as being better suited to the Italian "race" and climate. Toward the end of the 1930s, the CNR's food committee advised that Italian workers doing moderate labor required an intake of only 2500 calories per day, a figure significantly below the 3000 calories per day estimated by other national bodies and the 3400 calories per day recommended in Britain at the time.[9] Effectively, the autarky project meant that the Fascist regime attempted—with notable success—to reverse the tentative contemporary changes in consumer habits toward a more varied diet and increased consumption (particularly of meat), which the wartime bread subsidy had made possible and the arrival of international mass consumerism made a concrete aspiration. Instead, the measures brought in by the regime under the rubric of autarky put the beginnings of an increased and more varied national diet in jeopardy (e.g., by forcing the increased cultivation of grain to meet national self-sufficiency targets in that crop at the expense of the cultivation of other foodstuffs and by banning certain imports); indeed, the regime actively worked to achieve and made a virtue of this.

The production, sale, and procurement of food—a fundamental human need, after all—were eminently political issues. As such, the sharp distinction that Renzo de Felice drew in his volume of Mussolini's biography dedicated to "the years of consent" between "unrest […] motivated by

exquisitely economic reasons" (which would include, e.g., cost-of-living protests) and protest with "a political character and significance" must be recognized as blurred, at the very least.[10] This chapter examines the politics of everyday consumption in Fascist Italy from the perspective of how this was practiced and lived day by day and on the ground, so to speak. It narrows its focus to a particular moment of heightened state intrusion into Italian daily life and, specifically, consumer habits and practices—the reaction to the League of Nations' sanctions placed on Italy in late 1935 in response to Italy's invasion of Ethiopia—and how these played out in one (quite particular) Italian city—Venice. With the autarky project, and more broadly Fascism's totalizing project, underway, the economic sanctions placed on Italy were used by the regime as propaganda fodder and a pretext for restrictive and persuasive measures aimed at reinforcing the imperial "home front" and fundamentally reshaping families' consumer practices. This chapter examines the experiences and practices both of local producers of consumption policy (the Venetian Fascio and the various committees which oversaw the anti-sanctions "resistance") and of those who received and were charged with enacting these policies (shopkeepers and consumers).

What I hope to indicate in this chapter is the patchwork, piecemeal nature of one iteration of the practice and experience of consumption under Fascism. Local representatives of the state who were tasked with implementing the city's "defense" against the "iniquitous sanctions" did so with gusto, but the multiple committees and individuals responsible for "anti-sanctions resistance" could and did reach differing interpretations of what this entailed, consequently issuing confusing and sometimes contradictory instructions to Venetian shopkeepers and (mostly female) consumers. Equally these two groups, singled out as instrumental to the success of the autarky project, responded in multiple, often ambivalent, ways to the regime's attempts to place them and their consumer practices at the center of efforts to construct a Fascist home front and empire. Class, as well as personal priorities, whether of taste, social practice, or economy, often shaped the enactment and experience of Fascist food policy.

A secondary aim of this chapter is to point to some of the ways in which an everyday life approach adds to our understanding of how the "actually existing" Fascist dictatorship functioned. It is the contention of this chapter, and more widely this book, that by examining the Fascist regime from the perspective of how it was lived and experienced, focusing particularly

on how Fascist policies and ideals were enacted and practiced in everyday spaces on an intimate scale and how individual "consumer-producers" (to borrow de Certeau's phrase) responded to these, can bring to light the complicated, messy, fragmented—but no less fear-inducing and violent—encounters which constituted the lived experience of Fascism. Fascism moved in and out of people's lives; people moved in and out of the gaze of state authority, nationally and locally. Fascism did interrupt and fundamentally change people's lives, often with violence, but Italians did not feel the impact of dictatorship at all times and in all aspects of their lives. It was not consistently remote either. This chapter focuses on two groups of individuals, Venetian shopkeepers and (female) consumers, at a moment when the state sought to make itself particularly present in their everyday lives. The relationships and interactions between Italian consumers, shopkeepers, and the local representatives of Fascist authority, which are the focus of this chapter, provide examples of the kinds of everyday interactions where we find the "causal connections" that might bridge the gap, which has existed in historians' approaches but not in the lived experiences of their subjects, between macro-policies and the interventions of the central state, on the one hand, and micro-processes of negotiation on a local and human scale that might bring individuals closer to the state or achieve distance, on the other.

To do so, like many works of micro- and everyday life history, this chapter uses evidence gleaned predominantly from "official" sources, produced by representatives of the Fascist regime such as the local Fascio leaders and newspapers, for prescriptive and/or propagandistic purposes, as well as sources produced directly by those who received and experienced Fascist policy and ideology. Given the relative paucity of sources directly bequeathed to historians by "ordinary" historical actors and given the restrictions and (self)censorship imposed by a would-be totalitarian state, we follow the example set by Ginzburg, Lüdtke, and others to "read between the lines" of official documents, and to trace the "discrepancies" between the Fascist authorities' idealization and expectations of retailer and consumer behavior and the actual practices and modes of behavior engaged in by these groups.[11] As we will see, the pronouncements of the local Fascio and reports in the local press, despite lauding the anti-sanctions resistance, very often revealed significant gaps between prescribed and actual behavior.

Mobilizing Shopkeepers and Consumers "at the Battle Outposts"

Italy invaded Ethiopia, a sovereign state and member of the League of Nations, in October 1935. In response, the League of Nations imposed sanctions on Italy, which came into effect on 18 November and remained in place until July 1936, following the Italian declaration of victory and of the Fascist empire in May of that year. The sanctions prohibited member states from importing Italian goods and from exporting arms, war materials, and a range of other goods and materials to Italy, with the significant exceptions of steel, coal, petrol, and, in this context, food. While the sanctions had relatively little material impact on Italy's ability to prosecute the war in Ethiopia, they were seized by the regime as perfect propaganda fodder both to denigrate Italy's international rivals and, at home, to further the national project of turning Italians into Fascists. On the home front, much of this propaganda intervened in the consumer lives of Italians. Notions of autarky, or national self-sufficiency in key goods and materials, which already had strong Fascist currency, became top concerns. Following the announcement of the sanctions in October 1935, Mussolini took the opportunity of his speech on the occasion of that year's anniversary of the March on Rome to declare that "all Italians worthy of the name will fight and organize themselves in the most tenacious defense, they will distinguish between friends and foes, and they will long remember this, transmitting memory and teachings from father to son to grandson."[12] The sanctions were thus seized as a key opportunity for the regime's ongoing mobilization of Italian families into Fascist families.[13]

In Venice, the Fascist authorities took up Mussolini's call to organize defenses against the "economic siege." Using the city's newspapers and journals as a mouthpiece, the local authorities began espousing a raft of measures that the inhabitants of Venice, as in the rest of the peninsula, should undertake in order to fulfill their patriotic duty and help the war effort through what they ate, wore, and how they moved around the city. Two groups of citizens, in particular, were immediately identified and mobilized as crucial to the success of "sanctions resistance": shopkeepers and women, the latter assumed to be the chief controllers of family consumption. It was made clear to these groups that it was their patriotic duty to further the Fascist autarky project by altering their commercial and consumer practices, above all by selling and buying only nationally, and ideally locally, produced food.

Mussolini's insistence that "sanctions resistance" be transmitted down the patrilineal line, "from father to son to grandson," masked the degree to which the Ethiopian war and sanctions resistance campaign constituted a crucial moment in the regime's co-option of women into the Fascist project.[14] A national regime pronouncement at the end of October 1935 entrusted the "defense and retaliation against the sanctions" to provincial committees of women, particularly the mothers and widows of fallen soldiers, who would carry out their duties "house by house." Women would be at the vanguard of the "anti-sanction defense" as they were also its targets. As the *Gazzetta di Venezia* reminded its readers in November 1935, it was women "who frequent shops the most and who monitor most directly the fortunes of the family balance sheet."[15] As the assumed controllers of family consumption, Venetian women were reimagined as consumer-combatants, even if old tropes positing women as frivolous, wasteful shoppers still continued to condition Fascist rhetoric.[16] Both Victoria de Grazia and Perry Willson have noted that the organizing of women as the mainstay of home front resistance marked a new level of union between Italian women and the Fascist state.[17] From the perspective of how this "union" was actually lived and experienced by women themselves, its degree of success is open to question, but certainly from the perspective of the state, Italian women were placed at the center of efforts to resist the sanctions. Indeed, when the League of Nations finally lifted the sanctions in July 1936, Mussolini delivered a "eulogy to the women of Italy" from the balcony of Palazzo Venezia, lauding them for having made "every Italian family into a fortress of resistance."[18]

No sooner had the placing of economic sanctions on Italy been announced on 9 October 1935, the Venetian Fascist authorities began to organize committees, diktats, and propaganda in support of the "resistance against the sanctions." From the start, the imperative to enlist the cooperation of shopkeepers and consumers was recognized. The federal secretary of the Venetian Fascio, Michele Pascolato, acknowledged openly that the punitive measures to control and restrict the consumption of certain foods and the propagandistic efforts to promote "national consumption," though doubtlessly "a good thing," would not work "if Fascists and citizens do not contribute to ensuring the respecting of [the price bulletins] with the most uncompromising vigilance."[19] To this end, in addition to the pre-existing price control committee and the nationally-announced provincial women's committee, made up of mothers and widows of fallen soldiers, at the beginning of November Pascolato formed an

"action committee" to coordinate and apply the anti-sanctions measures, which brought together the leaders of the various Fascist organizations and unions (including the Fascio, Fascio femminile, Gruppo Universitario Fascista [GUF], Opera Nazionale Balilla [ONB], and the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro [OND]) with those of the Associations for the Mothers and Widows of Fallen Soldiers, for Veterans and for the War Injured, and the editors of the two pre-eminent local newspapers, the *Gazzetta di Venezia* and the *Gazzettino di Venezia*.[20]

The measures—which took the form of both punitively backed restrictions and propagandistic "advice"—encompassed myriad and minute aspects of day-to-day basic consumer practices and habits. Maximum prices for basic foodstuff, including eggs, fresh meat, milk, cheese, oil, pasta, rice, sugar, coffee, and bread were either reinforced or extended.[21] From 5 November, butchers were ordered to close their shops on Tuesdays and to refrain from selling beef, pork, and lamb on Wednesdays. In addition, from the same date, restaurants, hotels, *trattorie*, and railway dining cars were instructed to serve only one meat or fish-dish per meal to each customer.[22] Vigilance committees of GUF and Fascist Party [PNF] members (in some instances joined by the women of the Association for the Mothers and Widows of the Fallen) were established to check if shopkeepers were observing the price regulations and other restrictions; infringement of these was punishable by fines, enforced shop closures, and public shaming. Everyday rhythms were further jarred by the decree that changed the working hours of all public office employees (and thus the hours that these offices opened to the public), dispensing with the traditional long lunch break for a continuous working day from 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM (with half an hour for lunch). This measure was intended to save electricity and heating costs, but brought with it—according to the *Gazzetta*—the felicitous side effects of easing the daily commute of workers who lived in the city's peripheries (reducing four daily home-to-work journeys to two) and, at 4:30 PM each day, transforming the "white collar worker" into a "free citizen" at liberty to "devote himself to his family, to his children, to his house," to sport, leisure, or self-improvement.[23] In addition, the restrictions on opening hours were extended to commercial enterprises: for the next six months all food shops were ordered to shut at 7:30 PM (all other shops had to close at 7:00 PM).[24]

Fascist rhetoric and diktats directed at shopkeepers and women-as-consumers were framed in the language of patriotism, duty, and wartime sacrifice. Fixed prices for key foods and other goods had been a feature

of daily life in one form or another since the Great War.[25] In addition, from 1926 the regime had moved to "discipline" shopkeepers through the requirement that all wholesale and commercial retailers obtain—and pay for—a trading license and by reconfirming the imposition of maximum prices on basic goods by local state authorities, a measure backed up by "surveillance squads" tasked with checking prices displayed and charged in individual shops and with reporting repeat offenders to the provincial licensing committee.[26] However, with the arrival of the sanctions, the tone of the authorities' pronouncements changed and the penalties for infringement increased in severity; any merchant or consumer who infringed the sanctions resistance restrictions was declared nothing short of "a traitor."[27] Shopkeepers were informed that their patriotic duty was now to keep their shops well stocked with national products only, to refrain from any potentially speculative or hoarding activity, and to denounce any "eventual market abnormalities." What's more, they were also told to engage in practices that were likely to reduce their trade and could hardly be considered good business sense: to sell no more than "the right amount" of goods to each customer and to "encourage the public to be constant in their frugality and, where necessary, in their sacrifice."[28]

As those who "directly monitored the fortunes of the family balance sheet," Venetian women also received detailed instructions as to how their and their families' consumer habits and consumption practices should alter in order to meet the patriotic exigencies of the anti-sanctions resistance. Exhorted from all quarters to economize and buy only nationally and, especially, locally produced goods, the new duties of the female consumer were set out most comprehensively in the *Decalogo delle Donne Italiane*, a pocket-sized vade mecum containing 10 commandments of consumption for women to follow, produced by the Venetian Fascio femminile's anti-sanctions resistance committee, and including prefaces penned by Mussolini and Contessa Vendramina Brandolin Marcello, the patrician leader of the city's Fascio femminile.[29] The first four commandments mixed patriotic calls with practical advice, for example, to remove meat from family meals on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and not buy any in the preceding days; to buy only nationally produced food, clothes, and furnishings; and to reduce as much as possible consumption in all areas: "light, gas, heating, food, and especially luxury products." Commandment seven advised those with land or an "even minute" garden (relatively few in the Venetian *centro storico*) to grow vegetables and to keep hens and even goats so that "your little ones and [even] your neighbors'

less fortunate children" might drink their milk, which is "superior to that of cows."[30] Other commandments (five and six) sought to regulate women's behavior and lifestyles, urging them to renounce "useless pastimes or frivolous entertainments" and spend at least an hour per day making clothes for "less fortunate" children and Italian soldiers in East Africa. The final three commandments (eight, nine, and ten) made clear that, while the anti-sanctions resistance campaign aimed to engage women as political agents perhaps as never before—the "union" described by Victoria de Grazia—that engagement was always intended to restrict women's roles as Fascist agents to the confines of the domestic household and women's relational roles within the family. Commandment eight insisted that it was a woman's duty to read newspapers and keep up to date with current affairs in order that they continue to be "the central point to whom, on each and every occasion, her family resorts."[31] Commandment nine directly addressed "mothers," telling them to "raise your children as the Duce desires" by having Mussolini's portrait hanging in their home and talking to their children of him in order that "they love him as he loves them," thus casting Mussolini as a kind of benevolent grandfather. Commandment ten addressed women in all of their familial roles: "mothers, wives, sisters, fiancées of Italy. Be strong, be good, be always smiling because the courage and faith of our soldiers depends on you; therefore, in part, the greatness of Italy depends on you."[32]

The identification of wealth- and class-based distinctions was key to shaping the official propaganda on consumption under the sanctions (and also, as we will see, to conditioning individuals' responses to the sanctions resistance measures). The stated aim of the anti-sanctions resistance committees was to alter the consumer practices of all Italians—"a vast and effective propaganda campaign in every little center of civil and provincial life"[33]—but the women of the Fascio femminile, bound by the traditional mentalities of aristocratic and upper-middle class charitable activity, also made clear that the intended recipients of their propagandistic efforts (after examining the consumerist habits of their own households and "the formation of the Fascist family") were the "working classes: simple and sincere classes that often only await the word that dissipates ignorance."[34] However, this belied the tacit acknowledgement that in reality, efforts to increase "national consumption" and, especially, to alter consumer practices that would entail less variety and luxury would need to be channeled toward the middle and upper-middle classes, whose consumption was more conspicuous and who were more likely to be "culpable" of buying

foreign goods; it was not the *popolani* of Castello and Cannaregio who ate more than one meat- or fish-dish per restaurant sitting or who purchased jars of English mustard, "Russian caviar and French cognac."[35] In line with the regime's anti-bourgeois campaign spearheaded by Achille Starace from the mid-1930s, the sanctions resistance propaganda and pronouncements were intended to divest middle-class Italians of those habits and practices that were judged to be holding back the fulfillment of Fascism's totalizing project. As the Venetian anti-sanctions committee declared,

> In the city, particular efforts will be made to induce every woman to abandon non-national products: we will ensure that within the family, foreign languages are not spoken out of snobbery, we'll ban certain exotic newspapers, we'll ensure that at 5pm the excellent *The Ati*, [Italian brand of tea] is served, and if there remains at home a stock of Russian or English tea we'll use it for our own consumption, but not offer it to friends gathered for conversation.[36]

These instructions demonstrate that there were limits to the regime's intentions to intervene in domestic consumption and that exceptions to the rule marked the resistance campaign from the off. The regime expected to be able to dictate what language was spoken and which newspapers were read "within the family." However, while foreign brand tea was to be banished from sitting rooms when in company, that is, when the home became a semipublic space, those same foreign teas could still acceptably be consumed when guests were not present and the "privacy" of the home was restored. Such leaps of logic were echoed by the local Fascio when it issued its own instructions via the *foglio d'ordine*: "We are, however, intelligent people: foreign goods that have already been paid for and are already in our homes are by now national assets and hence should be consumed."[37] The issuing of contradictory and changing messages only intensified as the sanctions resistance campaign progressed, making it tricky for consumers to be sure exactly which everyday practices would, and would not, conform to the expectations of the Fascist authorities.

The direct appeals to both shopkeepers and women consumers emphasized their place "at the battle outposts" of the anti-sanctions resistance and thus in defense of Fascism's autarky project.[38] Both were entrusted with bringing about national self-sufficiency in foodstuff and with its corollary aim of effecting the transformation of Italian families into Fascist families. As the leader of the Venetian Fascio, Michele Pascolato, had said,

the sanctions-busting price restrictions and other regulations could not succeed without them.[39] However, at the same time both groups were also viewed with suspicion and identified as potential impediments to, as well as instruments of, the anti-sanctions and wider autarky campaign. Already on 12 October 1935, over a month before the coming into force of the sanctions and in the same breath as Pascolato's insistence on popular adherence and vigilance as key to the autarky project's success, *Italia Nova* suggested that the source of any "potential violations" would be "unscrupulous merchants."[40] Such invectives, which imagined shopkeepers as venal would-be hoarders and speculators, built on long-held stereotypes and narratives. In the aftermath of the 1919 cost-of-living riots, shopkeepers had been vilified by both left and right, labeled "starvation-mongers" by the Socialist daily, *Avanti*, and decried as "thieves!" and "a sort of dictator" for their control of consumer access—at a price—to decent-quality basic goods by the Fascists.[41] Although moments of overlapping interests and collaboration did shape relations between Fascists and retailers through the early to mid-1920s as Fascism came to power and moved toward dictatorship, especially via the Confederazione Generale Fascista del Commercio Italiana (the "Fascist" added to its title in 1925) led by Ercole Cartoni, the hostility of the "early encounters" between the two groups persisted and intensified. Popular images of profiteering merchants who sold basic goods "at prices so exaggeratedly high that it is enough to make you pull your hair out in despair" proliferated in the mid-1920s as salaries failed to keep up with rising prices and built expectations on the regime to "crack down on merchants."[42] These expectations were somewhat met with the measures introduced by the regime to combat inflation at the mid-decade including the establishment of (and reclamation of old Socialist) consumer cooperatives to undercut the price of bread sold by bakers on the commercial market as well as the licensing system and extension of maximum price regimes for basic goods established at the close of 1926, already mentioned. Indeed, some of the measures brought in during the summer of 1926, intended to reduce consumption as part of the "Battle for the Lira," including the obligation on butchers' and bakers' shops to close continuously for 36 hours and the prohibition of restaurants from serving meat dishes on Fridays, effectively foreran the restrictions introduced at the mid-point of the following decade in the wake of the League of Nations' sanctions.[43]

Women shoppers equally had the potential to engage in suspect consumer practices. When, in early November, the *Gazzetta* happily described

the removal of foreign brands, goods, and signs from shop windows and displays about the city, it observed that the shops which stubbornly continued to advertise foreign-made goods were "precisely those shops that prosper thanks to the luxury expenditures of women: above all perfumes, face powders, rouges and such things."[44] The ideal-type woman had been recast as a consumer-combatant, shopping in the service of national greatness, but the alter-image of female consumers as frivolous spendthrifts continued to surface in official attitudes and rhetoric.[45] What's more, the Venetian Fascist authorities sought to set shopkeepers and consumers against one another, enlisting each as "informants" of any malpractices being engaged in by the other and to ensure the others' compliance. In January 1936, *Italia Nova*, the *foglio d'ordine* of the Venetian Fascio, wrote,

> Speculators and those who are ill-intentioned and cunning cannot prosper under vigilance. If someone tries to escape detection, without doubt they will be caught. But in order to achieve this aim of control from above, we must rely precisely on everyday experience. The person who does the shopping, who has to think about nourishing their family, stands at the outposts of the battle for prices. It is he (or rather she, because it is almost always women who do the shopping) who must raise the alarm and inform the Regime's organizations [of infractions]. The Party absolutely does not intend to fight alone: are not the people who work and consume the backbone of the party? They must also mobilize in this sacrosanct defense of prices![46]

Consumer Practices During the "Economic Siege"

Venetian shopkeepers and consumers responded in varied, often ambivalent and contradictory, ways to the regime's attempts to place them and their consumer practices at the center of efforts to use sanctions resistance to construct a Fascist home front and, thus, build its empire. The local press presented 18 November 1935, the day the sanctions came into effect, as a quasi-festive day, describing a city "literally covered with tricolors until evening," with shop windows displaying portraits of King and Duce, students processing from Piazza S. Marco to Cà Littorio (the city PNF headquarters), and school children having their lessons interrupted to hear the Fascist Great Council's deliberations, to sing patriotic and Fascist songs, and to swear oaths of loyalty to the regime in the school

courtyard.[47] For many Venetian businesses, the sanctions and sanctions resistance presented a chance to both demonstrate their patriotic credentials and to capitalize on any opportunity for profit that these afforded. Local companies advertised their goods under banners urging readers: "buy Italian products!"[48] Others took actions which purported to illustrate adherence to anti-sanctions resistance through the disregard of commercial interests. To coincide with the coming into force of the sanctions, local butchers closed their shops for four days running "out of respect" for the new dispensation limiting the sale and consumption of meat. They also "sent back" to Yugoslavia all the supplies of *castradina,* salami made from wild boar, which had arrived in anticipation of the Venetian festival "*della Salute*" (21 November) with which it was traditionally associated. That the *festa della Salute*'s traditional dish had been absent from the city's homes and restaurants before, during the 1849 siege and again during the Great War, served only to reinforce the nobility of the shopkeepers' sacrifice, linking it to those looming *luoghi comuni* of nationalism. In addition, the city's *trattorie* reportedly went beyond the requirement that they serve customers only one meat-dish per sitting and set about removing foreign foods, including wines, desserts, sauces, and mustards of English and French provenance, from their menus all together.[49]

However, not all Venetian shopkeepers adopted the sanctions resistance measures with similar fervor. Despite the ramping up of the rhetoric labeling those who failed to adhere to the provisions of the anti-sanctions committees "traitors," many Venetian shopkeepers (and consumers) chose to prioritize economics over politics. The number of "shopkeepers who are still slaves to a mentality and a conscience that is absolutely incompatible with the times we live in," that is, shopkeepers and merchants found to have engaged in speculative or hoarding activities, to have sold restricted goods, such as foreign foods, or meat on a Tuesday or Wednesday, or goods at prices higher than those set by the local price committee, seemed to prove founded the concerns expressed by Michele Pascolato about "unscrupulous merchants" derailing the resistance effort. Already on 12 November 1935, just less than a week before the official introduction of the sanctions, the discovery and punishment of the first merchants and shopkeeper to be found having flouted the new regulations was announced. The "price vigilance squad" made up of Fascists from the San Polo branch responded to a tip-off that the Bertotto Aquilino firm was continuing to import fish from a "sanctionist state" despite several warnings, requisitioning 180 kilos of fish which they then sold at the

Pescheria, donating the profits made to the state welfare agency (the *Ente Opera Assistenziale* EOA).[50] On the same morning, the "price vigilance squad" surprised fish seller Augusto Tagliapietra selling fish to customers at a marked-up price and punished him by publically shaming and forcing him to sell at the wholesale price.[51] Over the following weeks, the punishments for anti-sanctions resistance infractions became less improvised, while the number of shopkeepers brought before the Prefect continued to grow—over a hundred local butchers and grocers by the end of the winter.[52] By way of example, on 20 November 1935, 11 shopkeepers were punished in this way; the following day another 5 shopkeepers were penalized. Amadeo Corso, Giovanni Folin, and Folador Adalberto, who kept shops in Dorsoduro, were ordered to shut down their shop for one day for having sold eggs at prices higher than the decreed L1.20 per pair. Scarpa Sante paid the same penalty for having sold *radicchio* at L1.50 on his Rialto stall, considered an excessive markup from its wholesale price, as did the Castello-based butcher Aristide Scarpa in his case for selling beef at L3.90 rather than L3.60 per kilo.[53] At the end of January 1936, the local Fascio still found itself lamenting the evidence "of the persistence on a mass scale of a mentality we thought overcome" provided by the number of shopkeepers and merchants evidently "failing in their duty."[54] They were particularly incensed, for example, by the arrival of ten cases of Gordon's London Dry gin at Venice's Santa Lucia station in April 1936.[55]

The responses of Venetian consumers to the anti-sanctions resistance measures were similarly mixed. The new restrictions on daily diets, which envisaged greater austerity and monotony in what people ate and (sometimes contradictorily) emphasized both national and reduced consumption, especially of "luxurious" foods, were experienced differently and engendered diverse reactions. What and where Venetians ate obviously varied according to their socioeconomic status. Certain food items, particularly those associated with local festivals such as the sweet and sour fried fish (*sarde in saor*) eaten on the *festa del Redentore* in July, crossed socioeconomic divides. Some of the city's *osterie* attracted customers among both rich and poor, like the Osteria da Capon near Campo Santa Margherita, once the site of a convivial encounter between local Socialist leader Angelo Vianello and the then President of the Council of Ministers, Luigi Luzzatti, and the Osteria da Codroma in fondamenta Briati, the preferred dining location of the "*sette savi*," an informal group of Venetian nationalists which included the city and national politician and prominent exponent of local industrial-capitalist interests, Piero Foscari.[56] As Maria

Damerini, the glamorous wife of the editor of the *Gazzetta di Venezia*, Gino, later noted, "in those years it was considered stylish to frequent taverns [*osterie*] ('La Vida,' 'L'orso,' and so on), making them fashionable."[57] However, while the Venetian aristocracy and upper-middle class also regularly dined (on French cuisine) at fashionable hotel restaurants on the Lido and along the Grand Canal, the everyday diet of Venetian *popolani* revolved around polenta, rice, vegetables, and legumes, with little fish and meat. This meant, of course, that the impact of sanctions resistance on food consumption varied accordingly.

As has been noted, the directors of the anti-sanctions resistance campaign in the city were well aware that their propaganda to eliminate "caprices" of consumption would need to be directed "particularly at the wealthier classes because especially those who have a lot of money can make greater savings."[58] Two months into the sanctions resistance and the suspicion that the consumer habits of the well-off would prove most stubbornly resistant to change seemed to be coming to pass. *Italia Nova* declared that poorer Venetians had adapted well to the new dietary restrictions.[59] The typical *popolano* diet as described in the memoir of Marghera resident Antonio Baldo was already characterized by austerity and a lack of variety (though it is interesting to note that, in his memoir, Baldo specifically associated this diet with "the state of autarky imposed on the country by the Fascist government for the war conducted in Ethiopia").

In 1936–1937, at the family meal table, was prepared:

> In the morning, barley coffee boiled Turkish-style in a pan, with bread. Not always was there milk.
>
> Lunch varied from beans with pasta, rice and […] peas, […] rice and potatoes, *pastasciutta*. We children were also given half a slice of bread with jam or, alternatively, *mortadella*, the cheapest of the sausages. Same in the evening.
>
> Sundays were distinguished by soup made with beef broth.
>
> Only on feast days did we eat with less limitation, and for that reason we awaited such occasions anxiously. Steak: I never set eyes on it![60]

Having praised the adaptability of Venetian *popolani*, *Italia Nova* turned its ire to "those who have instead demonstrated a dangerous tendency to desertion, [that] is the wealthy class: to be clear, the bourgeoisie."[61] Indeed, the Venetian Fascio spent much of winter 1935–spring 1936 issuing reprimands of what they called "bourgeois" tendencies to hoard

everyday goods such as pasta, rice, cheese, and coffee. "In fact, there are some families," Pascolato spluttered during one of these, "who, worried about an alleged scarcity of goods and consequent increase in prices, are obsessed by the fear of soon not being able to find anything [in shops]."[62] Similarly, the prefecture outlined its own concern about the number of Venetian housewives whom it said were simply not respecting the limits placed on consumption and asked the local population to denounce episodes of disobedience to the authorities.

> A malevolent spirit has whispered in our ear that not every housewife passed by the fishmongers, nor did every housewife take herself off to the Rialto to procure a main course of cheese or vegetables. Is it possible that some families yesterday [a Tuesday] ate beefsteak or a veal chop placed in an icehouse the night before; perhaps in that of an obliging butcher?[63]

This pronouncement in particular articulated the concern that the relationship between "housewife" and "obliging butcher" was one that remained ultimately impenetrable to the state. Such "neighborhood ties between patron and proprietor" were indeed resilient. According to Jonathan Morris, relationships between shopkeeper and consumer had long been consolidated not least through the "near-universal provision of customer credit," even to wealthy clients whose financial situations did not make this a tactic for family survival.[64] Contemporary resident Maria Damerini confirmed that in Venice, whose topography and housing stock ensured that rich and poor inhabited the same streets, squares, and sometimes the same building, clientalist neighborhood networks endured.[65]

Other evidence suggests that many wealthy Venetians did indeed embrace the new duties to consume patriotically, even if they sometimes came up with rather dubious ways of achieving this. The aforementioned Maria Damerini, who was a meticulous diary-keeper, described not only how her consumption of clothing and other fashionable goods and those of her high-society friends changed with the sanctions—"What Coco Chanel did for France, the sanctions did for Italy"[66]—but also how the eating habits of her social set were altered. "To deprecate the sanctions," she wrote, "Anna and Francesco Malipiero came to lunch one day more often than the usual once per week."[67]

Venetian consumers' responses to the state's calls for changes to their consumer practices encompassed episodes of non-compliance as well as the persistence or intensification of pre-existing habits; some modes of

behavior intended to bring practices into line with the state's new requirements, others intended to evade or simply ignore these. To complicate matters, both for contemporaries deliberating potential courses of action and for historians trying retrospectively to understand these, the propagandistic messages that emanated from the various bodies directing the anti-sanctions resistance campaign—the price regulation committee; the anti-sanctions committee; the Fascio and its organ, *Italia Nova*; the Fascio femminile; the editors and journalists of the city's newspapers; the "price vigilance squads" active in each *sestiere* of the city, and so on—lacked coherence, and at times were contradictory. Inconsistent messages often resulted in real confusion among consumers as to the forms of behavior that constituted resistance to the sanctions. The Damerinis' and Malipieros' tactic of lunching together more frequently as an act of anti-sanctions resistance provides an illustration of this. Holding more luncheon parties rather than fewer surely contravened the regime propaganda, for example, set out in the *Decalogo delle Donne Italiane*, to economize in all areas of the household and to eliminate bourgeois pastimes and entertainments. That these couples chose to express their solidarity with the sanctions resistance campaign precisely by engaging in the kind of "bourgeois" activity that was now frowned upon, underscores the potential for misunderstanding and the range of personalized, often conflicting interpretations of anti-sanctions resistance that were reached by individual Venetians.

The range of personalized interpretations of what might constitute sanctions-resistant modes of behavior was compounded by the ambiguous and, indeed, contradictory instructions that were laid out by the various sanctions resistance "experts" and committees. Above all, the various regime-sanctioned agencies and bodies were unclear as to whether "national consumption," which all Italians were now expected to engage in, entailed a reduction in overall consumption or simply a transferal of consumer habits from goods produced internationally to those made in Italy and, ideally, locally. The initial advice given out immediately following the declaration of the sanctions in October 1935 had focused predominantly on encouraging parsimony and a reduction in people's consumption of basic goods, as well as more luxury items. The *Gazzetta* advocated the adoption of "an almost Spartan way of life, this being the only way to resist the foolish and inhuman foreign pressures."[68] The sum of "national consumption" was that Venetian consumers should "limit as much as possible" essential spending and "eliminate completely those costs that can be declared useless, especially if they refer to products imported from

sanctionist countries." Measures such as the publication of the *Decalogo delle Donne Italiane* followed this interpretation of austerity and reduced consumption as the hallmarks of sanctions resistance.

Only days later, however, the dispensers of sanctions resistance instructions, particularly those in the local press, began to backtrack on their advice to consumers to be thrifty, "make [their] own" and aim for "self-sufficiency." Rather than retreating from the marketplace into increased austerity and self-sufficiency, the revised course of action now being pressed on Venetians was to maintain and even increase their spending and consumption, but only of "national products."

