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A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE:
FASCIST CULTURE, LABOR, AND POLICING AT THE
1942 UNIVERSAL EXPOSITION OF ROME

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GREGORY D. MALANDRUCCO

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NOTES ON USAGE

Fascism (with capital F) versus fascism (with lower case f): the rule applied here is that “Fascism” references specifically fascism in Italy, such as in the form of the regime or Italian Fascist ideology; “fascism” on the other hand references its use as a category or in non-Italian national or international contexts. Quotations including the word fascism however remain true to the original authors usage.

The *Esposizione Universale di Roma*, the Universal Exposition, E 42, the Roman World’s Fair of 1942, et al. are used interchangeably to reference the 1942 World’s Fair of Rome, while the EUR (or EUR-city) is used to connote the new city built by the Fascists as the site of the 1942 World’s Fair.

Introduction

“We are at war, at war with the universal abstractions of anti-fascist culture, which lacks the essential characteristics of our race and is spiritually inferior... Fascism must and will create an epoch with its own mentality, its own art, and its own culture.”¹

Roberto Forges Davanzati, 1926

During the bloody but victorious year XV of the Fascist Revolution, the Italian regime went public with its plan to hold an international exhibition in Rome during 1942.² According to the early publicity in 1936, the world’s fair event would be a celebration of year XX, definitively commemorating the Black Shirts’ March on Rome and the Fascist ascendancy to power in 1922. The announcement of the universal exposition came at the end of a year in which Italy claimed victory in its brutal Ethiopia campaign while continuing to support Franco’s reactionary forces in the Spanish Civil War.³ At the 1942 World’s Fair of Rome, the Italy of corporatism, autarky, and

¹ Roberto Forges Davanzati is quoted in Philip V. Cannistraro (Jul. - Oct. 1972). “Mussolini’s Cultural Revolution: Fascist or Nationalist?” *Journal of Contemporary History* 7 (3/4): 115-139.

² The following is a small sample of the many news articles that announced the E 42 to the Italian public: see “Le basi organizzative dell’Esposizione universale di Roma,” *L’Ambrosiano* (15 December 1936): 1; “L’Esposizione universale di Roma,” *La Voce del Popolo*, (15 December 1936): 3; “L’Esposizione,” *Giornale D’Italia*, (6 December 1936): 2; “Il Duce stabilisce che l’Esposizione Universale sorga nella zona delle Tre Fontane,” *Il Messaggero*, (16 December 1936): 1.

³ As many historians have noted, this period of “high fascism” can be considered an epoch at least slightly apart from those preceding it. Italy’s 1936 imperial conquest in Ethiopia and other coterminous events, such as the League of Nations embargo, a second Depression-era economic crisis, new types of autarkic discourse and practice, ever-closer ties to the Nazi state, and participation in the Spanish Civil War signaled new directions in both discourses and practices. I would maintain that in the context of said events, the regime began to strengthen or “totalize” its power at home while practicing a new Fascist internationalism abroad. The period

now Empire was to achieve spatial representation for an estimated 20 million visitors, a remarkable opportunity to communicate Fascism's alternative ethos before a global audience.

By investigating the Fascist system of representation at the international exhibition, this dissertation seeks to critically reveal the governing ideology of the Fascist state, and importantly, its impact on subjectivities during the period 1936 to 1943. Through a nuanced examination of extensive plans for the "Exposition 42" or E 42, this study attempts to recover Fascism's assertion of a break with not only past universal exhibitions, but also with the very milieu those earlier exhibitions sought to recreate. World's fairs had long been celebrations of the progress of man and the wonderments of universalizing industrial civilization.⁴ These periodic extended events of limited duration provided a spatial and temporal frame for self-reflection as well as a laboratory in which globalized futures were envisaged in the form of commodities.⁵ Karl Marx perceived this in the earliest Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851, calling it "striking proof of the concentrated power with which modern large-scale industry is everywhere demolishing national barriers and increasingly blurring local peculiarities of production, society and national character among all peoples."⁶ With Fascism pitched as a revolt against a sickly global system, the

after 1935 is also considered that in which Italy successfully consolidated totalitarian rule.

⁴ As Jeffrey A. Auerbach has written, the British Royal Society of Arts, which had planned the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851, was founded in 1753 as "The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Manufactures, Commerce, and Arts." Its mission was to increase industrial growth through competition. See Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven 1999): 14-15.

⁵ See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge 1987): 264-5.

⁶ For more by Karl Marx on the Crystal Palace Exhibition, see "Review, May to October 1850," in *Marx and Engels, Collected Works, Volume 10* (London 1978): 499-500. For Marx, the 1851 Exhibition was a "great world congress of products and producers," an attempt by the bourgeoisie to generate new outlets for commodity demand in order to overcome the recent crisis of overproduction that began in 1845.

homogenizing modernity on display at prior exhibitions was instead seen as an inadequate representation for the Roman World's Fair. Rather than another fair of liberalism and globalism, which were said to be altogether inadequate to the specificities of the Italian context,⁷ the Fascists were keen on holding a fair that represented corporatism, a "third way" productivism mobilized as a remedy for the "ills" of both laissez-faire capitalism and communism.⁸ Corporatism, in which the state promised to manage the economy to resolve crises and social antagonisms engendered by the free market, claimed as its fount cultural origins deep in the pre-industrial world.⁹ This is especially so after 1935, as the state was increasingly directed toward economic self-reliance, a stratagem that involved positioning the Fascist economy in opposition to global capitalism's "blurring" of local differences, as I will show. Corporatism would instead be revealed at the E 42 in "hybrid" forms designed to evoke an "alternative" productivist modernity. In this way we shall see that Fascism claimed to be pursuing its own form of modernity in which culturally bounded authoritarian traditions were shown to be fundamental to a specific Fascist universality, emanating from Rome once more.

⁷ See for example pages 613 and 614 in Giuseppe Bottai (Jul. 1935). "Corporate State and N.R.A." *Foreign Affairs* 13 (4): 612-624. This source is addressed in greater detail in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

⁸ For more on aesthetic representations of the "third way," see Ruth Ben-Ghiat (April 1996). "Italian Fascism and the Aesthetics of the 'Third Way,'" *Journal of Contemporary History* 31 (2): Page 293. See also Alexander De Grand, *Italian Fascism: Its Origins & Development* (Lincoln 1982): 81-84.

⁹ See page 1251 in Mabel Berezin (March 1994). "Cultural Form and Political Meaning: State-subsidized Theater, Ideology, and the Language of Style in Fascist Italy," *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (5): 1237-1286. Though the corporative framework was first formed in 1927, the development of corporations did not become reality until after 1933. Stanley Payne references the origins of corporatism in ancient Rome. See his *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison, WI 1995), 38-39. For a thorough recapitulation of corporatism and its origins, see pages 150 and 151 in Franklin Hugh Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism: The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906-1934*.

Thematically, this dissertation first examines the Fascist synthesis of symbolic productivism and anti-modernism in World's Fair exhibits, in mass architectural projects, and in the constitution of a new laboring subjectivity developed around the construction of the massive EUR city in "record time."¹⁰ Subsequent chapters move "top-down" from worker subjectivity to an analysis of policing as a system of representation at the World's Fair, and into the "everyday" practices of a variety of individuals within the space of the E 42 site. This approach provides for a more complete look at the "imaginative worlds" that Fascism helped to fashion, while offering new insights into Fascist subjectivization.¹¹ While constructing the EUR city and planning the Fair provided new opportunities for indicating Fascism's transformative nature, Fascist aims regularly encountered limits and resistances when confronted by real workers and enforcers. At the same time, I argue that Fascist structures spawned specific forms of resistance, so that

¹⁰ When the E 42 was first announced in 1936, the regime boasted that the World's Fair site would be fully constructed in less than half the time typically required by other countries. See footnote 20 below for more information on this claim.

¹¹ See pages 10 and 11 in Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Staging Fascism: 18 BL and the Theater of Masses for Masses* (Stanford 1996). Schnapp's work is critical of the "top-down" approach to analysis of Fascist culture. Schnapp argues that by concentrating on the regime's realization of "consensus," much of the literature on Fascism from the prior generation had been commonly "reduced to the role of documentation, confirming or confuting the intent of a given policy initiative." He notes that these "unified, top-down perspective[s] on fascist culture" were limiting in that they did not enter into the "imaginative worlds" that Fascist policy created. Because "fascism required an aesthetic overproduction – a surfeit of signs, images and slogans – in order to compensate for its unstable ideological core," Schnapp advocates for the use of a "broader set of methodological tools," needed for examining the regime's aesthetic productions from a "lateral perspective." To reach more expansive conclusions about Italian Fascist culture, Schnapp writes that the task of historians must be twofold: firstly, "to formulate alternate classification schemes and periodizations" that help to explain the ease with which artists and authors drifted from left to right and back again in the first half of the twentieth century, and secondly, to develop an understanding of why so many individuals adopted the regime's call to forging an authentic new Fascist culture. My dissertation attempts to achieve a "lateral perspective" on Fascist culture and aesthetics.

“everyday resistance” as a response was produced and constrained by the conditions Fascism itself had generated. In the context of this work, Fascist hypostatization of difference is shown to have only appeared to comprise freedom from the vicissitudes of the world economy, a key point that I further develop throughout this dissertation and expand upon in the Conclusion.

Before returning to the critical theme of Fascist difference, let us first review some general information on the Universal Exposition to provide a sense of scale to one of the Fascist regime’s most ambitious endeavors. As the physical substantiation of Fascist ideology, the *Esposizione Universale di Roma* was to be the greatest “carnival” of form and function in human history. Weeks before the World’s Fair was publicly announced, the Italian Fascist regime had selected a grassy plain five kilometers beyond Rome’s ancient fortifying Aurelian Walls as the site for the new “EUR” city. The 400-hectare plain was roughly halfway between the Roman hills of the ancient city and Ostia, where the Tiber’s yellow, sedimented waters empty into the Tyrrhenian Sea.¹² The site for the World’s Fair would fulfill Mussolini’s wish to “return Rome to the sea” in yet another appropriation of Italy’s pre-modern tradition, this one pointing toward the realization of an alternative Fascist universal emanating once again from Rome. Before the regime could reconsecrate its pre-modern path to the sea, an act of rapid “modernization” was required; in 1937 the poor peasants and shepherds who sparsely populated this land were swiftly expropriated by the Fascist state.¹³ On this vast Roman plain, a massive permanent Fascist city

¹² The terrain of the E 42 site beginning on the southern bank of the Tiber on an alluvial plain that quickly gives way to an intermediate zone, where the soil consists of clay with peat moss (*sphagnum*).

¹³ For more on E 42 related expropriations carried out from 1937 through 1944, see *ACS, E42, Buste 63, 100-106; 111; 178-179; Busta 314, Fascicolo 5013*. For documents produced around lawsuits that were filed by individuals to contest the state’s land expropriations, see *ACS, E42, Buste 107-108*. For plans to expropriate the land, including maps of land plots, see *ACS,*

would be built to contain “an amusement complex among the newest and most congenial that can possibly be contrived.”¹⁴ The Exhibition meanwhile would feature an “Olympiad of Civilizations,” designed to incorporate all nations with “accurate” representations of their material resources, cultures, religions, and activities, important for juxtaposing representations of Italy with other nations, and for demonstrating Italy’s cultural superiority. This competition would provide a representation of culture adequate to a Fascist alternative universality in which organic, pre-modern differences would reign everywhere, a world of difference.

The new modern “eternal” EUR city built for the Fair would contain several permanent structures, *piazze*, and over 30 kilometers of new road.¹⁵ To symbolize Fascism’s break with universal modernism, EUR architects hybridized the rectilinear façades and sharp edges of rationalism with “spiritually Roman” arches and columns, creating Fascist renditions of ancient structures, such as the Coliseum and the Pantheon. Built with Italian commodities like marble, travertine, and pozzolana, the EUR was also a city of autarky, with cultural difference in the objective realm a potential boon to domestic production and employment. A metallic arch, to

E42, Busta 340, Fascicoli 5808-5814, and 5817. Peasants were paid a cut rate of less than 4 Italian *lira* per hectare, roughly equivalent to \$4 USD per hectare in 2015. Yet, not all of the land destined for the E 42 was in such a state of “disuse” as the regime’s rhetoric would suggest. More specifically, plots of land closer to the Tiber River tended to be more developed. Two of the landholders with larger plots joined together in 1926 to privately develop a water main that would allow for the construction of new farms that grew grain and raised cows. The irrigation system increased the value of the land, and made the terrain newly attractive to manufacturing, particularly on the alluvial plain closest to the Tiber, where a series of workshops and factories had recently formed. One glassworks factory had grown to 680 workers. The glassworks factory owners were concerned about the prospect of having to move the factory elsewhere, a sentiment grounded in the potential problems that 680 newly unemployed workers would have for the regime.

¹⁴ The quote is attributed to Giuseppe Bottai. See pages 11 to 16 in Luigi Di Majo and Italo Insolera, *L’EUR e Roma dagli anni trenta al duemila* (Bari 1986).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

reach 170 meters in height and 330 meters of maximum width, was planned for the entrance to the EUR.¹⁶ Made in Italy, entirely from Italian materials, the arch was to exemplify Italy's autarkic, economic self-determination, always in the process of being realized.¹⁷ To "compete with the massive structures in embellishing the landscape," more than 100 hectares of the city were to be set aside for parks in which 4 million plants and flowers, 1.6 million hedges, and 16,000 trees were to be planted. The EUR-city would be connected from Rome's center by a "high speed" subway, with the potential to carry more than 30,000 passengers per hour the eleven kilometers to the World's Fair.¹⁸ The Fair was to even include on-site reconstructions of Mussolini's birth home and Jerusalem's ancient Holy Sepulchre.¹⁹ All of this was to be planned

¹⁶ P.A. Pellecchia, "Rapida corsa da Piazza Venezia alla zona dell' Esposizione," *Il Popolo di Roma*, 11 March 1939, 6. The planned E 42 arch is highly reminiscent of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, only it featured in plans for the Exposition at least 10 years before the Gateway Arch had even won the architectural competition for a St. Louis waterfront monument in 1947. To give a visual sense of the arch planned for EUR, the Gateway Arch is 192 meters maximum height and 192 meters maximum width. While the E 42 arch had a much broader span than the Gateway Arch, the latter was however built to carry people to its apex.

¹⁷ For the article that explains the arch and its intended statement, see "Il Duce all Città Universitaria: acclamato da goliardi e maestranze," *Il Corriere della Sera*, 11 April 1939, 1.

¹⁸ The train would cover this distance, (from the new train station in Rome's center, Stazione di Termini, to the EUR site), in an estimated 10 minutes with a top speed of 80 km/h. For exact details of the train's capabilities, see; "Le Attrattive dell'E. 42 e l'organizzazione dei trasporti," *Il Popolo di Roma*, 25 July 1939: 4; "Visita al Cantiere dell' E. 42," *Il Popolo di Roma*, 8 September 1939: 4; also, P.A. Pellecchia, "Rapida corsa da Piazza Venezia alla zona dell' Esposizione."

¹⁹ See Elio Zorzi, "L'E.42 e il Santo Sepolcro: La Grande Esposizione Conterra il Progetto per una eventuale ricostruzione della sacra basilica di Gerusalemme," *Corriere Della Sera*, 15 March 1940: 3. According to the article, Italy had been debating the issue of whether to rebuild the sacred site in Jerusalem (where it is claimed that Jesus Christ's body lies) ever since a 1934 newspaper article initiated the discussion. Italian architects working alongside the Catholic Church had planned to destroy the original site and build a new monument in its place; though a drastic step, it was considered necessary after various natural disasters had battered the site for centuries. Thus, the reconstruction of the Holy Sepulchre at the Exposition was to be firm

and fully constructed in less than half the time typically required to plan and build worlds fairs in other countries.²⁰ From an ideological perspective, the new EUR city was thus built as a defiant statement on material compulsion as well as a critique of growing homogeneity and decaying rootedness in modernity, as I will document here. Though the Exhibition was eventually canceled with mounting war losses during the ungodly year of 1942, Italian workers nearly completed the city built for the Fair, which today constitutes the core of Rome's EUR district. Thus, long after the 1942 World's Fair had come and gone, the EUR-city would continue to provide lasting evidence of the intrinsic cultural relation between ancient Rome and modern Fascist *italianità* (Italianness).