> Abstention from buying foreign goods—whether from sanctionist or non-sanctionist countries—does not mean abstention from purchasing local products that can very well substitute for the former. Male and female consumers must not aggravate the discomfort of producers and workers through a misunderstood sense of discipline. The discipline that is required of us in this moment is very different from that which is usually understood. It is a discipline that many of our women have already understood perfectly.[69]

A remorseful article by the *Gazzetta*'s fashion correspondent and published on 23 December, which apologized for earlier advice to readers to repair and make their own clothes instead of recognizing the need to support the Italian fashion industry with "open hearts," hints at one source of this change in tone: "industrialists" who had accused the writer of "defeatism" in her earlier advice. Certainly, the local Fascio and, following its lead, the local press came to identify reduced consumption with a lack of patriotism almost on par with those shopkeepers and consumers accused of speculating, hoarding, and continuing to sell and buy foreign goods. The local Fascist *foglio d'ordine* spat that "auto-sanctionism [self-sanctioning behavior] is for stupid people and, in certain cases, for people of bad faith." The watchword of consumers ought to be "against the sanctions, not autosanctionism."[70] The *Gazzetta* followed suit. "Auto-sanctionist" or "pseudo-sanctionist" consumer practices confused the "anti-sanctions struggle" with "hypocritical parsimony." It decried the "needless [reduction of] one's own spending" and the "desertion of shops" as damaging to "our own commerce, industry, laboring and artisan sectors, when instead they needed to give these the strength to establish themselves, with tangible demonstrations of solidarity."[71] Local consumers' "false franciscanism" amounted to a failure to fulfill "the obligations

of their rank" as patriots and Fascists. Supporting local and Italian businesses through increased spending was now the mark of the patriotic consumer. Thus, while the regime continued to assert that the nation should strive toward self-sufficiency, it seemed that individual Italians should be anything but.

Everyday Spaces of Consumption

The spaces in which everyday consumer modes of behavior and practices were enacted were effectively key sites of political encounter between the Fascist regime and individual Italians. This had long been the case, of course: having recognized the political importance of the cost-of-living debates and demonstrations during the *biennio rosso*, the Fascist squads had made Italian high streets and shops a significant locus for their intimidatory, violent politics before the March on Rome. The introduction of the League of Nations' sanctions over a decade later, at a time when autarky and national self-sufficiency were already important maxims of the Fascist project to remake Italy and Italians, only intensified the degree to which food shopping (and selling) constituted a political act. Political conformity as well as non-compliance and evasion were played out in the fruit, vegetable, and fish markets and in the butchers' and grocers' shops of the city: the removal (or not) of foreign brands and signs from shop windows; the decision to pass by the Pescheria or Rialto "to procure for themselves a main dish of cheese and vegetables" or fish on certain days of the week; the continued stocking of Gordon's Dry Gin in "that elegant bar in the center of town, of which the Fascists have never been too fond" were all politically charged (as well as economic, social, and cultural) acts thanks to the regime's insistence that what people bought, sold, and ate were markers of patriotism and adherence to Fascism.[72]

As Steege et al. noted, "common stops in the daily routine of local inhabitants" could be at one and the same time, or intermittently, "a social meeting point, a neighborhood border, an economic node, a violent political hotspot," and more.[73] Venice's shops and markets naturally were places of multiple economic, social, and political functions that people (at least consumers and the vigilance squads) visited frequently but fleetingly, though the interactions that took place therein were no less significant for that. They were also politically ambivalent spaces. The Fascist regime sent in its agents, in the shape of the men (and women) of the "price vigilance squads" to places where everyday consumer transactions were taking place

in their thousand-fold in order to police the actions and relationships conducted therein. These were spaces which had to be appropriated for political ends by the regime because they were key loci where anti-sanctions resistance and, by extension, the autarky project and empire home front would be made. They were also suspect places, where adherence to the national-Fascist project could be rejected, or unmade, through the venal priorities of shopkeepers, the entrenched or misplaced resistant practices of consumers, or the resilience of relationships between shopkeepers and consumers built up through countless daily social and commercial interactions—such as that supposed by the *Gazzetta* to exist between "housewife" and "obliging butcher." The Fascist authorities appealed to a sense of national community—the "one sole faith, the one sole will [that] unites us"[74] identified in the *Decalogo* by Vendramina Brandolin Marcello—in order to interrupt the socioeconomic ties between shopkeeper and consumer, calling particularly on the latter "to monitor the attitude of their suppliers, and to denounce without hesitation or reticence those offending against the price list by going to the closest [Fascist] Group, in each one of which, as is well known, a vigilance squad has been formed."[75] Many shopkeeper punishments did reportedly originate in tip-offs; nevertheless, the authorities' continued lamentations about non-compliance and persistent "old mentalities" betrayed the suspicion that those ties between "housewife" and "obliging butcher"—the kinds of pre-existing "social bonds" that persisted through totalitarian projects, described by Fitzpatrick and Lüdtke[76]—and of course the economic priorities of each, might be more enduring than a sense of political obligation to support the anti-sanctions resistance campaign.[77]

The public spaces of shops, markets, *trattorie*, *osterie*, restaurants, and hotels were of course not the only places where basic consumer practices were exercised. The sanctions resistance campaign furnished the regime another opportunity to enter Italian homes (sometimes literally) and to claim a right to dictate the practices enacted in supposedly private, domestic spaces.[78] Not only should women hang portraits of Mussolini in their homes, as the *Decalogo* enjoined, they should also look to his regime for guidance as to what to grow in their gardens, how and when they should light and heat their homes—"man is not an orchid and, as stated by the hygienists, heating to 22, 25 degrees is excessive and detrimental to one's health"[79]—and what to feed their families. The insistence on buying national and local produce and on abstaining from eating meat was relatively clear, even if advice varied from total abstinence three times a

week to complete abstinence one day plus the avoidance of beef, lamb, and pork on one other day per week. However, the often self-appointed resistance experts tied themselves in knots—and produced conflicting instructions—when determining whether and in which circumstances it was acceptable to use up existing household stocks of foreign foodstuffs and whether and when it was not. For the *Gazzetta*, stockpiles of foreign goods could be consumed only when the ordinary members of the household were eating and drinking, but not when guests were present; for *Italia Nova* and the *Gazzettino*, foreign foods "already in our home" now constituted "national assets" and could be consumed without concern.[80] (The *Gazzettino* only further muddied the water, as it were, with its suggestion that all stockpiles of champagne in the city ought to be sent to AOI to allow the soldiers there to toast their victory.[81]) The expectation that the state should dictate the most minute and seemingly mundane aspects of daily practice, from how high the flames of one's gas cooker ought to flicker to providing lists of food likely to be produced outside Italy, suggests either an exhaustively literal reading of the rightful remit of a totalitarian regime or a basic distrust and denigration of one's fellow countrymen and women as suspect and/or lacking basic common sense.

In the end, the sanctions did not provide an entirely successful pretext for remaking Italians into Fascists via the politics of everyday consumption. Of course, the declaration of the Italian empire in May 1936 did give rise to an outpouring of support for Fascism's nationalist-imperialist project. The refrains of "*Faccetta Nera*" could be heard across the peninsula. But just as the popularity of a song that waxed lyrical about a romantic encounter between an Italian soldier and Ethiopian woman was at best ambivalent in offering popular legitimacy to an imperial project that wished to prevent just such crossings of imposed colonial boundaries, so too the everyday putting into practice and experience of the sanctions resistance campaign demonstrates the possibility for creative interpretation, if not occasional subversion, of what that Fascist-nationalist-imperialist project entailed.

Many of the sanctions resistance directives related to consumption were ambiguous, allowing individual Venetians space to interpret and maneuver around the measures in multiple ways, as in the case of the confusion surrounding consumer practices that could be read either as admirable acts of sanctions resistance or as despicable "pseudo-" or "auto-sanctionism." This ambiguity meant that individuals practiced ways of behaving under the auspices of sanctions resistance which deviated from those endorsed by the official rhetoric. In this way, Maria Damerini and friends could rejoice in

their belief that by holding lunch parties more frequently, they were doing their bit to resist the sanctions. For others, there were compelling reasons to skirt around or simply ignore the resistance propaganda. For Venetian shopkeepers, and for *popolano* consumers, for whom economic survival was a more pressing question, support for anti-sanctions measures that would entail or exacerbate material hardship was somewhat circumspect. Given the risks posed to their livelihoods, it is little surprising that so many shopkeepers ran the risk of financial penalties and public shaming to sell their goods at prices higher than those decreed. After all, this was not the first time that shopkeepers had rejected the regime's politically motivated restrictions on their economic activity. Numerous retailers had refused to comply with the restrictions implemented in 1926 to reduce inflation and battle for the lira that similarly curtailed their everyday trading, and were punished for this by the provincial licensing committees. At that time, shopkeepers complained that they alone were being asked to demonstrate their patriotism by taking a financial hit.[82] Of course, shopkeepers were not "apolitical" in their actions and attitude toward government, as they so often claimed, but in the face of the regime's attempts to co-opt and restrict their business practices as part of its totalizing project to remake Italy, they consistently put economic priorities before political ones. The presumption that the regime could intrude into domestic consumption practices also encountered at least some resistance from consumers. Having blithely declared its intent to put into effect the anti-sanctions resistance campaign "house by house," the provincial anti-sanctions defense committee was compelled to rapidly backtrack and reassure Venetians that "this is not a question of interference in or control of the family sphere, but rather is a question of persuasion." In so doing, they recognized that their initial declaration "made one think of a kind of 'house by house' surveillance."[83]

The spaces of everyday consumption discussed here—the Rialto marketplace, butchers' and grocers' shops, and Venetian kitchens—were crucial places where micro-political interactions between the Fascist state and individual Italians were enacted. Thus, these are also places where power was constituted. Moving between different scales of analysis—the individual, the locality, the nation—sheds light on the extent to which the experience of the Fascist state and of the power of the state was a negotiated one and could be uneven, flexible, and also transitory in the sense that people moved in and out of the gaze of state authority, nationally and locally. The sanctions resistance campaign to intervene in domestic food consumption was certainly one occasion when

women—as "housewives"—and shopkeepers were brought firmly within the gaze of the state, but it was one that was reinterpreted and constructed in the locality and from below as well as from the Fascist center in Rome. This allowed Venetian shopkeepers and consumers a modicum of space—however limited and delineated by the repressive apparatus of the regime—to exercise some autonomy and agency, whether that resulted in prioritizing business and economic needs or consumer preferences over political and newly defined patriotic duties or whether it resulted in the rewriting of what those patriotic duties should comprise to ensure that they matched consumer preferences, as in the case of the Damerinis' and Malipieros' sanctions-spiting lunch parties. To this end, the everyday worlds of Italians must be viewed as a crucial dimension of our understanding of how Fascism actually ruled and how it was lived.

Notes

Some material for this chapter was previously published in Chap. 4 of Kate Ferris *Everyday Life in Fascist Venice, 1929–1940* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

1. John Foot, "'Eliminated as a Class?' Milanese Socialism, Consumers, and Shopkeepers during the Period of the Cost-of-Living Riots, June–July 1919," *The Italianist* 18 (1998): 245–71; Carol Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil: Politics and Food in Italy* (Oxford: Berg, 2004); Jonathan Morris, *The Political Economy of Shopkeeping in Milan, 1886–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 276.
2. Some Fascists participated in the June–July 1919 cost-of-living riots in Milan and Florence. Jonathan Morris, "Retailers, Fascism and the Origins of the Social Protection of Shopkeepers in Italy," *Contemporary European History* 5, no. 3 (1996): 302.
3. Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil*, 59.
4. See, for example: Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Ministero degli Interni (MI), Divisione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza (DGPS), Polizia Politica (Pol pol) Fasc. per materia b. 207 f. 4 Situazione vinicola 1942; b. 208 f. 1 Situazione vinicola 1942–1943.
5. Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil*, Chaps. 6–7.
6. Morris, "Retailers, Fascism," 308.
7. Morris, "Retailers, Fascism," 218; Franco Catalano, *Fascismo e piccola borghesia: crisi economica, cultura e dittatura in Italia, 1923–1925* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979).

8. Elisabetta Randi, *La cucina autarchica. Nozioni teoriche e pratiche di autarchia alimentare* (Florence: L. Cionini, 1942), 9.
9. Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil*, 101.
10. Renzo de Felice, *Mussolini il duce. Gli anni del consenso 1929–1936*, 2nd ed. (Turin: Einaudi, 1974), 80.
11. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms. The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*, trans. Anne Tedesci and John Tedesci (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xiii–xxvi.
12. Reported in *La Gazzetta di Venezia*, 27 October 1935.
13. On the wider Fascist mobilization of Italian families see Paul Ginsborg, *Family Politics: Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival, 1900–1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), ch. 3; Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), ch. 4; Kate Ferris, "Parents, Children and the Fascist State: The Production and Reception of Children's Magazines in 1930s Italy," in *Parenting and the state in Britain and Europe c. 1870–1950: Raising the Nation*, eds Hester Barron and Claudia Siebrecht (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
14. Perry Willson, "Empire, Gender and the 'Home Front' in Fascist Italy," *Women's History Review* 16, no. 4 (2007): 487–500.
15. *Gazzetta*, 8 November 1935.
16. In this respect, there are parallels with Belinda Davis' research into the home front in the First World War. Berlin. B. Davis, "Food Scarcity and the Empowerment of the Female Consumer in World War One Berlin," in *The Sex of Things. Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, eds Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 287–310.
17. De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 78; Willson, "Empire, Gender and the 'Home Front.'"
18. Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 27, eds Duilio Susmel and Edoardo Susmel (Florence: La fenice, 1959), 266.
19. *Italia Nova*, 12 October XIII (1935); reproduced in the *Gazzetta*, 27 October 1935.
20. See *Gazzetta*, 6 November 1935.
21. *Gazzetta*, 8 November 1935.
22. This was decided at a meeting held by Mussolini in Palazzo Venezia, attended by key party figures and representatives from the relevant corporations. The results of the meeting were conveyed to Venetians in the *Gazzettino di Venezia*, 30 October 1935.
23. *Gazzetta*, 7 November 1935; 12 November 1935; 14 November 1935.
24. See, for example, the announcement in the *Gazzettino*, 10 November 1935.
25. Morris, "Retailers, Fascism," 292–5.
26. Morris, "Retailers, Fascism," 314–5.

27. *Italia Nova*, 15 December XIV (1935).
28. *Gazzetta*, 8 November 1935.
29. *Gazzetta*, 17 November 1935.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. *Gazzetta*, 8 November 1935.
36. *Gazzetta*, 17 November 1935.
37. *Italia Nova*, 15 December XIV (1935).
38. *Italia Nova*, 12 January XIV (1936).
39. *Italia Nova*, 12 October XIII (1935).
40. Ibid.
41. *Avanti*, 8 July 1919; *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 24 March 1919 and 7 July 1919. Cited in Morris, *The Political Economy of Shopkeeping in Milan*, 277–9.
42. Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil*, 67.
43. Morris, "Retailers, Fascism," 310–1.
44. *Gazzetta*, 2 November 1935.
45. Victoria de Grazia, "Nationalizing Women: The Competition between Fascist and Commercial Cultural Models in Mussolini's Italy," in *The Sex of Things*, eds de Grazia and Furlough (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 337–58.
46. *Italia Nova*, 12 January XIV (1936).
47. *Gazzetta*, 19 November 1935.
48. *Gazzetta*, 17 November 1935; *Gazzettino Illustrato*, 1 December 1935; 15 December 1935.
49. *Gazzetta*, 16 November 1935; 17 November 1935.
50. *Gazzetta*, 12 November 1935.
51. Ibid.
52. The published lists of those punished for flouting the anti-sanctions regulations were printed alongside the lists extolling the individuals who donated gold, wedding rings, medals, jewelry, and other precious items to the war effort, serving to further highlight the contrast between the two groups of individuals.
53. Reported in the *Gazzetta*, 21 November 1935, 4.
54. *Italia Nova*, 19 January XIV (1935).
55. *Italia Nova*, 12 April XIV (1935).
56. Elio Zorzi, *Osterie veneziane* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1928), 85–7. See also Giovanni Sbordone *Nella Repubblica di Santa Margherita: storie di un campo veneziano nel primo Novecento* (Portogruaro: Nuova dimensione, 2003), 22; Maria Damerini, *Gli ultimi anni del leone. Venezia 1929–1940* (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 1988), 96–100.

57. Damerini, *Gli ultimi anni del leone*, 71.
58. *Gazzetta*, 17 November 1935.
59. *Italia Nova*, 15 December XIV (1935).
60. Antonio Baldo, *Ricordi di guerra di un diciassettenne: 1940–1945*, Archivio Diaristico Nazionale (ADN) MP/02, 20.
61. *Italia Nova*, 15 December XIV (1935).
62. Ibid.
63. *Gazzetta*, 20 November 1935.
64. Morris, "Retailers, Fascism," 289.
65. See, for example, Damerini, *Gli ultimi anni del leone*, 88; Marco Fincardi, "Gli 'anni ruggenti' dell'antico leone. La moderna realtà del mito di Venezia," *Contemporanea* 3 (2001): 445–74.
66. Damerini, *Gli ultimi anni del leone*, 187.
67. Ibid.
68. *Gazzetta*, 8 November 1935.
69. *Gazzetta*, 12 November 1935.
70. *Italia Nova*, 22 December XIV (1935).
71. *Gazzetta*, 14 December 1935.
72. *Italia Nova*, 12 April XIV (1935). It is though that the bar referred to was the noted Harry's Bar.
73. Paul Steege et al., "The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter," *Journal of Modern History* 80 (2008): 364.
74. Preface of the *Decalago delle Donne Italiane*, reproduced in the *Gazzetta*, 17 November 1935.
75. *Gazzetta*, 12 November 1935.
76. Sheila Fitzpatrick and Alf Lüdtke, "Energizing the Everyday: On the Breaking and Making of Social Bonds in Nazism and Stalinism," in *Beyond Totalitarianism. Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, eds Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 266–301.
77. Certainly, there seems to be a marked contrast in rhetoric, if not always behavior, to the situation of food provision during the Second World War where speculation and hoarding were popularly vilified. See Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil*, ch. 4.
78. Other instances of the regime entering people's homes include the *visitatrici fasciste* (health workers) of the regime's organization for maternity and infancy, ONMI.
79. *Gazzetta*, 13 November 1935.
80. *Italia Nova*, 15 December XIV (1935); *Gazzettino*, 12 November 1935.
81. *Gazzettino*, 12 November 1935.
82. Morris, "Retailers, Fascism," 285–318.
83. *Gazzetta*, 31 October 1935; 7 November 1935.

CHAPTER 7

Borderlands

Maura Hametz

"Slavic irredentism in Venezia Giulia … does not exist … nor has it ever existed." Foreign provocateurs are responsible for border incidents and terrorism. To resolve the situation, "hermetically seal the border … perhaps even the construction of networks of double-line metal mesh fencing … with wires carrying electric current in the space between the two networks [is warranted]," suggested Triestine journalist Livio Ragusin Righi in 1931.[1] Ragusin Righi's comments conjure up common visions of the Italo-South Slav border region as a site of conflict and unrest, a zone where Italy was engaged in pitched battle against forces intent on undermining the Fascist state. His observations are in tune with the prevailing view of the frontier zone as a territory fraught with instability and rocked by ethnic violence, which was exacerbated in the interwar years by Fascist persecution of non-Italian populations. Borderland life was considerably more complex. In the eastern borderlands, ethnic and linguistic affiliations were often unclear, and borderlines did not coincide with ethnic boundaries, even where predominant ethnicities could be determined. Violence was sporadic, and some communities were affected more than others. Ragusin Righi railed against terrorists, "disruptive elements" from across

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the border. The "tranquil populations of the Carso," he contended, meaning autochthonous Slovenes and Croats, were seduced by "nefarious" and predatory South Slavs.[2]

The dichotomy Ragusin Righi drew between hostile foreigners and tranquil citizens reflected a common belief at that time that many non-Italians in the borderland were complacent in Italy. This perception was reflected in convictions that cultural Italianization and education were the keys to assimilation. Fascist initiatives that sought to "redeem," nationalize, or Italianize individuals affected everyday life in the borderland. However, for the majority, nationalization was not the sole or even overriding daily preoccupation. Poverty, isolation, and other mundane concerns guided the rhythms of daily life.

"Our lands and all of Istria need three things—to be educated Italianly [*italianicamente*], to be educated Italianly, to be educated Italianly," argued the Director of the Lega Nazionale (National League) in Villanova del Quieto (Nova Vas in Brtonigla), a village of 750 inhabitants on the northwestern coast of Istria. In 1928, more than seven years after annexation to Italy and six years after the rise of Fascism, he admitted, "We do not delude ourselves. All the redeemed lands are Italian, not so for the redeemed people."[3]

The National League, an organization founded in 1891 to aid the ethnic Italian populations in the Habsburg provinces and "defend" Italian culture, patrimony, and rights, established a network of Italian literary circles, libraries, recreation centers, and preschools (*scuole materne*, *asili*, or nursery schools).[4] After the war, the Lega focused its efforts on promoting "spiritual unification and civic elevation of new citizens of Italy" living in "difficult and delicate localities" in the borderlands assigned to the Italian successor state.[5] An examination of the reports filed at the end of the 1927–1928 school year by preschool teachers offers a glimpse of how the League's educational mission was proceeding in village nursery schools, one of the many institutional strands woven into the fabric of everyday borderland life under Fascism. The response of Ragusin Righi's "tranquil populations" to the nationalist preschools' presence and programs reveals patterns of "actual human practice" under the Fascist dictatorship in the Adriatic border territories.[6]

In 1920, Giovanni Gentile, the neo-idealist philosophy professor who would become the first Fascist Minister of Education, published a series of lectures delivered to the teachers of Trieste and dedicated to his philosophy for school reform. Gentile emphasized the importance of ideas of

nation and liberty in education to enable students to imbibe the spirit of Italy and strengthen the nation.[7] Educational strategies were more prosaic, relying on the promotion of classical Roman influences, Italian patriotic history, and Italian language instruction. In 1923, the public school reform incorporated Gentile's ideas in a comprehensive Fascist nationalist curriculum, but nursery schools remained outside of the control of the state. This allowed the League's preschools, which had been at the forefront of Italian language preschool education in the Habsburg Monarchy, to continue educating young children in the Italian state.[8]

From 1920 to 1929, the National League's Director Giorgio Pitacco responded to the Liberal and then the Fascist Italian governments' nationalizing aims by closing preschools in areas that were primarily Italian and funneling resources to non-Italian areas.[9] By 1928, 79 Lega nursery schools served 4507 children in the border provinces of Trieste, Gorizia, Istria, Carnaro, and Zara.[10] Encouraged in their mission by the Fascist regime, but run as private institutions, the preschools provided preliminary education and humanitarian assistance infused with a healthy dose of Italian nationalism and Fascist nationalist ideology in communities that struggled with poverty, disease, and limited educational, social, and cultural opportunities.

The Lega Nazionale remained the primary force in nursery school education in the borderland until 1929 when the Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB), the Fascist youth organization, assumed control of the afterschool and recreational centers, and Italia Redente, established under the patronage of the Duchess D'Aosta (the wife of Prince Emanuele Filiberto di Savoia-Aosta) and associated with the Royal Family, absorbed the preschools. Italia Redente's network of *asili* was better financed and linked to the Fascist Party and Opera nazionale maternità e infanzia (ONMI), established in 1925 to assist women and children, especially needy children up to the age of five.[11]

The Lega Nazionale nursery school teachers' reports offer a particularly valuable source through which to view everyday life in the borderland. First, the tone of the reports transcends the aggressive and combative polemics of male officials and public figures that predominate in narratives of border Fascism and life in the eastern provinces. The historiography, beginning with Gaetano Salvemini's *Racial Minorities under Fascism in Italy* published in 1934, has emphasized Fascist dictatorship and the effects of Fascist policies in a top-down approach. Responding to the framework of authoritarianism, it has concentrated on proclivities for ethnic engi-

neering and on persecutory policies enforced in a coercive climate of ethnonationalist enmity, political intolerance, and violence. Driven in part by propagandists' polemics and writers' works concentrating on borderland conflicts, it paints the picture of populations suffering brutal repression and cowed by fear or engaged in bloody resistance.[12] Government forces and Fascist institutions were engaged in a repressive campaign of intimidation in the borderland, billed as a fight against terrorism. Violence against non-Italian populations did erupt in the eastern borderlands as part of a brutal cycle of government-sponsored repression, anti-Fascist reaction, and government retaliation.[13] Those caught in the vortex of this violence, often ethnic Slovenes and Croats, were trapped in the world of querulous ethnic relations, browbeating tactics, and repressive measures. But violent encounters were extraordinary and intermittent; quotidian interactions and experiences of the populations were less sensational and more mundane.

Second, the reports record the observations of credentialed nursery school teachers (graduates of methods schools in Gorizia, participants in summer institutes in Pola, Trieste, or Gorizia, or experienced Lega Nazionale teachers) required to know the "local vernacular," meaning the Slovene or Croatian language.[14] Their rather unique constellation of skills, familiarity with local customs and language, and the nature of their work in remote and isolated communities enabled teachers to reflect on their daily experiences, aspirations, and the needs of those in the communities they served. Drawn up for Lega Nazionale officials not for the Fascist authorities, the reports offer a glimpse of teachers' efforts to fulfill the Lega's mission to educate and "civilize" young children, to promote Italian culture, and to ameliorate the harsh conditions in villages and towns scattered throughout the borderland, along the coast, in the interior, on the islands, and in the hills.

Third, as women, the teachers were liminal figures in the political and public arenas. The reports reflect the women's subservience in the highly gendered teaching profession and in Fascist society and demonstrate their cognizance of their role as "nurturers of the nation," a position touted in Fascist ideology.[15] At the same time, gendered assumptions allowed the preschool teachers to observe public life from a distance and enabled them to avoid or evade, at least to some extent, the intense scrutiny that the Fascist regime directed at men in the borderland. The reports reflect the "spaciality" of the preschool environment, a relatively non-threatening

site presided over by women and inhabited by children, where individuals performed the various rituals and habits of their daily lives.[16]

Setting the Stage: Ethnonationalism in the Borderland

According to the 1910 census, approximately 600,000 ethnic Slovenes and Croats inhabited the Habsburg territories that Italy inherited after World War I.[17] Borders drawn by the Paris Peace and in subsequent agreements dissected communities traditionally linked by shared culture, resources, and traditions. Subjects of the multiethnic, polyglot Habsburg monarchy were forced to embrace exclusivist national citizenship.[18] In territories assigned to Italy, where Italian was among the languages regularly spoken, some identified themselves as Italians to escape persecution or avoid stigmatization; others emphasized Italian ties to gain political or economic advantage. Ethnic transformation was more difficult in rural and isolated areas where linguistic divides were greater and social, educational, and professional opportunities were more limited. The geography of Habsburg ethnicity meant that Lega teachers generally faced greater political and cultural obstacles in carrying out their mission in preschools in Carsic villages in Trieste and Gorizia and interior villages in Istria than they did in *asili* in coastal villages and the archipelago. Coastal communities had long been associated with commerce and trade, as well as Venetian and Italian maritime culture.

An Allogeneic Population?

Contradictory visions of the characteristics of borderland populations arose from countercurrents in theorizations and understandings of race, ethnicity, and identity that permeated the Italian state. Mid-nineteenth century Risorgimento rhetoric referred to Italy's unity "formed by nature." Italians appeared, at least in ideological terms, to share historical and geographic links to the peninsula and a distinctive culture and language (despite the vernacular of dialects). However, Mazzini's reference to Italy "encircled by the Alps and the sea" did not include the Adriatic provinces.[19]

After World War I, Italy's new Adriatic provinces became part of the territory of Venezia Giulia, one of the Tre Venezie or Three Venices, associated with Venezia Eugenea which included Venice and the Veneto

and had been part of the modern Italian state since 1866.[20] Italy claimed the populations of the Adriatic coastland cities as urban, cosmopolitan, and cultured peoples descended from the Romans or Venetians. "Slavic" culture was derided as rural, backward, and primitive.[21] European racial hierarchies encouraged Italians to dismiss Croats, Slovenes, and Serbs as inferior and nationally "weak," and officials' experiences with the polyglot population likely reinforced these perceptions. Multilingual individuals could choose to present themselves as Italians when it was expedient. With officials, they consciously or unconsciously adapted their language and bearing to meet the exigencies of the moment.[22]

The nature of the Lega teachers' position promoting Italian education and culture in non-Italian areas encouraged them, like all teachers in the borderland, to develop chameleon-like qualities in adopting various identities or languages. Giuseppina Martinuzzi is perhaps the best known exemplar of teachers' ethnic elasticity. Born in Habsburg Albona (Labin) in 1844, Martinuzzi was hailed a hero by Italians and Croatians for her work as an educator and a champion of the Istrian poor. A passionate Italian nationalist, an active supporter of the Pro Patria cultural association (a precursor to the Lega Nazionale) and a founder of the eponymous literary journal *Pro Patria* (1888–1889), she taught in mixed or primarily Croatian communities in Trieste and Istria where support for Italian nationalism did not conflict with social advocacy inspired by Mazzinian democratic and egalitarian traditions.[23] Martinuzzi wrote in Italian for all of her life but became increasingly disenchanted with the nationalist cause and the bellicosity of Italian nationalism. By the time of her death in 1925, she had become a committed Communist, at odds with the Fascist regime. But, other teachers who trod a similar linguistic and ethnic path leaned toward Italian Liberal Nationalism after annexation.

After World War I, many Italian nationalists believed that border populations' attachments to non-Italian affiliations were shallow and superficial. They thought that vestiges of Habsburg pro-Germanic and pro-Slavic policies would be abandoned in the face of determined efforts to promote Italian culture and influence. At the same time, racial and ethnic ideologues considered "foreignness" as embedded in the nature of non-Italian speaking populations. Ragusin Righi's description of borderland populations as "tranquil" and educable but involved in "problems in the allogeneic Julian zone" (or in the area populated by those of foreign genes or extraction) encapsulated the contradictions in these strands of nurture versus nature thought.[24]

Nursery school teachers' reports captured the inevitable inconsistencies that arose in applying understandings of ethnic and racial categorization. Teachers treated their pupils both as teachable others and biological foreigners. In a letter to the ONB, the Lega touted the work of its nursery schools "in the small villages of the allogeneic zone" crediting them with "spreading the first seeds of Italianness, where later the flowers of Fascist youth will bloom."[25] In San Pietro dell'Amata (Sveti Peter in northwestern Istria), Anna Feno boasted of the Lega's success in creating a "great atmosphere" for the "allogeneic children," living "in the tiny allogeneic villages lost and far from centers of civilization." In Grimalda (northcentral Istria), Anna Gauber attributed the difficulties of teaching "*piccoli allogeni*" (little ones of foreign genes) to difficulties with language. Amalia Stefanini, who reported from Piedimonte (Podgora, a part of Gorizia), emphasized the "teachability" of the students, the "majority [of whom were] of Slovene nationality." The impossibility of drawing sharp distinctions between Italianness and "foreignness" was evident in Lisignano (Ližnjan, near the southern tip of Istria), where the teacher chose Giovanni Crustich, a child living in the area of mixed population with an Italian given name and a non-Italian surname, to recite a poem at the end of the year assembly entitled "We are the stock [*stirpe*] of the future."[26]

Educational Methods

The Lega Nazionale's emphasis on Italian cultural education and the preschools' Italian curricula were not new in the 1920s. Where the preschools reopened or were relocated from nearby communities after the war, the Lega's efforts were already familiar from prewar life. In non-Italian communities hosting new preschools, the Lega's nationalist emphasis might have been less familiar and less welcome, but the schools provided education consistent with pedagogical methodologies developed in the nineteenth century that were popular in Italy and more broadly in Europe. Aportian and Agazzi methods and teaching strategies that promoted children's moral, physical, and intellectual development drove the daily routine in the Lega's nursery schools. Neither pedagogy was directly linked to the nationalistic curriculum, but both were easily adapted to Italian nationalist ends. In addition, Ferrante Aporti and the Agazzi sisters, Rosa and Carolina, were hailed as exemplary Italians whose lives and work presaged the model that Fascists advocated for Italian citizens.

The Aportian approach, considered seminal, was developed by educator and priest Ferrante Aporti in Habsburg Cremona. Aporti emphasized the acquisition of superior Italian language skills, first in speaking and then in reading. He taught the Bible and religion in Italian rather than in Latin (to the consternation of the Church and its supporters) and relied on Bible stories, eschewing fairy tales and legends such as the Grimms' tales (the preferred morality fables in German preschools) to enhance children's understanding of Christian moral precepts. He advocated learning through song to engage young children and promoted physical activity to improve their health. His educational strategies built on systems of rewards and punishments, and his methods sought to capitalize on children's curiosity to inspire them to learn.[27] Heralded as an "apostle" of early education, Aporti was recognized as the founder of the first Italian kindergarten, opened in Cremona in 1829. He was also an Italian patriot. Having fled Cremona for Turin in the wake of the revolutions of 1848–1849, he supported the Risorgimento and, until his death in 1858, enjoyed the House of Savoy's patronage.[28]

Several of the Lega's nursery schools celebrated Aporti as a hero. In Pogliane del Carnaro (Poljane, Primorsko-Goranska), a program featuring a statue of Aporti draped with the Italian tricolor and covered with roses and daisies, a speech on the importance of the "grand apostle," and a hymn dedicated to Aporti marked the 100th anniversary of the founding of his first kindergarten. Tina Malusà in Santa Domenica di Albona (Sveta Nedelja) lectured her students on the "great figure."[29] Several schools tied the Aporti celebration to Christmas festivities. The occasions allowed Lega teachers in Fascist Italy to fuse praise of Aporti's politics, his methods to combat illiteracy, emphasis on the primacy of the Italian language, and promotion of Christian principles including obedience and charity with educational priorities of the Fascist state.

Anna Sinossich employed Aportian methods in Vines (Vinež), a hamlet in Albona on the southeastern Istrian coast, to engage her students in "instructive lessons, conversation, intellectual pursuits, free and organized games." At the school founded in 1926, these included "singing marches," which prepared the children for physical training with the Balilla and Piccole Italiane.[30] In Unie (Unije) in the Cherso-Lussino (Cres-Lošinj) archipelago, a visit by the Didactic Director of Lussino and the Inspector from Pola offered Anna Malich the opportunity to demonstrate her use of

Aportian methods. She reported singing songs and reciting poetry with the children. She also conducted a discussion to teach the children the value of "order and diligence." Her approach fit Aporti's emphasis on civil education and hard work, and it meshed with the regime's priorities and aspirations for children to be raised to "believe, obey, and fight." In Stermazio (Štrmac) in the hills of eastern Istria, the Balilla and the League's school held joint end of the year exercises making explicit the links between the League's schools and Fascist youth organizations.[31] These ties would be solidified in 1929 when the Fascist government placed all of the Lega's recreation and *doposcuola* facilities under Balilla supervision.

Rosa and Carolina Agazzi's methods, like Aporti's, capitalized on children's curiosity, but the sisters from Brescia moved away from emphasis on traditional doctrine and discipline to encourage spontaneity and spirit. Like their contemporary Maria Montessori, they nurtured children's innate abilities and encouraged their development in a natural and comfortable environment. In 1928, the regional Royal Inspector of the Schools recommended Rosa Agazzi's publications to teachers so that they could avoid being overly "pedantic and mechanical" and revise "dry lessons" and repetitive exercises of rote recitations. The Inspector called for greater attention to "the spontaneity of the child" and "free activity" and criticized "the suffocation of free play" in some of the Lega's schools. His prescriptions resonated with trends in educational reform throughout Europe rather than with Fascist politicization.[32]

Spontaneity and independent thinking were not among the regime's priorities, but the Agazzis' emphasis on the organization of nursery schools according to the ideal of family life and maternal care fit Fascist priorities. The Agazzis saw the home as the "natural environment," and promoted the mother as the "natural educator."[33] In Trebiciano (Trebče), a village in the hills above Trieste, Angelina Missero confided, in clear homage to the Agazzis, that the "secret" to educating young children lay in psychological observation each day to understand the child's spirit (*anima*). In the village of Cherso, a teacher among those who had been urged to read Agazzi's books, heaped praise on "good mothers" in the audience at the year-end festivities.[34] Educational policies associated with family, honoring mothers, and instilling discipline were in line with traditional preschool and community priorities. They also resonated with traditional Catholic beliefs.

Church and State

While Mussolini's state and the Catholic Church remained at odds until 1929, in the year or so prior to the Lateran Accords the Fascism regime softened its approach to the Church in public life, especially as it affected Italian youth.[35] Religious education and church attendance were traditionally part of the Lega preschools' routine contributing to the sense of their integration in local life. On the island of Unie, for example, the parochial church formed the locus of nearly all of the preschool's special activities. The students celebrated a "mass in honor of victory" on 6 November, the "traditional festival of Christmas" on 6 January, and the "Te Deum" in the church courtyard on 24 May. In Grimalda, the year-end program included the hymn "Grace of God" and a prayer to the Lord.[36]

Teachers reported on Christmas celebrations, processions, and programs. Few mentioned the Italian crèche or nativity scene characteristic of celebrations on the Italian peninsula. Many recounted the celebration of the "Festival of the Tree." While Queen Margherita had introduced the custom of the Christmas tree into Italy in the late nineteenth century, the Festival of the Tree that centered on a community tree occupying a central space in the village square had a distinctly Habsburg flavor. Drawn from Germanic traditions, the custom resonated with centuries-old practice in the borderland communities.[37] Many teachers reported celebrating the Festival of the Epiphany on 6 January. The Church celebration of the coming of the Magi was often a time in Germanic lands for charity collections and the distribution of sweets to children. In Italy, it was the twelfth night of Christmas, when the witch Befana left sweets in children's stockings or shoes. In 1928, Befana fascista became an official celebration and occasion for charitable works for children. By 1935, it was called the Befana del Duce.

Christmas celebrations at the *scuole materne* in the Adriatic communities were an amalgam of the Italian and Germanic traditions. In many preschools, the children received sweets. In Piedimonte, for example, the Fasci Femminile provided the Christmas treats. State, party, local, and private charities offered contributions for the needy. In Pisino (Pazin) in central Istria, the city distributed clothing at the preschool's celebration of the tree. In Piedimonte, each child received 1.5 meters of cloth, a gift from the nearby Brunner Cotton Mill. In Rovigno, a benefit ball for the Lega Nazionale followed the nursery school's Befana celebration.[38]

An assassination attempt on the life of Italian King Victor Emmanuel III in Milan in April 1928 prompted a religious response in the Lega

Nazionale's preschools. Lina Luschitzki's pupils recited a prayer "thanking God for saving the King." The preschool in S. Andrea di Gorizia flew the flag and had a procession with the students.[39] Emphasis on the monarch's welfare and associations of the monarchy with the Catholic Church resonated deeply with those in the Adriatic provinces who were accustomed to centuries of honoring the Habsburgs. In remote villages far removed from political centers and Court society, the Italian King might easily have taken the place of honor formerly afforded the Habsburg monarch.

Teachers appeared to pick and choose among local festivals and traditions, as long as they could be adapted to fit the purposes and priorities of the *scuole materne* and nationalist education. Rome permeated the atmosphere in the Lega's nursery schools. Romanness and an emphasis on Italians as "imbued with the spirit of 'eternal Rome'" were central conceptions in Italian nationalism and part of Fascism's "palingenetic" or regenerative myth.[40] In Rovigno (Rovinj) on the western coast of Istria, pupils celebrated *Natale di Roma* (Birth of Rome) at the end of April. Intended to replace May Day, the Fascist holiday commemorated the founding of ancient Rome. In Santa Croce in the province of Trieste, homage to Rome was implicit in the children's participation in a public procession that celebrated the Festival of Saints Peter and Paul.[41] While the festival was religious in inspiration, it honored Rome's patron saints.

Other celebrations that formed part of the children's everyday experiences honored the Savoy monarchy, nationalist heroes, and Fascist icons with hymns and prayers. In San Vito del Vipacco, the year-end ceremony included the hymn "Croce di Savoia" dedicated to the King (with lyrics by nationalist poet Giosuè Carducci) as well as poetry dedicated to the Duce. "Giovinezza" (the Fascist Party hymn and unofficial anthem of the regime) and "Croce di Savoia" were standard, although not universal, fare at the year-end festivities despite the fact that the preschools were not public institutions or officially tied to the Fascist Party. In Laurana, the year-end program emphasized the natural environment and Fascist priorities. It began with the "Dance of the Cherries" and included a poem entitled "Flowers of the Nursery School" as well as a poem called "Duce" and ended with the singing of "Giovinezza."[42] In S. Andrea di Gorizia (Štandrež), the children honored Italian Prime Minister Francesco Crispi (served 1887–1891 and 1893–1896). Homage to Crispi was likely a holdover of the Lega Nazionale's Liberal Nationalist politics of the Habsburg and immediate postwar years, but in the new curriculum he was promoted not only as a hero of Italian Unification but also as a precursor to Mussolini and Fascism.[43]

Charity formed part of the Lega preschools' mission year round. Members of the local community might or might not appreciate the emphasis on Italian language and patriotism or allusions to Fascism, but gratitude for charitable assistance to needy families was undeniable. In Postumia (Postojna) in the Carso, at the end of the year, the poorest children received shoes. In San Vito del Vipacco, Maria Vida noted that the commune provided gifts of clothing and shoes for the very poor. In San Pietro dell'Amata, needy children received clothing at the end of the year to "encourage them to return the next year."[44] While charity was welcomed, even if infused with a heavy dose of Italian nationalism, linguistic and cultural education designed to eradicate non-Italian influences and culture was more contentious.

Language and Naming

The popular response to Italianization varied by locality and circumstance and over time. Gentile saw language as an intrinsic part of an individual's personality and therefore an articulation of a person's spirit.[45] Thus, language became an important part of the Fascist nationalist curriculum. The Fascist government sought to eliminate the use of languages other than Italian and, by 1925, educational reforms prohibited bilingual instruction in Italian public schools.[46] Technically, teaching Italian as a second language remained legal in communities with non-Italian speaking populations, but Slovene, Croatian, and German schools in the Adriatic provinces were compelled, through a variety of legal and extralegal means, to close their doors. Teachers who could not or would not comply with Italian language requirements were fired. An official downgrading of the status of ethnic or linguistic minorities to *reliquia etnica* or people affected by a residual or ancient ethnic influence accompanied the language legislation.[47] This diminution of minority nationalities as mere relics of the past reflected assumptions that non-Italian associations would simply wither away as populations chose to assimilate to the "superior" Italian culture.

The Fascist regime enacted Italian language policies under the guise of the national campaign to increase literacy in an initiative cast as a social "battle" similar to the Battle for Grain or Battle for Births. However, the specious nature of Fascist literacy concerns for border provinces was immediately apparent on examination of national literacy rates. In the border provinces including Venezia Giulia and Zara, Venezia Tridentina (with German speakers), and Piedmont (with French speakers), literacy rates far

exceeded the national average. In addition, although elementary schools targeted German, Slovene, and Croatian speakers for intensive language instruction, the resources expended on the borderland populations did not lead to any appreciable increase in literacy rates.[48]

The National League had traditionally concentrated on Italian language instruction, and Lega teachers in the borderlands continued to view language instruction as an important educational and national duty. On Cherso in the village of La Sella (Predošćica), Maria Voich assured authorities that she was "very much engaged in language teaching," and in Dragosetti (Dragosetici), Stella Gallesich boasted of the children's pride in reciting dialogues, poems, and songs, and she "marveled at hearing our dear and sweet language spoken by these little ones." From Istria, Vittoria Rosman offered a report on the Italian language curriculum in Stermazio, in which the daily fare included conversation, poems, dialogues, short recitations, and fables. In Laurana (Lovran), on the western Istrian coast, the local president of the League's preschools affirmed the "students' progress in the pronunciation of the language." Maria Vide noted with pride that the Lega's School Inspectors Vincenzina Norscia and Luigia Di Paoli and noted "the beautiful facility with which the children expressed themselves in Italian" in the village of Vipacco (Vipava).[49]

The inspectors' comments revealed their proclivity to intervene where progress in learning Italian seemed inadequate. In her report, Virginia Velli thanked Inspector Norscia for the good advice she offered on teaching Italian which, Velli promised, would be put to good use in the next school year in San Daniele del Carso (Štanjel). Rosina Villari, at the preschool in Ossero (Osor) on Cherso, whose Italian appeared poor, noted that the inspector had been "expansive" in making suggestions for improvement.[50]

Despite the note of optimism in many of the reports, some teachers could not overlook local populations' restiveness in the face of linguistic and cultural attacks. In late October 1928, the Fascist Special Tribunal for the Defense of the State indicted unknown suspects (*ignoti*) for disseminating Slovenia language flyers that urged parents to boycott the Italian schools.[51] Coupled with other incidents in the borderland, the government believed the materials' dissemination to be part of a widespread campaign against the state. The court could not proceed against *ignoti*, but the indictment hung in the air as a warning against subversive or antinational behavior. When three Italian schools in Cattinara (Katinara), Storie (Štorje), and Prosecco (Prosek) were damaged or destroyed by arson, Fascist propaganda blamed borderland "terrorists," and the attacks

became a justification for further repression.[52] Firebombing of rural schools, a common protest tactic against Habsburg authorities' interference in local education, emerged in 1928 as a sign of discontent with Fascist initiatives.[53]

Among the Lega's nursery schools, the *asilo* in Prosecco (in the hills above Trieste) seemed to experience the greatest disruption due to ethnic enmities and local violence. Vittoria Noni reported that the preschool moved twice during the school year, in the first instance after a fire in December that forced the *scuola materna* to find a new home and, in the second instance, after the firebombing in April of the second site in the Giacomo Venezian elementary school. The *asilo* pupils finished out the year in a room at the *doposcuola* (afterschool activity center).[54] The escalating violence was consistent with an increasing level of resistance in the borderland in the late 1920s as the Fascist government became increasingly authoritarian and expanded security forces and policing under the guise of defense of the state. Fascist policies targeted Slovene and Croat schools, and language restrictions persecuted minorities, but parents in the borderland did not necessarily oppose children's Italian education. The antagonism in Prosecco represented the exception rather than the rule in villages where the Lega hosted preschools.

Linguistic barriers were taxing for teachers and pupils alike. In Draguccio (Draguč, northcentral Istria), the teacher bemoaned the fact that the majority of the children from outlying areas did not understand Italian, making it impossible for regular lessons to begin before December. Anna Gauber admitted to having difficulty teaching formal lessons in Italian in Grimalda, so she relied on drawing, games, and songs.[55] The teachers and students struggled with Italian lessons, but those attending the Lega's preschools expected the Italian training.

Italian language skills were essential to ascend the social ladder in Fascist Italy. Slovenes and Croats (often identified generically as "Slavs") were associated with the working or lower classes. Italian offered a means to assimilate and advance. In order to receive some rights and privileges, including tax credits and exemptions for prolific families, children had to be of "Italian nationality"; spoken language was the criterion for consideration.[56] Preparation for elementary school was a perennial part of the nursery schools' mission, and as elementary schools became Italian speaking by law, the Lega's *scuole materne* offered access to education as well as entry into the Italian national world. In S. Andrea, the preschool's yearly program included a field trip to the local elementary school to test the

youngsters' discipline and readiness to begin their studies. Teachers like Irma Cella in Cherso boasted of the nursery schools' success in preparing children for public school and, she noted, in instilling "moral and intellectual education."[57] The Lega claimed that its efforts eliminated inequalities, and after three years of attending the nursery schools, "the small pupils … [could] move on to the elementary schools knowing Italian at least as well as children of the same age born in purely Italian provinces."[58]

As the Fascist government sought to hide persecutory language legislation in the cloak of literacy reforms, it also sought to pass off toponym changes as an effort to standardize place names in the new territories. By 1928, the use of Italian place names was required by law, and those who disobeyed faced punishment including fines and even incarceration. But, as nursery school teachers' reports demonstrate, new toponyms were used inconsistently, and Fascist versions of some names poorly masked non-Italian roots. Velli reported several children attending from Kobdil, on the outskirts of San Daniele del Carso. Kobdil was Kobdilj in Slovenian, but the spelling change did not effectively Italianize the name. Retention of the "K" indicated that either the Fascist renaming had overlooked the small hamlet or the teacher did not know the official name. Some preschools, like those in Draguccio (Draguć in Croatian) and Rifembergo (Branik in Slovene and Reifenberg in German), were in places with names poorly rendered into Italian that failed to mask the "foreign" basis for the toponym. In San Vito del Vipacco (formerly Podnanos, "at the foot of the Nanos"), the teacher reported that students from nearby Nanos, officially renamed Monte Re, "came eagerly" to the *asilo*.[59] Evidently the pre-Fascist name Nanos remained in common use, suggesting the depth of attachment to Slovene culture and language in the village. The continued use of Nanos also likely reflected the local politics. Nanos was, by many accounts, the birthplace in 1927 of the Slovene irredentist, anti-Fascist resistance group *Revolucionarna organizacija Julijske krajine*, more commonly known as TIGR, an acronym for Trst-Istra-Gorica-Reka (or Trieste-Istria-Gorizia-Fiume).

In 1927, surnames too came under attack with surname measures justified as attempts to restore corrupted names to their original Italian or Latin versions. The legislation provided for automatic changes in some cases and allowed others to choose Italianization. Among the hundreds of names forcibly changed, Slovene and Croatian names predominated.[60] In 1927–1928, the legislation had not yet filtered down to the local level, and automatic changes were in the future, but a directive issued by the super-

intendent of schools for Venezia Giulia and Zara in March 1928 urged teachers to be among the first to volunteer to Italianize their surnames.[61] Many public school teachers responded with petitions filed through the offices of the Fascist Party to the regional name commission.

Despite the particular pressure placed on teachers and the fact that many bore Slovene, Croatian, or otherwise non-Italian surnames, the Lega nursery school teachers remained silent on the matter. Perhaps female teachers, whose surnames were legally bound to those of their spouses or fathers, did not feel pressed to respond to the Italianization call. The teachers working for the Lega Nazionale not the Fascist government in isolated communities may not have felt a sense of urgency to respond as their status as agents of Italian nationalism was clear in their employment by the League or, as Slavic surnames predominated in the borderland, they might not have faced social pressure to conform to the directive.

The authorities presented the surname campaign, as they had the language campaign, as a measure to eliminate vestiges of foreign culture. They adopted a paternalistic tone suggesting that the legislation was a means to elevate and assimilate non-Italians. The civil servant heading the name commission in Trieste Aldo Pizzagalli was a model functionary who had demonstrated his commitment to Italian education and acculturation. A lawyer by training and civil servant by profession, he wrote children's literature and poetry. Before taking charge of the onomastic reform, he served on Venezia Giulia's ONB Committee.[62] Like legions of other civil servants in the borderland, he saw himself as a benevolent agent of Italian civilization and culture.

As with the language legislation, the majority in the local populace appeared to acquiesce to the name changes, accepting them as a fact of life in Italy under Fascism. In many cases, even if not in their specific Fascist forms, bilingual place names had been in use under the Habsburgs. Multiple pronunciations, spellings, and ethnic versions of surnames had likewise been common in the multiethnic empire.[63] Individuals did not respond with alacrity to Fascist renaming; neither did they actively resist.

Attending the Preschools

Their nationalizing mission notwithstanding, many of the teachers offered anecdotal evidence of the success of their schools and the welcome they received in non-Italian borderland communities. Stella Gallesich reported from Dragosetti, "My dear children come to the *asilo* with love and sym-

pathy." From Stermazio, Rosman assured officials that the "lively atmosphere" of the preschool resulted from the fact that students were "sent voluntarily and came willingly." Year-end reports including enrollment and attendance figures offered statistical evidence of the preschools' reach and portrayed them as increasing in popularity. In Santa Croce, Cornelia Sillig started with 60 pupils; by November there were 80, and, due to the high enrollment, the *asilo* was divided into two sections. She noted a median attendance of 100 students in the last two months of the year. Tina Malusà, from Santa Domenica di Albona on the eastern coast of Istria, reported with pride that she began the year with 47 pupils and ended with 55. Only two pupils left the preschool over the course of the year, suggesting that those who attended were satisfied.[64]

Yet, many of the reports hinted at difficulties that compromised the preschools' success. Maria Vida described her students' increasing enthusiasm as the year went on, noting that the children were initially "shy, with their heads down, not wanting to speak or to eat much," but overcame this hesitancy. Vida counted the year-end festivities a great success as the local population attended humbly and listened to the program. The attendance figures in San Vito del Vipacco paint a less favorable picture. In the first three months, 55 of 65 students attended regularly. In January, bronchitis and pneumonia forced many to stop coming, and several never returned. Vida attributed the drop to propaganda spread by the school's Slavic deacon and the custodian. Forty attended by the end of the year, but attendance never reached the earlier high, suggesting that the campaign against the preschool resonated in the community. Anna Avi also suggested difficulties in Tomadio (Tomaj) related to anti-Italian propaganda. "The population is beginning to take interest in the *asilo* and to recognize its advantages despite isolated attempts [to disparage it] with covert and hostile propaganda," she reported. The school year opened with 14 pupils (more than the previous year), and eventually the number reached 42, when children from outlying villages including Croce (Križ) and Seppuglie (Šepulje) began attending. The fragile relationship between the community and the preschool in Senosecchia (Senožeče) preoccupied Emilia Bertoli. Only 15 to 20 of her 30 pupils attended regularly, and she chose to stay the summer in the small town on the Carsic plateau "to remain in contact with the families" and "to ward off any lingering hostilities."[65] The *asili* in both Senosecchia and Vipacco were among those the Lega founded after 1923 in localities judged to be "difficult."

In the harsh borderland environment, enrolled students' failure to attend was not necessarily a political or cultural choice. The effects on attendance of remoteness and isolation cannot be underestimated.[66] Snow cut off communication with many villages for weeks. Amelia Medeu, in Colmo (Hum) in the hilly Collio (Brda) region, blamed "unsatisfactory" winter attendance on terrible weather and impassable roads. From San Daniele del Carso, Velli reported that children from the village outskirts made their way to the preschool without adult supervision, arriving each day in the dead of winter crying and pale with cold. She noted with pride that the parents in the town had already told her they were looking forward to the reopening of the nursery school in October.[67] The increase in the preschool's attendance over the winter did not necessarily reflect satisfaction with the curriculum. Those who could reach the preschool found warmth, shelter, and often food.

Social Benefits, Health, and Welfare

For many, the material and social benefits of attendance and the philanthropic mission of the Lega Nazionale's preschools were the overriding reasons for attending. As R. J. B. Bosworth noted, "It was all very well for the regime's megaphones to resound with raucous words about the homogeneity and grandeur of the nation and to expatiate on the eternal nature of the capital city Rome. But a more genuine 'eternity' lay instead in the village or home town."[68] Parents desperate for social benefits were willing to overlook politicization, and some Lega teachers may have concentrated as much on charitable work as on political aspects of preschool education.

In Piedimonte, everyone expressed "sincere thanks" for the Lega Nazionale's beneficence at the end of the year festivities. Anna Feno reported from San Pietro dell'Amata of the "feeling of gratitude in everyone's heart for the Lega Nazionale for [its] great work of Italian humanity." She noted that the end of the year festivities provided "two hours spent in an atmosphere of innocent happiness" reflecting the gratitude of the children and their relatives who celebrated with them.[69]

Official visitors to the preschools often distributed sweets to the children, providing a rare and memorable luxury for many. In Postumia, in celebration of the March on Rome, a local bakery donated pastries for all of the children. At the end of the year, the children enjoyed ice cream and chocolates.[70] Guests of the preschools included Fascist leaders whose pur-

poses might have been blatantly political, but local dignitaries, members of the Lega Nazionale's leadership, and others did not necessarily have overtly nationalist aims. Several teachers praised the personal generosity of Secretary of the League Antonio Petronio. Small luxuries like sweets enticed children and pleased parents, but it was the League's devotion to improving the health and welfare of children that often tipped the scales in favor of enrollment.

In line with Fascist health aims, "biological politics" and the demographic campaign launched in 1927, doctors routinely visited schools including the Lega Nazionale's *asili*.[71] Fascist health measures and disease-prevention strategies were part of Italy's modernization and were linked to the "propulsive population policy" of the demographic campaign. They were also intended to win support for the regime.[72] Increasingly the Lega Nazionale worked with official Fascist entities including the ONMI to improve the health and welfare of the preschool children. When the ONMI took over supervision of day care centers including those run by the League, the preschools began officially to partner with state-run institutions.[73]

The preschool teachers' reports demonstrate the desperate need for medical care in the remote villages and on the Adriatic islands. ONMI officially oversaw instruction in hygiene and health and cooperated with provincial officials throughout Italy in the prevention of childhood diseases.[74] Outbreaks of disease plagued the countryside, and quarantines were frequent. In Dragosetti, Gallesich cited outbreaks of whooping cough and pneumonia. The *scuola materna* in Piedimonte closed in June due to outbreaks of dysentery and whooping cough. In Unie, students did not have end of the year exercises as a result of a quarantine due to whooping cough. Writing from Rovigno, Lina Luschitski explained the nursery school's closure from 3 to 8 November for disinfection after a "dear one" died from croup. Anna Carrara reported an outbreak of the measles in S. Andrea di Gorizia in which one pupil died. In Carpano, two of the 40 pupils died during the course of the year. So desperate were the circumstances of some families in La Sella that Maria Voich reported feeding two of the youngsters cod liver oil to sustain them in the winter months. "Thirty of the weakest" children in the village of Cherso received cod liver oil, thought to be effective in fighting tuberculosis. Citing the parents' and children's gratitude to the Lega Nazionale, Voich begged for additional funds for hygiene, medicine, and health-related supplies in La Sella.[75]

Lega teachers followed preschool educators' recommendations and Fascist guidelines in introducing health and hygiene practices. In Dragosetti, Stella Gallesich reported with pride that her pupils checked "each other's cleanliness at their seats each day," because they did not "want to have to clean themselves in front of everyone." Ida Dessardo in Laurana included a poem entitled "Health at School" in the preschool's final exercises. Angelina Missero in Trebiciano inspected children's bodies and clothes, noting that "[d]espite the lack of cleaning supplies the children keep themselves relatively clean." Where she saw hygiene "deficiencies," Missero spoke with the families except, she noted, "in cases where the mother was sick or absent." For needy children, she assured authorities, assistance with hygiene was provided at the preschool, where other children pitched in to help.[76] Missero's report exposes the harsh realities of village life which made the Lega's facilities attractive irrespective of the politics. The teachers' success in enforcing hygiene standards was mixed, and Royal Inspector Vittorio Bonat was highly critical of their efforts, noting that on his inspections he saw many dirty children in unhygienic facilities.[77] But, as the conditions in Trebiciano and other locales indicate, the preschool's responsibility went far beyond nationalizing programs and preparation to enter Fascist schools. The preschools provided health and welfare services of inestimable value to the community, serving populations bound together by common aims and desperate needs.

Despite the Lega Nazionale's desire to win over communities, many of its facilities failed to meet its standards or community expectations. In Tomadio, in her official report, Anna Avi praised the new preschool, "full of light and well equipped" and featuring a small play area outside where the children could run freely. But in a separate letter attached to the report, she begged authorities for "curtains or double-windows to protect from the cold," citing "the need to change the position of the stove." Her thanks for assistance during the year was perfunctory.[78] The strikingly different tones of the two documents written at the same time demonstrated Avi's sensitivity to audience and the unspoken politics of her position vis-à-vis Lega Nazionale and educational authorities. The official report was positive; the reality was mixed.

While providing much needed care, education, and other benefits, the Lega teachers did not lose sight of their nationalist mission. Italian nationalists cited the glories of ancient Rome, the expanse of the Roman Empire, and Rome's reputation as the cradle of Western Civilization to rationalize including former Venetian lands in the Italian polity. They conjured

up visions of the Mediterranean Sea as a Roman lake and saw Italians as leaders of the Latin or Mediterranean peoples to justify irredentism. Preschool lessons reflected their vision, combining health and recreation with nationalist education.

Outings to enhance the health and welfare of children appealed to parents in areas where few other resources were available. Aportian and Agazzi methods encouraged outdoor play. But curricula designed along these lines were also subtly linked to classical Roman ideals that touted the healthful effects of fresh air and light. Several of the teachers praised the Lega Nazionale for providing facilities with safe outdoor gardens or play spaces. In Stermazio, the children's gardening projects prompted one of the parents to promise to provide dedicated gardening space for the following year. In Lisignano, Noelia Marte Mazzarovich highlighted her work in the preschool's garden planting flowers around the building and using the space to teach her students about agriculture. Planting grains, potatoes, artichokes, peas, and so on taught practical skills valuable in rural life.[79]

In S. Andrea di Gorizia during the month of June, the children took several walks along the Isonzo. Billed as fresh air outings, these occasions doubled as visits to the sites of some of Italy's most catastrophic World War I battles. In Rovigno, songs of the Piave were featured in a celebration in May to commemorate the anniversary of Italian entry into World War I. References to World War I and the sacrifices of Italy were particularly blatant at the troubled site of Prosecco where, at the end of the year program, parents, students, and visitors who mingled with government representatives, Fascist Party dignitaries, and members of the armed forces including a detachment of local infantry were treated to the Lega's hymn, a dialogue entitled "I am an Italian," and patriotic songs like "Il Piave" and "Giovinezza" performed by the Doposcuola band.[80] In the context of the borderland, commemorations of Italy's sacrifices in World War I and in the Piave campaign were particularly insensitive to the local populations. While the Carso and the territory between the Piave and Isonzo rivers loomed large in Fascist visions of the heroic Italian landscape, those in the borderland had been Habsburg subjects, enemy combatants or civilians (many of whom were interned by Italian forces) during the war.[81]

The Lega Nazionale's political independence, traditional emphasis on Liberal Nationalist politics, and efforts to improve the material lives of young children contributed to the preschools' demise. Teachers from Italia Redente, a competing organization founded in 1919, visited the

preschool at S. Andrea di Gorizia twice during the school year, noting at one instance "a sense of grace and discipline on the part of the pupils" and in the other "commenting on the good performance of the nursery school."[82] The visits by Italia Redente, the Fascist-backed preschool organization, were a portent of things to come.

Conclusion

The Lega Nazionale's independence that made its preschools a target for takeover by the more politically reliable Fascist-supported Italia Redente, makes the teacher's reports particularly valuable as windows on everyday life under the regime. While everyday history is sometimes conceived as a means by which to assess how extraordinary context (in this case Fascist dictatorship) frames ordinary existence (life in the borderland), the experience of nursery school teachers in Italy's Adriatic borderlands demonstrates borderland populations' daily experience under Fascism was not that extraordinary, or at least not that extraordinary much of the time. Admittedly, the snapshot of the 1927–1928 school year offers a narrow frame of reference. Persecution of border populations and government repression intensified with the consolidation of the regime after 1926 and, by 1930, increased surveillance and enforcement of extraordinary security laws escalated political tensions, stoked the fires of ethnic enmities, and emboldened resistance to Fascism. Yet, in the Adriatic provinces, ethnonationalist conflicts and repressions have recurred for more than a century, from the time the provinces were included in the Habsburg Adriatic Littoral to the bloodshed of the 1990s. The historian of everyday life attempting to "tell the integrated story" of the ways in which "real people made use of the chance to shape their present" and "to draw out the human consequences of those actions" might suggest that the everyday experience of non-Italian borderland populations under Fascism was not focused on ethnic unrest and violence.[83] Rather, strategies to combat poverty, hardship, and lack of opportunity captured the public's attention and dominated the everyday.

The Lega's report on the *scuola materna* in Santa Domenica di Visinada (Vižinada) perhaps best encapsulates the challenges of life in the borderland environment. An official inspection report deemed teacher Celestina Longhin's performance "praiseworthy." Her preschool and pupils were clean; her lessons were well prepared; she encouraged children to speak freely in conversational Italian, whether in "phrases or with single words."

At the same time, the Lega's aims and expectations had been considerably compromised due to the environment in Santa Domenica. All of the children's slates "disappeared from the school, prejudicing their ability to learn." The preschool had been removed from the premises of the elementary school, and, the inspector reported, there appeared to be no "attention to the new curriculum." The children had been vaccinated twice by the school doctor and had celebrated Aporti, but the final program consisted only of hymns and a salute to the flag.[84] Santa Domenica was not a place Longhin wished to remain; she used the favorable observations in the inspection report to prove her merit in a request for transfer to Pola.

While Fascist policy was oppressive, placed in the perspective of subsequent initiatives aimed an ethnic assimilation or ethnic cleansing in the borderland regions, Fascist dictatorship was one phase in a cycle of ethnic engineering initiatives and persecutory policies that have accompanied changes in political sovereignty and leadership in the Adriatic regions to the present day. Throughout the twentieth century, these policies and programs have been accompanied by periods of violence and intense suffering that affected various localities at particular times. However, everyday life in the borderlands followed the perennial rhythms of the land in the rural, isolated territories between the Julian Alps and the Adriatic Sea.

Notes

1. Livio Ragusin Righi, "Guardia al confine," *La porta orientale* 1, no. 1 (1931): 111–2.
2. Ragusin Righi, "Guardia al confine," 112–3.
3. Letter dated 11 November 1928, quoted in Diana De Rosa, *Gocce d'inchiostro. Gli asili, scuole, ricreatori, doposcuola della Lega Nazionale. Sezione Adriatica* (Udine: Del Bianco, 2000), 174. Nova Vas, near the Mirna River, is today in Croatian Istria. Place names in this article appear as written in the Lega Nazionale documents. For the purposes of clarification, alternate names, other official names, or those in common use follow in parentheses the first time the name is used.
4. The preschools educated children aged two to six. The terms *scuole materne*, *asili*, nursery schools, and preschools are used interchangeably.
5. Quoted from the *Lega Nazionale*'s *Bollettino* of April 1927 in De Rosa, *Gocce d'inchiostro*, 126.
6. On "actual human practice" in everyday history, see Paul Steege et al., "The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter," *The Journal of Modern History* 80, no. 2 (June 2008): 360. R. J. B. Bosworth, "'Everyday

Mussolinism': Friends, Family, Locality and Violence in Fascist Italy," *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 1 (2005): 41, discusses "strands" in the "fabric" of Fascist dictatorship.