More than ephemeral this dissertation shows that Italian cultural difference at the E 42 represented the basis of Fascism's claim to a radical break with the negative, homogenizing tendencies of modern industrial society.²¹ Fascist thinkers saw the new relations between individuals and society, taking shape in the production and distribution of labor and material wealth, as flattening cultural difference and erasing tradition.²² Cultural difference, based on

evidence of the Italy's capacity for rebuilding the site in Jerusalem. See also *ACS, E42, Busta 1012, Fascicolo 9645*.

²⁰ Cini notes in 1940 that the exposition plans of Barcelona and Seville took 16 years to finally consummate (in 1929), while the expositions at Brussels and Paris took 11 and 10 years, respectively. See Vittorio Cini, "Revision of the 'Programma di Massima' from 1937," December 1940, page 15, published in *E 42: L'Esposizione Universale di Roma; Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Tullio Gregory and Achille Tartaro, eds. (Venezia 1987): 166-170.

²¹ "What they criticized in capitalism was not its exploitation but its materialism, its indifference to the nation, its inability to stir souls," writes Robert O. Paxton. "More deeply, fascists rejected the notion that economic forces are the prime movers of history." See page 10 in Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York 2004). On this point, see also Zeev Sternhell's introduction to *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*.

²² A similar current also existed in Nazi Germany. Moishe Postone has characterized Nazism as a revolutionary struggle against the abstraction of liberalism. In the interwar period,

hand-selected pre-modern traditions, such as “ancient Roman” values, was a medium through which the Fascist regime projected anti-democratic, hierarchical social relations onto the populace as the proper, authentic mode of Italian being.

Yet Fascism, it is commonly argued, was a thoroughly homogenizing force, both domestically and overseas in fulfilling its colonial expansionist aims.²³ This position however requires further nuancing. Zeev Sternhell, for one argues that “Fascism was anti-materialism in its clearest form” while simultaneously holding to the view that under Fascism, “Anything that

liberalism became increasingly interlinked with economic crisis. The Nazis directly associated the Jews as the corporeal manifestation of the “mysteriously intangible, abstract and universal” nature of capitalism. In effect, notes Postone, “the abstract domination of capital, which [...] caught people in a web of dynamic forces they could not understand, became perceived as the domination of International Jewry.” The Jews were seen as “rootless, international and abstract” at a time when Nazism was an anti-capitalist movement with a “hatred of the abstract.” The Nazi association of the Jews with capital “became a fatal association.” See Moishe Postone (Winter 1980). “Anti-Semitism and National Socialism: Notes on the German Reaction to ‘Holocaust,’” *New German Critique* 19 (Special Issue 1: Germans and Jews): 97-115. *New German Critique*, 19, 1 (Winter 1980), 97-115.

²³ See for example, page 12 in Zeev Sternhell’s introduction to *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*. See also page 130 in Philip V. Cannistraro, “Mussolini’s Cultural Revolution: Fascist or Nationalist?” Cannistraro makes the argument that Italy suppressed internal difference. The Fascist regime was however not devoted to erasing all cultural difference. In its fight against counterparts in Washington and Moscow, the Italian Fascists alluded to the dangers of growing homogeneity in modern society. Thus, Fascism’s permissiveness toward *select* cultural differences fit its anti-materialist, anti-Enlightenment worldview. One example can be found in 1927 Italy when the regime made Frosinone the capital and the namesake of a new province that was being carved out of two older historical provinces. At the same time in 1927, the regime moved to officially create and recognize a new dialect and ethnicity, called *Ciocciari*. The Fascists thereafter began to celebrate this new identity through folklore. For the legal code announcing the formation of the Province of Frosinone in 1927, see Fascist law, *R.D.L. 2 gennaio 1927, n. 1 - Riordinamento delle circoscrizioni provinciali* [http://it.wikisource.org/wiki/R.D.L. 2 gennaio 1927, n. 1 - Riordinamento delle circoscrizioni provinciali](http://it.wikisource.org/wiki/R.D.L._2_gennaio_1927,_n._1_-_Riordinamento_delle_circoscrizioni_provinciali) <January 23, 2015>

constituted a factor of diversity was to be eliminated.”²⁴ Sternhell’s own argument thus holds the basis of showing the centrality of difference (“anti-”) within fascist ideology. Taking this “anti-materialism” one step further, this dissertation will show how the Italian Fascist state mounted ideological and economic opposition through a series of “primordial” cultural forms. Thus, at the same time that Fascists attempted to crush difference, they also generated new realms of difference and mobilized them for political purposes. As this project aims to show, Fascist thinkers disseminated representations of Italian cultural difference to sustain and strengthen a sense of “rupture” with a universalizing global system in crisis.

At the core of this break with an encroaching modernity was the sense that pre-modern cultural difference and concrete social relations were being superseded by international abstraction and a globalizing homogeneity. “In its essence,” Sternhell writes, “Fascist thought was a rejection of the value known in the culture of the time as materialism,” namely the “rejection of the rationalistic, individualistic, and utilitarian heritage” of the Enlightenment.²⁵ Embedded in this discourse of the “materialist” threat to Italian culture was a specific critique of capitalism, what Sternhell calls Fascism’s “anti-materialistic and anti-rationalistic revision of Marxism.”²⁶ The critique of modernity made from the standpoint of cultural difference was one that allowed for the structure of society to remain in place, as several commentators have noted. As Robert Paxton writes, “While [fascists] denounced speculative international finance (along

²⁴ See page 12 in Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*.

²⁵ See page 7 in Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*. In instances in the E 42 documents, the Fascists refer to western capitalism and eastern bolshevism as “enlightenment” ideologies or politics emanating from “1789.”

²⁶ See page 5 in Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945* (Madison 1995).

with all other forms of internationalism, cosmopolitanism, or globalization—capitalist as well as socialist) they respected the property of national producers, who were to form the social base of the reinvigorated nation.”²⁷ Similarly, Sternhell argues, “The Fascist revolution sought to change the nature of the relationships between the individual and the collectivity without destroying the impetus of economic activity—the profit motive or its foundation—private property, or its necessary framework—the market economy.”²⁸ Why then did the Fascist regime attempt to “modernize” and build prosperity with “anti-materialist” and even anti-capitalist discourses at the center of its worldview? How could the Italian Fascist regime, with its strong “anti-materialism,” persist and thrive in a market economy?

Though the regime mobilized oppositions toward “the universal” at the E 42, it also claimed to be creating a specific form of universality in its place, an “alternative” productivist modernity in which cultural difference served as its standpoint of critique. As I show in the following chapters, the Fascist regime hybridized culturally “rooted” and modern forms into the formation of “Italian” objects. Culturalist is the term I use to describe Fascism’s architects and artists whom mobilized culture and difference, beginning in the late 1920s.²⁹ Though without

²⁷ Please refer to page 10 in Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*. What interwar fascists “criticized in capitalism was not its exploitation but its materialism, its indifference to the nation, its inability to stir souls,” writes Robert Paxton. “More deeply, fascists rejected the notion that economic forces are the prime movers of history.”

²⁸ Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*, 7.

²⁹ Though not a widely used term during the Fascist *ventennio*, artist P.M. Bardi does use the term “*culturalista*” in his critique of powerful regime architect Marcello Piacentini, as analyzed further in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Dennis P. Doordan traces disputes surrounding cultural inflection in Fascist architecture to debates around the “Italianness” of Novecento architecture during the 1920s. See page 44 in Doordan, *Building Modern Italy: Italian Architecture, 1914-1936* (New York 1988).

direct reference to Fascism, recent scholarship on the term “culturalist” can prove useful for establishing its significance in a preliminary way. Arjun Appadurai for one describes culturalist political movements as deliberately mobilizing cultural material to “articulate the boundary of difference.”³⁰ Building upon this current usage with Sternhell’s thesis on fascist “anti-materialism,” it can be said that the regime’s “culturalist anti-materialism” formed the basis of Fascism’s claim to a radical break with the growing world of abstraction and homogeneity.³¹ Fascism and other movements of this ilk posit “culture” as the apparent “radical other” to the commodity form’s universalizing, impersonal, homogenizing character.³² Cultural difference, articulated in the form of distinct commodities—consumer goods that objectify cultural specificities—maintained in place the market economy while critiquing aspects of capitalist materialism from the perspective of an anti-global ideology.³³ Culturalist “anti-materialism,”

³⁰ See for example Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, pages 12-16. Other theorists (such as Marcel Mauss, Benjamin, and Žižek) have examined the rise of the mobilization of culture as a category during the interwar period as a reflection for the loss of the interpersonal social relations of a precapitalist time, the loss of objective aura (which Benjamin sees as progressive), or “the twentieth century desire for the real.” See Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Production,” *Illuminations*. Translated by Harry Zohn (New York 1968): 217-251; the conclusion to Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: the Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Translated by W.D. Halls (London 2000); and Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London 1997).

³¹ This section is influenced by William H. Sewell’s recent distinction between “culture as concept” and culture(s) as referencing a “bounded set of beliefs and practices.” Please refer to Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago 2005): 175-195.

³² Culturalist anti-materialism is a response to real change in society as well as new modes of domination. However, it ultimately “misrecognizes” what drives this change and therefore exactly how this historically specific form of domination is to be overcome. The language here is indebted to Andrew Sartori’s description and application of the concept of “misrecognition” in his *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital*.

³³ Hardt and Negri ground the late-capitalist notion of difference within postmodernist conceptions of hybridity and play, which they argue are applied to increase commodification and

expressed in commodities, thus at the same time reconstituted market relations within the existing hierarchical stratification of Italian society.³⁴ In practice, under the direction and guidance of newly developed forms of technical power adequate to capitalist society,³⁵ the form of appearance of “culturalist anti-materialism” was itself culturalist materialism.³⁶

Thus, while culturalism was an explicit rejection of the homogeneity Fascism had associated with the free market and materialism, it was directly implicated in the realization of Italian autarky. With Fascism’s economic program of autarky, or economic “self-determination,” it was necessary to recreate symbols and systems of representation constitutive of particularity in

corporate profitability. See the chapter titled “Symptoms of Passage,” beginning on page 137 in *Empire* (Cambridge and London 2000).

³⁴ See page 8 in Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*.

³⁵ In regard to this claim, I would add that Moishe Postone’s reinterpretation of Karl Marx’s mature work as a theory of modern society provides us with powerful new tools for reading not only Marx, but Foucault as well. See Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx’s Critical Theory* (New York and Cambridge 1993).

³⁶ In fact, one might even add that not only does the commodity form constitute the possibility for culturalist anti-materialism, but that such an ideology is itself inseparable from the ongoing proliferation of the commodity form. This notion is influenced by György Lukács’ work on the commodity as the dominant form in modern capitalist society: it constitutes that very society, penetrating society “in all its aspects” and remolding it “in its own image.” See the “Reification Essay” in Lukács *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge 1971). It is also an application of Fredric Jameson’s theory that the commodity form in late capitalism has obliterated previously impenetrable boundaries like nature and the unconscious. The “nature” component to Jameson’s claim is more straightforward: it points to commodification of social relations in societies that were previously pre-capitalist, such as third world agricultural enclaves, leading to the integration of such peoples into the dominant society through commodity exchange. Perhaps the statement about the unconscious is the more powerful one. If the unconscious of individuals – or that which structures an individual’s actions, desires, etc. but of which the individual is either unaware or deliberately represses to function in society – has become “colonized” by the commodity, then the commodity comes to dominate libidinal desires, as evidenced by postmodernist art, in ways in which the individual is not consciously aware. See Jameson (September 1984). “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” *New Left Review* 146: 53-92.

ways that were commensurate with the market objective of increasing domestic production. The “autarkic market” necessitated the replacement of commodities previously acquired through international trade with goods manufactured in Italy, from Italian materials. Italian labor power, available on the cheap and in excess supply, was likewise a domestic commodity befitting the objectives of autarky.³⁷ Cultural difference found its productive realization in the form of consumer preference for more domestic commodities and Italian labor power, ensuring a domestic market and an Italian accumulation of wealth. In a period of generally more state-centric capital control, mobilizing “cultural difference” became tied to an anti-internationalist, “anti-capitalist” method of generating domestic industry.³⁸ The regime’s desire for permanence, this very concreteness as represented by the autarkic conception of domestic production, took the substance of “authentic” traditions in the struggle against the ephemerality of capitalist time.

³⁷ See page 61 in Jon Cohen and Giovanni Federico, *The Growth of the Italian Economy, 1820-1960* (Cambridge 2001). The supply of unskilled workers was “very high, if not infinite, for much of Italy’s first century,” write Cohen and Federico, adding that skilled labor was typically in demand.

³⁸ Post-1929, export-led development became difficult as every nation was affected by the economic crisis of the interwar period. The unrestricted international trade of the pre-World War One period had reached its end by the 1920s (despite attempts to restart this system after 1919), marshaling the end of the free movement of labor and capital. In some countries, the unit value of exports fell more than 50 percent, resulting in the loss of purchasing power. Import substitution industrialization (ISI) policies began to take hold in the 1930s, but many nations did not transition to ISI policy until the 1940s and 50s. The 1930s were not a “universal” turning point to ISI so to speak, but the decade did mark a transition toward state-control of national economies. Internationally, the 1930s was a period of growth after the collapse of 1929, with growth of domestic production and consumption fostered by non-tradables like education and construction projects. By the mid-1950s, the transition from the export-led model to the ISI model was complete just about everywhere in the world. See Victor Bulmer-Thomas “Latin American Economies, 1929-1939” and Rosemary Thorp “Latin American Economies, 1939-1950” in *Latin America: Economy and Society since 1930*. Leslie Bethell, editor. (Cambridge 1998).

Were these Italian Fascist representations of cultural difference not a chauvinistic variation of the racism typically associated with fascism? In Fascist Italy, even in its most explicitly racist discourses,³⁹ the term “race” points to a bricolage of “cultural” attributes rather than a biological notion of racial difference.⁴⁰ As Cannistraro has explained, the Fascist state assembled “a confused mixture of archaeological, linguistic, and anthropological evidence” in propagating the myth “that Italians were descended from a pure ‘Italic race.’”⁴¹ Ruth Ben-Ghiat has alluded to a similar phenomenon, writing that “The word race (*razza*) had long been used in Italian as a synonym for people (*popolo*), nation (*nazione*), and stock (*stirpe*).”⁴² Even after 1938, when the regime took on Nazi-like racialist discourses, as in critiques of “Jewish” modernism,⁴³ “Slippage between the terms *race* and *stock* was particularly common.”⁴⁴ While

³⁹ For example, the discourses employed against Abyssinians during the subjugation of East Africa or as in its approach to the Jews after the regime’s Racial Laws were passed in 1938.

⁴⁰ See pages 153 to 157 in Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley 2001). “There were many ways to be racist in fascist Italy, and not all of them implied the embrace of anti-Semitic sentiments.” For a study of Italian Fascist intellectual writings and policies on race specifically, see Aaron Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy* (London 2002).

⁴¹ See Philip V. Cannistraro, “Mussolini’s Cultural Revolution: Fascist or Nationalist?”

⁴² Refer to pages 153 to 157 in Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945*. “The lability of the word *race*,” adds Ben-Ghiat, “allowed intellectuals who may not have been anti-Semites to take part in the regime’s racist subculture and gain credit for toeing the line.”

⁴³ For more on the so-called “Judaification and Bolshevization” of Italian art through the influences of modernism, see “Eravamo soli...,” *Il Regime Fascista*. 25 August 1938. For more on the connection between the fascist critique of universal abstraction (i.e. modernism) and anti-Semitism, see Moishe Postone, “Anti-Semitism and National Socialism: Notes on the German Reaction to ‘Holocaust.’”

⁴⁴ See Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945*: 153-157. Ben-Ghiat highlights examples after the passing of the 1938 Race Laws in which Italian Fascist “folklorists, demographers, and social welfare experts used [race] in reference to campaigns to increase the population and protect popular traditions.”

the Fascists would celebrate pre-modern “differences” as the basis of Italian specificity, they were chauvinistic in their assessment that they had reference to the most distinguished tradition.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, ontological views on culture and history as determined by place could perform some of the same functions as theories of racial difference. Though not bearing the full array of pseudo-biological determinations as Nazism, Fascism’s appropriation and mobilization of this “unique” past was ultimately concretized in blood, war, and domination.