7. Giovanni Gentile, *La riforma dell'educazione* (Bari: Laterza & Figli, 1920), vii–viii. See also Marino Raicich, "La scuola triestina tra 'La Voce' e Gentile 1910–1925," in *Intellettuali di frontiera,* ed. Roberto Pertici (Florence: Olschki, 1985), 303–4.
8. Monica Ferrari, "L'éducation préscholaire en Italie aux XIX e XX siècles," *Histoire de l'education* 82 (May 1999): 120.
9. De Rosa, *Gocce d'inchiostro*, 127.
10. Civico Museo di Storia Patria di Trieste—Archivio storico della Lega Nazionale (hereafter cited as TS, CMSP, ASLN), busta 5, "Tabella degli Istituti della Lega Nazionale, Giugno 1928, Scuole Materne." The Lega's recreation and afterschool centers served an additional 2636 children. De Rosa, *Gocce d'inchiostro*, 137.
11. Elisa Gobbato, "Le donne de 'L'Italia Redenta.' L'Opera Nazionale Assistenza Italia Redenta negli anni 1918–1938," in *Carità pubblica, assistenza sociale e politiche di welfare*, ed. Anna Maria Vinci (Trieste: EUT, 2012), 77.
12. Gaetano Salvemini, *Racial Minorities under Fascism in Italy* (New York: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1934). Among the more recent studies are: Claudia Cernigoi, *La Banda Collotti* (Udine: Kappa vu, 2013); Giorgio Mezzalira and Hannes Obermair, *Faschismus an den Grenzen* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2012); Anna Vinci, *Sentinelle della patria* (Rome: Laterza, 2011); Raimondo Domenig, *Italiani al confine orientale* (Udine: Aviani & Aviani, 2011); Stefano Bartolini, *Fascismo antislavo* (Pistoia: ISRPt, 2008), and Almerigo Apollonio, *Venezia Giulia e fascismo* (Gorizia: LEG, 2004).
13. Adriano Dal Pont and Simonetta Carolini, eds, *L'Italia dissidente e antifascista*, vol. 1 (Milan, La Pietra, 1980), 343–5.
14. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, list of teachers (undated and untitled). Of 87 teachers listed, only seven lacked current credentials or credentials in process. The seven were slated to be "kept in service" until 31 July 1929.
15. Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1992) is the seminal work on women under Italian Fascism.
16. On "spaciality" and the everyday, see Ben Highmore, "Introduction: Questioning Everyday Life" in *Everyday Life Reader*, ed. Ben Highmore (London: Routledge, 2002), 12–3.
17. See Emil Brix, *Die Umgangssprachen in Altösterreich zwischen Agitation und Assimilation* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1982) and Fran Barbalić, "National

Minorities in Europe—V: The Jugoslavs of Italy," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 15, no. 43 (1936): 178.

18. Most obtained citizenship automatically. But, depending on their circumstances of birth, residency, and ethnic association, some "opted" for or "elected" Italian or South Slav citizenship. See Articles 70–82 of the St. Germain-en-Laye Treaty available at http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/1920/3.html (accessed 29 August 2015). Similar clauses in the Trianon Treaty governed those in former Hungarian lands.
19. Giuseppe Mazzini, "To the Young Men of Italy [1848]," in *The World's Famous Orations,* vol. 7: *Continental Europe*, ed. William Jennings Bryan, 1906, http://www.bartelby.com (accessed 26 August 2015).
20. The Three Venices also included the new northern provinces in Venezia Tridentina.
21. On Italian urban culture see Albert Ascoli and Krystyna von Henneberg, eds, in *Making and Remaking Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), in particular essays by Adrian Lyttelton and Silvana Patriarca. On western perceptions of Slavs and Balkan populations see Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
22. Emphasis on "choice," both conscious and unconscious, complicates notions of individuals' "agency" in constructing identities and differentiates this process from "deceptions of self and society" typically identified by historians of the everyday. Steege et al.,"History of Everyday Life," 371.
23. Patrizia Gabrielli, "Giuseppina Martinuzzi: biografia di una maestra italiana nella periferia dell'impero Austro-Ungarico," *Storia e problemi contemporanei* 17 (1996): 41–63.
24. Ragusin Righi, "Guardia al confine," 111–3. On the pervasive use of these terms like *allogeni* see Glenda Sluga, "Identità nazionale italiana e fascismo: *alieni*, *allogeni*, e assimilazione sul confine nord-orientale italiano," in *Nazionalismi di frontiera*, ed. Marina Cattaruzza (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2003), 171–5.
25. De Rosa, *Gocce d'inchiostro*, 136.
26. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, San Pietro dell'Amata, Grimalda, Piedimonte, and Lisignano.
27. James Albisetti, "Froebel crosses the Alps: Introducing the Kindergarten in Italy," *History of Education Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (2009): 160–2; Avril Wilson, "Ferrante Aporti: Apostle of Infancy," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 27, no. 3 (1979): 222, 226–9.
28. Ferrari, "L'éducation préscholaire,"102n.
29. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Pogliane del Carnaro and Santa Domenica di Albona.

30. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Vines di Albona; Tracy Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 100–1.
31. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Unie and Stermazio.
32. Report of 1 April 1928 quoted in De Rosa, *Gocce d'inchiostro*, 141–6.
33. Renzo Titone, "The Development of Italian Educational Philosophy in the 20th Century," *International Review of Education* 4, no. 3 (1958): 322–3.
34. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Trebiciano, Cherso, and Gruppo di Cherso.
35. Alessio Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man: Youth Regimes in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 41–5.
36. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Unie and Grimalda.
37. In 1935, the Fascists outlawed the Christmas tree as a "foreign" custom. Kate Ferris, *Everyday Life in Fascist Venice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 107–8, explores Fascist appropriations of Christmas traditions.
38. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b,5, Pisino, Piedimonte, and Villa di Rovigno.
39. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Villa di Rovigno and S. Andrea di Gorizia.
40. Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991), 28, 73–5 defines Fascism in terms of "populist ultranationalism" and "palingenetic" myth and discusses the influence of conceptions of "eternal Rome."
41. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Villa di Rovigno and Santa Croce.
42. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, San Vito del Vipacco and Laurana.
43. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, S. Andrea di Gorizia.
44. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Postumia, San Vito di Vipacco, and San Pietro dell'Amata.
45. Gentile, *La riforma dell'educazione*, 27–9.
46. Apollonio, *Venezia Giulia e fascismo*, 143.
47. Gabriella Klein, *La politica linguistica del fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986), 70.
48. In 1921, of the 18 Italian regions, Venezia Tridentina ranked first, Piedmont second, and Venezia Giulia and Zara sixth in literacy rates, estimated at 97.5, 93.2, and 84.9 percent respectively. In 1931, the regions' rankings remained the same, and literacy had risen only marginally. Illiteracy remained higher than 50 percent in Calabria and Basilicata. Klein, *La politica linguistica del fascismo*, 34, table.
49. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, La Sella, Stermazio, Dragosetti, Laurana, and Vipacco.
50. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, San Daniele del Carso and Ossero.
51. Ordinanza 268 of the Special Tribunal, 30 October 1928, cited in Dal Pont, *L'Italia dissidente e antifascista*, 234.
52. Apollonio, *Venezia Giulia e fascismo*, 192–3; Dal Pont, *L'Italia dissidente e antifascista*, 350–1.

53. On the Habsburg protests, see Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*, 53–63.
54. The elementary school was dedicated to Giacomo Venezian, an Italian nationalist and irredentist who died in World War I.
55. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Draguccio and Grimalda.
56. Corrado Gini, "The Italian Demographic Problem and the Fascist Policy on Population," *Journal of Political Economy* 38, no. 6 (1930): 690–1.
57. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, S. Andrea di Gorizia and Cherso.
58. Lega Nazionale report of 28 April 1928, reproduced in De Rosa, *Gocce d'inchiostro*, 138.
59. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, San Daniele del Carso and San Vito del Vipacco.
60. On the process of surname alterations, see Aldo Pizzagalli, *Per l'italianità dei cognomi nella Provincia di Trieste* (Trieste: Libreria Treves-Zanichelli, 1929) and Paolo Parovel, *L'identità cancellata* (Trieste: Eugenio Parovel, 1985). On resistance to surname changes, Maura Hametz, *In the Name of Italy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).
61. Adriano Andri, "I cambiamenti di cognome nel 1928 e la scuola triestina," *Qualestoria* 11, no. 1 (1983), 111.
62. Miro Tasso, *Un onomasticidio di stato* (Trieste: Mladika, 2010), 17–9, 28.
63. Maura Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian, 1918–1954* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2005), 124–8.
64. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Santa Domenica di Albona, Dragosetti, Stermazio, and Santa Croce.
65. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Tomadio, Santa Croce, San Vito del Vipacco, Vipacco, and Senosecchia.
66. In 1929 nearly all of the preschools were delayed in their opening due to exceptional cold and wind that made many inaccessible. De Rosa, *Gocce d'inchiostro*, 151.
67. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Colmo and San Daniele del Carso.
68. R. J. B. Bosworth, "Everyday Mussolinism," 42.
69. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Piedimonte and San Pietro dell'Amata.
70. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Postumia.
71. On biological politics see Elizabeth Whitaker, *Measuring Mamma's Milk* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 99–101.
72. Fascist statistician Corrado Gini refers to the "propulsive population policy." Gini, "The Italian Demographic Problem," 688.
73. Ferrari, "L'éducation préscholaire," 120.
74. Gini, "The Italian Demographic Problem," 692–3.
75. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Dragosetti, Piedimonte, Unie, Villa di Rovigno, S. Andrea di Gorizia, Carpano, La Sella, and Cherso. In La Sella, the preschool and early elementary schools were combined.
76. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Dragosetti, Laurana, and Trebiciano.

77. Report of 28 May 1928, reproduced in De Rosa, *Gocce d'inchiostro*, 139. He lauded the teachers' general diligence and good will.
78. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Tomadio.
79. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Stermazio and Lisignano.
80. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, S. Andrea di Gorizia, Villa di Rovigno, and Prosecco.
81. Paul Baxa, *Roads and Ruins* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 28–33.
82. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, S. Andrea di Gorizia.
83. Steege et al., "History of Everyday Life," 371.
84. TS, CMSP, ASLN, b. 5, Santa Domenica di Visinada.

CHAPTER 8

Empire

Roberta Pergher

Roman Legionaries or British Sahibs?

"Italy finally has its empire," proclaimed Benito Mussolini to his fellow Italians in May 1936, after months of brutal combat in Ethiopia.[1] It was to be a new kind of empire—one, as the regime would never tire of declaring, "for the working people." Massive settlement of hardworking Italians would distinguish the Fascist "demographic" empire from all other modern empires and in particular from the "exploitative" imperialism of Great Britain and France.

Luigi Bacchiega was one of the settlers dispatched—not to Ethiopia, where rebellion continued to rage and just a handful of settlers were relocated before Italy lost control of the territory, but to the colony of Libya. He arrived in a highly publicized settler trek of about 16,000 Italians—men, women, and children. The famed *ventimila*, the "twenty thousand," were charged with transforming Libya's arid coastline into a blooming garden. The 24-year-old Bacchiega relocated with his birth family, coaxed by his eldest brother's promise of a bright future. In his eighties, now coaxed by a historian, he reflected back on his Libyan years.[2]

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He told of the regime's magnificent organization, the modern villages and sparkling white farmsteads in the desert, and the hard work in the fields, which he shirked whenever he could. He remembered Mussolini's words for the departing settlers, likening them to Ancient Roman legionaries who were returning to recolonize a land abandoned for 18 centuries. What had drawn young Bacchiega to Libya was the prospect of becoming the farm's "manager," as his brother had assured him. A manservant in Italy, he dreamt of moving up the social scale and becoming part of a new class of landowners, "just like the British in Kenya." Upon his return to Italy after World War II, he worked in a factory and dabbled in union politics. His Socialist sensibility led him to reckon it had not been "right" to colonize a "foreign land." "Then again," he added, "things were changing; Libya was being Italianized." His family had been surrounded by other Italian families; all the products in the village store had been Italian. Yet Bacchiega had often stood on the shore and looked toward Italy, wondering "whether this"—his new Libyan home—"was Italy." "The habits of Italian daily life were missing," he had felt even then, "the Arabs were different." It was "another world."

Living in challenging environmental conditions, under the regime's watchful eye, settlers like Bacchiega tried to make a new life and a new home for themselves and their families. They heard the regime's message, they laid hands on their new surroundings, and they interacted with one another and wrote letters. As they tried to forge and give meaning to their new lives, they drew upon established patterns and experiences—ongoing aspirations to improve their lot, the pressures of familial obligations and a shortage of opportunities, remembrance of previous migrations, the burdens of patronage and dependency on landlords and the authorities, lifelong work habits and consumption patterns, perceptions of the land and its riches, as well as plenty of prejudice about fellow Italians and foreign Arabs. The regime's own rhetoric shone brightly in these constellations of sense-making. Fascist "truths," rendered concrete in the many regulations that impinged on settlers' daily lives, shaped settlers' expectations and provided a framework for explaining and justifying their place in the state project. As settlers reflected on their situation, with all the experiences and sensations to which life in the new land gave rise, they also pondered right and wrong, just and unjust, truth and untruth. And when they recalled their African lives decades later, they often found cause to reconsider these value judgments.

This chapter traces the construction of an "everyday" under extraordinary circumstances.[3] The "everyday" might seem a strange concept with which to capture the remarkable spectacle of ordinary Italians shipped en masse to populate recently pacified territories in occupied Libya. And indeed the tension between the ordinary and the extraordinary, the taken for granted and the new and unexpected, and between plans, hopes, and reality, runs through not only this chapter but also the accounts of Italian settlers and functionaries. The "everyday" thus denotes an ongoing project, namely, the colonizers' struggle to render the extraordinary normal. To create a Fascist everyday, the regime's functionaries drew on recognized beliefs and judgments; the settlers, too, fell back on time-honored mental and sentimental habits to understand and master their new surroundings.

The chapter begins with a reflection on the place of *Alltagsgeschichte* in unlocking settler realities and on the importance of studying the thought patterns, affective circuits, and truth regimes underlying the everyday. As well as drawing upon recent scholarship on colonial truth claims and a settler colonial logic, it introduces Antonio Gramsci's notions of "common sense" and "good sense" to frame the experiences and narratives of Italian settlers' daily lives. The narratives are then grouped into three themes that seek to show the tension and overlap between settlers' common sense and the logic and dictates of the state's representatives. First, I explore how the settlers' preceding experiences of poverty and destitution gave shape to aspirations and anxieties about the settlement project. Second, I analyze the family as the bedrock of the Fascist settlement program and its meaning for the formation of a readymade Italian community. Third, I discuss relations with the native population. My concluding remarks argue that the ambiguities and contradictions in the way the settlers made sense of their world lead us back to a central ambiguity in the Fascist expansionary project itself, namely that of building an empire while expanding the nation. Contradicting proclamations and policies of *national* regeneration on the one hand and *imperial* greatness on the other created all manner of confusion regarding the true role of the settlers, with profound implications for their everyday relations on African soil.

Analysis of the everyday of all inhabitants of the Italian colonies, though of great comparative value, is far beyond the scope of this chapter. The exploration of a native *Alltag* merits a study in its own right, as native sources point to highly differentiated experiences ranging from radical opposition to accommodation and collaboration with the colonial overlords.[4] This chapter, moreover, limits its focus to the colonial

settlers dispatched by the Fascist state rather than including the many other Italians then inhabiting the colonies, the majority of whom resided in cities.[5] Because it was so meticulously planned and tightly managed, the settler reality lends itself particularly well to parsing out the meaning and practices of a *Fascist* everyday. It allows us to analyze both the regime's construction of an everyday and people's understanding of daily life and thereby gain greater insight into competing visions and practices of land reclamation, husbandry, kith and kin, or relations with strangers—be they Italian or not. These practices in turn allow us to see the contours of what was legitimate and rightful. For this reason, too, the chapter concentrates on Libya rather than East Africa, where the project of establishing a settled Italian society remained much more provisional and disorganized.[6]

That is not to say that in Libya the Italians achieved stability and order quickly.[7] After the 1911 invasion, native resistance continued to seriously challenge Italian rule. In the late 1920s, the Fascist regime responded by concentrating over 100,000 civilians in concentration camps in the desert. In this context of extreme violence but steadfast determination to hold the colony, Fascist administrators and colonial experts came to see settlement as an ideal solution to the native challenge to Italian sovereignty. Their vision of a colony inhabited by half a million Italians, who would outnumber the native Arab, Jewish, and Berber population, dovetailed with earlier fantasies of an Italian "fourth shore" on the North African continent, complementing the three shores of the Italian peninsula. Entrusted to the initiative of private investors, these fantasies had withered; now spectacular state investment was to bring them to fruition. Starting in 1938, five consecutive treks of 20,000 settlers each were planned with the goal of increasing the number of Italians by 100,000 within half a decade. Plans, however, did not fully materialize: though the *ventimila* were an impressive demonstration of force, they actually fell 4000 bodies short, and the 1939 trek counted barely 10,000 settlers. Italy's entry into the war the following year put a halt to the project altogether. With war raging in North Africa, the aura of a fourth shore began to dissolve and settlers' everyday realities became marked by families torn asunder, foreign occupation, and fear of Arab reprisals.

In 1938, though, it was possible for settlers to focus on the bright side and attend to the mundane but mammoth tasks of constructing a new life for themselves and their families, caring for the land and the animals, and coping with all the directives from state representatives. For its part, the regime had a precise vision of an orderly settler community living

a regimented *Alltag*. Some settlers, however, went to Libya precisely because they envisioned a life of greater freedom and self-expression in the colony. They dreamt of a new, exciting, unconventional life and invested the fourth shore with an aura of the exotic and the transformative. Given that they were being transported to Libya under the aegis of an aggressively expanding dictatorship, how could they even hope for a life of such agency and freedom? It is the attention to everyday practices, and the meaning and justification attached to these practices, that helps us unlock their agency and their sense-making.

Aura and *Alltag* in Fascist Colonial Settlement

Alltagsgeschichte as a concept has never designated merely the quotidian, the uneventful. For one, historians of the everyday have always been conscious of the susceptibility of everyday life to intrusion and "colonization." Everyday history revolves around tensions between ordinary routines and powerful forces of change, or between state power and the ability of ordinary people to shape their own lives. For another, daily life is not simply there for people to inhabit, but its patterns respond to and make sense of changes in the environment, in social relations, in values, and so forth. *Alltag* is about how the habits of the hand and those of the mind interact. Practitioners of *Alltagsgeschichte* have shown, for example, how people living under dictatorship and seeking to make the "extraordinary" normal and create an everyday where there was none, exercised their own "agency," put up "resistance," sought out "negotiation," and displayed a good dose of "*Eigensinn*."[8]

While the concept of *Alltagsgeschichte* per se has not had a transformative influence on the history of imperial conquest and exploitation, scholars have recently paid greater attention to the construction of a "logic" or "common sense" that undergirded colonial rule and settlement in particular. To expose the ambiguity and indeterminacy of the imperial project, Ann Laura Stoler draws our attention to colonial functionaries—"what made up the repertoires of common sense that guided their arts of governance and the violences of social policy."[9] Stoler recognizes colonial functionaries' "common sense" as less stable, more "indecisive and muddled" than the systems of knowledge we have come to assume regulated imperial power. It is this "common sense," rather than more permanent ideologies, that found expression as "achieved labor and worldly practice," with immediate consequences for the lives of colonizers and colonized.[10]

Focusing on the American frontier, Mark Rifkin has theorized how a "sense of givenness" permeated settler societies, how "settler colonial governmentality comes to be lived as the self-evident conditions of possibility for (settler) being."[11] Rifkin argues that the state's claim to sovereignty "provides non-Natives with a 'ready-made' background against which to register opportunities for agency and for interaction with their surroundings."[12] That settlers arrived with solid backing from the Italian state, whose claim to Libya was in turn acknowledged by all the great powers, certainly influenced the "self-evidentness" with which Italian settlers, too, made a home for themselves. As Rifkin has astutely observed, "aspects of law and policy orient, shape the trajectory of, and provide momentum for quotidian modes of sensation and contextualization."[13]

Rifkin's statement here calls to mind Gramsci's notion of hegemony, that is, a political, cultural, and moral dominance able to direct all of society and delineate the "field of possibility" for settler agency.[14] But in reflecting on the settlers' condition, Gramsci would probably have drawn on not only hegemony but also an additional concept from his toolbox, namely "common sense," which he defined as a set of ideas, truths, and sensibilities partly in agreement with hegemonic culture but partly beside and outside of it. A settler society's "common sense" would refer to the meanings and morals that settlers brought to the table in the creation of a quotidian sense of settledness. It might indeed be beneficial here to recover and apply Gramsci's insights for a number of reasons. He undoubtedly offers useful concepts for understanding the regime's efforts at building consent, as the Fascists strove to create in Libya a white society bound to the regime, one that would never question the metropole's sovereignty and secede. But beyond the general applicability of his concepts—prescient and powerful though they are, Gramsci's writings are intriguing for the explicit and indirect ways they reveal the particular ambivalences of the Fascist experience. Gramsci, after all, was writing under Fascism, steeped in an Italian environment bound by tradition yet undergoing rapid change, not least in patterns of sociability and the relationship between the individual and the state. The specific features of Fascism—the moral ambiguity and plain fear it generated for many, the violence and terror that affected Gramsci personally—in no small measure influenced Gramsci's own sense of how ideologies crystallize, how they turn hegemonic, and how individuals, classes, and powerholders relate to each other through systems of values, ambitions, and judgments.

I thus invoke Gramsci's thinking not simply to suggest a framework within which to think about an Italian imperial everyday, but because it alerts us to the ways in which Fascism shifted moral signs. For example, Gramsci used "common sense" to denote a conception of the world that was not necessarily coherent or logical but was shared by distinct societal and geographical groups. He generally treated common sense rather negatively, as haphazard and subjective, but at times he showed real appreciation for the common wisdom of broad groups of people. In addition to "common sense," he also recognized a "good sense" that had a much more positive valence. It was an individual philosophy which Gramsci juxtaposed with both empty philosophizing and the feelings of the masses. In some places, however, Gramsci spoke of *senso comune* and *buon senso* interchangeably and assessed both positively.[15] What is interesting about the ways in which Gramsci shifted between "common sense" and "good sense"—and the moral judgments associated with each—is not that he offers a clear theoretical framework for analyzing and interpreting settler narratives. Rather the shifts in his own usage of terms reveal how Fascism unsettled common ways of thinking and feeling and sense-making, how it confounded the sensibilities undergirding everyday experiences. That was all the more true in the colonies.

In order not to overburden this methodological section, I will not pursue here an additional challenge in reflecting on everyday history under Fascism, namely, that our principal sources are often in the form of oral history. We trawl for the remnants of one everyday using the net of another. Sometimes this can help, as aging respondents become reflective and self-conscious about a "common sense" that no longer quite makes sense to them. Sometimes, of course, new regimes of feeling occlude older ones altogether. At this stage, I will simply observe that this chapter was written very much conscious of, and in dialog with, the challenges of recovering the everyday from memory.

Aspiration and Perspiration

Following seven days at sea, a grand ceremony in Tripoli with charismatic Governor Italo Balbo, and a bumpy ride on a military lorry to their farmsteads, the settlers wrote home to family and friends. Monitoring the correspondence, Balbo sent excerpts to Mussolini as "genuine expression" of the settlers' "mood and disposition."[16] They wrote of the sea voyage, the revelries along the way, the beautiful homes they found on arrival,

the promising soil, and the tools and supplies provided. Full of praise for Balbo, the Duce, and Fascism, the selected excerpts are nonetheless interesting for the connections their authors make, the comparisons they draw, and the mental images they evoke.

The settlers felt "like *signori*" and hoped to "enjoy some tranquil years after having suffered so much." "Those godforsaken places" they had hailed from were "forgotten"; they had moved "from rags to riches." Their house appeared to them "like a villa"; "the barn was better than the house" they used to live in. They found "everything a rich family needs … even a toilet, nicer than any beautiful house" in their home village. The settlers did not have to work over the next few months and thus could "take a stroll and always be out and about." It seemed "impossible" to them to "be so happy and not to have all those worries." It was "like being a Queen." They had "heard from the old colonials that here one never has to worry about a thing, one works little and eats well." They were happy about the land: "those who talked of sand are crazy, there is good land here." And even where there was sand, even when they arrived "in the middle of a desert," they shrugged it off with a "never mind"; they were "happy anyway" because they had to "no longer worry about food." They were "in the middle of a desert supplied with everything." They found "perfect air"; it was "like being in Sicily without any difference." They felt that they had "struck gold in the lands of Africa." As they got to their new homes, they found "three Black men that stood guard and had lit a fire." The Arabs had "welcomed them all indistinctly with great joy" and "in addition to speaking their own language speak perfect Italian." They felt they were "treated better than when they went to Germany." They believed that "there will be land for all Italians without a need to sacrifice one's life abroad or stay in Italy and have one's blood sucked by good-for-nothing masters." They enjoyed dancing in private homes, trusting that "if things continue like this, here we have America." They could get "everything" they wanted; it was "indeed like having America." They would not return home for the time being, because "a place like this was not to be found." Mussolini enjoyed reading the correspondence—he was "heartily interested and also amused"—and asked that the settlers' mail be monitored for some time.

The settlers thus recalled the deleterious conditions they had left—the hunger, toil, and poverty—and likened their new lives to those of their former masters. But it was not only the material benefits—the house, the barn, the five spades, and five kilos of spaghetti[17]—that led them to think

they had made it but also the promise of landownership and a less burdensome life. They trusted what others told them about being a "colonizer." They were positively surprised by the welcome and assistance and perhaps the subservience the natives offered. They had migrated before, but this was better because here they arrived with privileges, as envoys of a state that allegedly was recreating a glorious empire. To be taken care of, to be without worry, to have climbed the social ladder, and to be surrounded by helpful and harmless natives was certainly a great prospect. And yet the most positive and auspicious assessments likened the new home to America, which was still considered the best option by destitute Italians in search of a better future.[18]

That their previous everyday was marked by real misery alerts us to the kind of people the state enlisted to populate Italy's fourth shore. These were not citizens of means who saw the colonies as an investment opportunity. Rather, they were the commoners who eked out a living on the margins and often migrated to make ends meet. That they spoke of having it like their former masters indicates the lives of dependency they had led and the lives of freedom and autonomy they now envisioned. They had been sharecroppers and tenants and some of them even agricultural day-laborers, although the state settlement agencies were generally keen to exclude the latter, deeming them too irresponsible to be entrusted with a farmstead.

What the settlers were not quite aware of, at least initially, was that they remained in the same condition of dependency, except that now their overlord was the state. They may have felt like landowners when they arrived and "took possession" of the farmstead—one of the settlement agencies even worded its contract so as to give settlers "the effective sensation of ownership."[19] Yet the settlers would not actually own the farmstead until 30 years of continuous tenancy, by the end of which their hard labor would have more than repaid the state for the property and assistance. There were some differences between the settlement contracts of the two state agencies in charge of the project, the ECL and the INFPS, but in the main settlers received an allowance in their first few years, then entered a sharecropping relationship or co-partnership with the state agency, and eventually the repayments started.[20] The settlers thus were *coloni* in the sense of colonizers, but they were also *coloni* in the traditional sense of tenant farmers.[21] As one settler recognized a couple of months after his arrival, nothing was free. Governor Balbo had come to the village to "explain the conditions" and the following day the settler wrote to his

brother: "now, dear brother, let me explain to you. We have to pay for all the tools, animals, house, barn; everything needs to be paid for, even the plants."[22]

This is not to say that the state did not play an essential and beneficial role for the settlers. Some of them had migrated before as individuals, but without state support they could not have relocated as large families without capital or connections. The farmstead and assistance made for a sheltered and respectable beginning. But the symbiotic relationship with the state also meant that settlers' everyday was massively shaped by the authorities. On the one hand, settlers turned to the state far more than functionaries thought desirable. They expected state assistance, demanding help whenever they thought it advantageous. State agents worried that the system was "habituating" settlers "to a regime of negative tutelage" and thus failing the "ethical purpose" of colonization, namely to "direct the farmers towards a sense of ownership."[23] On the other hand, the state imposed many more controls than the settlers wanted. The entire family had to work on the farmstead, and no family member was allowed to seek external employment. Nor were settlers allowed to hire native labor. Nobody was supposed to leave the farmstead on a workday without written permission from the farm manager. Directives for land cultivation and livestock management had to be followed meticulously.

Bacchiega was thus not supposed to become estate manager but expected to work the land together with the rest of his family. He had never been interested in such occupation and had left his sharecropping family at an early age. It was his brother's insistence that had compelled him to lend his name to the family's application, as he was the only one enrolled in the party and who thus fulfilled one of the prerequisites for selection. Unwilling to do now what he had dodged in Italy, Bacchiega soon abandoned the farmstead, seeking outside employment first with the settlement agency, handing out machinery and tools to farmers, then as a liquor merchant. He did what he had always done, seeking opportunities, making things happen, always on the lookout for better options. He was not the only one. Other farmers sent their daughters to work as housemaids in the city and their sons to toil as construction workers. They grew vegetables, which could make good money at the market, even though it meant neglecting the state-mandated tree cultures, which would presumably yield in a distant future. They fed the state-provided forage to their personally owned poultry instead of to the livestock, which belonged to the agency. To thrive, and sometimes just to survive, settlers shirked state

regulations about pretty much every aspect of their work and family lives. In fact, settlers' coping strategies, expectations, and common sense rarely matched those of the state agents. Their different worldviews reflected and created different everyday practices.

In an effort to keep farmers on track, a hierarchy of farm managers, overseers, and agricultural experts used admonitions, fines, and the threat of repatriation. They monitored not only agricultural activities but also "the morale and the life of the farmers; their opinions; their discontents; the impressions that they exchange among each other; the state of hygiene in their houses; the behavior of the housewives; etc. etc."[24] They directed farmers based on an eclectic mix of rationalization theory, expert knowledge, native wisdom, and Italian traditions. The only form of expertise disregarded was the settlers'. And yet the settlers were the ones held accountable when things went wrong. A concise manual for "the new colonial farmer" contained 20 suggestions for how best to cultivate the land and tend animals. The first piece of advice acknowledged the adverse conditions awaiting the farmer but promised he would "reap a good harvest" if he knew "how best to employ" his labor.[25] It thus left no doubt as to who was to blame in case of failure.

Earlier, small-scale settlement programs in the first half of the 1930s had yielded meager results. In one case, only 12 of the 26 family heads transferred had endured.[26] And yet the agencies carried on, convinced that the "right" settlers would succeed. By the late 1930s, the guidelines for selecting prospective families heeded considerations of regional origin, occupational history, agricultural specialization, family structure, party membership, and moral conduct. It was believed that their background and character would make all the difference.

When things did not turn out to the regime's satisfaction, it was thus the settlers and the procedure by which they were chosen that were blamed. An agency report from 1940 criticized the various commissions involved in the selection, depicting the settlers as "*coloni improvisati*," attracted by adventure and mistaken promises.[27] Despised were destitute adventurers exploiting the program to chase quick colonial riches irrespective of the "higher" national purpose and incompetent settlers relying on state subsidy and assistance to improve their situation. Laying blame on the settlers appears to have been a convenient way of distracting attention from the mistakes and shortcomings of the settlement agencies and the state project per se.

But even more than that, the possibility that farmers might entertain a more self-interested, less Fascist vision of settler success potentially undermined the very experiment upon which the regime had embarked in Libya. The state did not want "*signori*," nor did it want the "colonizers" of the popular imagination, the likes of British plantation owners in Kenya. It wanted sober, thrifty Italians who through their sweat and toil would take possession of the land, grow into a close-knit white society, and eventually outnumber Libya's native population.

The regime's Libyan program built, no doubt, on earlier land reclamation programs inside Italy. It borrowed programmatic and structural elements from the *bonifica* projects, which sought to ruralize the population as a means for social and political stability. But more than anything else, the goal in Libya was to boost Italy's claim on the land. As reincarnations of Roman legionaries, the settlers were to occupy a land that had been fought over for decades. Their toil and ownership of the land would secure Italian sovereignty once and for all. That is why it was so important to root Italians who were committed to the project, who did not see it as an opportunity for enrichment, who would not sell out to the highest bidder, who did not plan on returning to their home villages. That is why farmers were granted de facto ownership only after many years of committed labor, when "the farmer will have overcome every uncertainty and tied himself forever to the land."[28] The Libyan land was to become his home. And home meant the affirmation of Libya's alleged *Italianità*.