To provide for a more complete look at the reach of Fascism’s politics of domination, this dissertation moves “top-down” from anti-modern aesthetic forms to policing as a system of representation at the World’s Fair, and on to “everyday” practices within the space of the E 42 site. This dissertation is based principally upon sources held in the “E 42” fonds at the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* in Rome. The archive holds more than 15,000 *fascicoli* created between 1935 and the late 1950s, an exceptional collection that illuminates everything from the highest reaches of intellectual and aesthetic production in Fascist Italy to the everyday musings of a day laborer over the cost of bread.⁴⁶ This in-depth, variegated examination of the E 42 archive yields new insights into the regime’s self-representation of its present and its idealized future. The richness of the documentation used in this dissertation allows me to both engage the literature on Fascist representation while going beyond current historiographical emphases to recover the

⁴⁵ Ibid. Even after the regime officially sanctioned racism after 1937, Italians took pride in “the delineation of a peculiarly ‘Italian’ brand of racial thought, which conceived of race as a mostly cultural and spiritual construct,” states Ben-Ghiat. See also page 5 in Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*. The Italian regime’s relationship to the terms race and culture are made especially evident when comparing Nazi German and Fascist Italian approaches to differences in their midst.⁴⁵ “Racial determinism was not present in all varieties of fascism,” argues Sternhell. “Racism was thus not a necessary condition for the existence of fascism; on the contrary, it was a factor of Fascist eclecticism.”

⁴⁶ ACS, E42, Busta 56, Fascicolo 271.

mature Fascist approaches to statehood, ideology, fantasy, *fiesta*, labor, and security. In this vein, the chapters that constitute this dissertation move “top-down” from the regime’s intellectual and cultural productions into histories of the “everyday.”

My first chapter, “Corporatism as Otherness: Anti-Modern Fascist Productivism in the Roman Exhibition of 1942,” examines the EUR Agency Propaganda Division’s plans for some of the numerous Fascist exhibits scheduled for the World’s Fair. In this endeavor, Italy’s most venerated intellectuals were placed on committees wherein they collaborated with the Fascist state to draw up the extensive plans for this “amusement park” of Fascist ideology. All together, Italy’s many World’s Fair exhibits represented a synthesis of modern productivism and pre-modern cultural essence as symbolic of corporatism. More than any other exhibit, the massive Exhibit of Italian Folklore (or as the regime would prefer, “Exhibit of Popular Traditions”) dealt explicitly with forming a unity out of “pre-modern” peasant culture within Italy. I show that folklorists and Romanists synthesized divergent pre-modern “traditions” into a unity of “anti-modern” cultures, in which the persistence of concrete particularities were shown as representative of Fascist universality. The chapter concludes with an analysis of EUR Agency President Vittorio Cini’s wartime revisions of his original Exhibition plans for an “Olympiad of Civilization.” In what way would the Fascist vision for a “World of Difference” be reimaged for a post-war era in which Fascism was victorious? In effect, Cini at that time further expands on earlier plans to make the exhibits into markers of Fascist corporatism’s break with utilitarianism and Enlightenment reason emanating from England and France.

In Chapter 2, “Fascism’s Alternative Modernity: Universalism, Autarky, and Aesthetic Culturalism at the Great Rome Exposition of ’42,” I examine the many permanent structures designed and built for the World’s Fair. I show that through a mix of sharp rectilinear façades

and Romanesque statues, columns, and arches, E 42 architects sought to hybridize modernist and rationalist architecture with a spiritual Roman style to achieve an evocation of Ancient Roman design. The aesthetic direction in architecture employed by the regime for its 1942 Universal Exhibition of Rome was considered an “ideal” testament to Italian Fascism’s own goal of being universally reproducible while simultaneously fixed and locally distinct. I argue that Italian Fascists of the late 1930s claimed that Italy’s cultural rootedness in ancient Imperial Rome provided the basis for the regime’s “third way” hybridization of universal modernism—imbued with meaning and irreducible Italian difference. In the conclusion of Chapter 2, I develop the concept of Fascist ‘*past-Modernism*’ to further explain this unique aesthetic. I arrive at the use of this term after conducting a comparison of the late 1930s EUR aesthetic and postmodernism of the 1970s and 80s, as both shared many of the same criticisms of universal modernism. Through this comparison I suggest that Fascist culturalism evoked a “turning back” toward a past in which labor and social relations were concrete and deferential in nature. The Fascists, I maintain, appropriated these pre-modern, traditional forms in reaction to the unsavory features of valorization.

Attempts to “Italianize” contemporary international trends were not restricted to the aesthetic sphere and nor was the aesthetic sphere limited to art in any traditional sense. In chapter 3, “Fascism’s Authentic Laboring Subject and the 1942 Universal Exposition of Rome,” I argue that the social activity of thousands of wage laborers was guided by more than the production of EUR buildings, but also the fabrication of a distinct Italian Fascist worker subjectivity. Fascist labor, with its specific mode of sociality based on virility, a stoical approach to sacrifice, and hierarchical, family-like solidarity, was deemed true to Italian origins, down to its irreducible Roman elements. At peak construction between 1937 and 1941, an army of 5,000 workers

labored daily to construct the new city for the World's Fair. Coupled with the management of everyday life in the Workers Village, an adjacent complex of worker dormitories, construction of the site was said to be generative of a new culture of labor. Through analysis of a lengthy dramatic screenplay and a documentary film on labor at the EUR, as well as publicized visits to the work zone for select dignitaries, I argue that carefully selected cultural traditions further naturalized Fascism's intensely hierarchical social relations. These traditions, I contend, also functioned to undermine mass worker organizations, which point to the heart of corporatism as a system that subsumed "class interests" to both employers and the state.

My fourth chapter, "Policing as a System of Representation: Fascist Image Management and Cultural Diplomacy at the 1942 World's Fair in Rome," argues that the Fascist regime viewed the World's Fair as an ideal space to calibrate its security methods through a specific spatialization of policing in representations and practices. While previous chapters show that the regime created hybrid pre-modern and modern forms to generate a sense of Italian difference, the "hybrid" policing techniques for which the regime had become known were instead seen as incommensurate with transforming Fascism's authoritarian image abroad. Thus, in extensive preparation for policing tourists at the E 42, planners set out to shed undesirable elements from Fascism's regular policing methods, leading the regime to delink itself from associations of state-violence and aggression. I argue that the state's application of a distinct appearance for police authority further demonstrates the politically selective nature of Fascism's claim to having a direct and natural link to the ancient and authentic cultural forms on display for the international public at the World's Fair. To explore another side of policing as a system of representation, this chapter examines a criminology exhibit planned for the 1942 World's Fair. In both the exhibit and the Fair, I maintain that regime was interested in a mechanism of enforcement through the

medium of an established set of differences, a type of “profiling” that, with the help of criminological perspectives, created a model of “preemptive policing” of labor and foreign nationals at the E 42.

My fifth chapter, “Scarcity, Discipline, and the ‘Limits’ of Fascist Subjectivity: the Case of Italy and the EUR,” contends that Fascism attempted to dominate subjects both through a new ideology of “work” and through access to work. The chapter shows that although the new Fascist laboring subject was publicly exhibited as fixed within a “natural” hierarchy of honorific bonds, hiring was regulated through a mix of scarcity and moral policing, making access to work an instrument of Fascist subjectivization beyond the inherent disciplinary functions of labor. Through an investigation of “the everyday” interactions of workers and guards in the E 42 site, this chapter reveals that in spite of the repressive organization of material and psychical life under Fascism, attempts to instill values of the “New Fascist Man” in workers and officials never fully materialized, much like the epic 1942 World’s Fair itself. The conclusion of this chapter advances the story of the E 42 beyond the cancellation of the World’s Fair and into the war years. It provides insights on the growing discontent among workers, officers, and even Fascist leaders in the period before and after the collapse of the regime, showing that Fascism ultimately structured responses and modes of resistance, while relegating such forms to smallish, mostly individualized acts of dissent. In the Conclusion, I review my findings on the 1942 Roman World’s Fair and utilize them to indicate new historiographical and theoretical directions.

Chapter 1. Corporatism as Otherness: Anti-Modern Fascist Productivism in the Roman Exhibition of 1942

“It is easy to denounce ‘tyrannies’ and I have no love for them, but [...] there is no greater mistake than to apply British standards to an un-British condition. Mussolini would not be a fascist if he were an Englishman living in England.”¹

Sir Ronald Graham, British ambassador in Rome, 1926

I. Effusion of the Concrete

A longing for the irreducible elements of a concrete materiality formed the substance of right-wing critiques of modernity in the interwar period. Leading intellectuals of the time wrote widely on a rural nostalgia, in the vein of Martin Heidegger’s “reactionary peasant sublime.”² Writing from a Fascist prison in 1934, Antonio Gramsci called it (in the words of the historian Niccolo Rodolico) the “return to the earth” phenomenon, the bourgeoisie’s “conversion to ruralism,” replete with the “disparagement of the cities typical of the Enlightenment.”³ The declining capitalist spirit, according to Gramsci, affected Italy’s urban bourgeoisie, leading to their “exaltation of the artisanat and of idyllic patriarchalism.” Writing in the same year, former

¹ As quoted by Franklin Hugh Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism: The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906-1934* (Cambridge 1995): 285-6.

² For more on Heidegger’s “reactionary peasant sublime” and its relationship to interwar reactionary ideologies, see Timothy Brennan (Sep-Oct 2014). “Subaltern Stakes” *New Left Review* 89: 67-87. For more on Heidegger’s reading of Van Gogh’s work of art “Peasant Shoes,” refer to pages 59 and 60 in Fredric Jameson (Jul-Aug 1984). “Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” *New Left Review* 146: 53-92; see generally pages 250-8 in Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*. Trans. David Maisel (Princeton 1994).

³ See pages 283 and 287 in Antonio Gramsci, “Americanism and Fordism,” *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. (New York 1971). Gramsci writes that this “ruralism” came about as a result of the “decline of the spirit of capitalist initiative among the urban bourgeoisie.”

Heidegger student Herbert Marcuse called the fascist glorification of those “closest to the earth,” namely peasants, the “counterpart” to the right-wing struggle “against the metropolis and its ‘unnatural’ spirit.”⁴

In the comprehensive Fascist critique of modernity, Enlightenment universalism is said to have led to pure materialism, monetized all social relations, and flattened the cultural difference of indigenous, pre-Enlightenment peoples in their material and practical existences. In exhibit plans for the 1942 World’s Fair of Rome, as this chapter shows, the state mobilized a discourse of rupture with “capitalist modernity”⁵ while advancing an alternate universalism.⁶ The regime’s

⁴ See page 39 in Herbert Marcuse, “The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State,” *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*. (Boston 1968): 3-42. In 1934, Marcuse writes that philosophical existentialism’s meaning “lay in regaining the full concretion of the historical subject in opposition to the abstract ‘logical’ subject of rational idealism, i.e. eliminating the domination, unshaken from Descartes to Husserl, of the *ego cogito*.” Heidegger, according to Marcuse, had moved furthest in this direction, which led him to a reactionary turn.

⁵ Capitalism is here understood as more than the evolutionary growth of an early modern or ancient market economy, or as profits generated by purchasing goods for cheap and selling them at higher prices, as these kinds of transactions have existed for millennia. Moishe Postone, in providing a critique of interpretations that place the market economy and private property as the constitutive elements of capitalism, instead defines industrial labor (i.e., human labor power expenditure in the production of commodities) as the core constitutive element of capitalism. The latter understanding has significant differences from the former, helping to explain why for example “actually existing” socialist economies continued to exploit workers in growth-oriented economies geared toward generating surpluses, with similar levels of environmental degradation as nations in Western Europe and North America during the same historical period. The latter understanding also shows that in capitalism, a historically unique form of universality is generated, as all products and labor are rendered equivalent in a universal system of commensurability that is expanding spatially and quickening temporally according to its own dynamic logic. It is this system of universal equivalents as well as the historically new compulsions on sellers and purchasers of labor power that contribute to capitalism’s radical restructuring of the social, political, and material world in the period of the Industrial Revolution. See Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (New York and Cambridge 1993).

grandiose displays of folklore and ancient Roman tradition were viewed as sites of resistance to the homogenizing tendencies of modernity, in which “the anti-modern” took the form of “concrete” or “qualitative” representations. At the same time, this chapter shows that World’s Fair exhibits were largely productivist in scope, mediated by a discourse in which a “virtuous majority of authentic producers”⁷ is said to be “rooted in the soil”⁸ or in the deferential relations of ancient Imperial Rome. For the regime, the nuanced discourse of an authentic, textured tradition had particular resonance in a time of global crisis. “In dark times,” writes ethnographer Nicola Borrelli in an exhibit proposal, “tradition is a torch; it’s sometimes bright.”⁹

Through the regime’s major exhibits at the 1942 Roman World’s Fair, such as the folkloric “Exhibit of Popular Traditions,” an authoritarian-led “community of the folk” would be united with productivism to make a declaration about corporatist ideology for an international audience.¹⁰ In fields like folklore, Italy showed the persistence of traditions in a manner that spoke to the strengths and aims of the present regime, displaying through the rural folk and the

⁶ See page 12 in Robert O. Paxton *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York 2004). “Fascists often cursed faceless cities and materialist secularism, and exalted an agrarian utopia free from the rootlessness, conflict, and immorality of urban life.”

⁷ For more on “producerism,” see page 236 in John Abromeit, “Transformations of Producerist Populism in Western Europe,” *Transformations of Populism in Europe and the Americas: History and Recent Tendencies*. John Abromeit, York Norman, et al., eds. (New York 2015).

⁸ This quote is from a June 1926 speech by Benito Mussolini to the senate. For more on the context of this quote, including Mussolini’s “ruralist” campaign and his critique of urbanism as “sterile” when compared to the authentic agrarian producer, see page 356 in Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism: The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906-1934*.

⁹ *ACS, E42, Busta 1012, Fascicolo 9645*.

¹⁰ See page 39 in Herbert Marcuse, “The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State.”

hierarchies of the Roman *urbe* a lesson on the fundamental “ontologies” of the Fascist corporatist vision, connecting past and present. In the process of evaluating the customs of these “traditional” societies and reproducing them for public consumption at the World’s Fair, Fascist thinkers had consciously constructed a fitting metaphor of corporatism itself. As a “third way” between the poles of liberal capitalism and communist productivism, corporatism had to always reproduce itself with differentiating content, and (at least) claim that such content emanated from its unique form. At the 1942 World’s Fair, corporatism would be shown as having origins in a concrete world predating Enlightenment universalism. Fascist thinkers thus offered consumers a vision of pre-modern, universal Rome that promised to reverse modern capitalism’s restructuring of practices, relationships, knowledge, hopes, and phantasies.

While the 1942 World’s Fair and the accompanying cultural exhibitions never took place because of the intensification of World War II, plans were developed at length and treatises were written on exhibit content. In the first part of this chapter, we examine the EUR Agency President Vittorio Cini’s general plans for the overarching universal exhibition, known as the “Olympiad of Civilizations,” in which he links corporatism directly to the formation of an alternate universalism. In the second part of this chapter, we will examine the ways in which Fascist folklorists and Romanists created exhibits according to an overwhelming sense that pre-modern cultural difference and qualitative social relations had been increasingly superseded by a homogeneous modernity. Next, we analyze exhibit plans that seek to most pleasurably order Italy’s internal cultural differences so as to provide for a more productive absorption of knowledge on the corporatist “third way” by exhibit visitors. These exhibits were designed to be more than informational; they were to explicitly articulate Fascist corporatist ideology in the most effective manner for consumption by an international audience at the World’s Fair. In the

conclusion, I examine Cini's later revised exhibition plans in order to revisit the problem of the regime's seemingly paradoxical representation of modern growth-oriented logic alongside contra-modern tradition through its production and distribution of difference. Together, I contend, displays of productivism and concrete "anti-modern" cultures embodied the central tenets of Fascist corporatism as an anti-hegemonic, anti-universal ideology adequate to Italy's history, a "third way" that was said to be giving rise to a new universal originating (once more) from Rome.

The Fascist state gave a lesson on Fascist ontology each year on the regime-instituted holiday of April 21st. As a substitute for the socialist May Day and the anniversary celebration of Rome's mythical founding 2,692 years before,¹¹ April 21st was itself a peculiar hybrid.¹² It was a modern "revolutionary" state holiday with the content of a tradition that preceded the modern calendrical cycle, one that "opposed the secular 'clock time of capitalism,' and posited in its

¹¹ On April 3, 1921, more than a year before the Fascists seized power, Mussolini declared April 21st a joint-annual holiday to celebrate the "Birth of Rome" and Labor Day, meant to replace the socialist May Day. See Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1997): 91-92.

¹² See E.P. Thompson (Dec., 1967). "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38: 56-97. Thompson addresses the fate of older festivities and holidays in England during the transformative period on the rise of industrial society, and the process of adapting "the seasonal rhythms of the countryside, with its festivals and religious holidays, to the needs of industrial production." Writes Thompson on page 76: "the irregularity of working day and week were framed, until the first decades of the nineteenth century, within the larger irregularity of the working year, punctuated by its traditional holidays, and fairs." See also Sidney Pollard (1963). "Factory Discipline in the Industrial Revolution," *The Economic History Review* 16 (2): 254-271. "It is nowadays increasingly coming to be accepted that one of the most critical, and one of the most difficult, transformations required in an industrializing society is the adjustment of labor to the regularity and discipline of factory work," writes Pollard on page 254, adding on page 255 through a primary source from 1806: "'I found the utmost distaste,' one hosier reported, 'on the part of the men, to any regular hours or regular habits ... The men themselves were considerably dissatisfied, because they could not go in and out as they pleased, and have what holidays they pleased, and go on just as they had been used to do.'"

stead an alternative time scale that was epic and transcendent,” a “ritual colonization” of time.¹³ On April 21st, 1939, a large crowd gathered around a podium in the construction site of the 1942 Roman World’s Fair. On this April 21st, labor and the birth of Rome would be celebrated in the massive construction site for the 1942 Roman World’s Fair, where the Fascists claimed to be fulfilling tradition in the name of the true “Third Rome.”¹⁴

EUR Agency President Vittorio Cini took to the podium to tell the audience that the E 42 would show Rome as “the great mother of universal civilization, the bearer of all law, order, and virulent virtue around which the world’s people still model themselves in the modern age.”¹⁵ This form of “universality” for the Fascists, both pre-modern and transhistorical in origin, allowed ideologues to refigure a world order in which the insurgent concrete authority of Rome militates against modernity’s encroaching abstraction. The new EUR aesthetic would articulate this synthesis by “respecting the demand of the most modern technique,” according to Cini while

¹³ See page 5 in Joshua Arthurs *Excavating Modernity: the Roman Past in Fascist Italy* (Ithaca 2012). See also Mark Antliff (Mar., 2002). “Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity,” *Art Bulletin* 84 (1): 148-169; and Mabel Berezin (Mar., 1994). “Cultural Form and Political Meaning: State-subsidized Theater, Ideology, and the Language of Style in Fascist Italy,” *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (5): 1237-1286.

¹⁴ For more on this conceptualization of the “Third Rome,” or third period of greatness for Italic civilization following the Roman Empire and the Renaissance, see the November 4, 1925 speech of Benito Mussolini, “Celebrazione della vittoria,” *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXIX (Florence 1951), 439-441. The number “three” has a prominent position in Fascist state mythology, such as in the formation of a “third way” between the poles of communism and capitalism, or in the foundation of a “Third Rome.” For more on the potential sexual connotation of the number “three,” specifically as it might be useful for understanding its relation to Fascist virility, see page 190 in Sigmund Freud *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (New York 1966). Writes Freud, “for the male genitals as a whole the sacred number 3 is of symbolic significance.”

¹⁵ “L’Alta Parola Del Duce: sui problemi vitali per l’avvenire dei popoli: Nella Gloria del Campidoglio,” *Corriere della Sera*, 21 April 1939: 1. Vittorio Cini thanked the 27 nations at the time that had agreed to participate in the great “international celebration of humanity” and the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution.

“faithfully answering the traditions of our civilization.”¹⁶ The great synthesis of civilizations on display for the world would place Rome at both ends of a two millennia arch spanning ancient Rome to Fascist Italy. For Cini the aim of the E 42 was to “materially and spiritually” join the “imperial Rome of forums, temples and thermal baths” with the modern epoch.¹⁷ Through this presentation, ancient Rome would be symbolized as the locus and bearer of an alternative form of world civilization engendered by the Fascist Revolution’s corporatist insurgency. The Italian state endeavored to institute a system of corporatism based on joint owner-worker cartels organized according to existing economic sectors and trades, both public and private. One major aim of corporatism was the resolution of class divisions into broad cooperation, redirecting individualistic and class-based conflictual energies into the service of the state.¹⁸ Though modern-productivist in aim, the corporatist form was said to have its origins in the society of

¹⁶ Ibid. “L’Alta Parola Del Duce: sui problemi vitali per l’avvenire dei popoli: Nella Gloria del Campidoglio,” *Corriere della Sera*, 21 April 1939: 1

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ For more on corporatism and its alleged origins, see pages 150 and 151 in Franklin Hugh Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism: The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906-1934*.

traditional guilds and corporations that predominated in Europe before the industrial revolution,¹⁹ pointing as far back as the Middle Ages if not to ancient Rome.²⁰

Vittorio Cini, a wealthy businessman of aristocratic stock, vocalized to holiday revelers that the contemporary form of universal civilization, which originated in 1789 Paris, was in “apparent dispersion” as a result of “the bitter polarity of principles.” Fascism, he claimed, was instead mediating the differences and providing a way out of the historical antagonism between Washington and Moscow, communism and capitalism, owners and workers. The Fascist “third way,”²¹ based on corporatism’s pre-Enlightenment and culturally rooted “relations of production,” was creating for Cini “a profound renewal of lively force and imposing a new order onto the existing one, which is passive and inert.”²² The E 42 was to give the “corporative idea the most eloquent expression,” pronounced Cini on the important Fascist holiday.²³ “It will be possible,” he added, “to document not only the material well-being of our people, but also its

¹⁹ Ibid. Adler writes that within corporatism, “The potential for conflict is reduced by compelling everyone to join the official, vertically based, unitary, interclass network” of sanctioned corporations. At the same time that the state protects the “privileged property-holding classes” by making strikes and work stoppages illegal, the wealthy classes “are constrained to sacrifice some measure of their own autonomy, their own political and economic initiative.” The former, reduction of labor activism, was a highly desirable outcome for the capitalist classes, writes Adler, particularly given Italy’s history of labor unrest. The latter result, limits on the autonomy and economic directives of certain industrialists, was much less appealing.

²⁰ Stanley Payne references the origins of corporatism in ancient Rome. See Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison, WI 1995), 38-39.

²¹ For more on Fascism as a “third way,” see Ruth Ben-Ghiat (Apr 1996). “Italian Fascism and the Aesthetics of the ‘Third Way,’” *Journal of Contemporary History* 31 (2): 293-316.

²² See “L’Alta Parola Del Duce: sui problemi vitali per l’avvenire dei popoli: Nella Gloria del Campidoglio.”

²³ Ibid.

high-grade of culture.” By bringing the Fascist “third way” into the international spotlight, the Fascist regime sought to demonstrate that the corporatist system had its basis in Italian “‘otherness’ as an ontological fact.”²⁴

One day after Cini’s April 21st holiday speech at the E 42 construction site, the EUR Agency Propaganda and Hospitality Division set out to extensively plan the numerous World’s Fair exhibits.²⁵ The EUR Agency established a committee for every cultural exhibit, each staffed with the regime’s most highly regarded intellectuals,²⁶ with many presided over by conservative critic and Fascist Syndicate of Fine Arts president Cipriano Efisio Oppo.²⁷ In the proposed plans and committees established by the EUR Agency to determine the parameters and content of each exhibit, we see intellectuals collaborating with the Fascist state at the highest levels. Intellectuals and faculty of Italian academies, such as Giovanni Gentile, Ugo Ojetti, and F.T. Marinetti, were

²⁴ Timothy Brennan, “Subaltern Stakes.”

²⁵ *ACS, E42, Busta 5, Fascicolo 11.*

²⁶ *Ibid.* For some examples, the “Literature Exhibit” was presided over by Oppo and featured many notable figures, such as Antonio Baldini, Count Valentino Bompiani, Dr. Arnaldo Fratelli, F.T. Marinetti, Ugo Ojetti, and Corrado Pavolini. Giovanni Papini, well-known philosopher, professor, and author of the recent *History of Italian Literature*, oversaw the affairs of the Literature Exhibit Committee. The “Architecture Exhibit,” once again presided over by Oppo, was also made up of notable architects such as Marcello Piacentini (vice-president), Alberto Calza Bini, Domenico De Simone, Enrico Del Debbio, Gustavo Giovannoni, Giovanni Michelucci, Agnoldomenico Pica, and Luigi Vietti. The “Exhibit for the Study of High Culture” was presided over by Professor Pietro De Franciscis, Silvestro Baglioni was the vice-president, with professors Carlo Anti, Widar Cesarini Sforza, and Alessandro Ghigi. The “Exhibit of *Romanità*” included Giulio Quirino Giglioli (president), Pietro Romanelli (vice-president), Pietro Aschieri, Antonio Colini, Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, Italo Gismondi, Giuseppe Moretti, Massimo Pallottino, and Carlo Pietrangeli.

²⁷ See pages 25 and 220 (footnote 16) in Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley 2001). Ben-Ghiat writes that for Cipriano Efisio Oppo, *Italianità* “stood for order, discipline, and the classical heritage.” Oppo was the secretary and president of this and most other committees for 1942 World’s Fair Exhibits.

the producers of the lengthy, quasi-academic exhibit proposals, and often the key decision-makers on committees established to disseminate a vision of Fascist ideology to a global public.

While many reactionaries depicted the regional differences and the poverty of Italy's forces as a major cause for Italy's calamitous World War I campaign, Fascism undertook to create a new form of unity, one that respected Italy's "ancient" cultural traditions. Thus, just as Fascism set out to resolve internal cultural differences, it placed a higher value on particular aspects of folklore that would express something vital to Fascist ideology.²⁸ The regime's struggle to "accurately" define and articulate Fascism was seen as a matter of national cultural significance, vital for the expansion of fascism, both overseas and right at home in the souls of Italians. The Fascist conception of "*italianità*" was decided upon in memos, proposals, and meetings that involved a precise balance of regime officials and loyal intellectuals. In the process of mobilizing a conception of a distinct Italian culture, these champions of Fascist ideology carefully appropriated cultural artifacts that articulated the regime's basis in a long history of concrete social relations, and discarded aspects of peninsular history that exceeded the anti-democratic paradigm. In this regard, the exclusions are as telling as any of the regime's periods of historical interest.

The exhibits were to be divided in 10 different sections, together representing a synthesis of modern productivism and a return to the pre-modern world of "virtuous producers" not yet lost to a world of abstraction. Section 1 would feature the general information services for the World's Fair. Section 2, the "International Section," would hold the Pavilion of Nations, all of the international pavilions, a Catholic and Church Exhibit, a Red Cross Exhibit, a Social Security

²⁸ See page 545 in Simeone, "Fascists and Folklorists in Italy."

Exhibit, and sporting exhibits on hunting, camping, and forestry. Section 3 would contain exhibits such as the Universal Science Exhibit, the Ethnography and Popular Customs Exhibit as container for regionalism (the term “Popular Traditions” here is evidence of the regime’s attempt to Italianize the word “Folklore”), the Exhibit on the Study of High Culture, the Exhibit of Inventions and Scientific Novelty, and the Exhibit of Hygiene and Public Health. Section 4, known as the “City of Art,” would hold the Exhibit of Ancient Art, the Exhibit of Decorative Arts and Handicrafts from 1000 AD to Today, the Architecture Exhibit, the Literature Exhibit, the Cinematography Exhibit, and the Exhibit of the Avant-Garde, to name a few. Section 5, the “National” section, would contain the Exhibit of Italian Civilization, the Exhibit of *Romanità*, the Exhibit of the City of Rome, the Exhibit of the Fascist Party (PNF), the Exhibit of Italians Abroad, among others. Section 6, organized around the theme of “The Italian City of the Corporatist Economy,” would feature the Italian Artisans Exhibit, the Artisan Workshops of the Most Characteristic Productions Exhibit, the Exhibit of Commerce and Markets, the Viticulture Exhibit, the Grain Exhibit, the Exhibit of the Industrial Factory, an Exhibit on Agrarian Reclamation, the Exhibit of Cooperation (Credit), the Exhibit of the Grain Industry, and numerous distinct exhibits on chemical, electric, and hydrothermal industries. It also would contain a number of media and communications exhibits, like the Exhibit of Publicity and the Exhibit of Hospitality. Along with this heavy focus on economy and individual economic sectors, Section 6 would also contain an Exhibit of Individuals, (which commemorated industrialists like Breda, Agnelli, and Pirelli), as well as an Autarky Pavilion, and a Corporatism Pavilion. Altogether, Section 6 claimed to be a “Synthesis of the Corporatist System.” Section 7 would hold an Exhibit of Italian Lands at Home and Overseas. Section 8 was dedicated to Hospitality Services, Shows, and Entertainment. It would also feature an open-air theater, a

movie theater, illuminated fountains, the massive metallic E 42 Arch, and the Palace of Water and Light. Section 9 would contain services of the Exposition, such as a Village for the *Dopolavoro*, the Palace of Postal Services, telephones, and telegraphs, and stations of the Red Cross, Police, Fire, and Transportation services. Section 10, with a focus on archaeological projects at *Ostia Antica* would have exhibits on “New Excavations,” “The Roman Theater,” and would include an archeological museum.²⁹

Of all the exhibits planned for the World’s Fair of 1942, four were to be made into permanent museums. Whereas permanence was of the highest importance for the city built to hold the Fair, the majority of exhibits themselves were designed as temporary. During the Fair, the pre-selected permanent exhibits would take place in landmark EUR buildings, such as the “Square Coliseum,” structures meant to last long after the World’s Fair of 1942 had ended.³⁰ These four permanent exhibits were to include the Autarky and Corporatism Exhibit, the Science Exhibit, the Italian Folklore Exhibit, and the Italian Civilization Exhibit, each a definitive statement on Fascism’s unique mediation of productivist modernity as expressed through Italian historical traditions.³¹ The Science Exhibit was to show “the countless” Italian scientific discoveries, including a section on “modern machines, derived from Italian origin, being reproduced abroad.”³² The Italian Civilization Exhibit meanwhile would cross millennia from ancient Rome to Mussolini and Fascism, at which point history would appear to end: “Mussolini

²⁹ For more see *ACS, E42, Buste 5, 73, 112, and 1048*.

³⁰ Even after the World’s Fair was indefinitely postponed after the war intensified, Mussolini continued to ensure that these four exhibits would be built into permanent museums.

³¹ *ACS, E42, Busta 1048, Fascicolo 9970*.

³² *ACS, E42, Busta 1106, Fascicolo 10724*.

reassumes in himself the most profound aspirations of the *lineage* [...] the conclusion of almost two millennia of history.”³³ Sometimes “traditional” relationships would take the shape of spectacle in very explicit ways, as in plans for wedding ceremonies to take place before the public during the World’s Fair, further disseminating the regime’s familial and reproductive symbolism.³⁴

The 1942 World’s Fair exhibits were to provide an essentializing analysis of Italian culture, showing Italians to be the heirs of a tradition formed under unique, locally determinate conditions. Fascist politics, according to this worldview, had emerged in a different historical-cultural milieu and were therefore said to be irreproachable, as the Italian state was represented as the realization of the purity and wonderment of these traditions. Fascism, it was claimed, was fully consistent with the specificities of Italian culture, and thus was not open to the moral judgment of outsiders, a phenomenon that human rights scholar Jack Donnelly calls “radical cultural relativism,” according to which “culture is the sole source of the validity of a moral right or rule.”³⁵ The celebration of “the traditional” and “the concrete,” grounded in the pre-

³³ See the 1939 document “Mostra della Civiltà Italiana: Criteri fondamentali per la presentazione della Mostra” republished in full in *E 42: L’Esposizione Universale di Roma; Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Tullio Gregory and Achille Tartaro, eds. (Venice 1987): 157-166. The “Medieval Exhibit” would feature Saint Thomas Aquinas, Dante, and also the Conflict between Roman Civilization and Islam. The “Renaissance Exhibit” would feature Michelangelo, Petrarch, Machiavelli, and Columbus. The section titled “From the End of the 16th Century to the End of the 18th Century” would present Galileo and Vico. The section titled “From the End of the 18th Century to Mussolini” was to feature Risorgimento figures like Garibaldi, Mazzini, and Cavour. No liberal era politicians were to be featured.