Individuals, Families, Communities

Libya's Italianness had to be ensured long-term—and created quickly. That was one of the reasons why the state chose to settle whole families. A group of families could form a community and re-create the feel of home villages on the spot, or so the authorities hoped. The intent to instantly forge a day-to-day reality guided the planning of villages and the selection of settler families.

Early settlement programs admitted extended families, including married children or the family head's siblings and their families. The provisions about family structure, however, were revised in the late 1930s, when only nuclear families were accepted. These "homogenous" families were rather numerous, averaging eight members, with a male family head under the age of 50 and at least one adult, unmarried son.[29] The decision to ban extended families was probably related to the problems

incurred in previous projects.[30] Adult family members more easily entered into disputes with the head of the household and married family members with children could contest the agencies' principles of ownership and inheritance. The potential for family breakups undermined the farmstead's viability, thus jeopardizing the settlement project. Settlement authorities may have believed moreover that a nuclear family was easier to supervise than an extended family.

Cognizant of the hard work required in reclaiming the desert, the program placed a premium on male adults. Following the overall state specifications, the INFPS decided to be even more selective, picking families "with no less than two or three working (male) elements."[31] The 400 families it selected in 1938 were composed of 3491 individuals. Among them were only 761 women over the age of 15 as opposed to 1466 men.[32] By 1940, the villages overseen by the INFPS counted 4797 men and 3343 women.[33] In selecting "ideal" families for settlement, the agency had created a skewed social environment.[34] The gender imbalances hampered the creation of future families, undermining the very project of establishing a viable, self-contained Italian community.

Not that the INFPS misunderstood the importance of women in colonization, which it had discussed at length in a 1937 planning meeting. Board members argued, "peasants will go more willingly if they know they will find women." They recognized that among the families would include "young girls who want to marry and seek out the places where the young farmers gather." Hence they stressed the need for a "piazza" to "promote relationships" and serve as a "central gathering spot for life in the colony."[35] Young settlers, however, seem to have preferred private homes and barns to the state-created public spaces. Afra Garosi recounted that she and her siblings went out every night, visiting one farmstead after another, meeting and dancing with all the other young people. She remembered it as the best time of her life.[36]

Both settlement agencies not only regarded women as indispensable but believed it "necessary that even the women become farmers."[37] Not surprisingly, however, the monthly subsidy dispensed to adult women was substantially lower than that given to men. The ECL, for instance, paid men 100 lire and women 75 lire.[38] It is not clear whether the disbursement was meant to reward family members for their work or whether it was intended as an allowance for their sustenance. Either possibility mirrored common assumptions and practices: women's work was less valuable and women needed less than men. Nevertheless, women's role was

considered integral not only because of demographic concerns but also because of their economic and affective responsibilities within the patriarchal household.

Yet, as already noted, women did work off the farm, often at the behest of their own families, but often also out of their own initiative and in opposition to their kin. This emerged clearly when a village manager investigated how it was that Italians in Tripoli were pressuring him to release young women for household work. The manager found that "the settler women are the ones who solicit this type of request by asking to be proposed as domestic servants …. depicting themselves as victims of the family, as inept for an agricultural lifestyle by having been accustomed to a different … education etc. etc."[39] As settlement agents had to recognize, women had their own views about how to fashion their lives and availed themselves of a variety of rationales to justify their choices.

In other cases, it was women's particular roles within the family household that upset managers and administrators. Every family member was supposed to work in the fields, yet traditionally Sicilian women did not perform this type of labor.[40] Bacchiega remembered that when Governor Balbo visited his village, he told the farming families that he had heard about some women's refusal to work in the fields. His response was categorical: those who did not want to work could take a ship back to wherever they had come from.[41] Settlement agencies in fact claimed the right to "fire those families who prove for any reason incapable or unworthy to complete the project, or who diminish their work capacity by distracting from agricultural labor even a few of their members, be they men or women."[42] Several families were sent back to Italy shortly after their arrival.[43]

Beyond directing the gender makeup of settler communities, planners looked to geography as a means of optimization. At the aforementioned 1937 meeting, the INFPS determined that the northern Veneto region would yield "the best elements," while people from the Romagna region were deemed to have "a very cocky and very sly character" and hence considered "terrible for colonization." Also the central Umbria region was discredited, its people painted as "too attached to the traditions and loathing change."[44] Such opinions were based not only on the region's environmental and cultural distinctiveness but also on its traditional work and property relations. Regional differences among Italian settlers thus played a constituent role in the state's settlement schemes. Families from various (though perhaps not all) regions were supposed to come together

to create a harmonious Italian society on the "fourth shore." To endorse cohesion, the state agencies in 1938 relocated families from the same region close to one another.[45] Such proximity, however, seemed to have fostered antagonism rather than unity, as settlers transferred the *campanilismo* of their home villages to their new homelands.

In response, Balbo insisted for the 1939 settlement trek that the settlers "be mixed up to the great advantage of the Italian language which they are obliged to speak in order to understand each other."[46] Mixing families from different regions was meant to "favor the fusion of farmers … in the same national spirit."[47] Yet the revised relocation scheme did not bring about national unison either. Instead of identifying based on their narrow local provenance, settlers now invoked broader regional characteristics to define themselves and their neighbors. Settlers called each other *polentoni* and *terron-magnasavon*, the Southerners ridiculing Northerners for their culinary habits of eating polenta and the Northerners scorning Southerners as eaters (rather than users) of soap—eluding once again the state's goal of a nationally conscious and nationally bound community.[48] While my interview partner assured me that such monikers were offered in a jovial spirit and that open confrontations were rare, settlers apparently felt the need to differentiate themselves from fellow Italian immigrants rather than to bond and emphasize commonalities. Mixing settlers from highly divergent regions created an environment that brought to the fore massive internal differences that may have necessitated acknowledgment and negotiation. Moreover, the arrangement of the villages as separate Italian enclaves averted daily contact between settlers and native population and may thus have inhibited mechanisms of collective identification as Italians in opposition to Libyans.[49]

Despite such internal divisions, identification along national lines was not completely absent among settlers. Settlers were most likely to identify as Italians when fulfilling their role as active participants in the project of reclaiming Libyan lands. They were taking part in an historic mission not only as farmers, Venetians, or family heads but also as Italians. Settlers internalized and embraced the Fascist message of national grandeur as it justified their role in the takeover of foreign lands. Their dependence on state assistance and their awareness of state surveillance further encouraged this national identification. This selective sense of Italianness—defined by the appropriation of foreign land and the reliance on the state—took on a completely new and pressing import once Italy's predominance waned and settlers' separation from the local population diminished. After World

War II and especially with the proclamation of Libya's independence in 1952, settlers were forced increasingly to rely on the Italian government to defend their claims. At that point, it became imperative for them to identify primarily as Italians, rather than Neapolitans or Piedmontese. Settlers in fact inserted themselves into the Italian landscape of regional identities by defining themselves as *italiani della Libia*, "Italians of Libya."

Thus like the scores of emigrants overseas before them, Italian settlers in Libya initially maintained strong local and regional identities.[50] But Italy's history of emigration offered further points of contact that translated into mental and sentimental habits that settlers fell back on, even if the settler experience was very different from preceding Italian migratory experiences. Scholarship on migration has shown that generally one individual or perhaps a few family members, rather than entire families, left their homes for faraway destinations, or even simply to find work in the city. Migrants stayed connected to their home villages through family networks, who arranged accommodations and contacts in the new locations, helped the migrant to find a spouse, provided an option for return, and so forth.[51] In the history of Italian migration, the *famiglia* had played quite a different role than that which the Fascists now expected of it: from being the unit providing stability and connection between home and away, it had now become the unit of migration itself. Yet families fell back on the habits and hopes of their forefathers when they split to improve their lot, when they maintained contact with their kin in Italy, and when they interacted and did business with those around them, strangers who sometimes could become acquaintances or even friends.

Italians and Libyans—"The Same, in Their Own Ways"

The settler villages were conceived as "oases of Italianness," separate and independent from the local population.[52] It appears that some of them were just that. One of my interviewees assured me that his family had "no contact with the Arabs," insisting that "for us they didn't exist."[53] Another one told of an Arab village nearby but claimed there was hardly any contact.[54] A third remembered that the Arabs came to ask for hay, water, barley, and sugar and depicted them as "needy."[55] Bacchiega said the Arabs were a "danger" because they were "vindictive" but that his family was "respectful" toward them. "I did not fear them, I used my bike

at night," he explained, "because I did business with them, I sold them wine."[56] Also, the land allotted to his family included a quarry, which his family ran as a side business, employing 40 Arabs as day laborers. Hence the Bacchiegas had a good degree of familiarity with the native population. Other families "showed the Arabs the barrel of the gun when they came to beg for some bread." To these families the Arabs "played spiteful tricks," burning the hay or cutting the goat's throat. Bacchiega moreover told of the violence committed by the local population against the settlers during the war. Italian reports in the archives confirm as much.[57] Yet Bacchiega was the only one among a dozen interviewees to mention it; all others were keen to report that there were no reprisals during World War II, that the Arabs remained loyal. This stark variance in recollection highlights some interesting patterns of memory. The majority of interviewees described a world marked by separation but at the same time portrayed the few extant relations as positive. Bacchiega did the opposite: he acknowledged interaction, displaying a good dose of prejudice, but he also talked openly about the tense relationship and Arab violence during the war.

While some of my interviewees may have forgotten or displaced instances of interaction, it is also possible that settler-native relations varied significantly by village. A 1939 health report claimed that the Italian settlers lived "completely isolated from the autochthonous population."[58] But as we have already seen, several settlers upon arrival shared their positive impression of the Arabs. One letter writer even chided the recipient in Italy for warning him that "here I would not be able to take one step out the door, instead I go out every night and the Arabs are friendly and favorable."[59]

There certainly was some interaction, or at least the possibility thereof, distressing the authorities enough to intervene. In January 1939, Balbo inspected the new villages and met with the settlers.[60] He gave them directions on how to conduct their lives, "insisting," as he later reported, "in particular on the need to avoid, in the most absolute manner, promiscuity and familiarity with the Muslim populations." He informed the Foreign Minister that the Muslims were similarly averse to any type of "intermixing" due to their religious convictions and added confidently that by "using clear and comprehensible language it is not difficult to lay down precise rules for the limits of interactions between the races." In a letter soon after, a settler commented that "His Excellency Balbo was here and told us how to carry ourselves with regard to the Arabs" but did not spell out what exactly that entailed in practice.[61]

But such decorum had been made clear to settlers long before this point: all were instructed even before their departure for Libya how to interact with the native population. To limit unnecessary repatriations, farmers were informed about the "*contegno*" they would have to maintain, "particularly regarding relations with the Arabs."[62] The word *contegno* denotes a composed and dignified attitude, but it also expresses a certain reserve and restraint. Interviewee Luigi Manenti remembered that during the passage to Libya settlers were taught the Arab concept of *sua-sua*: Arabs and Italians were "*sua-sua,* the same, in their own ways."[63]

The concepts of *contegno* and *sua-sua* reveal something specific about the Italian colonial project. For one, the authorities were fully aware that they were using destitute and disadvantaged Italians, whose alleged lack of discipline, racial ignorance, and convivial manners could undermine the settlement project. State functionaries were thus keen to uphold "white prestige" and avoid the formation of an embarrassing class of poor and unruly whites. Hence the language of dignified self-control and separation. Hence the repatriation of families for "actions dishonoring or tending to lower the national prestige in the eyes of the natives."[64] Hence the prohibition of Italian itinerant labor "for reasons of dignity and prestige."[65] And hence the commitment to public welfare for unemployed and destitute Italians, "for obvious reasons of authority and prestige" and "to demonstrate to the native our superiority in every manifestation of civility and progress."[66] In this respect, the Fascists were no different from the other European colonizers, for whom the presence and comportment of poor whites in the colonies was a continuous anxiety. The Italians were indeed determined to prove to the rest of Europe that they were just as apt colonizers, ready to fulfill the imperial obligation of enforcing racial boundaries as an expression or their racial superiority.

At the same time, functionaries were not interested in the affirmation of an assertive, entrepreneurial, and independently minded white colonial ruling class that availed itself of indigenous labor. To the contrary, they aspired to the creation of a national community of toiling and thrifty farmers. Hard labor and ownership were regarded as indispensable to permanently and unmistakably establish the Italianness of the Libyan shoreline. Hence farmers were not allowed to hire indigenous labor, not even if they paid for it out of pocket.[67] This tale of separation and self-sufficiency, however, was at odds with the reality on the ground, as native laborers

constructed the roads, wells, and houses for the settlement project. Public works projects consistently employed one-third metropolitan workers and two-thirds native workers.[68] And some native Libyans even continued to work for the settlement agencies after the settlers arrived, living in the same villages as the Italian immigrants. In February 1938, for instance, one village counted 605 farmers, 200 Italian workers, and 250 native workers.[69]

The language of separation, of *sua-sua*, had a further connotation, one that signaled Italy's position in imperial politics. By the mid-1930s, Fascist Italy was posing as the "protector" of Islam, in clear opposition to Great Britain and France, the imperial powers that dominated the Arab world, and flanked Libya on either side. The regime thus spoke of the Italian and Arab civilizations as different but equally rich. Yet the delusion of a completely separate but equal society could not hide the entrenched social and political hierarchies. The Libyan people were forced out of their traditional ways of life, pushed into the hinterland, relegated to separate enclaves with considerably smaller land parcels than their Italian counterparts, paid a fraction of Italian wages, deprived of labor protection, accorded an inferior legal status, and by 1939 denied the possibility of ever attaining full citizenship. They were never to hold a position superior to that of an Italian, as it "would cause grave damage to the prestige which for political and social reasons the metropolitans must conserve with respect to the local populations."[70]

The concept of *sua-sua* thus tied the regime's international politics to settlers' everyday practices. But as a concept *sua-sua* could imply not only separation but also similarity, and that understanding could have repercussions that defied state wishes. A sense of Italo-Arab correspondence could blur racial barriers and foster interaction. Not that settlers who chose to engage with the Arabs necessarily viewed them as their equals—they had after all absorbed some of the lessons of what it meant to be European and don the mantle of colonizer. But settlers did have tea with their Arab neighbors, traded with them at the market, and employed them on their fields. These relations and dealings disrupted the functionaries' logic of separation. But there was one more feature to the state project that could confound settlers as to how they felt connected to the land and the people around them.

Conclusion

Bacchiega's ruminations about whether "this was Italy" surprised me, as I had always thought of Libya as a colony and hence as significantly different from Italy's national territory. True, by the late 1930s the regime incessantly presented Libya as an Italian homeland, and in 1939 it officially integrated the four coastal provinces into the Italian nation. In spite of this declaration, however, not much changed in administrative terms, and thus I had taken the words of the Fascists to be just that—words of Fascists, propaganda with little meaning. Yet here was my interview partner, remembering 60 years later how he had contemplated the Italianness of his new home. As he shared his past musings, his predicament slowly started to make sense to me. Words, gestures do matter. The deafening talk of a "fourth shore," the provincialization of the colony—these demonstrations on the part of the regime did have an effect on the settlers, forcing them to reassess their sense of place and their sense of belonging.

Invoking the image of a "fourth" Italian shore, the regime had assured the settlers that this land was Italian, that, unlike the unfortunate emigrants of decades past, they were living on Italian, not foreign soil. Settlers for their part surveyed their new surroundings and assessed their situation. They had arrived sustained by a "common sense" of what it meant to migrate, what it meant to colonize, what it meant to run a farmstead and a family, what it meant to live a righteous life. What they found was a colony that afforded them many privileges, more than they had ever enjoyed, but also confronted them with many impositions. Sure, the regime kept telling them this was Italy, but they could not stop noticing how different it was. Besides, the regime's propaganda itself was contradictory. Not only were the settlers being bombarded with messages about the Italianness of the fourth shore, but they were also told that Italy now had an empire—an empire for the people. Were they not the people populating this new empire?

No wonder then that Bacchiega stood on the shoreline and pondered the Italianness of his surroundings. The circumstances he encountered in Libya tested his perception of what he owed to his family, whether he ought to be a farmer, and what this move to Libya meant for him personally. But he was also stretching his imagination as to what it meant to live in a colony rather than inside the nation. Sure, there were many other Italians and many Italian products, but did that make Libya part of the nation? Why then did he feel like he was living in "another world?"

The distinction between nation and empire might seem inconsequential. After all, the settlers were the emissaries of a dictatorship bent on expansion. But nation and empire did mean different things, even in the popular understanding of destitute Italians. Their "common sense" differentiated between the two forms of rule and the privileges, rights, and responsibilities associated with each. Most importantly, equality and hierarchy had different meanings inside the nation and in the colonies. Not that these commoners had ever considered themselves equal to their "*signori*" in Italy. They understood and respected social hierarchies even when the law declared everyone to be equal. But once they arrived in Libya they sensed that now they were the "*signori*," though over whom they did not say. They recognized that this was a very different reality from the one they had left behind. At the same time, it was possible for a settler to describe an "*Italia nuova*" in a letter to his brother. "You have to promise to come visit," he wrote, "because you'll really see in Libya a new Italy … It is a pleasure to be here:… we are all equal and we all get along fine."[71]

So what was this new space in which they found themselves—a new empire for the people in which they were the colonial overlords? Or a new Italian shore that would strengthen the bonds of Italianness and create a new society of equals? These settler voices show that the simultaneous projects of nation-building and empire-building gave rise to much ambiguity, with real consequences for their daily lives. After all, it was through an engineered *Alltag* that the Fascists were hoping to render Italy's sovereignty over Libya incontestable. The praxis of a white settler society marked by hard labor, intact families, and segregation from the native population was meant to root Fascist claims to power.

Whether they were enthusiastic Fascists or indifferent opportunists, the settlers' everyday was stamped by the Fascist goals of national unity *and* imperial conquest, racial hierarchy *and* Italian homogeneity. The regime's influence on the values and aspirations of the Italian population as a whole cannot be overestimated, and this was all the more true when it came to the aspirations of the regime's beneficiaries, like the settlers. Yet Bacchiega's uncertainty at the time, and his reflective musings in retrospect, remind us that the settlers did not simply swallow what the regime told them. The ambiguities of the Fascist project forced the settlers to take stock, and often collided with the assumptions they had brought with them to Libya.

Gramsci recognized that a people's "common sense" was always in conversation with the hegemon, constantly incorporating new ideologies

and mores. For Gramsci the question was thus how the people's "common sense" would respond to and be affected by the Fascist ideology he so despised. As suggested earlier, Gramsci did not place much hope in "common sense," believing it too conservative and conformist to withstand Fascism. But at times he also talked of "good sense," to denote an individual's personal philosophy and in particular an individual's stance in relation to the state. He generally gave the individual's "good sense" a more positive valence than the group's "common sense," though at times he used the two terms interchangeably and viewed them as potentially transformative.

For Gramsci, both "common sense" and "good sense" thus described the capacity of the population or particular groups or individuals to draw their own conclusions. Yet his own vagueness and volatility in the usage of these terms signals that he himself was unsure that either the collectivity or an individual could see through hegemonic ideology and come to their own judgment of what constituted a good and just society. He remained uncertain whether "common sense" and even "good sense" represented negative or positive capacities—a clear sign of the moral indeterminacy that Gramsci saw around him. We find ourselves confronted with the same uncertainty, as we recover the mixture of experiences, values, and judgments that made up the settlers' everyday.

Notes

1. Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 27, eds Duilio Susmel and Edoardo Susmel (Florence: La Fenice, 1959): 268–9.
2. In this article I have used real names where my respondents explicitly wished me to do so. The personal interviews with Luigi Bacchiega were conducted in Bolzano, Italy, 15 and 20 July 2004.
3. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
4. Irma Taddia, "Memorie italiane/memorie africane," in *Auf dem Weg zum modernen Äthiopien. Festschrift für Bairu Tafla*, eds Stefan Brüne and Heinrich Scholler (Münster: Verlag, 2005), 225–46. For a Libyan viewpoint see Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, *Forgotten Voices: Power and Agency in Colonial and Postcolonial Libya* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
5. On the city of Tripoli see for instance Barbara Spadaro, *Una colonia Italiana. Incontri, memorie e rappresentazioni tra Italia e Libia* (Milan: Mondadori, 2013).

6. Taddia, "Memorie italiane/memorie africane," 235. For a collection of interviews with settlers in Ethiopia see Irma Taddia, *La memoria dell'Impero: autobiografie d'Africa Orientale* (Rome: Piero Lacaita editore, 1988). On the experience of emigrants to East Africa see also Giulia Barrera, "Mussolini's Colonial Race Laws and State-Settler Relations in Africa Orientale Italiana," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 8, no. 3 (2003): 425–43.
7. For an overview of Italian rule in Libya see Angelo Del Boca, *Tripoli bel suol d'amore, 1860–1922* (Rome: Laterza, 1986) and Del Boca, *Dal fascismo a Gheddafi* (Rome: Laterza, 1988). On the settlement program specifically see Federico Cresti, *Non desiderare la terra d'altri. La colonizzazione italiana in Libia* (Rome: Carocci, 2011) and Claudio Segrè, *Fourth Shore: The Italian Colonization of Libya* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974). On Italian colonialism more generally see Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare: storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002).
8. Practitioners of *Alltagsgeschichte* have developed various concepts to acknowledge the power of historical subjects in shaping their lives. Among the most influential is Alf Lüdtke, *Eigen-Sinn. Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1993).
9. Ann Laura Stoler, "Epistemic Politics: Ontologies of Colonial Common Sense," *Philosophical Forum* 39, no. 3 (2008): 350.
10. Ibid., 351.
11. Mark Rifkin, "Settler Common Sense," *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 3–4 (2013): 322–40.
12. Ibid., 329.
13. Ibid., 327.
14. Ibid., 331.
15. For an insightful discussion of "common sense" and "good sense" see Guido Liguori, "'Senso comune' e 'buon senso' nei Quaderni del carcere" (paper presented at the Seminario sul lessico dei Quaderni della IGS Italia, Rome, 13 May 2005).
16. Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASDMAE), Archivio Storico Ministero Africa Italiana (ASMAI), Gabinetto Archivio Segreto (GAB), busta (b.) 70, fascicolo (f.) Colonizzazione demografica in Libya. Stralci di lettere sull'immigrazione del 1938: Balbo letter to Mussolini on 19 November 1938. What follows are excerpts from settler correspondence included in the letter.
17. Francesco Prestopino, ed., *Uno dei ventimila. Diario del colono Giacomo Cason. Libia 1938–1959* (Bologna: Barghigiani, 1995), 52–3. In his diary Cason lists everything he found on the farmstead upon arrival.

18. Sebastiano Martelli, ed. *Il sogno italo-americano: realtà e immaginario dell'emigrazione negli Stati Uniti* (Napoli: CUEN, 1998).
19. Archivio Storico Istituto Nazionale per la Previdenza Sociale (ASINPS), Carte Colonizzazione Libica (CCL), f. 129: Report July 1940.
20. Various private and semiprivate agencies run small settlement projects in Libya starting in the early 1930s. But the state's "intensive demographic settlement program" of the late 1930s was run by two state agencies: the ECL, *Ente per la Colonizzazione della Libia* (Agency for the Colonization of Libya), and the INFPS, *Istituto Nazionale Fascista per la Previdenza Sociale* (National Fascist Institute for Social Security). The ECL had been created for the sole purpose of bringing settlers to Libya, while the INFPS was the national social security organization, which decided to take on this particular task in the mid-1930s. See Cresti, *Non desiderare la terra d'altri*.
21. In Italian, the term "*colono*" has both meanings. See Salvatore Battaglia, *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana I* (Torino: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1961), 307: entry "colono."
22. ASDMAE, ASMAI, GAB, b. 70, f. Colonizzazione demografica in Libia: Stralci epistolari. Balbo's letter which includes the censors' reports dates from 3 January 1939.
23. ASINPS, CCL, f. 5: Report 7 August 1940.
24. ASINPS, CCL, f. 5: Stern report 1940.
25. ASINPS, CCL, f. 160: INFPS, Servizio disoccupazione, Colonizzazione demografica in Libia, *Colonizzazione demografica in Libia. Venti consigli al nuovo colono* (Rome: 1939).
26. Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri (PCM), 1937–1939, 17/4/23: Concessione agricola di Bir Terrina (Tripoli), letter 27 October 1936.
27. ASINPS, CCL, f. 129: Report July 1940.
28. ASINPS, CCL, f. 245: ECL, "Crispi" e "Gioda." Even if settlers managed to pay off the agencies ahead of time, the contract stipulated that they could not freely dispose of the land for at least 15 years. See "Gli aspetti demografico-sociali della colonizzazione agraria libica" in ASDMAE, ASMAI, GAB, b. 70, f. Colonizzazione demografica in Libia.
29. ASINPS, CCL, f. 21.
30. On the failure of an earlier settlement project in Libya see ACS, PCM 1937–1939, 17/4/23: Concessione agricola di Bir Terrina (Tripoli), letter 27 October 1936.
31. ASINPS, CCL, f. 24: Report Ruggieri 1938.
32. Ibid.
33. ASINPS, CCL, f. 129: Report July 1940.
34. ASINPS, CCL, f. 21: Servizio assicurazione disoccupazione.

35. ASINPS, CCL, f. 115: Servizio dell'assicurazione per la disoccupazione involontaria, Commissione per la colonizzazione, meeting 22 October 1937.
36. Afra Garosi, interview by author, Bressanone, 21 July 2004.
37. ASINPS, CCL, f. 115: Commission for Colonization, meeting 17 November 1937.
38. ASINPS, CCL, f. 245: Ente per la colonizzazione della Libia, Compartimento di Tripoli, *Contratto colonico per la zona di Tarhuna* (Anno XV E.F).
39. ASINPS, CCL, f, 5: service order 45, village Bianchi, 28 March 1938.
40. ASINPS, CCL, f. 5: service order 46, village Bianchi, 28 March 1938.
41. Luigi Bacchiega, interview by author, Bolzano, 15 July 2004.
42. ASINPS, CCL, f. 245: Ministero delle colonie. *Statuto dell'ente per la colonizzazione della Cirenaica* (Rome, 1933).
43. ASINPS, CCL, f. 129: report July 1940.
44. INPS, CCL, f. 115, meeting 17 November 1937.
45. Giovanni Spinelli, interview by author, Rome, 22 April 2004.
46. ASDMAE, ASMAI, GAB, b. 70, f. Colonizzazione demografica in Libia: Balbo letter to Mussolini, 15 September 1939.
47. ASDMAE, ASMAI III Opere Pubbliche, b. 73, f. Colonizzazione della Cirenaica: Pubblicazione: "La colonizzazione e la valorizzazione agraria." No author, n.d., but written after the outbreak of World War II: p. 40.
48. Ibid.
49. There is a vast literature on Otherness and the constituent importance of dichotomies in the construction of self. See for instance Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).
50. See, for instance, Donna Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).
51. For an insightful reading of Italian migrations, identities, and relations across continents see Samuel L. Baily, *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise: Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City, 1870–1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). Baily presents a breakdown of migrants by sex and marital status on page 150 ff.
52. Federico Cresti, *Oasi d'Italianità. La Libia della colonizzazione agraria tra fascismo, guerra e indipendenza (1935–1956)* (Turin: SEI, 1996).
53. Giovanni Spinelli, interview by author, Rome, 11 June 2004.
54. Guerrino De Bortoli, interview by author, Bolzano, 15 July 2004.
55. Luigi Manenti, interview by author, Velletri, 4 February 2004.
56. Luigi Bacchiega, interview by author, Bolzano, 20 July 2004.
57. See material in ASDMAE, ASMAI, GAB, b. 93, f. 363; b. 124, f. Segnalazioni 1941–1942; b. 235, f. Relazioni quindicinali ordinarie; and b. 237. Also in ACS, Pubblica Sicurezza (PS), Documenti suddivisi per anni,

1941, b. 5/B and in ACS, Segreteria Particolare del Duce, Carteggio Ordinario, f. 500002/1 Ministero dell'Africa Italiana—Varia. See Patrick Bernhard, "Behind the Battle Lines: Italian Atrocities and the Persecution of Arabs, Berbers, and Jews in North Africa during World War II," *Holocaust Genocide Studies* 26, no. 3 (Winter 2012): 425–46.

58. ASDMAE, Archivio Storico Ministero Africa Italiana III (ASMAI III), Varie, b. 168, f. Libia organizzazione sanitaria 1936–1940: Report on the organization of sanitation.
59. ASDMAE, ASMAI, GAB, b. 70, f. Colonizzazione demografica in Libia: Moore censored letters sent to Mussolini on 3 January 1939.
60. ASDMAE, ASMAI, GAB, b. 70, f. Colonizzazione demografica in Libia: Balbo communique on the colonists to the Foreign Ministry, 11 January 1939.
61. ASDMAE, ASMAI, GAB, b. 70, f. Colonizzazione demografica in Libia: Stralci epistolari. A settler from Crispi to someone in Romania.
62. ASINPS, CCL, f. 24: Ruggieri report 1938.
63. Luigi Manenti, interview by author, 4 February 2004.
64. ASINPS, CCL, f. 159: outline for the colonial contract.
65. ASDMAE, ASMAI VOL II, b. 150/38, f. Libia Varie 1930–1934, sottof. Calegari Diego: Governor Emilio De Bono, Tripoli, to the Ministry of the Colonies, 26 March 1928.
66. ASDMAE, Consiglio Superiore Coloniale (1923–1939), b. 17, Prima Sezione, n. 8, proposal for the creation of a welfare agency in Tripoli, 22 March 1934.
67. ASINPS, CCL, f. 159: outline for the colonial contract.
68. ASDMAE, ASMAI VOL II, b. 150/33, f. Notiziari politici 1938.
69. ASINPS, CCL, f. 36. Village Michele Bianchi.
70. ASMAE, Consiglio Superiore Coloniale (1923–1939), b. 21, Prima sezione, N. 43, 3 July 1936.
71. ASDMAE, ASMAI, GAB, b. 70, f. Colonizzazione demografica in Libia: Letters, November 1939.

CHAPTER 9

Memory

Joshua Arthurs

"Here's my shit," yelled Ebe, the elderly shopkeeper, as she stood on her neighbor's doorstep. "I've been holding on to it for twenty years, and now it's your turn to eat it."[1] It was the morning of 26 July 1943. The night before, Italians had learned of their king's decision to remove Benito Mussolini from power and dissolve his dictatorship. Now Ebe—"an old socialist, and a bit mad"—stood in her slippers at the door of her local Fascist Party secretary and demanded vengeance.[2] In 1921, she had been administered a bottle of castor oil, the purgative used by the black-shirted *squadristi* to humiliate their opponents during the Fascist "conquest" of power. Twenty-two years later, the time had come to repay old debts.

For Ebe and her fellow countrymen, the night of 25–26 July seemingly marked the moment at which Fascism ceased to belong to the present, encountered in the course of daily experiences and routines. Private letters indicate the extent to which Italians of all stripes believed that they were witnessing an epochal break. "*Consumatum est*," declared an anti-Fascist exiled in France, "That bloody scoundrel Benito Mussolini … is politically dead"[3]; one Roman exclaimed, "It all fell apart in four hours, almost without a fight, and liberty has returned! You can think, speak or write,

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without fear that your waiter or your lover (if you have one) will betray you and throw you in jail."[4] Others were less exultant, like the woman from Como who wrote that she felt "dazed, and [didn't] know how to react, but this morning … put up a moderate defense of our Duce, for whom we all feel a bit of nostalgia."[5] Even philosopher Benedetto Croce (hardly one to jump to premature conclusions) confided to his diary on 27 July that "Fascism already appears to me as the past, a closed cycle."[6] While far from uniform, such responses demonstrate the widespread perception that Mussolini and his regime had vanished overnight. From this point onward, Fascism would exist in the past tense, accessible only through retrospection and reflection.