³⁴ *ACS, E42, Busta 60, Fascicolo 320.*

³⁵ Jack Donnelly (Nov. 1984). “Cultural Relativism and Human Rights,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 6 (2): 400-419. See also Page 8 in Zeev Sternhell *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*. “This new nationalism,” writes Sternhell, “denied the validity of any absolute and universal moral norms” such as “truth, justice, and law.”

Enlightenment *longue durée*, was at the core of Fascism's justification for the existence of its insurgent, non-progressive "third way."

II. Naturalizing Difference

An examination of the original general plans for the E 42 demonstrates just how essential the material expression of Italian cultural specificity was to both the project and the milieu it was intended to represent. It further shows the relationship of cultural difference to Fascist plans such as autarky and the formation of a corporatist "third way." The official plan for a Roman World's Fair was prepared in June 1935 by Rome mayor and avowed corporatist Giuseppe Bottai, who served at the helm of the Ministry of Corporations between 1926 and 1932.³⁶ His blueprint for the exhibition develops several points of departure with past international expositions held in other nations.³⁷ Bottai writes that at the E 42, "all the world's nations, from all continents" should participate, "not just the thirty nations typically present at such vast exhibits." Further, each of the nations would have their own display with "a representation of their resources, their races, customs, religions, activities, conventions, etc.," so that a voyage through the Exposition "would constitute a meaningful journey around the earth,"³⁸ a veritable world of difference. To

³⁶ Bottai is the author of the original E 42 overture, though it is widely held that Federico Pinna Berchet originally authored the plan and sent it to Bottai, after which Bottai opportunistically reshaped Berchet's plan and sent it to Mussolini. For more on Bottai's tenure with the Ministry of Corporations, see pages 349 and 350 in Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism: The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906-1934*.

³⁷ Even if Bottai's plan lacked a definite outlet (in the form of Mussolini's support) to help see it through to fruition, the proposal would still be noteworthy on account of its vision.

³⁸ In 1935, Bottai's phrase "ancient and new race" and "races" should not be considered racialist as it would have been for a high Fascist official later, particularly after the Racial Laws were signed in July 1938. Even then, it appears Italian Fascists often used the term "race"

similarly reproduce a tour through Italy, Bottai's plan calls for an exhibit in which all "94 Italian provinces would represent their industrial, agricultural and touristic significance, preferably reproducing their primary features with accuracy."³⁹ One month after submitting the E 42 proposal, Bottai wrote about the corporate state for the Council on Foreign Relations, in which he argues that "concrete" differences in Italian geography and culture validated Italy's divergent mediation of capitalist abstraction.⁴⁰ Though Bottai's proposal to translate the knowledge of 94 Italian provinces into World's Fair entertainment was never fully realized, set in the context of his greater views on corporatism, his plan created the framework for exhibits to naturalize Italy's corporate system through a hybrid of normalizing productivism and difference, for which I will now elaborate.

interchangeably with "stock" [*stirpe*]. Ruth Ben-Ghiat has also made note of this usage on pages 153-157 in *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945*. For a study of Italian Fascist intellectual writings and policies on race, see Aaron Gillette *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy* (London 2002). The full text of Bottai's proposal to Mussolini, titled "Progetto di Massima per una Esposizione Universale Romana," is featured in Luigi Di Majo and Italo Insolera, *L'EUR e Roma dagli anni trenta al duemila* (Bari 1986): 11-16. The document can also be found in *E 42: L'Esposizione Universale di Roma; Utopia e Scenario del Regime*, 149-152.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ In the piece (written for an American audience), Giuseppe Bottai explains that the divergent economic role of the state in Italy and the US hinged on the historical formation of cultural differences in relation to geography. The United States, according to Bottai, provides individuals with ample territory to stake out their distinct interests at a remove from government control. Italians on the other hand, "confined in limited territories," have sought the "rigid organization" of society around classes and occupations to resolve centuries old questions around "the distribution of wealth." "The social consequences of this environmental difference are reflected in the attitude of the two peoples toward the state," writes Bottai. The European, Bottai continues, always "instinctively desires the seal of state approval. It is demanded by his temperament, his conception of the state's function, his age-old tradition of discipline. This is the historical setting in which Italian corporatism must be interpreted." Historic and geographic characteristics have thus led to cultural differences, which Bottai relativizes as the justification for Fascist corporatism. Giuseppe Bottai (Jul. 1935). "Corporate State and N.R.A." *Foreign Affairs* 13 (4): 612-624.

Two years after Bottai's original overture for a Roman World's Fair, EUR Agency president Vittorio Cini developed the first E 42 Master Plan, stressing the belief that the E 42 should differentiate itself from past exhibitions because they "have had an essentially economic content and aim."⁴¹ Past expositions, according to Cini, took place in capitalist countries where the central purpose was to display the material effects of that particular market society in order to further intensify that very system on display. For Cini, their intent was purely productivist, namely to "provoke the interest and curiosity of other nations in an attempt to spark economic exchange and to open new avenues of commerce."⁴² In contrast to these expositions of internationalism, materialism, and capitalist production and consumption, Cini states that the E 42 would symbolize the corporatist state. The critique of capitalism is itself striking considering Cini's "dual-status" as a Venetian aristocrat and a capitalist. Cini's own wealth had increased substantially in the Fascist economy in which the state was the "guarantor of the interests of producers and the wealthy."⁴³ As a political figure, Cini was a mix of "practical" business

⁴¹ See page 1 in Vittorio Cini's 1937 "E 42: Programma di Massima" in *E 42: L'Esposizione Universale di Roma; Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Tullio Gregory and Achille Tartaro, editors. (Venice 1987): 153-156.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Adler differentiates between two types of elite Italian businesses that grew in stature in the decades before Fascism. The first type of business was a part of the "new state-protected industrial sector." Through large subsidies, these companies began to manufacture steel, armaments, and ships. Meanwhile, "export-oriented" industrialists that "sought tariff reciprocity rather than principled protection" constituted the second group. The first group, in which we can place Vittorio Cini, was unsurprisingly made up of "unqualified proponents of economic nationalism, imperialism, corporatism, and, later, Fascism." See pages 21 and 22 in Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism: The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906-1934*. For a contemporary view on the "peculiar" alliances between "old world powers," the authoritarian state, and private capital in the late interwar period, see Max Horkheimer, "The Authoritarian State," *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, editors. (New York 1982): 95-117. See also Maurizio Reberschak in the

functionary and charismatic leader. His importance to the E 42 project, though certainly multifarious, is illuminated by his ability to garner funds from corporate donors, many of whom were personal associates, for projects such as World's Fair exhibits.⁴⁴

In contrast to these past expositions of “materialism,” Cini states that the content of the E 42 would “instead be predominantly political and spiritual.”⁴⁵ Rather than another hollow manifestation of capitalist production and consumption, the EUR would have the corporate state as its guiding principle, which promised to return individual identity and spirituality to mass society. As a physical substantiation of the corporatist “third way,” Cini writes that the exposition would demonstrate Italy's Fascist political achievements, “almost without bias” while “avoiding forceful prejudices.”⁴⁶ With an acute awareness of foreign perceptions of the Italian Fascist state, he asserts that a significantly subdued political rhetoric would be essential for “avoiding easy absenteeism and boycotts on the part of governments inspired by different systems.” Fascist Italy would instead express its primacy “naturally, as a consequence of the

Dizionario biografico degli italiani, entry on “Cini, Vittorio,”
http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/vittorio-cini_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/. <28 Oct. 2014>.

⁴⁴ *ACS, E42, Busta 266, Fascicolo 4336*. In 1940 Cini wrote to his personal friend and business partner, Count Giuseppe Volpi, president of the Fascist Confederation of Industrialists (a combination of industrialists' interests), with regard to a 30 million-lira contribution from the National Federation of Trades. “With this tangible, conspicuous bond the industrial trades fulfill not only an act of solidarity toward the Exhibit, which will confirm the strength and prestige of Italy throughout history,” writes Cini to his friend Volpi, “but it also demonstrates a great sense of comprehension for the exigencies of culture, just as the Museum of Science will signify the realization of an ancient aspiration of the scholars and experts.”

⁴⁵ See page 1 in Vittorio Cini's 1937 “E 42: Programma di Massima” in *E 42: L'Esposizione Universale di Roma; Utopia e Scenario del Regime*.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

eloquence of events and the grandiosity of their realization.” To create an experience that would produce knowledge of the “third way,” only tacit pedagogy would be used.⁴⁷

Cini reveals a further plan for an “Olympiad of Civilizations” to present a systematized exhibition of primordial cultural difference in a sizeable, spatialized form. To further distinguish it from past expositions and to give presence to the seemingly abstract ethic of the corporate state, the *Esposizione di 1942* would feature “a competition of civilizations instead of the pure and simple competition of products and their means of production.”⁴⁸ In this “Olympiad of Civilizations,” “each civilization [would] express itself in concrete realizations,” to avoid “getting lost in the metaphysical and the abstract or in the generic.” In this mini-model world of difference, categories such as “race, customs, religion, art, science” and each nation’s “political, social, and economic organization would be thoroughly expressed in the formula Olympiad of Civilizations.” While the Olympiad would produce “a contest” of civilizations, Cini states that Italy “cannot emerge” victorious. The victor of the proposed “Olympiad of Civilizations” is “destined to originate from the facts, from the elements of the Exposition, and not from pretentious attitudes of defiance or from brash verbal statements.” Thus, only the concrete realization of difference would convey Italy’s supremacy. Such tangible expressions would allow the “third way” and Italian fascism – which was, according to Zeev Sternhell, “the product of a

⁴⁷ Ibid. For further analysis of this “soft” approach to presenting Fascist ideology to international tourists, see section IV of this chapter on Edification in the Exhibits. See also pages 5 and 6 in R.J.B. Bosworth, (March 1997). “Tourist Planning in Fascist Italy and the Limits of a Totalitarian Culture,” *Contemporary European History* 6 (1): 1-25.

⁴⁸ Vittorio Cini, “E 42: Programma di Massima,” 2.

number of different but convergent elements” – to further articulate this bricolage in contradistinction to the other, which would in turn shape a clearer definition of the “third way.”⁴⁹

Through the form of the universal exposition, with its already constituted and determinate coordinates of possibility (i.e. the established normative culture of universal expositions), specific content would be applied to make it distinctively Italian. “Universality” and “enormity” on one hand, and a “definite character” and “style” on the other would form the essential characteristics of the exposition.⁵⁰ To accomplish a sense of Fascist universality, Cini argues that “all peoples, of all centuries and all forms of activity must be represented.” The “comparative exposition” would demonstrate “the civil conquest of all the peoples (of the world),” and “express the high grade of potency reached by imperial Italy.” This universality would, in effect, simplify the expression of continuity from the Roman Empire to the present in which a mode of traditional, concrete authority was to be exported universally, emanating from Rome once more. To successfully create an impression of enormity, the exposition would have to “aim to surpass every analogous preceding manifestation” in both quality and quantity. The overall quality of the exhibit would be vital to etch itself in “the indelible memory” of exposition attendees. Such enormity would prove that the fascist “third way,” while different, was *more* capable than capitalism of creating the period’s great material wonders.

Cini’s E 42 master plan also outlines a critique of capitalism and modernism with a focus on the growing diminution of cultural specificity. It was of particular importance to Cini that Italy would again seek “to differentiate the E 42 from other World’s Fairs, especially those of

⁴⁹ See page 8 in Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*.

⁵⁰ See page 3 in Vittorio Cini, “E 42: Programma di Massima.”

America, which has searched and will search to astonish the world with the vastness of its proportions, the exaltation of its mechanical conquests and the mirage of material happiness.”⁵¹

While each international exposition aspired to its own unique theme, Italy would attempt to outdo them all with the creation of a unique, all encompassing motif to serve as the point of orientation: “Yesterday – Today – Tomorrow.” Cini outlines the logic behind his suggestion for the exposition’s orientating slogan:

Chicago 1933 defined itself as “a century of progress” (the past in predominance); that of Paris of ‘37 “art and technology in modern life” (the present); that of New York of ‘39: “Building the World of Tomorrow” (the future). But [the “Olympiad of Civilizations”] will adopt a vaster subject that better responds to its universal content with the motto: “Yesterday – Today – Tomorrow,” which will give each exhibit a corresponding historic representation... The formula seems to harmonize, and in a certain sense, synthesize, the destiny of Rome as the ideal center of the confluence of universal civilization.⁵²

Here, Cini envisions an exhibition that would be different in its capacity to encompass and surpass all other international expositions. But perhaps more striking is his acknowledgment that such a motif would historically “synthesize” universal Rome in order to ‘naturalize’ it as the source of “universal civilization,” in the past, present and future. The plan thus envisions an exhibition that would be different in both its capacity to encompass and surpass all other international expositions and in its disavowal of the homogenizing effects of the dominant form of universality.

To create “the most favorable psychological climate around the future exhibit” Cini recommends the publication of a journal titled “E 42” to coincide with traditional print media articles on the exposition. As the “official” journal of EUR, it would serve quite a few purposes,

⁵¹ Ibid. 5.

⁵² Ibid. 8.

such as articulating Italian cultural and political distinction while stressing Fascist Italy's aesthetic and scientific achievements. Printed in five languages (Italian, French, English, German, and Spanish), the journal would promote the exhibition and the Fascist "third way" abroad. The journal would "be essentially political in nature, but the taste, the culture, the sensibility of Italians, in the artistic fields as well as the technical" would help to promote E 42.⁵³ What is more, Cini warns that the journal should not be released too early, citing a concern over media saturation.

In the meantime, the EUR Agency developed committees to accomplish the task of properly representing Fascism for the world. These committees were made up of Italy's top intellectuals and professors. As Vittorio Cini noted in an article on the Italian University and the E 42, these esteemed faculty members came to work on the exhibits of their own volition.⁵⁴ "As soon as the program of the E. 42 was established, tenured professors responded willingly to the appeal to carry out the work of manifesting the pure spiritual feature of the Italian people to the world. They collaborate actively in the organization and ordering of the various exhibits that are important to our history, our thought, our science, our art."⁵⁵ To this end Bottai, then the Minister of National Education, was placed in command of organizing the requested content for the most

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ See Vittorio Cini, "L'Università Italiana e l'E. 42" *Gli Annali della Università d'Italia, Rivista Bimestrale dell'Ordine Universitario*. 1 (4), April 29 1940. See also ACS, E42, Busta 1106, Fascicolo 10722.

⁵⁵ Ibid. According to Cini, the Exhibit of Schools would have "the main scope of illustrating the profound transformation performed by the Regime in scholasticism."

important exhibits, including the Education Exhibit, the Folklore Exhibit, the Exhibit of Ancient Art, the Exhibit of Ancient and Contemporary Decorative Arts, and the Exhibit of Romanness.⁵⁶

III. Fusion of Differences

The Italian Folklore Exhibit, as one of only four exhibits to become permanent after the E 42, was one of the regime's most critical World's Fair exhibits. An assortment of Italy's most-important scholars of folkloric tradition submitted proposals and participated in committee meetings on how to represent specific cultural traditions at the E 42. Earlier interpretations of Fascism and folklore argue that ethnographers employed Fascistic rhetoric to maintain positions of prominence within then regime-dominated academies.⁵⁷ Subsequent works by Stefano Cavazza and William E. Simeone show instead that ethnographers were for the most part ideologically aligned with the regime from at least 1929, when the first National Congress of Popular Traditions was held in Florence and attended by King Victor Emmanuel III.⁵⁸ While these authors develop critical studies for demonstrating the relationship of folklore to Fascist propaganda, their interpretations overlook the inclusion of select regional differences into a whole to be mobilized against all other identities, which as this work suggests, indicates something core to Fascist ideology. Fascism's branding under the folkish Etruscan emblem of the *fascio*, a bundle of rods tied around a potent axe appropriated by Rome as a symbol of power

⁵⁶ ACS, E42, Busta 100, Fascicolo 463.