Seen in this light, the fall of Mussolini and its immediate aftermath provide a compelling vantage point from which to examine processes of memory production and to access Italian narratives of the Fascist era before they solidified into dogmatic schemas or official accounts. As scholars like Michel-Rolph Trouillot and Alon Confino suggest, memories are not only *ex post facto* constructions, nor simple expressions of formal political power. Rather, they are embedded in multiple contexts that shape how they are inscribed, disseminated, contested, or repressed. These include the events that originally provoked them; the historically contingent moments in which they are initially articulated; and subsequent accumulation of retellings and elaborations.[7] Multiple actors—individuals, collectivities, institutions, and structures—"simultaneously represent, conceive and contest memory."[8]

Along similar lines, it is important to emphasize that, far from a rational and unmediated recollection of the past, memory is intimately tied to subjectivity and emotion and thus is unstable and multivalent rather than static and univocal.[9] It is also multidirectional, operating (as Harald Welzer puts it) "in all three temporal frames—in the past which is being told about, in the present in which the we-group is marking its past, and in the future toward which the coherence of the group is directed."[10] Memory is of course retrospective; in the aftermath of conflict, for example, societies try to "come to terms with" or "make sense of" the past. They identify victims and perpetrators and pursue various forms of justice, reconciliation, or restitution.[11] At the same time, these same debates have presentist and futural orientations. Asking "where are we coming from?" is inextricably tied to "where are we now?" and "where are we going?" Memory can therefore be "prospective," transforming interpretations of past experience into programs for the present and anticipation

of the future.[12] Historical actors often seek to establish the parameters, the "mnemonic frames," by which posterity encounters the past, and determine which materials—texts, artifacts, spaces, ideas—can be used to reconstruct or represent the moment they inhabited.[13]

With this framework in mind, it is clear that the historiography of everyday life, with its reconstruction of experience, practice and the "messiness" of quotidian existence, presents rich opportunities for understanding the production and contestation of memory. I am especially interested in the ways in which memories of Fascism simultaneously shaped, and were shaped by, individual subjectivities and emotions; encounters and interactions in the public sphere; and responses to the spatial and symbolic order imposed by the regime.[14] To unpack these questions further, I return to the moment described at the outset of this chapter—namely the hours, days, and weeks that followed the fall of Mussolini in July 1943. It was in the 45 days between 25 July and 8 September that Italians first had the opportunity to "remember" the regime, to reflect upon the past 20 years, and to debate what Fascism "had been," "had meant," and "had done." Often, this process was less about confronting ideological abstractions or formal political institutions and more about revisiting lived experience, private sentiments, and everyday manifestations of Fascist rule.[15] Crucially, this effort was also driven from below. The new national government—essentially a military dictatorship backed by the monarchy—avoided an explicit confrontation with the legacies of the preceding regime, given that most of its representatives were profoundly compromised by their own ties to the old order.[16] Anti-Fascist activists were similarly extraneous to this process, since they were caught flatfooted by Mussolini's departure and had yet to establish a meaningful presence on the public stage. On 25 July, ordinary Italians therefore had an opportunity to grapple directly with Fascism as "the past," free from impositions from above.

In what follows, I explore three dimensions of this episode that evince the intersection of everyday life and memory. The first involves the initial announcement of the Duce's downfall, a moment that both triggered a wave of retrospection and, simultaneously, was itself quickly memorialized as a canonical event. Second, I examine acts of iconoclasm and defacement, which once again looked both "backward"—to memories of Mussolini and his regime—and "forward," toward the establishment of a new symbolic order. Finally, I consider encounters in the public sphere, and especially confrontations between civilians and individuals demarcated by the collectivity as "real" Fascists. These interactions revived longstanding

grudges and grievances—often dating back to the establishment of the regime—but also helped communities transcend past conflicts.[17]

25 July 1943: An Expected Surprise

By the summer of 1943, Fascism's *consenso* had reached its nadir.[18] Historians have long debated the moment at which public approval for the regime began its irreversible decline. Potential turning points include the Fascist Party's "radicalization" campaign of 1936, a year that also marked (as seen in Kate Ferris' chapter) the imposition of international sanctions after the invasion of Ethiopia, as well as the unpopular alliance with Nazi Germany[19]; the Racial Laws of 1938; Italy's entry into the Second World War in 1940; and the series of disastrous defeats in Africa, the Balkans, and the Eastern Front over the course of 1941 and 1942.[20] Mussolini's personal popularity remained strong even as support for his party dwindled, but the course of the war undermined the faith of even the Duce's most ardent supporters.[21] Discontent intensified over the course of 1942 as the conflict hit ever closer to home. Civilians blamed the regime—not the Allies—for the bombing of Italian cities and for the lack of adequate shelters and anti-aircraft protection.[22] Defeatist graffiti proliferated: "If you weren't ready for war, you shouldn't have entered it" (note the distancing use of the second person); "A reward to whoever can tell me the front where the Duce's sons are fighting"; "*Viva l'inchlese* [sic]."[23] Rationing, first introduced in 1940, became ever more restrictive and ineffective; the authorities seemed incapable of reining in inflation and the black market, and Fascists were (often correctly) suspected of hoarding and profiteering.[24] Disaffection reached a crescendo with industrial strikes across northern Italy in March 1943, which were easily repressed but which nonetheless represented the first mass protest since the establishment of Mussolini's dictatorship some two decades earlier.[25]

Still, when the Fascist Grand Council convened on 24 July 1943 to pass a non-confidence resolution against the Duce, and when the following day King Vittorio Emanuele III formally demanded his resignation and appointed Marshal Pietro Badoglio as his successor, their primary goal was not placating public opinion. Rather, it was self-preservation, driven by the hope that Mussolini's departure would free them to negotiate Italy's exit from the war while keeping their positions intact.[26] At 10:45 PM on 25 July, EIAR—the national radio broadcaster—announced the King's decision to the nation.

Given recent events and the pervasive mood of discontent, many Italians were anticipating some form of political upheaval. Rumors had been circulating for weeks, in some cases even correctly predicting what would eventually transpire.[27] On the night of the 24th, wrote Jolanda Carletti in Rome, "we were all strangely anxious …. The air was filled with currents of unease, which collided with one another and entered the brain, stimulating it, provoking radiation in the nervous system."[28] When it came, however, the news appeared "like a bolt out of the clear blue sky."[29] In Milan, reflected one observer, "no-one suspected anything, even though everyone had the feeling, however vague, of an imminent change."[30] "The transformation happened in such a short time. I think it should have happened at least six months ago," wrote another in Bolzano.[31] The first reactions were visceral and disoriented. As soon as the broadcast concluded, the Florentine anti-Fascist Piero Calamandrei fell into "a quarter hour of confusion, stupefaction, pent-up feelings, hilarity, incredulity"[32]; another opponent of the regime Magda Ceccarelli De Grada confessed to being "dumbfounded, and not happy like I thought. It's strange that I'm not as enthusiastic as I thought I would be at such astonishing news, which answered the most ardent of prayers."[33] On the other side of the political divide, one Fascist felt "dizzy, and left so dazed and perplexed that I couldn't say a word. I don't know what expression I had on my face, I don't know what I did in response."[34] Another wrote that "all my poor hopes have crumbled, and among so many ruins I'm searching pointlessly for some sense of a better future life."[35]

The intense shock, and the strong emotions that it elicited, in turn solidified into what cognitive psychologists term "flashbulb memories"—vivid and enduring recollections not only of an event itself but also of the circumstances in which subjects found themselves at that moment.[36] Decades after the fact, one woman remembered that on the day that Mussolini fell, she had been "wearing a yellow cotton dress, hemmed with blue … my hair down …. I was very tanned, as I had been going to the beach a lot."[37] In the Roman working-class neighborhood of Trastevere, recalled another,

> The most wonderful thing was when Fascism fell … we were sleeping, and everyone came out. Half of Trastevere in front of our house, to wake up my father, calling "Menichetti, Menichetti!" and ringing our doorbell, and my father came out and they said "Fascism has fallen, and you're still here?" So we went, my father took me, and we went all around Trastevere, to

> demonstrate, I remember that well. I still get shivers thinking about it! It was a joy that, really, I can't describe.[38]

As these and many other testimonies suggest, narratives of 25 July began to coalesce as soon as people learned of the Duce's downfall, and instantaneously imprinted themselves onto individual consciousnesses; the radio broadcast in particular served both as a catalyst and, later, as a recurring trope in personal accounts. This point is further reflected in contemporary sources, since in many cases the announcement prompted people to immediately commit their thoughts to paper. In Turin, the Jewish anti-Fascist Emanuele Artom returned to a diary that had been neglected for the past seven months: "it was always impossible for me to express my thoughts without the fear of compromising myself, or worse, compromising a friend. Now it seems that things have changed …. The situation is uncertain and confusing, but one can hope."[39] Many letters echoed the sentiments of one anti-Fascist, who confessed to his family that he was "[writing] with difficulty, as I'm about to explode with joy, and my fingers are trembling."[40]

Shock at Mussolini's unexpected departure was often accompanied by a tendency toward introspection, as Italians instinctively "took stock" of their situation. As discussed more fully below, those who had suffered the most under the regime—anti-Fascists, social outcasts, or other marginalized groups—tended to revisit the wrongs committed against them, especially during the years of Fascism's rise to power. Grudges that had sometimes been nursed for over 20 years could now be aired, and scores settled. Yet this retrospection was not confined to the regime's victims. Especially among young people who had only known life under Mussolini, one regularly encounters a sense of longing, fostered by having their "worlds of meaning, their sense of cosmic order" turned upside-down.[41] The story of eighteen-year-old Luce d'Eramo powerfully illustrates this mixture of nostalgia and disorientation. The daughter of a Fascist official in the air force, she was an enthusiastic member of the Gruppo Universitario Fascista (GUF), the party's organization for university students. On the night of 25 July, she found herself at her grandmother's home in rural Lazio, having been evacuated from Rome several weeks earlier. Initially refusing to believe the reports of Mussolini's departure, she was scandalized by the general euphoria, especially among members of her own family. Faced with no other recourse, she retreated to her room:

> I couldn't even bring myself to cry …. I couldn't manage to think. There was a bottomless void. Finally, completely demoralized, I let out a shudder and got to my feet, and went to the living-room to find, among the books, my precious box of documents. I grasped it feverishly …. In that box, there were all my Fascist Party cards, from when I was a *piccola italiana*, my Merit Cross diploma, my winner's certificate for the *Littoriali* [the party essay competition] … various letters attesting to my work for this or that Fascist war orphans' group, or young mothers, and so on …. I took out my GUF card and read the pledge: "In the name of God and of Italy, I pledge to follow the orders of the DUCE and to serve the Fascist Revolution with all my energy, and if necessary, with my blood." I didn't realize that I had sworn such a demanding oath, and yet even as a small child, my infantile signature had sanctioned these words. I had not read them closely, I hadn't understood them, and now they resonated inside me, calling me to account.[42]

After poring over old books and papers, and overwhelmed by competing senses of confusion and duty, d'Eramo dressed in her GUF uniform and took the next train to Rome. Assailed with insults and ugly stares, she dissolved into tears: "What could I believe in? What was true—what people were saying before, or what they are saying now?"[43] Upon her arrival in Rome, she was taken aside by a sympathetic bar owner, made to change into new clothes, and returned home.[44]

July 25 was also very much experienced as a mass event, in which communal responses sometimes overwhelmed private ones. Recalling the episode over 30 years later, the Turinese factory worker Aurora Benna acknowledged that "July 25th, that summer, September 8th, are all periods that I experienced with the collectivity more than anything else. I don't have any personal memories."[45] In part, this subordination of personal subjectivity reflects the pervasiveness of collective experience in Mussolini's Italy: first, the years of participating in the Fascist "crowd," of being bombarded with official slogans and directives; then the war, with deprivations and dislocations that transcended social divides and fostered a sense of shared victimization[46]; and finally, with the Duce's fall, the riotous "mobs" celebrating in the streets. Mass media—in this case, radio—also played an essential role, by providing a shared point of reference that framed diverse recollections of the event.[47] Ironically, the medium once promoted by the regime as an instrument of mass mobilization had become the main conduit through which the news of its demise was disseminated.[48]

The dramatic developments of 25 July thus functioned as a "trigger event," in which Italians became acutely aware of their historical situation.[49]

Whether or not they welcomed Fascism's fall, they perceived themselves to be inhabiting a moment of accelerated change, and of witnessing a fundamental caesura in time. Many were shocked at how suddenly the regime had disappeared, like "fog in the wind" or "snow in the sun"; the speed of its demise had revealed that the regime had been a house of cards, ready to collapse at the first gust of wind.[50] By the same token, they believed themselves to be present at the birth of a new era; as Turin's *La Stampa* commented, "tomorrow was already alive today."[51] Emerging from the past, and standing on the precipice of the future, they sought to "fix the meaning of events as they unfolded."[52]

Damnatio Memoriae

As in so many other moments of dramatic transition (from 1789 to 1989 and beyond), one of the most important mass "rituals of closure" after 25 July was the destruction of symbols, material artifacts, and texts identified with Fascism.[53] Mussolini's regime had tried to dominate the public sphere through monuments, slogans, symbols and spaces, all aimed at forging a totalitarian social order.[54] In the wake of its demise, Italians now vented their wrath against these "quotidian incarnations of the state"[55]:

> the hunt for emblems began. Fascist dates were scraped from the walls, plaques shattered, *fasci* demolished or scratched out, fake bronze busts of the dictator smashed on the pavement, pictures slashed. Obscene acts were performed, and honest citizens were forced, in public, to do things to the proud figure of the Duce … that normally one only does in dark corners.[56]

Some scholars have suggested that this fervor was indicative of little more than "a sign of the people's sense of impotence"[57]; given the lack of popular agency in Mussolini's overthrow, the crowds' vengeance could only be symbolic. Such assessments, based more on a macroscopic political narrative than an engagement with actual behavior, overlook the ways in which iconoclasm can serve as a constructive act, a "shedding of the old social skin [and] a regeneration of the social self."[58] Just as the erection of monuments seeks to memorialize and eternalize a particular set of values, so too can their destruction mark the rejection of discredited ideals and the proclamation of a new moral order.[59] For a society emerging from 20 years of "totalitarian" rule, iconoclasm could be an act of reclamation.[60] The "oceanic masses," for so long dutifully arranged under the dictator's

balcony, could exercise a degree of agency and autonomy in public space. In this regard, it is again significant that the purging of Fascist symbols was driven almost entirely from below. The Badoglio government was hesitant to undertake this task, both because it feared that such actions would fuel further disorder, and because—as a supposed "restoration" of royal command—it wanted to avoid any semblance of revolutionary schism. Military authorities consequently arrested thousands of civilians, who remained confused as to how they could be punished for damaging the remnants of the defunct regime.[61]

Unsurprisingly, the iconoclasts' most frequent target was Mussolini himself. In Varese, a local anti-Fascist removed pictures of the Duce from the walls of the local courthouse, placed them in the defendant's box, and conducted a mock trial before a jeering crowd.[62] Residents of a working-class Roman neighborhood staged a "decapitation," after which "the executioner undid his trousers, bent over the fragments, and gave his salute with a towering heap"; in Genoa, a bronze bust was hung on an electric tram and "throughout the day was dragged along like a cowbell."[63] Near Turin, soldiers dressed like bishops, marched through their barracks holding portraits of the Duce upside-down, and administered last rites at a funerary bonfire.[64] Such spectacular, ritualized episodes prompted many contemporary witnesses (and, later, historians) to describe crowds' behavior in atavistic terms, as a form of carnival or *charivari*.[65] Symbolic play often recalled premodern practices of degradation and almost certainly drew (even if unconsciously) from a repository of folk traditions. The inversion of portraits, for example, is reminiscent of the "world turned upside-down" of medieval festivals, as well as the "hanged man" motif in Renaissance-era *pitture infamanti*, which represented traitors and enemies in humiliating poses.[66]

At the same time, these scenes reflected the extent to which Mussolini's image had colonized Italians' imaginations over more than 20 years. By the late 1930s, *ducismo*—the cult of the leader—had definitively trumped *fascismo*.[67] Even as the popularity of the Fascist Party waned, Mussolini remained a transcendent figure, always praised for the regime's successes and absolved for its failures; this faith started to falter only in the latter stages of the war, once defeat was on the immediate horizon.[68] The hostility directed toward his image can therefore be understood both as an inversion of the personality cult and, conversely, a confirmation of its continued vitality. The endurance of *ducismo* is seen, for example, in the ways in which iconoclasm tended to reference longstanding aesthetic conventions.

It is notable that Mussolini's head was singled out for abuse. With its strong jaw, piercing eyes, and ferocious brow, it was the very embodiment of Fascist virility and aggression. Portraits of the Duce could be found in offices, schools, and homes, establishing him as an omnipresent and omniscient figure in both the public and domestic realms.[69] Much more than was the case with Adolf Hitler—hardly an imposing physical specimen—his physical body was central to his cult of personality. Whether working shirtless in the fields, engaging in feats of athleticism, or seducing beautiful women, Mussolini was Fascism incarnate, "the product of Italians' collective fantasies."[70]

Symbolic defacement of the Duce therefore spoke to the intimate, even carnal, relationship that he cultivated with the people.[71] This can be seen in the practice of soiling his image with spit, feces, and other bodily waste, or in acts of partial defacement, whereby some features were damaged but others left intact, so that the mutilated object remained "readable as a kind of denigrative memorial."[72] Parody, obscenity, and laughter—for so long a defense mechanism for the powerless behind closed doors—surfaced with a vengeance, as seen in the proliferation of graffiti: "the Executioner has packed up and gone"; "the ass of Predappio [Mussolini's home town] brays no more"; "Reward offered to whoever finds the two lovers. Mussolini, faithful to Hitler, bought underwear with a snap opening. His followers are all stuck in the toilet with heavy diarrhea"; "He wanted to be Caesar, but he died Vespasian"—a double insult, since not only was Vespasian a lesser emperor, but *vespasiano* is a common term for urinal.[73] Such mockery suggests that, at this juncture at least, many Italians found greater satisfaction in humiliation than in physical destruction. In July 1943, Mussolini was hated for having dragged the nation into a disastrous conflict, and his regime had been exposed as "an immense ball, inflated with twenty years of illusions … a great castle that could not sustain itself, because it was built with lies, abuses, and crimes."[74] In April 1945, after more than 20 months of civil war and Nazi occupation, sentiments would be considerably more virulent—as demonstrated by the treatment of the Duce's actual corpse in Milan's Piazzale Loreto.[75]

In the wake of 25 July, though, Italians had yet to experience the trauma of civil war and the German occupation. Even as they mocked his political fall from grace, they expressed ambivalence and unease about the man who had pervaded their consciousness for over 20 years. "My mind can't get used to it," wrote Piero Calamandrei. "Mussolini is no more. His proud scowl … that man of fierce countenance."[76] Even as they recognized the

reasons for his departure, many voiced sympathy: "I felt badly for that man who, for years, had been fawned upon and lauded … and who now all of a sudden was despised"[77]; "I can't react to any of those insults against the Duce. Even recognizing some of his last mistakes in recent times, I cannot forget that, at a certain moment, he was almost an idol for me and many other Italians. I can't forget the good that he did."[78] Strikingly, diary and letter writers maintained an aversion—developed over decades—to mentioning the Duce by name. "Concerning the man you are referring to," wrote one Roman, "I don't care about him anymore. May he never come to mind, now or in the future …. I am completely uninterested in him."[79] In such correspondence, Mussolini—"that man," "him," or even "that dirty, vulgar assassin"—remains an ominous, persistent presence.[80] Others used nicknames, whether out of jest or habitual caution: *Provolone*, *Pasta e fagioli,* or *Testone* ("Big Head").[81] Some seem to have trouble believing that he was gone for good. In a popular neighborhood in Rome someone yelled from a window, "Watch out, here comes the Duce!" Among the crowd below, there was "a moment of hesitation, of terror, of 'one never knows,'" resolved only once the bust of the dictator came crashing down onto the pavement below.[82] The exorcism of Mussolini, it seemed, would not be accomplished overnight; if anything, iconoclasm only reconfirmed the power that the Duce's likeness still retained over Italians' psyches.

Beyond representations of the dictator, other Fascist symbols also came under assault. *Fasci littori* (the regime's symbol of a bundle of rods bound to an axe) were chiseled off the side of buildings or subjected to "military castration"—breaking off the blades and reducing them as stumps.[83] Crowds defaced or erased slogans urging "Victory" or "Believe, Obey, Fight." Places were unofficially renamed, often replacing Fascist signifiers with their anti-Fascist equivalents. For example, streets and piazzas bearing the names of Fascist "martyrs" were changed to honor victims of the regime, most prominently the murdered anti-Fascists Giacomo Matteotti and Giovanni Amendola. Similarly, those marking important dates on the Fascist calendar—especially those recalling 28 October, the date of the March on Rome, and those recording the year of the revolution (the regime's calendar designated October 1922 as the beginning of Year One)—were substituted for 25 July 1943. In this way, the temporal and spatial order imposed by the regime was undermined and replaced by an alternative pantheon of heroes and a new canonical date that marked a rupture with the previous era.[84] Significantly, these new place names rarely "stuck," since the Badoglio government wanted to prevent any semblance

of a revolutionary schism with the past. Rather, according to the instructions of the Ministry of the Interior, cities should "whenever possible, return to the nomenclature that existed before the advent of Fascism; otherwise, new names should be drawn from history or tradition."[85] Thus, in Varese, authorities changed via Fasci di Combattimento to the more neutral via Genova; via Caduti Fascisti became via Napoli; Palazzo Littorio became Palazzo Italia.[86] In Forlì, piazzale Costanzo Ciano (named for the Duce's son-in-law) was patriotically renamed piazzale Risorgimento, while via Fondazione Fascio became via Monte di Pietà.[87]

Another common practice involved the burning of documents taken from local party headquarters and the offices of Fascist organizations. Certain types of paper had long been a source of resentment: Fascist Party cards, which conferred privileges on the bearer ranging from preferential treatment in bread lines to opportunities for professional advancement and higher wages; rationing books, in use since 1940, which by 1943 most Italians had come to see not only as useless but also as tangible markers of the regime's disastrous policies; in rural areas, registers of the *ammassi*, the much-hated agricultural requisitioning program; and reports by *delatori* (informants), sharing the most intimate secrets of their neighbors, coworkers, and relatives. By the same token, the destruction of documentation could also be a defensive act, an attempt to destroy any trace of past compromise or affiliation with the regime (e.g. carried out by these same informants to prevent discovery). Many party members, for example, willingly and publicly destroyed their ID cards as an act of penitence and abjuration. Even the burning of documents can be read as an attempt to destroy the bureaucratic memory that underpinned the authority of the former regime and to mark the birth of a new era unencumbered by a discomfiting paper trail.

These purges were distressing to loyal Fascists. In their eyes, the destruction of material artifacts was a literal dismantling of the regime's greatest and most enduring achievements. "They deny that Fascism did anything good for the sake of the people," complained an enlisted man. "So we were all just assassins? And all the projects created during twenty years of Fascism, these are nothing? Then why aren't these being destroyed, just like the *fasci*? Let's see what the others can do in twenty years and then let's compare."[88] An anonymous letter warned that "You rush to demolish, to defame, to erase everything that Fascism built; a vain illusion…. Twenty years of Fascism were not in vain, and the projects, the institutions, the cities, and so on created by Fascism will remain for eternity, to

document and tell future generations about how many beautiful, great and good things were achieved in only twenty years' time."[89] The regime's monuments and buildings were meant to challenge time and eternalize the values of the revolution; this constructive will now stood in sharp contrast to the wanton destructiveness of crowds. True believers secreted away precious relics of the fallen regime, to be safeguarded until the political winds shifted again: "We have collected all our Fascist emblems and pictures, and whatever we were able to save from the destructive mania of the liberals," explained one Blackshirt in Arezzo organizing a clandestine cell[90]; "I'm annoyed about my old black shirt," wrote another to his mother, "I would have liked to save it. Don't give the dagger to anyone, understood? It belongs to the Militia and I get to keep it."[91] For this individual, at least, Fascist faith seems to have transformed into nostalgia for a vanished era.

As these responses suggest, both Fascists and their opponents recognized that the demolition of the regime's material legacy was not just wanton vandalism. Rather, it was an intervention meant to show their powerlessness and ephemerality, to physically demonstrate the vacuity and fragility of the regime's grandiose vision, and to replace them with the symbols announcing a new age.[92] Statues and dates carved into stone were not immutable. By sweeping them away, Italians could claim some agency in the transformation of the social order; try to demonstrate that the Fascist period, now consigned to the past, had been a parenthesis; and, through the eradication of its traces, condition the ways in which future generations would encounter and interact with the physical remnants of Mussolini's regime.

Punishment and Rehabilitation

Just as they confronted Fascism's material remains, Italians also sought a public reckoning with Fascists themselves.[93] The story of Ebe, the elderly Livornese socialist, has already pointed to the fact that many encounters hearkened back to insults and injuries inflicted by the *squadristi*—the political terror squads—during Mussolini's rise to power in 1919–1922. As seen in Matteo Millan's contribution to the present volume, the early Blackshirts' preferred weapons had been intimidation and degradation, forms of "educative" violence meant to terrorize local populations into submission.[94] Their "punitive expeditions" typically featured the administration of purgatives, meant both to shame their victims and to symbolize

their purification from the community; beatings with the *manganello* (wooden club), a punishment widely perceived as emasculating[95]; head shavings, blackening faces with coal dust, spitting, and other insults to personal appearance; ransacking *case del popolo* (working-men's clubs) and other anti-Fascist organizations; and desecrating or destroying leftist symbols like the red flag. Far from subsiding after the Fascist accession to power, such humiliating practices continued to be inflicted on the regime's opponents and others marginalized by the new social order.[96]

In the wake of 25 July, one finds similar practices enacted in reverse, as a kind of Dantean "*contrappasso*" in which the victims of repression meted out a punishment that mirrored their own persecution. In Turin, a police commissar is said to have sanctioned precisely such behavior, when asked to rein in the vengeful crowds: "Let them vent; they're just repaying the *squadristi* in kind."[97] Blackshirts were often threatened with the *manganello* or a dose of castor oil, or even (as with Ebe) with the feces supposedly "conserved" by their victims years earlier. In the province of Como, a group invaded the home of the *podestà* (Fascist mayor) and forcibly shaved off his beard.[98] In Villadossola (Piedmont), local Fascists were forced to kneel, kiss a red flag, and receive slaps from a woman whose husband they had tortured years before.[99] As all these incidents suggest, 25 July offered the opportunity to enact the Fascist conquest and exercise of power in reverse; as one Turinese anti-Fascist put it, after beating and chasing a *squadrista* in the street, "It seemed like a veil had been lifted; for the past twenty years, it had been **me** who ran from the Fascists."[100]

While physical and verbal abuse could be an expression of decades-old conflicts and resentments, it was also employed to express more prosaic frustrations against the Fascist nexus of bureaucratic power and political privilege. Across Italy, former exponents of the old regime were attacked for reasons that ranged from rejecting job applicants, to refusing an elderly mother a place in a nursing home, to denying a farmer a truckload of fertilizer.[101] The motivations were sometimes even more intimate: in Nesso (Lombardy), a boarder was beaten for causing a rift between his landlady and her two adult children[102]; a young man in Milan assaulted his girlfriend's father, who had refused to let the couple marry.[103] The deprivations of war—especially food rationing—also fueled conflict. A transport supervisor in Rome was attacked by his employees for "having bread baked for him, every day in the company canteen, made with white flour … and he never failed to fine whoever had made it, if the fermentation and cooking were not to his taste; often, he also had chicken and meat cooked

in the same oven, in full view of everyone who could only eat what the mess provided."[104] Near Como, a customer slapped a baker, yelling, "That crook! Even though he's a millionaire, he refused to sell me bread a while ago, because I didn't have any money."[105] Crowds invaded officials' homes or *case di fascio* (local party headquarters), believing that they contained "Aladdin's caves" filled with unattainable luxuries[106]:

> they opened the pantries of the big Fascists, and at Rino Parenti's they found every bounty of God—five demijohns of oil, hundreds of bottles, tons of white pasta, canned goods, lard, rice, and everything to live off for who knows how many years. They put all the stuff in the street and carried it off, and groups of drunk people passed by, yelling with joy that they could say whatever they wanted.[107]

Retributive violence against Fascists was also distinguished by its selectivity. Party membership had long been mandatory for public employees and many professionals, and millions more were enrolled the regime's various organizations; wearing the *distintivo* (party badge) had been obligatory since 1938 and therefore did not necessarily indicate genuine commitment to the ideals of the "revolution." Only a minority of Italians, in other words, could claim to have had no institutional connection to the regime. In looking for "perpetrators" to punish, therefore, communities tended to single out party officials who were already widely resented or disliked for their abuse of power, "the terrible ones, the ones who broke people's spirits."[108] In Cesena, "beatings [were] handed out to certain Fascists, and they deserved it because they had done it before, so it was logical that they would now receive them."[109] The official forcibly shaved in Como was considered "a fervent Fascist [who] had treated everyone a bit badly."[110] In Finale Liguria, near Genoa, "they beat a certain Becco who … used to slap and beat poor invalids or peasants who happened to be around, if they did not make a show of submission when [Fascist] processions went by."[111] In Biella (Piedmont), residents looted the villa belonging to a local textile mogul; a month earlier, his wife—who also ran the town's *Fascio femminile*—had informed a gathering of workers that they could subsist on only four lire a day.[112]

By contrast, reactions remained muted where the local party leadership was not despised by the community. In Cuneo, the town's political secretary "was not hated," so received little more than jeers[113]; in Avellino, nothing much happened because "the *gerarchi* (officials) … were good

people, maybe a little bit self-important, but they never hurt anyone."[114] Some Fascists even submitted to punishment willingly, or apologized to those they had wronged in the past. The Blackshirts in Settignano (Tuscany) lined up "as though at the dentist's to have a tooth removed," to receive a slap from the town's shoemaker (whom, presumably, they had persecuted in the past).[115] In Grignasco (Piedmont), young men confronted a Fascist overseer at the local cotton mill. The man begged for mercy—"Forgive me boys, I never did anything to you!"—and cooler heads prevailed, deciding to "give him a kick in the behind, and then say *buonasera*."[116] In a town outside Ravenna, another Fascist had his clothes torn and was chased down the street; his wife followed behind the angry mob, yelling, "Give it to him, if he deserves it! But leave him well enough to work, because he has two little children."[117]

While these episodes are perhaps more colorful than most, they point to a broader pattern of negotiation between the antagonists. Protesters avoided using lethal force against exponents of the former regime, and by most accounts Fascist fatalities derived only from shootouts between military authorities and Blackshirts who refused to surrender their weapons. In part, this tendency might reflect communities' efforts to navigate conflicts and maintain stability by leavening punishment with the opportunity for penance and absolution[118]; it can equally be seen as a form of scapegoating, in which the majority was allowed to expel a stigmatized few and thereby externalize any sense of its own complicity. The relatively modest level of violence should not, however, be read as evidence of Italians' inherent generosity or of Fascism's "gentler" totalitarianism. Rather, it again demonstrates the extent to which retribution "spoke" the local vernacular.[119] The regime's most effective instruments of repression had been shame, intimidation, and the marginalization of dissenting voices; public violence was most valuable as a spectacle or a "lesson," directed toward a broader audience.[120] The humiliation of Blackshirts was thus not only repayment in kind but also a performance that revisited past relationships, celebrated the purging of Fascism from the body politic, and admonished those still tarnished by their association with the old order.

In sum, this diverse array of encounters provides some insight into how people tried to come to terms with 20 years of dictatorship and three of total war. They suggest that many Italians' conception of Fascism was based not only on the regime's "macroscopic" presence—mass rallies and rituals, ideological pronouncements and slogans, buildings and monuments, even the mythic presence of the Duce—but also on their everyday

experiences. Personal slights, professional resentments, and the deprivations of wartime had for many come to represent or define the Fascist era as a whole. This, in the end, was who the Fascists "had been," and what Fascism "had done." Fascism had meant bullying and humiliation, entrenched bureaucracy and corruption, an opaque system of privileges and favoritism, and ultimately war, which had once been confined to distant lands but which now had come home to roost. And the "real" Fascists had been those who had most enthusiastically meted out that abuse, and who had benefited the most from the regime's structures and hierarchies.

Conclusion

At 7:42 PM on 8 September 1943, another radio announcement turned Italians' worlds upside-down once again. Recognizing the inevitability of defeat, the Badoglio government had finally agreed to an unconditional surrender to the Allies. Upon hearing the news that seemingly answered so many prayers, civilians once again flooded into the streets in jubilation. Within hours, however, it became clear that the nation had not been delivered from crisis; it had only plunged ever deeper into disaster.[121] German forces, stationed since 25 July at strategic locations across the peninsula, unleashed a wave of reprisals against their former Axis partner, committing atrocities against soldiers and civilians alike. Badoglio and Vittorio Emanuele III abandoned the capital, seemingly leaving the country to its fate, and fled to the Allied-occupied south. Within two weeks, Hitler had returned Mussolini to power as the head of the Nazi-backed Italian Social Republic. From this point onward, Italy ceased to be a belligerent, and instead became a battlefield, both for the conventional war between German and Allied troops and for the brutal civil war pitting Fascist loyalists of Salò against the partisans of the anti-Fascist Resistance.[122] The final victory over Fascism would only be celebrated 20 months—and thousands of deaths—later, on 25 April 1945.