⁵⁷ See Stefano Cavazza (Apr. 1987). "La folkloristica italiana e il fascismo: Il Comitato Nazionale per le Arti Popolari," *La Ricerca Folklorica* 15: 109-122.

⁵⁸ See Cavazza, "La folkloristica italiana e il fascismo: Il Comitato Nazionale per le Arti Popolari," and William E. Simeone (Jan.-Mar. 1978). "Fascists and Folklorists in Italy," *Journal of American Folklore* 91 (359): 543-557.

in the ancient *urbe*, signaled that different parts were to make unique contributions to the actionable force of the whole. In a similar fashion, the Fascists would revive the *fascio* into a symbol of the Italian spirit, unified and guided by the prophecies of ancient Rome. In this regard, the *fascio* was a fitting metaphor for the combining and recombining of disparate cultures into a vision of a hierarchical, corporatist contra-modern universality for the E 42.

Cavazza writes that Italian interest in folklore grew during World War I as soldiers on the front lines encountered regional differences among compatriots in the form of disparate cultures and dialects.⁵⁹ Therefore, according to this view, both Fascism and folkloric scholarship grew out of the war experience. While many reactionaries depicted the regional differences and the poverty of Italy's forces as a major cause for Italy's calamitous World War I campaign, Fascism undertook to create a new form of unity, one that respected Italy's "ancient" cultural traditions.⁶⁰ Thus, just as Fascism set out to resolve internal cultural differences, it placed a higher value on particular aspects of folklore that would express something vital to Fascist ideology. Folklore would exalt the beauty of the authentic community held together by concrete cultural bonds, unaffected by capitalist modernity. Under the rule of a regime that placed productivism and cultural difference at the center of corporatist ideology, folklore represented according to Simeone, "the essence of what it was to be Italian, the essence [...] that survived and prospered apart from the cultural internationalism of many Italians and in spite of the presence of foreign rulers in the peninsula for so many centuries."⁶¹ By 1930 folklore was increasingly integrated

⁵⁹ See page 109 in Cavazza, "La folkloristica italiana e il fascismo: Il Comitato Nazionale per le Arti Popolari."

⁶⁰ See page 545 in Simeone, "Fascists and Folklorists in Italy."

⁶¹ Ibid.

into the activities of Italians, forming a significant component of leisure offerings through the regime's *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro* (the state's leisure organization for workers), and actively referenced by Mussolini in newsreels and public addresses.⁶²

Though folklore had established its importance to the regime by the time planning had commenced on the E 42 exhibits, it is worth noting that the Fascists did not invent the careful culturalism for the Roman World's Fair. Italy had itself held numerous prior folkloric exhibits, including the notable 1911 Ethnographic Exhibit of Rome. Esteemed ethnographers working on the E 42 Ethnography Exhibit committee strived to explicate the ways in which their plans would ensure a marked break with Rome 1911. In an extensive E 42 Folklore Exhibit plan, authored by architectural historian Guglielmo De Angelis, folklore professor Paolo Tóschi, and journalist Giuseppe Ceccarèlli, the Rome Exhibit of 1911 is besmirched for "reflecting Italy of that time," namely the liberal period that preceded Fascism.⁶³ Not only did Rome 1911 display objects that were "not ethnographically Italian," write the authors, but the exhibit also "lacked the documentation of certain aspects of popular art and traditional life that have only come to the fore in recent years, such as rustic architecture." Building on the theme of the unity of disparate traditions discussed above, prominent ethnologist Nicola Borrelli wrote that previous ethnographic exhibits like Rome 1911 focused only on Roman traditions or on the exotic

⁶² Ibid. Mussolini had adopted a variety of mottos with folkloric origins, such as "*Il popolo, che non rispetta le tradizioni del passato, rinunzia a una parte di vita,*" ("People who do not respect the traditions of the past renounce a part of life"), and "*Se cado in terra, accidenti a chi mi alza*" ("If I fall to the ground, damn him who helps me up)."

⁶³ Paolo Tóschi was a professor of the history of Popular Traditions at the University of Roma. De Angelis was an historian of Architecture who in 1933 joined the administration of the *Antichità e Belle Arti*. Giuseppe Ceccarèlli was a journalist (sometimes writing under the Latin pseudonym, *Ceccarius*) on the popular traditions of Rome.

character of specific traditions rather than integrating these into the “powerful revival of national life.”⁶⁴ While former expositions did well, in Borrelli’s words, to bring forth “our ethnographic patrimony” and the “richness of the traditions of the Italian people,” the E 42 Ethnographic Exhibit, “in its organic, national totality, will be able to fully document all of the wealth and the incomparable moral and spiritual heritage of our *indivisible* people.”⁶⁵ E 42 Ethnography Exhibit planner Raimondo Zamponi noted that Rome 1911 cultivated interest through the display of “division and separation between the groups of [Italy’s] various regions,” rather than its unity, showing that all of the regional and local cultural variations on display at the E 42 were, ironically, homogenizing, as together they all shared an opposition to the modern.⁶⁶

Exhibit plans had to separate the Fascist E 42 from Italy’s liberal past works in the field of ethnography, while also creating definitive lacunae with other “liberal” world’s fairs. A 1939 meeting discussed precisely how the 1942 World’s Fair exhibit on Italy’s folkloric traditions would be a spectacle like nothing ever seen before in preceding world’s fairs.⁶⁷ In Brussels 1935, it was noted during the meeting, only one exhibit was dedicated to ethnography, an “ample folkloristic reconstruction of old Brussels.” The 1937 World’s Fair in Paris had a lone folklore exhibit on France’s provinces. At Zurich 1939, “rural culture” was exhibited “in the form of a small village.” At the 1939 New York City World’s Fair, “there is nothing of equivalence.” E 42

⁶⁴ ACS, E42, Busta 1012, Fascicolo 9645. Borrelli explains in a later E 42 Ethnography Exhibit proposal that two noteworthy folkloric exhibits preceded the Fascist epoch: the Exposition of Italian Ethnography, held in Rome in 1893, and the Exhibit of Sicilian Ethnography, held in Palermo in 1911.

⁶⁵ Ibid. Emphasis mine.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

planners were confident that there had never been an exhibit like it before in World's Fair history. At a total cost of 3.8 million ITL, more than the regime spent to build new dormitories that would lodge over 1,000 laborers near the E 42 site, exhibit planners would have an extraordinary budget at their disposal, placing lofty objectives within reach.⁶⁸

Paradoxically, Fascist ethnographers lacked a term for the study of Italian traditions that would constitute the core of the exhibit, with “folklore” or the Italian cognate “*Folkloristica*” being of non-Italian origin and thereby “eliminated” from the Italian language—like all other words of foreign derivation. Exhibit planner Nicola Borrelli, for one, considered the use of the term “Folklore, dictated by the scholars of the London Athenauem” to have caused significant damage to the discipline, for it “does not render an adequate concept of the importance of such vast and profound content.”⁶⁹ Even though Fascist party secretary Achille Starace had mandated that the word “Folklore” be eradicated from usage in 1933, “the decree was soon ignored, and the offending word quickly reappeared in print.”⁷⁰ Throughout drafts of plans for the “Folklore Exhibit,” the committee struggled to attach a critical Italian term to the project, leading to the use of a number of different names. Other terms utilized in exhibit plans include the “Ethnography Exhibit,” the “Demology Exhibit” (both terms with Greek origins), and the “Popular Customs Exhibit” (of Italian origin). A 1939 executive order decreed the use of the official Italian translation of “folklore,” *tradizioni popolari*, (“Popular Traditions”). Even then, exhibit planners appear uncertain of what to call the World's Fair exhibit, with each planner referencing the exhibit through a variety of names, sometimes within the same proposal. Other exhibit planners

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See page 551 in Simeone, “Fascists and Folklorists in Italy.”

hybridized foreign and Italian terms, as in the title for Emilio Bodrero's "Ethnography and Popular Customs Exhibit."⁷¹ During a September 1940 General Meeting of the "Exhibit of Ethnography" committee, members had to reiterate the need to use "Exhibit of Popular Traditions" as the official public name.⁷²

Though Nicola Borrelli vehemently opposed use of the imported term "Folklore," the prominent ethnologist and author of two books on Italian folklore⁷³ created multiple sets of plans for his then hybrid titled "Ethnography and Popular Customs Exhibit."⁷⁴ Taken together, his plans provide great detail into the political agenda of the E 42 Ethnography Exhibit. When considered at another level of abstraction, his plans offer insight into the Fascist attempt to

⁷¹ Emilio Bodrero was a scholar of ancient philosophy but not a folklorist. He was, however, a party member, a Senator of the Realm, and a professor of the history of Fascism at the University of Rome. Bodrero played a major role in promoting folkloric manifestations with the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro beginning in 1927. Bodrero and Pier Silverio Leicht attempted to bring philological rigor to the folkloric work of the OND. See page 111 in Cavazza, "La folkloristica italiana e il fascismo: Il Comitato Nazionale per le Arti Popolari."

⁷² ACS, E42, Busta 1012, Fascicolo 9645. Also on the commission were Pier Silverio Leicht (1874-1956), Italian historian of rights, National Fellow of the *Accademia dei Lincei*, senator dal Regno, and author of the 1937 *Studi sulla proprieta fondiaria nel medio evo*; Orazio Amato (1884-1952), a painter, politician, elected member of legislature, and in 1939 became a counselor in the *Camera dei Fasci e delle Corporazioni*; and Raimondo Zamponi (1872-1954).

⁷³ In *Storia e Demopsicologia dell'Agro Vescino* (Maddaloni, 1919), Borrelli writes that many of Italy's backwater villages were "ahistorical," writing "villages exist in which the ahistorical character is revealed, not only through the lack of advancement, ruins, or relics, but also from a summary close examination of rites, practices, language, and names." It is a place "without memories, without traditions of significance, without "pride" as Nicola Borrelli writes in the text, "risen from medieval obscurity, lived darkness, nourished by darkness." In 1940, Borrelli published *Memorie storiche di Pignataro Maggiore*. In a work on "reactionary brigandage" in Sessa Aurunca, a village near the southern Italian city of Caserta, Borrelli writes that the Bourbons left "a trail of ignorance, foolishness, and degradation" to provoke a strong sentiment of hate against the wealthy classes and their idleness and exploitation. Angelo Martino, "Nicola Borrelli, storico, letterato eclettico, discepolo del pittore Luigi Toro." <http://www.comunedipignataro.it/?p=21604>. <December 14, 2014>.

⁷⁴ ACS, E42, Busta 1012, Fascicolo 9645.

reconcile Italy's internal differences within the sphere of Fascism's campaign against homogeneity. Ethnography in Italy, according to Borrelli, has principally nationalist aims; "unlike other nations (England for example) in which folklore has a general character, in our nation it has essentially national direction and purposes."⁷⁵ Italian regional cultural differences, much like *Italianità* on a national scale, were under threat by the "new" industrial society, steadily progressing toward homogeneity. "The great part of these 'vestiges of antiquity,' as Vico called them, are destined to go astray in the centuries, to be dispersed and extinguished," writes Borrelli. "Other vestiges, though altered, modified, adapted, reworked, I would say, by the sudden arrival of the new civilization, are often deformed and transformed." Ethnologists were thereby engaged in a time-sensitive struggle to capture and retain Italy's "ancestral heritage" against the rising tide of homogeneity in the midst of the reorienting effects of modernity.

Borrelli begins his longer opus with a quote from Goethe's "Mignon:" "*Kennst du das land...?*"⁷⁶ Borrelli references Goethe's tale of longing for the simple concrete splendors of the Italian homeland, as told by the young girl Mignon to her German patron Wilhelm Meister. "Do You Know the Land where the lemon-trees grow, in darkened leaves the gold-oranges glow, a soft wind blows from the pure blue sky [...]," sings a melodious Mignon.⁷⁷ "It must be Italy" Wilhelm Meister replies. "If you go to Italy, take me with you. I'm freezing here." Borrelli, in his plans for exhibiting Italian folklore at the E 42, shows a comparable romantic longing for the

⁷⁵ Ibid. Borrelli would further articulate his plans for the Ethnography Exhibit a month after submitting his initial proposal.

⁷⁶ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. Trans. Eric A. Blackball, ed. (Princeton 1989): 83-84.

⁷⁷ Ibid. After acrobats kidnapped Mignon from Italy, she escaped to Germany to stay under the protection of Wilhelm Meister.

sensual beauties of the Italian homeland.⁷⁸ Similar to Goethe's character Mignon, Italy too had a German benefactor in the form of Hitler, whose patronage and authority had allowed Italy to feel safe relishing in its beauties once again. According to Borrelli, Italy was a place in which traditions survived. "The relics of faded civilizations, echoes of remote cults, rites, and ceremonies, peculiar, dispersed fragments of primitive knowledge persist to this day, persevering throughout the centuries and the times."⁷⁹ The preservation of these concrete, cultural differences required a proverbial "struggle against time," or more precisely, resistance to a very peculiar conception of time, contra the linear time of modernity. The "ahistorical" pre-modern world was in recent times placed into a relationship with the encroaching linear-historical dimension of modernity. The historical time of modern society had "reclaimed" and commodified the notable civilization that existed before capitalism, as evidenced by the now universally heralded ancient ruins that confronted Italians in the present.

The E 42 Ethnography Exhibit, according to Borrelli, would do more than reveal the authentic traditions of Italians; the Exhibit

must shape the moral and spiritual patrimony of the Italian people, it must exalt, region by region, *the unity of characteristics of the stock*, the attachment of the people to their own land, to the home, to the family, to the Fatherland, to the sacred heritage of the forefathers. It must simultaneously exalt the activity, the industriousness, the brilliance, the wholesome innate poetry that comforts or livens the spirit through the many contingencies and moments of life. These are the objectives that the Exhibit must achieve; *hoc opus, hic labor*.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ ACS, E42, Busta 1012, Fascicolo 9645.

⁸⁰ "This is the hard work, this is the toil." The second emphasis in Latin appears in the original, while the first has been added. ACS, E42, Busta 1012, Fascicolo 9645.

The exhibit needed to demonstrate Italy's disparate regional traditions, the "felt realities of indigenous culture," in a way so as to be actionable in the present.⁸¹ The exhibit thusly needed to structure the *lebenswelt*, the entire void between individual and society that is suffused with meaning – or as Jameson puts it, "the gap between [...] the meaningless materiality of the body and nature and the meaning-endowment of history and of the social."⁸² Italy's disparate ethnic enclaves would cohere around their shared opposition to the modern. Italian "otherness," based upon these unifying anti-modern characteristics, was therefore not only an ontological fact, it was universally so.⁸³

The individuals that constituted the many "ethnic islands" unaffected by the significant transformations of the prior century were to be shown in the Ethnography Exhibit as the irreducible elements of otherness, impervious to further fragmentation. Borrelli's exhibit would bring forth the authentic pasts of these genuine "Italians" to "constitute the most faithful and efficacious documentation of that 'lesser known history' [*storia minore*] – as Caesar defined it – which has remained in the shadows until our day."⁸⁴ This history "from below," the history of the subaltern's concrete everyday existence must be "the history of the humble, the ignorant, the nameless, children, girls, farmers, workers, the real people, which the rustic man, the natural man (*l'enfant de la nature*) of Rousseau represents." The remnants of a "comprehensive 'tradition,'" (the "history, knowledge, activity, customs, rites, etc., of the people)" were vital to recover to

⁸¹ See Brennan, "Subaltern Stakes."

⁸² For more on Heidegger's reading of Van Gogh's work of art "Peasant Shoes," refer to pages 59 and 60 in Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism."

⁸³ See Brennan, "Subaltern Stakes."