Ultimately, then, the "first" fall of Mussolini proved to be an intermezzo rather than a caesura. Between 25 July and 8 September 1943, Italians believed that they were witnessing the fundamental transformation of their political, social, and cultural universe. They were conscious of inhabiting a moment of dramatic rupture, in which an old world was falling apart and a new world was coming into being. This conviction underpinned the narratives they told themselves and each other, both of their experiences of the past 20 years and of the future they anticipated. Their

stories were, of course, eclipsed by subsequent events. In the decades after 1945, moral narratives of Fascism and the Second World War were dominated by the legacy of the Resistance.[123] The popular experience of 25 July–8 September was either silenced (as a moment of ineffectual protest), minimized (as a preamble to more important developments), or deterministically (and ahistorically) recast as the first stirrings of the partisan struggle. Today, there are few streets and piazzas named for 25 July; its anniversary is marked with little fanfare, especially compared with Liberation Day on 25 April.[124]

In large part because of this halting demise, memories of the Fascist era remain contested and volatile to this day.[125] In the eyes of many observers, Italians have too easily taken refuge in "self-absolving representations," in exculpatory narratives of resistance, victimization, or of themselves as congenitally "good people" (*brava gente*) incapable of brutality.[126] This equivocation has also provided fertile soil for the emergence of antidemocratic, illiberal and xenophobic voices, from the Movimento Sociale Italiana of the early postwar decades to contemporary anti-immigrant movements.[127] Some of these groups trace their genetic origins directly to historical Fascism, while others simply appropriate its rhetoric and symbols—never entirely erased or invalidated—for their own ends. In this respect at least, the Italian case stands in stark contrast to Germany, where the total defeat of the Third Reich prompted a more rigorous (though no less complicated) *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and restricted the space available for the expression of pro-Nazi sentiment.[128]

By returning to the regime's immediate aftermath, I have sought to provide an alternative perspective into memories of Fascism. On the evening of 25 July 1943, Italians had not yet experienced the radicalized violence of the German occupation and the civil war, which in many ways would lay the foundation for those exculpatory narratives of resistance and victimhood; nor had they been subsumed into the political logic of postwar reconstruction and Cold War politics, both of which favored reconciliation and forgetting over the settling of scores. They had, however, lived through almost 21 years under a regime whose end—understood in both its senses, as a final goal and a terminal point—was a war that had already claimed thousands of lives, ravaged landscapes and cities, and divided communities. Whether Fascists, anti-Fascists, or the vast "gray area" in-between, they all sought to come to terms with this trajectory, to establish a moral narrative of the Mussolinian era and to frame the contours of future discourse.

Notes

1. Miriam Mafai, *Pane nero. Donne e vita quotidiana nella seconda guerra mondiale* (Milan: Mondadori, 1987), 145.
2. Ibid.
3. E. to L.P., 30 July 1943, ACS MI A5G II Guerra 1940–1945 b. 47, f. 12.2.90.
4. G.G. to B.A., undated, ACS MI A5G II Guerra 1940–1945 b. 40, f. 12.2.71.
5. I.M. to M.M., 26 July 1943, ACS MI A5G II Guerra 1940–1945 b. 32, f. 12.2.16.
6. Benedetto Croce, *Quando l'Italia era tagliata in due. Ritratto di un diario, luglio 1943–giugno 1944* (Bari: Laterza, 1948), 1.
7. See especially Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1386–403; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); also Harald Welzer, "The Collateral Damage of Enlightenment: How Grandchildren Understand the History of National Socialist Crimes and Their Grandfathers' Past," in *Victims and Perpetrators: 1933–1945*, eds Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Dagmar Wienröder-Skinner (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 285–95; and Jeffrey K. Olick, "Genre Memories and Memory Genres: A Dialogical Analysis of May 8, 1945 Commemorations in the Federal Republic of Germany," *American Sociological Review* 64, no. 3 (1999): 381–402.
8. Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History," 1398–9.
9. Welzer, "The Collateral Damage of Enlightenment," 285.
10. Harald Welzer et al., "From 'Opa war kein Nazi': Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächnis," in *The Collective Memory Reader*, eds Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 343.
11. See for example Elazar Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000).
12. Frank Biess, "Feelings in the Aftermath: Toward a History of Postwar Emotions," in *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe*, eds Frank Biess and Robert Moeller (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 37; and Jay Winter, *Dreams of Peace and Freedom: Utopian Moments in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 8. Clearly, these analyses owe much to Reinhart Koselleck's concepts of "space of experience" and "horizon of expectation"; see Reinhart

Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 267–88.

13. Jeffrey K. Olick, *In the House of the Hangman: The Agonies of German Defeat, 1943–1949* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 10.
14. For similar approaches by historians of everyday life, see for example Alf Lüdtke, "German Work and German Workers: The Impact of Symbols on the Exclusion of Jews in Nazi-Germany," in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism: German Society and the Persecution of the Jews, 1933–1941*, ed. David Bankier (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 296–311; Alf Lüdtke, "The 'Honor of Labor': Industrial Workers and the Power of Symbols under National Socialism," in *Nazism and German Society, 1933–1945*, ed. David F. Crew (New York: Routledge, 1994), 67–109; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Andrew Stuart Bergerson, *Ordinary Germans in Extraordinary Times: The Nazi Revolution in Hildesheim* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).
15. For a similar point regarding popular attitudes toward Nazism and Fascism, see Costantino Felice, *Guerra resistenza dopoguerra in Abruzzo: uomini, economie, istituzioni* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1993), 311; as well as Paul Corner, *The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion in Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
16. See for example the Badoglio government's ineffectual epuration policies, discussed in Roy Palmer Domenico, *Italian Fascists on Trial, 1943–1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 1–21; and Hans Woller, *I conti col fascismo. L'epurazione in Italia 1943–1948*, trans. Enzo Morandi (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), 19–47.
17. A brief note on sources: most are diaries, letters, and testimonies, both archival and published. Readers will note the relative absence of voices from southern Italy, and the predominance of central and northern ones. This discrepancy is due to several factors. First, there is the historical context itself—Sicily, for example, was in the midst of the Allied invasion at the time of Mussolini's fall and experienced the moment very differently. Letter and diary writing were also overwhelmingly concentrated among educated and urban Italians, and fewer sources remain from the south. Additionally, due to the legacy of the Resistance, northern Italian institutions have been far more assiduous in compiling historical documents and testimonies from the period; unfortunately, there are few repositories of southern Italians' stories.
18. On *consenso*—and its range of meanings between "consent" and "consensus," see the introduction to this volume, as well as the individual chapters by Ebner and Ferris.

19. This campaign, driven by Party Secretary Achille Starace, included measures like the elimination of the "bourgeois" handshake with the Roman salute and the replacement of the polite form of address *Lei* with *Voi*.
20. On the rise and fall of public attitudes toward the Fascist regime in its later years, see Corner, *The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion in Mussolini's Italy*, 172–288; Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Random House, 2012), 283–417; Pietro Cavallo, *Italiani in guerra. Sentimenti e immagini dal 1940 al 1943* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997); Simona Colarizi, *L'opinione degli italiani sotto il regime, 1929–1943* (Rome: Laterza, 1991).
21. On shifts in public attitudes towards Mussolini, see Angelo Michele Imbriani, *Gli italiani e il Duce. Il mito e l'immagine di Mussolini negli ultimi anni del fascismo (1938–1943)* (Naples: Liguori, 1992). On the breakdown of support for Mussolini within the Fascist leadership, see Aristotle A. Kallis, "'A Question of Loyalty': Mussolinismo and the Collapse of the Italian Fascist Regime in 1943," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 6, no. 1 (2001): 68–93.
22. Gabriella Gribaudi, "The True Cause of the 'Moral Collapse': People, Fascists and Authorities under the Bombs. Naples and the Countryside, 1940–1944," in *Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe, 1940–1945*, eds Claudia Baldoli, Andrew Knapp, and Richard Overy (London: Continuum, 2011), 219–37; and Marco Fincardi, "Anglo-American Air Attacks and the Rebirth of Public Opinion in Fascist Italy," in *Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe, 1940–1945*, eds Claudia Baldoli, Andrew Knapp, and Richard Overy (London: Continuum, 2011), 241–55.
23. See various reports in ACS MI A5G II Guerra 1940–1945, b. 121, f. 76.
24. See Simona Colarizi, "Vita alimentare degli italiani e razionamento (1941)," in *L'Italia in guerra. Cinquant'anni dopo l'entrata dell'Italia nella 2a guerra mondiale: aspetti e problemi storici*, vol. 2 (Rome: Commissione Italiana di Storia Militare, 1991), 279–89; Also Carol F. Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil: Food and Politics in Italy* (Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2006), 106–9; and Nicola Gallerano, "Il fronte interno attraverso i rapporti delle autorità (1942–1943)," *Il Movimento di Liberazione in Italia*, no. 109 (1972): 4–32.
25. Claudia Baldoli, "Spring 1943: The Fiat Strikes and the Collapse of the Italian Home Front," *History Workshop Journal* 72, no. 1 (2011): 181–9; Tim Mason, "The Turin Strikes of 1943," in *Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class*, eds Tim Mason and Jane Caplan (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 274–94; Umberto Massola, *Gli scioperi del '43. Marzo-aprile: le fabbriche contro il fascismo* (Rome: Editori riuniti, 1973); Paolo Spriano, "Gli scioperi del marzo 1943," *Studi Storici* 13, no. 4 (1972): 726–61.

26. Philip Morgan, *The Fall of Mussolini: Italy, the Italians, and the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 11–33; Elena Aga Rossi, *A Nation Collapses: The Italian Surrender of September 1943*, trans. Harry Fergusson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 32–54; Ruggero Zangrandi, *1943: 25 Luglio-8 Settembre* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1964), 38–177.
27. See for example the entries for July 1943 in Leonetta Cecchi-Pieraccini, *Agendina di guerra, 1939–1944* (Milan: Longanesi, 1964). These include, on 15 July, the rumor that the King had removed Mussolini.
28. Jo' di Benigno, *Occasioni mancate. Roma in un diario segreto, 1943–1944* (Rome: Edizioni SEI, 1945), 74.
29. Antonio Brunello, *Thienéndoghe alla vita. Diario di guerra in grigioverde* (Schio: Menin, 2002), 271.
30. Diary entry for 27 July 1943, ADN 2584.
31. P.P. to C.P., 5 August 1943, ACS MI PS AGR 1943 b. 67, f. 43.
32. Piero Calamandrei, *Diario, 1939–1945*, ed. Giorgio Agosti, vol. 2 (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1982), 153.
33. Magda Ceccarelli De Grada, *Giornale del tempo di guerra: 12 giugno 1940–7 maggio 1945* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), 217.
34. Diary entry for 26 July 1943, ADN 3348.
35. L.T. to A.Z., 23 August 1943, ACS MI A5G II Guerra 1940–1945 b. 32, f. 12.2.16.
36. Classic "flashbulb memory" moments include the JFK assassination and 11 September 2001. Many specialists debate the accuracy of flashbulb memories, but my point here is less about their reliability and more about the process by which memory narratives are first formalized. The foundational work on flashbulb memory remains R. Brown and J. Kulik, "Flashbulb Memories," *Cognition* 5, no. 1 (1977): 73–99.
37. Aldo Grandi, *I giovani di Mussolini. Fascisti convinti, fascisti pentiti, antifascisti* (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 2001), 344–5.
38. Testimony of Valtera Menichetti, IRSIFAR Fondo A, serie XX, b. 51, f. 1.
39. Emanuele Artom, *Diari, gennaio 1940–febbraio 1944* (Milan: Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea, 1966), 54–5.
40. Gian Carlo Pajetta, ed., *Lettere di antifascisti dal carcere e dal confino*, vol. 2 (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1975), 373.
41. Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 35.
42. Luce d'Eramo, *Racconti quasi di guerra* (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), 20.
43. Ibid., 36.
44. Here it is worth noting that d'Eramo ultimately assisted the anti-Fascist resistance, for which she was interned at Dachau.

45. Bianca Guidetti Serra, ed., *Compagne: testimonianze di partecipazione politica femminile*, vol. 2 (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), 563.
46. Giovanni De Luna, "Torino in guerra: la ricerca di un'esistenza collettiva," in *L'Italia in guerra 1940–1943*, eds Bruno Micheletti and Pier Paolo Poggio (Brescia: Fondazione Luigi Micheletti, 1991), 885–902.
47. Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 211–3.
48. Gianni Isola, *Cari amici vicini e lontani. Storia dell'ascolto radiofonico nel primo decennio repubblicano* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1995), 3.
49. Olivier Remaud, "Accelerating Change and Trigger Events," in *Afterlife of Events: Perspectives on Mnemohistory*, ed. Marek Tamm (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 62–3.
50. Cecchi-Pieraccini, *Agendina di guerra, 1939–1944*, 227; Zelmira Marazio, *Il mio fascismo. Storia di una donna* (Baiso: Verdechiaro, 2005), 65.
51. Mario Gromo, "Un mattino," *La Stampa*, 1 August 1943, 3.
52. James Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face: Politics, Culture, and Community in Czechoslovakia, 1989–1992* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 12.
53. Maya Nadkarni, "The Death of Socialism and the Afterlife of Its Monuments: Making and Marketing the Past in Budapest's Statue Park Museum," in *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*, eds Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (New York: Routledge, 2003), 202.
54. See Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).
55. Leora Auslander, *Cultural Revolutions: Everyday Life and Politics in Britain, North America, and France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 2.
56. Giuseppe Longo, "Giornate bolognesi," *Mercurio* 1, no. 4 (1944): 44.
57. Morgan, *The Fall of Mussolini*, 86. For a similar analysis, see Marco Innocenti, *Fuggiaschi ed eroi. La lunga estate del '43* (Milan: Mursia, 2010).
58. Arthur Boime, "Perestroika and the Destabilization of Soviet Monuments," *Ars* 2–3 (1993): 211.
59. In addition to Boime, see Polly Jones, "'Idols in Stone' or Empty Pedestals? Debating Revolutionary Iconoclasm in the Post-Soviet Transition," in *Iconoclasm: Contested Objects, Contested Terms*, eds Stacy Boldrick and Richard Clay (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007),

241–60; Pierre-Yves Balut, "La double inconstance: patrimoine et conservation, vandalisme et destruction," in *Révolution française et "vandalisme révolutionnaire." Actes du colloque international de Clermont-Ferrand, 15–17 décembre 1988*, eds Simone Bernard-Griffiths, Marie-Claude Chemin, and Jean Ehrard (Paris: Universitas, 1992); and Bruce Lincoln, "Revolutionary Exhumations in Spain, July 1936," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27, no. 2 (1985): 241–60.

60. Filippo Colombara, *Vesti la giubba di battaglia. Miti, riti e simboli della guerra partigiana* (Rome: DeriveApprodi, 2009), 33; Mario Isnenghi, *L'Italia in piazza. I luoghi della vita pubblica dal 1848 ai giorni nostri* (Milan: Mondadori, 1994), 341–2.
61. Ultimately, the Badoglio government did issue instructions to prefects regarding the removal of Fascist symbols, plaques, and monuments; however, these were to be carried out by local authorities, and the order was given so late—29 August—that there was no time to put it into effect before the armistice of 8 September. See ACS PCM 1940–1943, f. 5.1, n. 21711.
62. Franco Giannantoni, *Fascismo, guerra e società nella Repubblica sociale italiana: Varese, 1943–1945* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1984), 170.
63. Calamandrei, *Diario, 1939–1945*, 2: 157.
64. Bruno Mangano, "D'un tratto nel '43," *Resistenza Unita* 11, no. 12 (1979): 3.
65. See especially Colombara, *Vesti la giubba di battaglia*, 17–48.
66. See Robert Mills, *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure and Punishment in Medieval Culture* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005); Samuel Y. Edgerton, *Pictures and Punishment: Art and Criminal Prosecution during the Florentine Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).
67. Imbriani, *Gli italiani e il Duce*. On the cult of the Duce, more generally, see Stephen Gundle, Christopher Duggan, and Giuliana Pieri, eds, *The Cult of the Duce: Mussolini and the Italians* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); and Luisa Passerini, *Mussolini immaginario. Storia di una biografia 1915–1939* (Rome: Laterza, 1991).

Duggan, *Fascist Voices*, 216–48.

68. Duggan, *Fascist Voices*, xviii. See also Corner, *The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion in Mussolini's Italy*, 245–74.
69. Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 82.
70. Sergio Luzzatto, *The Body of Il Duce: Mussolini's Corpse and the Fortunes of Italy*, trans. Frederika Randall (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005), 16.
71. Duggan, *Fascist Voices*, 216–48.

72. Eric R. Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 8.
73. On jokes and obscenities used by the working class under Fascism, see Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, trans. Robert Lumley and Jude Bloomfield (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 74–126. The graffiti is recorded in photographs from the Istituto Luce; see archivioluce.com.
74. Ivo Dalla Costa, *L'Italia imbavagliata. Lettere censurate, 1940–1943* (Treviso: Pagus Edizioni, 1990), 156.
75. Luzzatto, *The Body of Il Duce*.
76. Calamandrei, *Diario, 1939–1945*, 2: 154.
77. Giulio Bedeschi, ed., *Fronte italiano: c'ero anch'io* (Milan: Mursia, 1987), 69.
78. L.T. to A.N., 2 August 1943, ACS MI PS AGR 1943 b. 67, f. 54.
79. A.B. to C.F., 13 August 1943, ACS MI A5G II Guerra 1940–1945 b. 38, f. 12.2.54.
80. M.M. to G.T., 28 August 1943, ACS MI A5G II Guerra 1940–1945 b. 47, f. 12.2.90.
81. Testimony of Carlo Muscetta, in transcript for the 1973 RAI documentary "Tragico e glorioso 1943—i 45 giorni di Badoglio," in the digital archive of the Istituto Luigi Sturzo, http://digital.sturzo.it/archiviopersonale/andreotti/3241581; A. Jacometti, "E' caduto pasta e fagioli," *Resistenza Unita* 12, no. 7–8 (1980): 3; Antonio Bortolotti, "Testone è caduto," in *1943: cade il fascismo* (Bologna: ANPI, 2003), 83. Many of these nicknames were decades old; see Passerini, *Mussolini immaginario*, 110–1.
82. Paolo Monelli, *Roma 1943* (Turin: Einaudi, 2012), 156.
83. Tim Benton, "From the Arengario to the Lictor's Axe: Memories of Italian Fascism," in *Material Memories*, eds Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward, and Jeremy Aynsley (New York: Berg, 1999), 216–7.
84. Mimmo Franzinelli, "Il 25 luglio," in *I luoghi della memoria. Personaggi e date dell'Italia unita*, ed. Mario Isnenghi (Rome: Laterza, 1997), 219–40. On canonical dates and the production of memory, see Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989): 19–20. On the Fascist calendar, see Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self*, 141–95.
85. ACS PCM 1940–1943, f. 5.1, n. 21711.
86. Giannantoni, *Fascismo, guerra e società nella Repubblica sociale italiana*, 7. On toponymy, see Maurizio Ridolfi, "Il nuovo volto della città. La toponomastica negli anni della transizione democratica e della nascita della Repubblica," *Memoria e Ricerca* 20 (2005): 147–67.

87. Dino Mengozzi, *L'epurazione nella città del "Duce" (1943–1948)* (Rome: FIAP, 1983), 19n9.
88. O.P. to C.B., 18 August 1943, ACS MI A5G II Guerra 1940–1945 b. 46, f. 12.2.88.2.
89. Anon., 5 August 1943, ACS MI PS AGR 1943, b. 66, f. "Movimento fascista/Roma".
90. G.P. to L.S., 5 August 1943, ACS MI A5G II Guerra 1940–1945 b. 30, f. 12.1.4.
91. R.P., 28 August 1943, ACS MI A5G II Guerra 1940–1945 b. 32, f. 12.2.16.
92. Lincoln, "Revolutionary Exhumations in Spain, July 1936," 256–8.
93. For a more detailed discussion of confrontations and retributive violence in this period, see Joshua Arthurs, "Settling Accounts: Retribution, Emotion and Memory during the Fall of Mussolini," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 20, no. 5 (2015): 617–39.
94. See also Marco Fincardi, "La 'spedizione punitiva': conquista e sottomissione del territorio," in *Gli italiani in guerra: conflitti, identità, memorie dal Risorgimento ai nostri giorni*, eds Mario Albanese, Giulia Isnenghi and Giulia Albanese, vol. 4.1 (Torino: UTET, 2008), 310–7.
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CHAPTER 10

Conclusion: Troubling Coercion and Consent—Everydayness, Ideology, and Effect in German and Italian Fascism

Geoff Eley

During the remarkable transformation of historical studies between the 1960s and 1990s, understanding of politics and political action changed out of all recognition. Amid the many different debates and departures—during that protracted, productive turmoil of passages and trajectories that joined the forms of social analysis prevailing by the end of the 1970s to everything we now remember as the cultural turn—a willingness to examine and rethink the category of the political was a striking constant. One big impetus for the original turning to social history had been a growing frustration with the dominance inside the profession of a narrowly institutional and socially decontextualized understanding of how politics works. Encouraged by the wider political ferment of the time and supported by a sparse but inspiring contingent of more senior mentors, the profession's newly entering cohorts encountered a distribution of power, prestige, and resources that was heavily skewed toward traditional political history in that sense, focused on foreign policy, statecraft, constitutions, high politics, elections, administrative policy-making, parliamentary affairs, and the

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conduct of government. While venturing into novel empirical areas with the help of social science theory and methods, social historians effected a decisive shift of perspective from "state" to "society."

Whether flying the flag of "history from below," with its implicit populism, stress on popular agency and experience, and preference for disregarded and subordinate social groups, or following one variant of social-science structuralism or another, the case was repeatedly made for the prioritizing of social context if the variable terms of political development and action were to come into view. For some years and across national historiographies, "social" explanation carried all before it. This reflected a larger trans-disciplinary ferment. From the later 1960s to the mid-1970s, in humanities and social sciences alike, the main trend of thinking, especially among critical intellectuals, embraced a classical or foundational materialism, in both its Marxist and non-Marxist versions, for which robust notions of social causality, social determination, and social totality had become key.

If in these heroic days, social history defined itself in contradistinction *to*, and often polemically *against*, political history as practiced and understood, then this also enabled, somewhat paradoxically, a radical *expansion* of politics—that is, an enlarged and more complex understanding of how "the political" related to social life. A wide variety of social settings usually seen as removed from politics became claimed *for* politics in a fresh way, often recognized as political for the first time: the workplace; the street and the neighborhood; the church and the chapel; the tavern and the bar; the sports ground and the club room; the cinema, the dance hall, and other places of entertainment; the market and the shopping plaza; the deviant or criminal subculture; the prison, and especially the family and the home. Such settings were already *objects of policy*, in the sense of law, policing, welfare, pedagogy, and general social administration. But they now became claimed as sites of political conflict and contestation, as places where identities and interests were in play, where forms of power were organized, embodied, and inscribed. This shift of perspective moved politics *away* from the familiar institutional arenas of activity (the state, parties, public organizations in the narrower sense) onto much broader and less manageable social terrain. It took politics "out of doors." It allowed the big questions of political life—the potentials for stability and cohesion in the social order; the possibilities for conformity and opposition; the circumstances under which dominant interests and values might be

challenged, restored, shaken, or occasionally overcome—to be very differently posed than before.

Thus if in one sense the turning to social history required the defining of society as separate and distinct from politics, then in another way it found political interests and potentials precisely *within* the social itself. If one possible effect was to depoliticize the social into a discrete and manageable object for study, another was to invest it precisely with political meanings. For a while, through the 1970s and 1980s, the tension between these twin logics supplied both the excitement and the unease in social history, the common agenda and its divisiveness. For one main body of thought, it should be said, the relationship between "the social" and "the political" stayed a non-issue, because securing recognition for new, technically demarcated sub-fields (e.g. demographic history, history of the family, social history of crime, history of social policy, and so forth), each with their own journals, conferences, and professional associations, was exactly the point. Many older-style political historians likewise continued much as before. But for others, the means of finding a way *back* to politics—that is, reconceptualizing the relations of the social and the political once the established and analytically constricting boundaries were breached—became an urgent need. Especially in the English-speaking world (in Australasia, South Africa, and in complex ways South Asia and other postcolonial societies, as well as in Britain and North America), that urgency then combined with broader intellectual-political developments influencing the ways in which political meanings could be understood. The full repertoire of the latter included many diverse lines of inquiry, from new theories of ideology and subjectivity, a significant turning to psychoanalytic theory especially among feminists, and new approaches to popular culture in cultural studies to the remarkable intellectual popularity of poststructuralist theories of language and last but not least Michel Foucault's writings about power, knowledge, and discourse.[1]

By the start of the 1990s, the conjunction of new empirical fields, unexpected subject matters, radical politics, and extensive theorizing had brought many social historians to an understanding of what politics may be held to include that differed markedly from where they had started out, when social history was launched as a contextually determining and conceptually superior rival for an institutionally circumscribed model of politics. Bringing "society" and "politics" back together again has been an immensely variable and complicated process, with richly differing national-historiographical, theoretical, and methodological coordinates

and results, but this important reintegration followed perhaps two principal paths.

One went through state theory, which was concurrently being reinvigorated too. An enlarged understanding of politics was matched by an expanded yet deinstitutionalized appreciation of the multiplying grounds and shifting modalities of the state's relation to and involvement in society. These analytics radically outgrew the boundaries of government in the narrower sense to embrace a far wider array of domains, including not only areas of social administration, public health, the law, schooling, and religious practice and belief but also the ordering of private life in families, the regulation of sexuality, the handling of gender distinctions, the monitoring of work for wages and in the home, the management of public life, and the shifting boundaries between the personal and the public. The state's presence inside society became sought in less visible and more insidious ways. Beyond the conventional business of governing, that is, the state was found to be engaged in far more variegated labors of regulation, involving the larger process of social reproduction, of constructing and reconstructing social relations on the broadest of fronts, or *governmentality* in the challenging post-Foucauldian sense. In the earliest days, social historians tended to presume a mechanical distinction *between* "society" on the one hand, and "state, ideology, and politics" on the other. But so far from belonging on one side of that dichotomy, social history was now increasingly repositioned *inside* the complex field of relations joining the two.[2]

The second route was through an anthropologically influenced conception of culture, for which Edward Thompson, Clifford Geertz, Pierre Bourdieu, and British cultural studies from Raymond Williams to Stuart Hall and the contemporaneous challenge of new feminist theory were all key. This is where literary theory, poststructuralism, and the reception of Foucault have also found a home. Foucault in particular helped decisively shift perceptions of politics, migrating the analysis of power away from the state's core institutions in the obvious national-centralized sense toward its "micro-physics" and the emergence of new individualizing strategies "that function outside, below, and alongside the State apparatuses, on a much more minute and everyday level."[3] In this notation, power is borne by far more than the practices of policing and the rule of law alone. Nor is it confined to the most obvious operation of the "repressive apparatuses," coercive practices, or public institutions more generally. Rather, it can be found in the smallest and most intimate of human transactions too. It is far more widely and insidiously diffused through society than the

older contrasts between social and political history, society and the state, encouraged us to think. Power—hence political significance—is organized in all types of social institutions, cultural practices, and informal behaviors, as well as in the formal contexts of national and local political processes and the more visible locations of public decision-making. It becomes structured into both the most basic and usually unspoken assumptions through which we perceive our relation to the social world and the practices and relationships of the everyday. In other words, *culture* is every bit as vital for the shaping and interpretation of power relations as the familiar institutional machineries of police, judiciary, civil service, legislature, welfare, and so forth.

The momentousness of this theoretical shift can never be overstated. If we think of power as a medium for the naming and ordering of disparities and inequalities of all kinds, including the multiple kinds of perceived hierarchies of difference, then it needs to be sought and addressed in many different ways, in hidden and unexpected places and not just in the formal institutional arenas of the polity and the state. Power becomes more elusively mobile across social spaces and social spheres so that it permeates and structures, often imperceptibly, the very stuff of human life itself. In that case, the usual analytical categories (social, economic, political, cultural) become blurred and mutually permeable. The resulting implications for how historians can now approach their study of the past is perhaps the single most enabling consequence of the changes in the historical discipline of the past 50 years: namely, a realist and eclectic recognition that politics, the law, culture, beliefs are not external to the economy and its social relations or to each other but are always embedded and imbricated together in complex unities of structure and action. Inside the experienced and practical materialities of human life, after all, these *abstractly* separable aspects or spheres can never *actually* be cleanly or observably pulled apart. On the contrary, they remain bindingly and constitutively melded together in concrete practices and the conduct of individual lives—in "specific and indissoluble real processes," as Raymond Williams put this in one typically arresting formulation.[4]

Williams' own standpoint, which he named "cultural materialism," remains one of the best guides for these intellectual trajectories and for the complicated challenges of sorting out and thinking through the character of the relations between "the social" and "the political" or "the political" and "the cultural." Breaking decisively with the existing functionalist and deterministic readings of culture's relationship to the economy and social

interests (expressed in the Marxist tradition by the "base and superstructure" metaphor), Williams developed a finely modulated argument about culture's own materiality. Whether in the received academic divisions of labor or in common-sense understandings, cultural life and the life of the mind—art and aesthetics, beliefs and ideas—become all too easily severed from material life in the sense of work, the production of goods, the business of buying and selling, and the general making of livelihoods. But rather than accepting this separation, which treated culture as simultaneously tethered by social determinations yet moving above them, Williams stressed the very concrete ways in which culture was lodged from the outset inside social relations and forms of material practice.

By cultural materialism, he meant not only the precise social and institutional conditions through which cultural meanings were themselves produced but also the constitutive presence of cultural processes for all other practices of a society, including not only politics and social interactions but also the complex operations of the economy. In those terms, the architectural metaphor of base and superstructure, with its imagery of the clear and physical separation of levels along with the implications of logical priority, actively misled. However necessary it may be to distinguish cultural meanings from their social contexts for the purposes of abstract understanding, in any actually existing circumstances they will only ever be encountered and experienced together, fused and embedded in those "specific and indissoluble real processes." Thus language, meanings, and signification should all be treated as "indissoluble elements of the material social process itself, involved all the time in production and reproduction." In that case, culture's relation to other spheres of life—work, market transactions, social interests, practical activities, *politics*, and so forth—will be always already embedded. The terms and effects of that relationship should only ever be approached by means of a far more "complex idea of determination," as the exertion of pressures and the setting of limits, in processes that run actively in both directions.[5]

This is the ground on which the interest in microhistory and the history of everyday life took root. To stand any chance of grasping how the intended actions of states—their public policies, their programmatic purposes, their manifold interventions, their regimes of regulation—translate practically into impact on their societies, we simply cannot confine ourselves to the societal level of structural results and aggregate effects, however searchingly we pursue them into the regions, cities, and myriad smaller-scale contexts. We need differently conceived down-to-the-ground

studies too, because only via imaginatively conducted ethnographic and interpretive readings of specific chains of events, concrete locations, and very particular lives can we hope to explore the efficacy and limitations of state-initiated action. If power is located in social as well as in formally political arrangements, and culture is both an effect and a medium of power and domination, then all the mundane relations of everyday life come into play. Individuals acting as women and men, children and adults, students and teachers, workers and managers, peasants and landowners, laborers and overseers, criminals and police, parishioners and priests, clients and professionals, citizens and state officials—all both produce and are produced by relations in which the participants are continuously negotiating and renegotiating questions of power, authority, and the capacity to shape the meanings of the world. And here, the element of *negotiation* becomes key. To be sure, power secures the silencing or constraining of some voices by ordering the world into definite regimes of truth, allowing some things to be thought or spoken while others stay normally unsaid. But in so doing it also puts itself at risk, by producing positions from which subjects may try to speak.

In Foucault's thinking this was power's productive dimension: it works not only to compel and repress, but it creates and enables too. Power relations are never simply vectors of domination or "social control" but are simultaneously media of possible contestation, of the chance to push back, even sometimes to break free. If the measure of this point is to be taken, moreover, and if the temptations of an over-totalized conception of successfully organized domination are to be cannily refused, then the possible grounds for "resistance" also have to be understood. Here, the idea of "hegemony" taken from Antonio Gramsci has proven especially helpful, with its stress on consent as against the instruments of compulsion, on the mechanisms of moral persuasion usually deployed before people's willing or begrudging acquiescence in a particular ruling order can be reliably secured. By insisting on the pervasiveness of power in society, in all of the above-mentioned ways, a Gramscian approach certainly presumes the inscription of political meanings in both social relations and practices of the everyday. But it also reads power relations more optimistically by probing for their incitements to disagreement and contestation. It seeks the spaces for compromise and confusion. It finds more of a gray zone, a multi-directional back and forth, rather than a one-way street. At the same time, despite the vital contingencies and conjunctures on which power regimes are taken to rest, Gramsci kept a sober sense of the continuities

and organizing strength of the centralized state, its reliance on armies, police powers, and emergency decrees. To say, with Foucault, that power has no single center does not mean that the centralized locations can no longer be found. A Gramscian approach shows precisely how *different* sources and locations of power, whether in the state-institutional complex and the polity or more widely diffused across society, can be organized into working together.