⁸⁴ *ACS, E42, Busta 1012, Fascicolo 9645.*

understand the “multiplicity of the plebian soul.” This exploration of subaltern consciousness on display at the 1942 World’s Fair “will opportunistically emphasize [...] how the characteristics and customs of the lowest people” gave form to the “domestic, social, religious, and spiritual life of *il popolo*.”⁸⁵

The authentic “national” patrimony, organically developed over millennia for Borrelli, was threatened by globalization. The nineteenth century unification of Italy, Borrelli writes, had greatly facilitated communication between populations of cities, towns, and the countryside, allowing for the spread of more homogeneous norms. “Under the influence of a greater leveling civilization and the diffusion of small town fashion, country people began the slow but continual repudiation of traditional elements that came to humiliate them in the face of the privileged classes.”⁸⁶ The increase in exchanges and spread of values from populated centers to the countryside had led village people to consciously resist the threatening homogeneity, leading cultural elements from backwater hamlets to become the most “tenaciously conserved and passed on.” Borrelli sees this original resistance to cultural homogeneity as admirable. He advocates for the resuscitation of now dying folkloric customs to “forestall the damage of losing them to memory.” It was the work of ethnographers to preserve these endangered customs, “to find them in traces around Italy, in the small provincial towns and in the old houses of well-off villages,” and to continue to manifest a society in which these values were incorporated together in the form of a general resistance to homogenizing forces.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

One of the major motivations for Borrelli is to preserve a culture of “virtuous producers” that is being undermined, even destroyed, as the march of modernity rolls forth. “In the course of the centuries, the traditionalistic patrimony has experienced, and will continue to undergo forever more, breakdown, alterations, contaminations, degenerations, transformations, and dispersions, causing it today to be less rich, less significant, and even less so into the future.”⁸⁷ Borrelli’s predictive analysis is striking. He observes the advancing transformations underway since the onset of industrialization in the nineteenth century, and the trend is clear: soon there will be nothing but homogeneity of objects and culture. “No longer does one today, like once upon a time in Campania, adorn oneself with symbols and signs of the yoke, or the embrace of the plow, no longer does the peasant in love make offerings to his beauty to demonstrate his promises,” writes Borrelli. The loss of past traditions was lamentable, as were the decline of authentic, concrete mediated symbols, and the romance of traditional interpersonal relationships. “Household furnishings also continue to lose their traditional character, their form, their characteristic uses,” writes Borrelli, “much like the products of domestic industries or the country manufacturing of housewives.”⁸⁸ In this reference to the “putting-out system,” a form of rural domestic piecework performed with the dawning of machine production in Western Europe, Borrelli alludes to virtuous producers within a proto-industrial hybrid form that portends

⁸⁷ *ACS, E42, Busta 1012, Fascicolo 9645.*

⁸⁸ This seems to be a reference to the “putting-out system” common in in eighteenth century Western Europe just before the industrial revolution. For more on the “putting-out system,” see pages 431 to 434 in Karl Marx, “Capital, Volume One,” *The Marx-Engels Reader*, R. Tucker, ed. (New York 1979).

to the logic of the proximate social form—the “last space station” before the full-blown abstraction and increased homogeneity of place and culture under capitalism.⁸⁹

Folklore, as Borrelli’s passages suggest, provided a vision into a romantic pre-capitalism, a world of concrete social relations and “real” objects created by pre-industrial forms of labor.⁹⁰ These timeworn traditions were threatened by the same cosmopolitanism that Fascists had claimed to explicitly oppose. Furthermore, this sense of Italian cultural difference also served real aims of creating commodity difference in ways that befitted the regime’s autarky paradigm. In this way, Borrelli writes that exhibiting Italy’s folkloric traditions would not only produce knowledge, such an exhibit would “brighten up the eyes and the souls of visitors.” After the E 42 Ethnography Exhibit, “it will never again be repeated that [Italians] possess an ethnological material of the first order but do not know how to valorize it.” Throughout the proposal, Borrelli offers a lament for the historical change consummated by the historical logic of capitalism, and yet shows that he is constrained by that very logic. Demonstrations of Italy’s endangered traditions for a cosmopolitan audience would have to fully cohere to the very logic of consumerism that was historically positioned to undermine the existence of the traditions on display. If the discourse of conserving tradition while changing with the times was a way to rhetorically break with the rapid transformations wrought by Washington and Moscow, Fascists discovered that there was value in “holding to traditions.” In an autarkic system of self-sufficiency and constrained by marketing principles, material alterity based on a set of “cultural differences” would prove excellent for propelling domestic production and reconstituting capital,

⁸⁹ Ibid., 302 to 312.

⁹⁰ *ACS, E42, Busta 1012, Fascicolo 9645.*

as demonstrated by the import-substitution industrialization policies popular worldwide after the Second World War.⁹¹

One significant point of contention however was the ordering of the exhibit. How would Fascist ethnographers join together the various traditions? How would divergent regionalisms be conjoined in unified exhibit displays? For Borrelli, “objective ethnographic exhibits” would “reveal ethnic and moral characteristics of the Italian people.”⁹² The truth of regional differences would be expressed through patrimonial objects. “Every object in the exhibit must have a clear and precise national scope,” writes Borrelli, “documenting an authentic tradition of the Italian people.” Ethnographic material would reveal to visitors “proud characteristics of the Fatherland’s various populations, in which authentic ethnic islands will be discovered, deserving of consideration and study.” For Borrelli, the most “logical, efficacious, and I would say, natural ordering of the exhibit is through regional-geography.” This method of ordering the ethnographic materials would allow for “easy comparison between diverse populaces and regions, permitting us to show, in the most appropriate way, the deeply singular, ethnic national community” constituted by “the richness of our ancestral traditions.”⁹³ Thus, Italy’s ethnographic multiplicity would be expressed as a unified totality against modernity’s homogenizing tendencies, representing the qualitative dimension against the quantitative.

Members of the Ethnography Exhibit committee each developed their own proposal for organizing the exhibit and for negotiating Italy’s regional differences amid the larger project of

⁹¹ In a series of 1938 editorials, chief E 42 architect Marcello Piacentini expressed the relationship between the “Italian-specific” aesthetic of the EUR and autarky, addressed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

⁹² *ACS, E42, Busta 1012, Fascicolo 9645.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

presenting Italian cultural difference. A variety of Italy's important scholars of folkloric tradition submitted proposals and participated in committee meetings on representing very specific cultural traditions at the E 42. According to a plan submitted by De Angelis, Tósch, and Ceccarèlli, the exhibit should be organized around what they call "the four critical components of Italian popular tradition."⁹⁴ The first aspect would consist of "man, the family, and the home;" the second; social and religious life; the third, agricultural and maritime life; and lastly, artisans in small village workshops. The entire exhibit would be built around a circular tribunal. A reconstruction of Mussolini's birth home would be featured in the center, signifying "a synthesis of Italian traditional life."

In a similar manner to examples cited above, Luigi Sorrento, professor at the University of Milan, writes that the ethnography exhibit would have to "demonstrate in the allotted time and space the ethnic and spiritual unity of our race." But how could planners present such a degree of "unity" without erasing the differences that make the ethnographic material worthy of a visit? Here, Sorrento breaks with Borrelli on the matter of systematizing the exhibit through geographical difference, writing "This division cannot nor should not be developed locally: the fact of Italy's diversity of geographic conditions is obvious, just as it is in every other nation." Sorrento was a proponent of the "four-region plan," which proposed breaking down the exhibit into sections that do not correspond with any official provincial designations of the state. "With this division," says Sorrento, "it can be scientifically and in lively and moving fashion set and interposed between the organic lines of the relative groups of folk psychology, avoiding the uniformity and rigidity of the exposition." The unification of local differences was important for

⁹⁴ Ibid.

the regime's claim to the contra-modern homogeneity of Italy's authentic rural cultures, while subtle nuancing of differences was vital for retaining the attention and generating knowledge for exhibit visitors.

A general meeting of the committee members would decide on how to organize the exhibit in ethnographic zones so as to avoid "invalidating the emergence of the ethnic and spiritual unity of the Italian people." The Sorrento-Bodrero plan was ultimately selected as the best method to provide a nuanced reproduction of regional difference that together coheres into an anti-modern unity. The plan would divide Italy into four regions: Alpine Italy, Northern Italian Apennines, Southern Italian Apennines, and the Italian islands. It was agreed that, organized in this fashion, the Folklore Exhibit would avoid demonstrations of "diverse attitudes or disagreements" between Italy's regions.⁹⁵ To further mitigate regional differences, a plan for a "National March of Reverence" was agreed upon in the meeting. The "National March" would feature representatives in traditional costumes, along with regional art, music, songs, and popular dances.⁹⁶ The decision at the same meeting to include representations of customs from Italy's Empire, such as Eritreans, Libyans, Albanians, and Ethiopians, would further contribute to the sense of unity of the Italian people vis-à-vis a posited "other."

When paired with the planned Exhibit of Italian Civilization, the barriers of internal difference would dissolve before the world, superseded by an identity bound to a shared political and social aversion to the hollow abstraction of modernity. The planned exhibit, to be held in the *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana*, or the "Square Coliseum" (addressed in chapter two), was

⁹⁵ ACS, E42, Busta 1012, Fascicolo 9645.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

originally designed under the title “Exhibit of Italic Civilization from the time of Augustus to Mussolini.”⁹⁷ The original title no doubt reflected a more adequate rendering of its object than the streamlined name “Exhibit of Italian Civilization.”⁹⁸ Subsequent to the initial proposal, prominent officials and scholars each submitted extensive plans for the renamed Exhibit of Italian Civilization, including prominent director of the Institute of Roman Studies, Carlo Galassi Paluzzi.⁹⁹ The Exhibit of Italian Civilization, writes Galassi Paluzzi in his master plan, should “demonstrate the value of the contribution that Italy has brought to the development of world civilization.”¹⁰⁰ Galassi Paluzzi, a powerful voice in matters of Fascism’s appropriation of a mythical, ancient Roman past, writes “The present project, while it is oriented to exhibit the unfolding of centuries of Italian civilization, is better oriented to put into evidence how the landmark stages of western civilization are a direct product of the Genius and Action of Rome and Italy.”¹⁰¹ The Exhibit should therefore “demonstrate the ‘priorities’ and the function of ‘primacy’ exercised by Italian civilization” to “reveal how exceedingly often Italy has realized accomplishments ‘first,’ before every other people, while also giving to humanity the greatest

⁹⁷ *ACS, E42, Busta 1023, Fascicolo 9763.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* According to the initial plan, “the present Exhibit differentiates itself from every other exhibit of its kind in Italy and abroad, not only for the extent of its object, but also, and above all, because it seeks to reach the memory of visitors through fantasy, and it reaffirms its popular, all-Italian character.”

⁹⁹ See Joshua Arthurs *Excavating Modernity: the Roman Past in Fascist Italy* (Ithaca 2012): 29-31. Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, a Neapolitan and devout Catholic, attended the University of Rome for a short time before turning to journalism as a writer for conservative Catholic newspaper *Corriere d’Italia*. His early work, writes Arthurs, “suggests an affinity for cultural administration and bibliographic research.”

¹⁰⁰ *ACS, E42, Busta 1023, Fascicolo 9763.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

fruits of Civilization.” Roman civilization shared with folklore anti-modern origins, while simultaneously projecting an alternative universality based on the cultural difference and sensuous, concrete relations being undermined in modernity.

Carlo Galassi Paluzzi’s plan seeks to organize the Exhibit of Italian Civilization around the “fundamental categories through which a civilization manifests itself, affirms itself, and expands itself.”¹⁰² Fulfilling the aforementioned criteria established by Vittorio Cini, the exhibit would show that Italian civilization, with its pre-modern origins, would serve as a beacon to the world in the form of Fascism’s corporatist “universality.”¹⁰³ According to Galassi Paluzzi, the “fundamental categories of civilization” included “religion, the conceptualization and organization of the state, law, armed forces, welfare, state development, culture, literature, arts, music, sciences, technical achievement, industry, [and] commerce.” “It is according to these fundamental categories,” writes Galassi Paluzzi, “that the Exhibit could be ordered to put into evidence the broad sphere of action of Italian Civilization.”

Galassi Paluzzi includes proposals for several special displays within the main Exhibit of Italian Civilization. One subsection would be dedicated to “Italian Genius,” which he describes as an essential attribute of “the people who have given to the world and to humanity new horizons and paths.”¹⁰⁴ The “Temple of Italian Genius” would contain “statues of four Italian geniuses” renowned for their excellence, including Cesar for his “genius of action in creating the Empire,” Thomas Aquinas for his “genius of speculation and for creating European thought,” as

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ See “L’Alta Parola Del Duce: sui problemi vitali per l’avvenire dei popoli: Nella Gloria del Campidoglio.”

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

well as Dante and Michelangelo for their genius of poetry and art. “Whenever possible,” adds Galassi Paluzzi, the “Temple of Italian Genius” would “compare Italian genius” to the substantive qualities of heroic figures of other nations. A memorial named “Rome in the World” would illustrate in “pithy summary” the significance of the entire Exhibit. More than anything, Galassi Paluzzi writes, the “testimonial of the immense, fundamental contribution that Italy has given to civilization,” should not be contained by any singular exhibit, but demonstrated in the full functions of the exhibit and the E 42.

Other presentations featured as part of the larger Exhibit of Italian Civilization would include the “Roman and Ancient Latin Civilization Exhibit,” which would show how specific ancient Roman traditions continued to give shape to the Fascist state.¹⁰⁵ Early Roman infantrymen, *Hastati*, would be displayed to ontologize both Italy’s modern “warrior spirit” and the compulsory military service of humbler peoples in the service of an ownership society. *Jus Feciale*, a rudimentary form of international law that focused on war indemnities, would show that real international law emanates from the concrete relations of pre-modern Rome. Marriage, that most “enduring” of traditional institutions, would be symbolized through the “*Confarreatio*,” a marital contract in which the woman’s father passes the bride “beneath [his] marital hand” to her new husband, showing the historical basis for marriage and Fascism’s subordination of women. The family would be displayed as well, “this embryonic nucleus of Roman power, the small uncompromising society where the absolute ruler the ‘pater’ is surrounded by the wife, the children, slaves, and clients.” Each of the four traditions on display would involve the willful appropriation of select aspects of a culture and a field of social

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

relations that continued to speak to desired norms and modes of being during the Fascist epoch. The Roman imperial-historical motif, when combined with the ethnographic, is configured to show that corporatism would once again return Rome as the locus of universal civilization.

Meanwhile, the “Italian Autograph Exhibit” would provide an outlet for the Fascist desire for the “Real” with a display on the signatures of historical figures from the 15th century to Mussolini.¹⁰⁶ Autographs of Italian figures such as Leonardo, Marconi, D’Annunzio, Mussolini, and Pietro Badoglio would show “in the most suggestive way the great figures that had, through the labor of centuries, given spirit and form to Italian civilization in its innumerable manifestations.” The two scholars who write the plan for the exhibit note that “the autograph is without a doubt the most lively, spiritual document strictly connected to the personality of the creator,” with a significance that “crosses time” to the extent that “even an ignorant is interested in the signature of a great [man].”

IV. Edification at the World’s Fair Exhibits

In World’s Fair exhibits, Fascist corporatist ideology would be transformed from political and moral abstractions into objects for the creation of knowledge for an international audience. In this way, exhibit plans also illuminate discussions on the very methods considered most imperative for the edification of World’s Fair patrons. Fascist officials wanted fair visitors to embark upon a full-sensory, knowledge-producing experience of fascism “of their own volition,

¹⁰⁶ *ACS, E42, Busta 1023, Fascicolo 9763*. The proposal, written by Dr. Ferdinando Gerra and Dr. Ettore Serra, divided autographs into 6 groups: 1) Casa Savoia, 2) Popes, 3) Heads of State, Politicians, leaders, 4) Artists: painters, sculptors, architects, musicians, 5) Scientists, Explorers, Navigators, 6) Intellectuals and historians.

without forceful propaganda.”¹⁰⁷ In response to the officials’ requests, exhibits were designed to provide individual “psychologies” with pleasure and entertainment to most effectively bridge the divide between “high-culture” and the domain of the “lowbrow.” As a marker of Fascism’s break with a world in which impersonal institutions mediated relationships between humans, and where discourses disseminated through new technologies of mass communication, traditional relationships and authentic modes of being would take on the dimension of cultural spectacle in the World’s Fair.