The terms of this discussion connect directly with shifts in the historiography of Italian Fascism in the final decades of the twentieth century, where arguments about popular consensus/consent (the Italian *consenso*) dominated discussion in the wake of the views advanced by Renzo De Felice's biographically centered studies of Benito Mussolini's regime.[6] For many years it became hard to escape the resultant binary of *coercion* and *consent*, through which scholars lined up on either side of a highly politicized standoff: *either* the regime had won popular legitimacy in the course of the later 1920s and early 1930s, through a mixture of successful propagandist mobilization, the co-opting of key economic sectors, and positive middle-class identification (De Felice); *or else* Fascism operated straightforwardly by violence and dictatorship, crushing the opposition, cementing elite cooperation, and deploying the state's coercive and repressive resources (De Felice's opponents). Relatively few voices tried to speak across that dichotomy by, for example, showing the more complicated and insidious persistence of violent rule beyond the pitched battles of the early 1920s and after the mid-decade consolidation, or by finding ways to think the issues of consent and coercion explicitly and productively together: Adrian Lyttleton and Ernesto Ragionieri were two of the exceptions.[7] It was only in the 1980s that this slowly began to change. In studies of working-class social experience and the Fascist leisure organizations, Luisa Passerini and Victoria de Graza explored the effectiveness of "the regime's ability to mobilize different social groups and, through seemingly apolitical institutions, to usurp the left's own agenda of economic renewal and societal transformation."[8] Then, during the 1990s, a new contingent of scholars began studying the specifically cultural aspects of Fascist rule, focusing especially on intellectual life, art and aesthetics, architecture and design, cinema and film, public culture and display, and the organizing of mass spectacles.[9] While this work often read Fascist culture for its fissures and contradictions, while venturing suggestively into matters of popular behavior and response, it focused mainly on the shaping of a Fascist outlook from above (in the drive for the fashioning of a "new man") by elaborately

orchestrated control over the public sphere and ever-expanding invasiveness into civil society.[10]

Pushing deeper into popular culture, by studying the experience of ordinary people in everyday life, has taken much longer, in a process which the current volume—with its probing of "the complexities of lived experience"—is trying to move further along. Much of the impetus is coming from English-speaking scholars, reflecting not only the "learning process" of the passage from "the social" to "the cultural" described above but also the effects of a revealing cross-field conversation with historians working on Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union.[11] One emblematic voice in these regards, for example, has been Paul Corner, who after producing one of the best social histories of Fascism's rise, in the characteristic 1970s idiom of the regional community study, moved toward no less intensely archival analysis of the dictatorship's relationship to popular opinion on the ground.[12] Another distinguished specialist on the Fascist period, Richard Bosworth, whose imposing Mussolini biography and critical historiographical guide, *The Italian Dictatorship*, shadowed Ian Kershaw's analogous accomplishments in the German field, has produced the closest we yet have to a general history of the experience of ordinary Italians under Fascist rule.[13]

But even as he illuminates this dimension of everyday experience, Bosworth also reveals some of the potential pitfalls. He is superb—ethnographically shrewd and adept, archivally grounded, contextually commanding—when reading the significance of this or that particular episode or encounter under Fascism, when authority relations or governing practices, public rituals or propagandist initiatives, came into play. He keeps the state's coercive behavior firmly in view, never effacing or forgetting its specific viciousness and corruptions (reflecting the character of *this* regime, as opposed to a polity where liberal freedoms stayed intact), while carefully acknowledging both the power disparities involved and the explicit meanings of the languages in use, whether vernacular or official.[14] *Mussolini's Italy* makes telling use of the strategies associated with everyday life history, essentially by composing a mosaic of skillfully crafted case histories which then carry the book's running commentaries on Fascist rule. By these means he aims to ground an argument about the societal limitations of Mussolini's power, one that emphasizes the constraining effects of the already given Italian histories on the possible forms and extent of the Fascist period's impact. He wants to show how in some respects that

project worked *with* the grain of pre-existing patterns and practices; how in others it went against the grain and came undone.[15]

Bosworth's book is studded with carefully explicated examples to this effect. Thus to show how Fascist governing practices shaded toward earlier forms of social policing aimed against the roughness and immorality of the "undeserving poor," who were deemed dissolute and work-shy as ever, he chooses a drunken evening in March 1933 on the part of six plebeian residents of the village of Maranzana in Piedmont, whose boisterous conviviality ended in the singing of "an old socialist song" before eventually petering out. Investigated by the police and denounced by fellow villagers, two of the six were given sentences of *confino* (banishment) to one of the remote islands or villages that formed the Fascist "archipelago of repression." One of the offenders, 45-year-old builder's laborer Lorenzo Boccaccio, married and father of four, neatly illustrates Bosworth's point: vaguely associated with pre-1922 "socialist sentiments" and supporting neither the Fascist Party nor its calendar of festivals, neglectful of family and often away working in France, he did nothing that qualified exactly as "resistance" in any conventionally political sense. His story fell, rather, into the elastic category of socially inappropriate behavior, for which local policing had historically evolved to discipline and contain. In another kind of example, Bosworth uses the career of Roberto Farinacci, briefly PNF secretary in 1925–1926 and longstanding *ras* (provincial boss) in Cremona, whose record stands in for all of the venal and capricious behavior that made Fascist officialdom little different from its predecessors once happily ensconced in power.[16]

Yet amid all of these rich descriptions, interestingly, Bosworth tends to flatten out what remained distinctive about Fascist rule. Thus he doubts the efficacy of the Fascist cultural propaganda, its forms of mass appeal, its reliance on spectacle, and the panoply of mythmaking, political symbolics, rituals, and charismatic mobilization that made up the new "political religion" foregrounded by Emilio Gentile.[17] Current interest in Fascism's cultural history, its "aesthetic vision of the world," in Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi's phrase, has resulted in a skewed and disproportionate emphasis on the effectiveness and reach of ideology, Bosworth thinks, leading to a distorted neo-totalitarian estimate of Fascist cultural success, what he calls "the ubiquity and power of Fascist words," or the centrality of "Fascism's symbolic world, its discourse, rituals, and marketing of charisma."[18] Underneath this level of formal ideological intervention, he then argues, could be found perduring patterns and practices of social life, especially

among the common people (workers, peasants, small proprietors, white-collar personnel, petty professionals), that were stubbornly defensive and non-permeable, impediments to the successful implanting of Fascist values. The main import of the case records surrounding the Maranzana drinking story for Bosworth was in these terms their window onto this resilence of a still-intact and largely unchanged non-Fascist ground of society: their "glimpses into the world of Italian rural male sociability, gender relations, food and drink, public health, the family, religion—formal and popular—and migration," or everything that suggested quotidian continuity.[19]

Taken together, for Bosworth, these two arguments—the over-totalized misreading of the effectiveness of Fascism's official cultural offensive, and the intactness of an Italian society whose forms impeded Fascism's capacity to remold them—urge a return "from cultural to social history and away from Fascist singularity to the broader study of the life of Italians under their two decades of national dictatorship." Without forgetting the "state-sponsored corruption, persecution, brutality, and murder," Bosworth wishes to uphold the strength of these "other vocabularies and *mentalités* surviving alongside or competing against the Fascist ones." Certainly, "Mussolini's dictatorship was a tyranny … But, for its subjects, the Fascist regime was also a place of multiple histories. Under its sway, the histories of the Italies survived as luxuriantly as did the formal political or intellectual history of Italy."[20]

This is an appealing position. Without clinging to the anti-fascist myth of the essentially democratic nation or the more diffuse version of the *brava gente* (the good or virtuous people), it does provide an optimistic ground of solid and resilient social history, from which speaking back might have been imagined, if only the corruption and repression, the ultimate sanction of the regime's systemically reliable readiness for violence, had gone. Reminiscent of Martin Broszat's concept of *Resistenz* in the German context of Nazism and the Third Reich—a term that translates *not* as *resistance*, but as "impedance" or a "limiting effect"—this suggests the superior presence of quotidian continuities and the sturdiness of social life, whose realities trumped the Fascist cultural challenge and thwarted the further-reaching ideological ambitions.[21] Yet, as for the Third Reich, this markedly downplays and underestimates the power of Fascist ideology as such. Conceding in one breath Fascism's success in destroying democracy and stifling dissent, in the next it signals the Fascists' failure. If the chances for political resistance are seen to have been slim and popular complicity in the regime's daily functioning is duly acknowledged, then

the ordinary population's indifference toward the regime's specific ideological claims—their practical apathy or *Resistenz*—can then be nonetheless upheld.

For the Third Reich, I have argued elsewhere, this seemed too much like an escape clause for the Left, a fallback position after the destruction of the actual resistance had been accepted and the hankering after its prospects finally put away: in the face of the weakness of the Left's opposition—the isolated and beleaguered qualities of any organized Socialist and Communist dissent—the argument from ordinary life and its nonpermeability can then offer itself instead.[22] Exploring the grounds and mechanisms of popular nonconformity beneath and behind the level of the no-longer-available means of explicit opposition has been brilliantly productive in recent historiography, to be sure. The integrity of the democratic values and collective solidarities of working people, even after the violence of the early 1920s, has deservedly been upheld, in what Passerini calls the toughness of "the original independence of everyday cultural forms" when set against the "violent, coercive, and disguised politicization carried out in the Fascist period."[23] But this easily becomes a means of avoidance too: adaptability, necessary self-protections, and the shrewdness of pragmatics can also spell complicity, submission, and the pliabilities of self-interest. Precisely Fascism's effectiveness, and the key to its more stealthful appeal, was its penchant for constructing exactly those concurrencies. In other words, we really do need to take the efficacy of Fascist ideology, what Bosworth calls "the ubiquity and power of Fascist words," more seriously.

Reading Italian and German historiographies of Fascism/Nazism against each other can be very instructive. In both cases, left-inclined social historians sought a ground of autonomy and resilience for thinking about society under fascist rule, one based in pre-fascist continuities of social relations, patterns of inequality, workplace practices, family dynamics, and all manner of class and subcultural identifications that survived or perdured beneath and despite the actions and ambitions of the regimes concerned. In the Italian case, this was enabled to some degree by the retroactive illumination cast by the anti-fascist resistance after 1943—in the sense that the latter's rapid emergence and impressive breadth encouraged the search for anticipatory forms of dissent or non-compliance even *before* the 1943 watershed, behaviors that were resistant (in Broszat's sense) to fascism's appeals. In those terms it was easier in Italy to imagine a social domain of practices and agency as well as belief and outlook that lay

outside or *beyond* the Italian equivalent of the *Volksgemeinschaft* (community of the race-nation-people). In Germany this was more complicated: absent the evidence of any mass-based popular resistance during the end-stage of the war, left-tending social historians came up with the alternative conceptualizations mentioned above, stressing "pre-political" forms of popular disobedience and disaffection, from Martin Broszat and Tim Mason through Ian Kershaw to Detlev Peukert.[24] Here, Claudio Pavone's great work *Una guerra civile* (1991) in a way moved the older anti-fascism framework much closer toward this German approach.[25]

In the meantime, those German social historians of practical non-compliance were themselves fashioning a messier and more clouded conception of the "gray zone" for grasping the ambiguities that accompanied any ordinary nonconformity or tentative disaffection: into the older duality of "perpetrator" and "victim" they now inserted a third, deliberately in-between term of "bystander." Still more radically, some advocates of *Alltagsgeschichte* (history of everyday life) began departing from the tripartite conceptual ground of perpetrator-bystander-victim altogether, seeking to begin from spatially and situationally conceived contexts of quotidian experience and agency instead. In the course of the 1930s and especially after the start of the war, for example, the new circumstances imposed by the Third Reich allowed individual Germans less and less room for any personal retreat or negotiation, let alone for expressions of ethical disapproval, whenever questions of loyalty to the Reich and the exclusion of its Jewish enemies came up. How anyone with deeply felt worries or disagreements, or merely varieties of hesitancy and qualms, responded to the many practical dilemmas the state's racial policies created for her/him, for instance at work or on the street, was seldom clear-cut. Any act of fellow feeling or ethical refusal was more likely to be clandestine and unobtrusive than openly and consciously linked to taking a stand. Indeed, most studies of everyday practice will reveal a complicated "mingling" of many different responses, embracing tacit assent and passive acceptance, going along with events, keeping one's head down, absenting oneself from the action, even very occasionally resisting. Inside these simultaneities, the possible terms of any act of resistance could only ever be compromised. At best, the wherewithal for acting ethically came surrounded with pragmatics. It was borne necessarily by all kinds of equivocations, from self-distancing and acquiescence to a self-protective conformity, including both "going along" and "looking away."[26]

In *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*, Michael Ebner expertly marks out that territory. On the one hand, he defines it spatially, partly by the regime's system of political confinement based on the "island internment colonies and small villages in southern Italy" (in his carceral metaphor of the "Fascist archipelago"), partly by the physical spaces of collective social interaction, where the regime concentrated most of its labor of routine policing and social surveillance.[27] If by 1943 the former encompassed some 5000 political internees in the five main island colonies, plus another 14,000 mixed detainees on mainland Italy, along with masses of civilian internees, ethnic deportees, colonial populations, and POWs, then the latter (the "dangerous places") included most venues of plebeian sociability—"taverns, piazzas and streets, trains and trams, public parks, brothels, jails, shops, public dormitories, open-air markets, courtyards in working-class apartments, and the work places of manual laborers."[28] In each case, as Ebner carefully details, the publicness of the situation left people vulnerable to anxiety, suspicion, and potential denunciation to the authorities, where a joke, political reference, incautious remark, or mere slip of the tongue might lead to being reported.

But on the other hand, those people most vulnerable to such intervention were "social outsiders" who lived on the wrong side of a moral borderline—those who were "denigrated in police reports for their alcoholism, criminal precedents, lack of work ethic, mental instability, sexual promiscuity, lack of devotion to family, and immorality," as much as for any evident oppositional leanings. These well-tried categories of the incompetent and feckless were monitored judgmentally by those on the other, safe side of respectability, whom the "authorities deemed 'of undisputed Fascist faith,' 'favorable to the regime,' and 'lovers of order.'" Definitely including the middle-class notability, they also embraced ex-soldiers and anyone "patriotic, gainfully employed, hardworking, and from stable, 'peaceful' families." As such, this was a borderline that already ran through the pre-Fascist society too. Insofar, Bosworth and others are justified in recurring to the purportedly superior continuity of the pre-Fascist moral-political substrate. Yet by brutally sweeping the liberal system of the rule of law away, with all of its limited protections, larger institutional architecture, associational freedoms, and public culture of civility, the Fascists decisively remade the societal environment around a shockingly different climate of punishment, surveillance, and vindictiveness, and *that* was horribly new. As Ebner says, under Fascism, whenever the distinct "subsets of Fascist society interacted with one another, 'upstanding' citizens were

implicitly empowered to exploit the smallest transgressions by social outsiders, or, worse, to simply concoct some offense."[29] Slights and resentments, indignities and insolence, fractiousness and missteps, misbehavior of every familiar kind, now had a different context of action than before. Social disdain and social vengefulness, possibilities for gain and redress, were now very differently empowered.

In its most imaginative forms *Alltagsgeschichte*, or everyday life history as practiced for the study of Nazism in the German field, can help clarify these questions in some distinct ways. First comes the microhistorical method itself. We can learn a great deal from developing conceptual strategies and locating an appropriate archive for the careful definition of historical "miniatures," whether as an especially resonant and complicated incident or event, or via the richness of meanings in a particular document or text, or in the contradictory circumstances of an emblematic life, and so forth. For Alf Lüdtke, *Alltagsgeschichte*'s pioneer and classic practitioner, this particularized focus is a means of getting "inside" those larger "structures, processes, and patterns" so beloved of social historians precisely in order to prise them open. Doing so can reveal "the daily experiences of people in their concrete life-situations, which also stamp their needs" so that the practically experienced intersections of *politics* and *social life*, or *politics* and *culture*, can then be directly engaged. Instead of sticking with the available generalizations about fascism and its social relations, microhistories can bring us closer to the ambiguities, conundrums, and contradictions through which people needed actually to live out their lives, under circumstances seldom freely chosen by themselves. For historical actors, these were the settings where the larger abstractions—domination and exploitation, possibility and hope—could be directly encountered, processed into manageable meanings, and inscribed into the organizing common sense needed for the conduct of individual and collective daily existence. Those larger forces so easily seen as separate and distant—the state and its exactions, publicness in all of its registers, as well as politics, law, culture, beliefs—became imbricated together and embedded inside social relations in precisely these microsettings, where provisional unities of structure and action were then able to materialize.[30]

Second, the conditions of everydayness under fascism, whether in its German or Italian variants, always rested on the palpable ubiquity of the threat of violence, translating existentially into a visceral and anxiety-making, even a sensory, experiential presence. As Ebner remarks:

> One of an Italian's first "national" experiences was learning to appreciate the machinations of the authoritarian state apparatus and the boundaries of expected political behavior. For Italians who transgressed these boundaries, among the possible grim outcomes were a punch in the face, institutional confinement, discrimination in the labor market or state welfare, financial ruin, social ostracism, or mere intimidation and fear.[31]

For anyone seeking to preserve some non-Nazi distance or personal integrity, likewise, living under the Third Reich required not just the self-protections and stubborn self-assertiveness variously stressed by Broszat, Kershaw, Mason, and Peukert but also an internalized economy of fears. Nazi everydayness certainly revolved around other kinds of habituation—satisfying routines and stable normativities after the privations and uncertainties of the early 1930s, modestly attainable "good times," new forms of individuality, collective enjoyments and pleasures too.[32] But underlying and surrounding them all were the fears and anxieties engendered by the widely diffused, clearly perceived, and brutally instilled awareness of what the new state was capable of perpetrating. From the very start, in 1933–1934, it aggressively performed its alacrity for discrimination and harassment, verbal and physical assaults, stigmas and taboos, ritual humiliations and social exclusions, arbitrary arrests and sanctioned killings, all held together by the *ultima ratio* of imprisonment and the camps.

In focusing on the everyday, the early writings of Peukert and Lüdtke set out to rethink what the forming of a political outlook or the taking of a political action under such circumstances might have entailed. Under those exceptional circumstances, inside the brutally innovative social and political imaginary of the freshly ascendant German—or Italian—fascism, how might the categories of "agency" and "rule" (*Herrschaft*) need to be recast? In his resulting treatments, Peukert stressed the blurrings of the lines between "victims" and "perpetrators," probing instead "the multiple ambiguities of ordinary people making their choices among the various grays of active consent, accommodation, and nonconformity."[33] Constantly beset by the regime's intrusions, which saturated the social environs with ideological advocacy and discursive noise, even Nazism's critics or opponents could never entirely escape either its ideas or its claws.

But third, if the violence of fascist rule reached into the innermost recesses of the everyday, then so did its ideas. While the former was experienced in the registers of endangerment, moreover, the conveyance of ideology required rather enthusiasm, pleasure, and commitment to the

commonly held norms. For Nazism, in that regard, it was the rhetoric and ideological machinery of the *Volksgemeinschaft* that mainly accomplished that work. The wider repertoire of the state's organized cultural activities was crucial in this regard, whether in the leisure time of children, women, and youth or in the club-like arenas of social and recreational life. To these should also be added the unavoidable clamor of the Third Reich's massed spectacles and its more general public intrusiveness, from rallies, festivals, and sporting events to radio, newsreels, advertising, tourism, and film. It was here—in what Bosworth calls skeptically "the ubiquity and power of Fascist words"—that ordinary citizens experienced the promises and affirmations that fascism hoped to supply. By capturing what Dennis Sweeney calls "the mutually constitutive connections [across] the local, the quotidian, the public sphere, and the state," microhistories can help us get closer to how those meanings might have been secured.[34] At one level, Sweeney continues, this requires "taking seriously Nazism's capacity to enter into the various realms of everyday experience and private desires, including the domains of work, quotidian sociability, family life, and consumer entertainment and spectacle." But it also involved the Nazi *ideas* per se, or "the interpellative capacities of Nazi ideology as it formed, or enabled the formation of, new fascist subjectivities." Seeking to drive out alternative ideals of community and collective solidarity, the appeals concerned were relentlessly and seductively ethnocentric, "anchored in notions of ethno-racial purity and self-contained *Eigenart*, in response to competing notions of self, the proliferation of cultural difference, and the immediate presence of the other."[35]

In these terms, returning now to Italy, we *do* need to take Fascist ideas far more seriously: the words, values, symbolic world, mythmaking, rituals, cultural policies, mass instruments, and spectacles. We need to take seriously the ways in which ordinary people came to recognize themselves (or did not) in the new world that Fascism claimed to be creating. How did so many Italians become open to finding positive reasons for accommodating to the post-1922 exigencies, and how did those bases change during the subsequent shifts of the regime? How did they adjust to the new rules for how lives would now have to be made? Given the violent conquest over opponents and the removal of rival ideas, whether as large-scale visions of a different society like socialism or Communism, or in many smaller notations of social value and the good of society, the Fascists had the field all to themselves, whether for powerfully mythologized versions of history, charismatic celebrations of the single leader, systematically orchestrated

propaganda, particular policy campaigns, or widely diffused dogmas of common-sense perception. The circulation of these ideas created categories of private understanding and public recognition that Italians had perforce to inhabit. Those categories interpellated them. The process was not automatic and not inevitable. Nor was it entirely emptied of negotiation. But after 1922—after the Fascist breach of civility—it came with brute force. Fascist ideas—the nation, empire, order, action, struggle, manliness, will, race, necessity of war, rebirth, the new man—created places where, in practice, with varying degrees of self-awareness, Italians had little choice but to dwell.

But these were not ideas produced only "from above" and somehow external to the already-existing and purportedly superordinate social histories. They did not circulate separately from the societal sphere or away from the material grounds of social life. On the contrary, they grew as an active agency *inside* a real social topography: in new forms of everydayness, in reworked patterns of organized sociability, in an entire architecture of presumed common belonging, in ways of regulating personal and public space, in new forms of pedagogy and welfare delivery, in institutional machineries, in practices of governmentality. Part aggressively and coercively, part insidiously, Fascist ideas wormed their way into and through each of these sites. If we are to grasp how exactly they acquired and eventually lost their purchase—how they sustained their resilience and continuity, how over time they shifted and regrouped—then the microdynamics of everyday life will be a very good place to begin.

Notes

1. For two commentaries on these intellectual histories as they were occurring: Geoff Eley, "Is All the World a Text? From Social History to the History of Society Two Decades Later," in Terrence J. McDonald (ed.), *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 193–243; and "Between Social History and Cultural Studies: Interdisciplinarity and the Practice of the Historian at the End of the Twentieth Century," in Joep Leerssen and Ann Rigney (eds.), *Historians and Social Values* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), 93–109. In full detail: *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).
2. The best guide remains Bob Jessop. See most recently his *The State: Past, Present, Future* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015), and *State Power* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008); also Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond

Statist Approaches and their Critics," *American Political Science Review*, 85:1 (1991), 77–96.

3. Michel Foucault, "Body/Power," in Colin Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977 by Michel Foucault* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), 60.
4. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 82.
5. Ibid., 99, 82.
6. Especially important were Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista: La conquista del potere, 1921–1925*, and *L'organizzazione della Stato fascista, 1925–1929* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966–1968), and *Mussolini il Duce: Gli anni del consenso, 1929–1936*, and *Lo stato totalitario, 1936–1940* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974–1981). De Felice's multi-volume account has never been translated as such, but see De Felice and Michael Ledeen, *Fascism: An Informal Introduction to its Theory and Practice* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1976). An excellent guide can be found in Roberta Pergher and Giulia Albanese, "Introduction. Historians, Fascism, and Italian Society: Mapping the Limits of Consent," in Albanese and Pergher (eds.), *In the Society of Fascists: Acclamation, Acquiescence, and Agency in Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1–28.
7. Adrian Lyttleton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919–1929*, 3rd edn. (London: Routledge, 2003; orig. 1973); Eugenio Garin, "Ernesto Ragionieri," *Journal of Modern History*, 52:1 (1980), 85–105. Palmiro Toggliati, *Lectures on Fascism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976), published in Italy in 1969 from lectures originally delivered in 1935, provided openings for Marxist analysis that remained long unexplored.
8. Pergher and Albanese, "Introduction," 14. See Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Victoria De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); also Tracy Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922–1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985). For a later book, De Grazia examined the situation of Italian women: *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
9. For example, Walter Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence: From Modernism to Fascism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Staging Fascism: 18BL and the Theater of Masses for Masses* (Stanford: Staford University Press, 1996); Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff (eds.), *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in*

Mussolini's Italy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Marla S. Stone, *The Patron State: Culture and Politics in Fascist Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Emily Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism: Art and Politics under Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Claudio Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Building Fascism, Communism, and Liberal Democracy: Gaetano Ciocca—Architect, Farmer, Writer, Engineer* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

10. Most influential here has been a primary student of De Felice, Emilio Gentile. See especially *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996; Italian 1993); also in this regard the *oeuvre* of Roger Griffin, including *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1993), and *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
11. For new research emerging from inside Italy, see the important contributions in Albanese and Pergher(eds.), *In the Society of Fascists.* Patrizia Dogliani, *L'Italia fascista, 1922–1940* (Milan: Sansoni, 1999), updated and revised as *Il fascismo degli italiani: Una storia sociale* (Turin: UTET, 2008), is one general history that deals directly with the issue of societal cohesion while acknowledging its unevenness and contradictions both in practice and across social groupings. However, "even in Dogliani, consensus figures above all as an objective of official policy and we learn less about how consensus may have emerged from the bottom up." Pergher and Albanese, "Introduction," 15. For the pertinent work on Nazi Germany, see the citations in notes 13, 15, 21, 29, and 31 below. For the Soviet Union, see especially Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times—Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Fitzpatrick and Alf Lüdtke, "Energizing the Everyday: On the Breaking and Making of Social Bonds in Nazism and Stalinism," in Michael Geyer and Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 266–301.
12. See especially his "Italian Fascism: Whatever Happened to Dictatorship? *Journal of Modern History*, 74:2 (2002), 325–51; "Everyday Fascism in the 1930s: Center and Periphery in the Decline of Mussolini's Dictatorship," *Contemporary European History*, 15:2 (2006), 195–222; "Fascist Italy in the 1930s: Popular Opinion in the Provinces," in Corner (ed.), *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes: Fascism, Nazism, Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 122–46; and the full-length *The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion in Mussolini's Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University

Press, 2012). For Corner's earliest work, see the classic *Fascism in Ferrara, 1915–1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

13. Richard J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); *The Italian Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism* (New York: Hodder, 1998); *Mussolini's Italy: Life under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915–1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005). For Ian Kershaw's analogous works, see *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, 4th edn. (London: Arnold, 2000); *Hitler 1896–1936: Hubris* and *Hitler 1936–1945: Nemesis* (New York: Norton, 1898 and 2000); *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); *The Hitler Myth: Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
14. "From 1922 to 1943 and then, in a terrible coda in central and northern Italy, from September 1943 to April 1945, the Italian people fell under the domination of a vicious and retrograde tyranny. It banned rival parties, arbitrarily imprisoned or drove into exile their leaders and, before and after 1922, killed from 2000 to 3000 of its political opponents. It destroyed the free press, liquidated non-Fascist trade unions, infringed the rule of law, sponsored a secret police, tempted Italians to spy on, and inform against, each other, and reaffirmed crudely patriotic practices." Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, 1–2.
15. For my own discussion of the analogous debates in relation to Nazism and the Third Reich, see Geoff Eley, "Driving for Rule, Extracting Consent: Bases of Political Order under Fascism," in *Nazism as Fascism: Violence, Ideology, and the Ground of Consent in Germany 1930–1945* (London: Routledge, 2013), especially 13–22.
16. Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, 230–7, 334–8. For the "Fascist archipelago," see Michael Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1–22.
17. See Emilio Gentile, "Fascism as Political Religion," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 25:2–3 (1990), 229–51.
18. Richard Bosworth, "Everyday Mussolinism: Friends, Family, Locality, and Violence in Fascist Italy," *Contemporary European History*, 14:1 (2005), 26; Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 14.
19. Bosworth, "Everyday Mussolinism," 24.
20. Ibid., 27.
21. The German word for "resistance" in the sense of the politically organized opposition of the illegal underground is *Widerstand*. Explicitly distinguished from "resistance" and borrowing its meanings from medicine and physics, Broszat's *Resistenz* was meant to suggest "immunity" or a countervailing ability to impede the flow of a current. It connoted those elements of social life (actions, practices, structures, relations) that "limit[ed]

the penetration of Nazism and block[ed] its total claim to power and control." It shifted focus methodologically away from actors' motivations to their "effect" (*Wirkung*) in "blocking or partially restricting Nazism's societal penetration." See Martin Broszat, "Resistenz und Widerstand: Eine Zwischenbalanz des Forshungsprojektes," in Martin Broszat et al. (eds.), *Bayern in der NS Zeit*, Vol. 4 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1977–1983), 691–709. The quotes originate in Kershaw's excellent explication in *Nazi Dictatorship*, 194.

22. See Eley, "Driving for Rule, Extracting Consent," 16–9.
23. Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory*, 65.
24. For Broszat, see note 21 above. Otherwise, see Tim Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich: The Working Class and the National Community* (Providence: Berg, 1993), and Jane Caplan (ed.), *Nazism, Fascism, and the Working Class: Essays by Tim Mason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, and *Hitler Myth*; Detlev J. Peukert, *Die Edelweisspiraten: Protestbewegungen jugendlicher Arbeiter im Dritten Reich* (Cologne: Bund Verlag, 1980), and *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity and Opposition in Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).
25. Now translated as Claudio Pavone, *A Civil War: A History of the Italian Resistance* (London: Verso, 2013).
26. Unsurpassed in his insightful and resolute troubling of these questions is Alf Lüdtke. See the works cited in note 30 below, but especially here "People Working: Everyday Life and German Fascism," *History Workshop Journal*, 50 (Autumn 2000), 74–92.
27. Phrases taken from the book description, Ebner, *Ordinary Violence*, i.
28. Ibid., 240, 241–2. Ebner estimates that by 1943 between 60,000 and 100,000 Slovenian, Croat, and Montenegrin civilians had been deported into the Italian interior; military camps held some 70,000 POWs; earlier in the 1930s, the military had interned almost 100,000 of the population of Cyrenaica, the western province of occupied Libya; some 6000–10,000 Ethiopians were interned after the Italian war of 1935–1937. See ibid., 259–61.
29. Ibid., 246–7.
30. For Alf Lüdtke, see note 26 above. Also "Introduction: What Is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are Its Practitioners?" in Lüdtke (ed.), *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 3–40; "What Happened to the 'Fiery Red Glow'? Workers' Experiences and German Fascism," ibid., 198–251; "The Appeal of Exterminating 'Others': German Workers and the Limits of Resistance," in Michael Geyer and John W. Boyer (eds.), *Resistance against the Third Reich* (Chicago: University of

Chicago Press, 1994), 53–74; "War as Work: Aspects of Soldiering in Twentieth-Century Wars," in Lüdtke and Bernd Weisbrod (eds.), *No Man's Land of Violence: Extreme Wars in the 20th Century* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006), 127–51; Fitzpatrick and Lüdtke, "Energizing the Everyday." Several of Lüdtke's most challenging essays remain untranslated: "'Formierung der Massen' oder Mitmachen und Hinnehmen? 'Alltagsgeschichte' und Faschismusanalyse," in Heide Gerstenberger and Dorothie Schmidt (eds.), *Normalität oder Normalisierung? Geschichtswerkstätten und Faschismusanalyse* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1987), 15–34; "Funktionseliten: Täter, Mit-Täter, Opfer? Zu den Bedingungen des deutschen Faschismus," in Lüdtke (ed.), *Herrschaft als soziale Praxis. Historische und sozialanthropologische Studien* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1991), 559–90; "'Ehre der Arbeit': Industriearbeiter und Macht der Symbole. Zur Reichweite symbolischer Orientierung im Nationalsozialismus," in Lüdtke, *Eigen-Sinn. Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis zu den Faschismus* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse, 1993), 283–350. The quoted sentences are taken from one of Lüdtke's very earliest statements on the topic: "Zur Einleitung," *Sozialwissenschaftliche Informationen für Unterricht und Studium (SOWI)*, 6 (1977), 147. For general commentaries: Geoff Eley, "Labor History, Social History, *Alltagsgeschichte*: Experience, Culture, and the Politics of the Everyday—A New Direction for German Social History?" *Journal of Modern History*, 61:2 (1989), 297–343; David F. Crew, "*Alltagsgeschichte*: A New Social History 'From Below'?" *Central European History*, 22: 3/4 (1989), 394–407.

31. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence*, 239.
32. See especially Andrew Stuart Bergerson, *Ordinary Germans in Extraordinary Times: The Nazi Revolution in Hildesheim* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2004); Shelley Baranowski, *Strength Through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Moritz Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin: Self and Society from Weimar to the Wall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 105–84; Ulrich Herbert, "'Die guten und die schlechten Zeiten': Überlegungen zur diachronen Analyze lebensgeschichtlicher Interviews," in Lutz Niethammer et al. (eds.), *"Die Jahre weiss man nicht, wo man die heute hinsetzen soll": Faschismuserfahrungen im Ruhrgebiet* (Berlin: J. H. W. Dietz, 1983), 67–96.
33. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 243.
34. Dennis Sweeney, in Andrew Stuart Bergerson, Elissa Mailänder Koslov, Gideon Reuveni, Paul Steege, and Dennis Sweeney, "Forum: Everyday Life in Nazi Germany," *German History*, 27:4 (2009), 575–6.
35. Ibid., 579.

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