The 1939 government document, “Exhibit of Italian Civilization: Fundamental Criteria for the Presentation of the Exhibition,” proposes various plans for exhibits at E 42.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps most of all it is particularly interesting for its attempt to calibrate the interaction – and in a sense, to close the space – between subject and object at the exposition. It advocates several all-encompassing and discreet methods to instill Fascist ideology in E 42 visitors.¹⁰⁹ The exposition was seen as an ideal space to make Fascist abstractions tangible, to physically concretize fascist corporatist ideology from the metaphysical realm. Visitors, the document states, would embark upon an “a posteriori,” knowledge producing, full-sensory experience of Fascism “of their own

¹⁰⁷ See the 1939 document “Mostra della Civiltà Italiana: Criteri fondamentali per la presentazione della Mostra” republished in full in *E 42: L’Esposizione Universale di Roma; Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Tullio Gregory and Achille Tartaro, editors (Venice 1987): 157-166. This “soft” approach to presenting Fascist ideology to international tourists foreshadowed the views expressed by Italian tourism expert Giovanni Mariotti in 1941, who advocated for a highly restrained take on the “totalitarian revolution.” See pages 5 and 6 in R.J.B. Bosworth “Tourist Planning in Fascist Italy and the Limits of a Totalitarian Culture.”

¹⁰⁸ See “Mostra della Civiltà Italiana. Criteri fondamentali per la presentazione della Mostra.” The complete document is published in, *E 42: L’Esposizione Universale di Roma; Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. 157-166.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

volition, without forceful propaganda.”¹¹⁰ In the process of describing the optimum method of universally disseminating Fascist ideology at the exposition, Fascist intellectuals begin to develop a theory of knowledge and of the ways in which individuals might “come to know” by way of interaction with a planned, distinct mobilization of culture expressed in material dimensions.

Fascist journalist Oreste Mosca advocated writing brash expressions like “Visit the Country of Autarky” on massive billboards and “in bright lights” in central locations around the world like Times Square, to articulate the news of “Italy’s new economy” and “new civilization” formed upon the residues of the Roman past.¹¹¹ The regime was however interested in devising more subtle methods to disseminate fascism universally. In the third major exposition plan, a type of subtle “branding” is recommended to inculcate Exhibit visitors with the desired message.¹¹² Each exhibit, according to the plan, would display Italian accomplishments to make visitors “continually ‘feel’ [*emphasis in original*] as if the Roman civilization always, and the Italian [civilization] almost always, have been the dominant civilization, the fulcrum and impetus of universal civilization.”¹¹³ Such a portrayal would naturalize the Fascist “third way” as indelibly Roman and universal. To make this representation appear valid, many periods of Italic

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ According to Mosca, the Fascist Revolution was the “French Revolution of the 20th century.” Just as the latter revolution “initiated great social change in Europe until the end of the Great War,” Mosca states that fascist Italy was initiating a similar type of revolutionary change. See Oreste Mosca’s “Proemio all’Esposizione del 1942,” *Il Popolo di Roma*, 27 Settembre 1938: 3.

¹¹² My use of the term “branding” comes from Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (New York 2000): 5-6.

¹¹³ ACS, E42, Busta 1023, Fascicolo 9763.

peninsular history would have to be glossed over in a manner befitting the regime.¹¹⁴ In tending to “the most obscure periods of our history”, the exhibits “must insist on the universality of Italian civilization,” even if difficult to prove. Exhibits should “harmonize and blend adverse elements in order to recreate them in their original form.” The Historical Exhibit – designed to “document the beneficial influence that Italian civilization has had in historical events and throughout history” – would trace the periods of Italian history, from the Roman Empire to the fascist regime, mostly focusing on “great men.”¹¹⁵

Who was the intended viewer of the World’s Fair Exhibits? For folklorist Nicola Borrelli, the Italian Popular Traditions Exhibit was vital for building knowledge of Italian ethnography, not just with the public, but also among scholars, to whom the “great part the treasures of the traditions of our stock are unknown.” Yet the exhibit would have to appeal to a diverse audience. “We cannot forget that Expositions are principally designed to excite the curiosity of the grand public, which is made up of 10 percent scholars and experts, 30 percent by intelligent and cultured public, 60 percent by inattentive and distracted laymen, who are frequently disposed to buoyancy and jokes, especially in an Exhibit of Ethnography,” states Borrelli. Or as his colleague, historian and National Fellow of Medieval property rights Pier Silverio Leicht put it to

¹¹⁴ See Mia Fuller (Apr. 1996). “Wherever You Go, There you Are: Fascist Plans for the Colonial Addis Ababa and the Colonizing Suburb of EUR ’42,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 31 (2): 397-418.

¹¹⁵ At the end of this exhibit, the historical connection of the former millennia to Mussolini and fascism would be made: “Mussolini reassumes the most profound aspirations of the *lineage* [...] as the confluence and conclusion of almost two millennia of history.” For greater detail into the plans for the historical presentation, see pages 6-31 of this document. *ACS, E42, Busta 1023, Fascicolo 9763*.

the Exhibit Committee: “How do we prevent the Exhibit from tiring the eyes of the visitor?”¹¹⁶

Toschi and Ceccarelli had their own take on the visitors of the exhibit. “Everyone is in agreement that the Exhibit must be captivating and fun, maintaining an implicit, rigorous scientific character,” write the Exhibit planners, adding:

It must be remembered that for every 1,000 visitors, nine-tenths come to observe and that is all; nine-tenths of the other tenth will be content to identify objects and the application of arts from their own country; only the remaining minority will be able to appreciate the historical scientific valor of the Exhibit, which for this reason must produce all of the effects, on all the visitors, with indirect means, of suggestion, of fantasy, of performance/show. It’s therefore necessary to 1) avoid giving *a priori* preference to any exclusive general criteria. 2) Pursue a perfect synergy between artists and technicians [...] in good taste and within the implicit utility of the Exhibit. 3) Know how to use from time to time analytics and synthetics, that is, know how to exhibit a series of similar objects, but also know how to present a suggestive and characteristic group of things. 4) Above all, see big and do not insist on the minutiae, which is often considered sacrosanct in a museum.¹¹⁷

To create a meaningful exhibit to even this latter majority, the exhibit would be prepared with “necessary competence, with discernment, with taste and brilliance,” Borrelli’s plan would appeal to “high-brow” observers, people “of mediocre culture” and the uninitiated, by “rendering a certain count of what is characteristic, picturesque, interesting, marvelous traditions of the people, grabbing them through the significance, penetrating the spirit, revealing the content of this or that rite, knowledge of the history of a utensil, of a artifact, of a tool, of how much is revealed through the multiform activity, the versatile brilliance, the artistic sense of even the humble plebs.”

¹¹⁶ *ACS, E42, Busta 1012, Fascicolo 9645.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

The “third way,” to find its historical rejoinder in the purported universality of the Roman past, was to be disseminated at the Exhibit through the edification of visitors. Because “a public of various tastes, biases, and cultures will be attending the Exhibition, the principle assignment of the presenters will be to strike the imagination of this public, (also made up of foreigners).”¹¹⁸ To succeed at “exciting the visitor’s sensibility and curiosity” the exhibitions would have to “connect materials” without falling back on “only one preordained mode of expression, which would generate monotony.” The pamphlet elaborates on all valid forms of pedagogy to be employed to reach its aim of “educating humanity,” in light of the extraordinary individual, cultural, and linguistic differences in perception and communication among visitors:

The methods of communicating with the public must be diverse: periodical writings that are indicative of the vibrant Italian civilization, physical maps, dioramas, diagrams, or abstract graphics of immediate significance for those with an ability to understand more basic layouts, plastic models and picturesque spectacles for those with visual instincts, phonic instruments and even bright, exceptional displays for those with imagination.¹¹⁹

The Fascists thus demonstrate a consideration for appealing to the diversity of individual learning styles. Of course, with a target audience as wide as “the man of high culture” and “the masses,” the appeal to Exhibition visitors would have to be conveyed as tacitly as possible. Therefore, the “populist mobilization” and the diversification of learning materials listed above would create one or many substantiations of knowledge of Fascism and its workings for everyone.¹²⁰ In a sense, it also tried to constitute a conceptual framework by which Fascism

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid. To further maintain the interest of the diversity of individuals expected, the pamphlet states, the exhibition would have to adhere to “requirements of conciseness to avoid... futile multiplications and subtle differentiation” between its various portions. Each part of the

could be known, which suggests at least the implicit understanding of the mutable nature of concepts and meaning.

Even the Exhibit of Science would “feature Italian scientific achievements” and “demonstrate the many Italian discoveries... and inventions,” including the “reproduction of foreign modern machines derived from Italian origins.”¹²¹ The “Exhibit of Science” would stress the modern potency of Fascist Rome through the guise of the scientific feats of Italian nationals. It was hoped that this exhibit, in its totality, would display “in maximum evidence those prerogatives and conquests of Italian civilization, that especially abroad, are less noted, or worse yet, misunderstood.”¹²² By demonstrating Italian primacy to the outside world, it would, in effect, prime the world for the universal vision of the “third way.” As physical articulations of Fascism and the universality of the ancient and modern Roman Empires, these exhibits would create an experience that would allow attendees to form knowledge of the “third way.”

To further maintain the interest of such a diverse pool of individuals, the pamphlet states that exhibits would have to be concise. While each particular exhibit was to offer new and stark differentiation from other sections, they were to be fused and harmonized into a coherent whole to avoid the disruption of the E 42’s master-narrative. The EUR was to be the material substantiation of the cultural distinction allotted by the corporatist third way as it spread universally. Like advertising on billboards or Oreste Mosca’s giant neon signs in Times Square, the EUR would alter perceptions and convince the world of the new form of society and

exhibit would have to be new and offer stark differentiation from other sections, while fusing and harmonizing these parts into a coherent whole.

¹²¹ *ACS, E42, Busta 1106, Fascicolo 10724.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

economy for its practical universal dissemination. In fact, Mosca claims that the new corporatist economy, constituted in Italy, was already widely experienced by the people of several countries throughout the world, unbeknownst or denied by them and their respective nation-states.

V. Conclusion: The Limits of Cultural Overcomings

When the Germans invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, the state of the world and Italy's relation to it had officially changed. Months earlier, Italy had signed the Pact of Steel with Germany, cementing Italy's military alliance with Germany.¹²³ In the Pact, each nation pledged to fully commit to the other in the event of war and agreed that neither would seek a separate peace.¹²⁴ "Because of its international character, the E 42 had to directly or indirectly feel the effects of worldwide political developments," reads a front-page article in the February 4, 1940 *Corriere della Sera*.¹²⁵ The article seeks to assure the public that "work on the project continues

¹²³ On May 22, 1939, Italian Foreign Minister Count Galeazzo Ciano and German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop met in Munich to sign the Pact of Steel (referred to in Italian as "*Il Patto di Acciao*"). Not surprisingly, the accord was months in the making by the date of its official signing. In the months leading up to the signing of the treaty, Italy, fearful of the growing power of Nazi Germany, tried to court both England and France. Italy is said to have wanted concessions in exchange for a commitment to neutrality. But France and England rejected Italy's attempt. After six months of resisting offers from Nazi Germany to sign the alliance Pact, Mussolini finally agreed to sign the German drafted version. See page 119 in John Whittam, *Fascist Italy* (Manchester 1995).

¹²⁴ Ibid. Reportedly, Mussolini had ordered Ciano to secure the treaty as quickly as possible. Ciano informed Germany that Italy would not be prepared for war until 1943. It has been argued that Mussolini believed the Pact of Steel would empower him with a greater ability to restrain Hitler and prevent the eruption of war until Italy could better equip itself, suggesting that Italy was aware of its military weakness and preferred to bring about diplomacy through a different "show of force."

¹²⁵ "E. 42: Olimpiade Delle Civiltà: Il Duce Dispone Che I lavori proseguano secondo il programma," *Il Corriere della Sera*, 4 February 1940: 1.

with great tranquility,” in spite of such alarming international developments.¹²⁶ With 26 nations still agreeing to participate in the 1942 World’s Fair of Rome, the regime began to conceive of the Exhibition as a political demonstration “of order, of serenity, of the virile spirit of peace that [Fascism] has given to the world and in peoples’ lives in this dramatic moment.”¹²⁷ EUR Agency president Vittorio Cini would revisit this sentiment in the coming year.

On June 10, 1940, Italy entered the war, siding with the German National Socialists after a year of formal neutrality.¹²⁸ Subsequent to the Italian declaration of war, the E 42 mostly disappeared from the Italian press. Italian newspapers soon announced the postponement of the *Esposizione Universale di Roma*. Even still, “During 1940,” as Agency doctor Giovanni Ciccolini wrote, “labor in the EUR zone saw no rest, and in some instances even accelerated.”¹²⁹ By the end of 1940 Vittorio Cini had broadened his power within the Fascist regime. Cini was appointed Communications Minister for the Fascist regime and was officially donned with the title of “count” (or *conte*, from the Latin *comes*, or “companion”), a formal noble ranking with origins in Roman antiquity.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Italy maintained neutrality in spite of commitments to the Nazis stemming from the Pact of Steel.

¹²⁹ See *ACS, E42, Busta 1144, Fascicolo 11311*.

¹³⁰ Cini took over the role of Communications Minister following the death of Costanzo Ciano.

In December of 1940, Cini authored the extensive “Revision of the ‘E 42 Provisional Plan’ from 1937.”¹³¹ A review of this pamphlet both summarizes earlier plans, useful for the purposes of review, while also pushing the narrative of the E 42 deep into the war years. The pamphlet-length Revision to the original “Plan,” discussed earlier in this chapter, seeks to reassure its reader that the E 42 would take place—eventually. It is further important for Cini’s reflection on his earlier EUR plans from 1937 and on his placement of the E 42 within the context of the war. Writing to Mussolini three years after his initial “E 42 Provisional Plan,” Cini reiterated the central themes of the original while arguing that more focus would be placed on the dissemination of Fascism internationally. “The EUR will assert the universality of the Fascist doctrine across the confines of the peninsula so as to propagate and assert itself in the world.”¹³² The Fascists hoped to use the E 42 to publicize a vision of a new universality emanating from Rome, one that would allow for the legitimate defense of Italian ontological cultural distinction, (and ultimately each nation’s as it spread throughout the world). Through events like the “Olympiad of Civilization,” Fascist forms of consciousness that were both expressive and constitutive of material particularity and difference would directly place Italianness within a framework for evaluation and comparison.

Cini acknowledges that the program in its original form was “constituted as much for its structural conception as for the political-spiritual content of the Exhibition,” fundamental objectives that he reassures are “naturally, unchanged.” However, Cini adds that because of

¹³¹ See “Cini, Vittorio” in the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*.

¹³² See Vittorio Cini, “Revision of the ‘Programma di Massima’ from 1937,” *E 42: L’Esposizione Universale di Roma; Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Tullio Gregory and Achille Tartaro, editors. (Venice 1987): 166-170.

recent developments, it would be necessary to “adjust the initial program to the great events that are reaching their historical fulfillment.”¹³³ As an example, he suggests that a number of smaller exhibits be consolidated into larger ones.¹³⁴ Even with the revisions, the Universal Exposition of Rome would maintain the hybrid “characters of originality and modernity that made it distinct.”¹³⁵ Cini adds that the “Olympiad of Civilization could possibly be assimilated into the theme: ‘*Novus Ordo*’ [meaning “the New Order” in Latin] to better accentuate the significance of the manifestation, envisioned to celebrate the new political and social order.”¹³⁶ While Cini claims that overt politicization was limited in his earlier proposal “to avoid appearing opportunistic,” he writes in December 1940 that “now instead, the E 42 will exalt the political, putting it in maximum light.”¹³⁷ During this period of world war, there would be nothing to hide any longer. Fascist ideology would instead be disseminated at the Exhibition to further contribute to the war, which according to Cini is a “war of ideas.”

In generating revised plans, Cini also creates a post-war vision designed to appeal to Mussolini. “England and France, for centuries assured of economic, and in great part, spiritual dominance in the world, will be substituted by the two nations that will prove victorious in the war.”¹³⁸ If England comprised the Anglo-Saxon, technical-economic might and France the Latin-

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 13.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 15.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid. With Italy’s entry into the war, Cini acknowledges, “the most important issue would be foreign participation in the exhibits.” While before the war it was “easy to assess the

political-revolutionary spirit of the Enlightenment, Germany and Italy would form a comparable tandem for the new reactionary, counter-revolutionary order. The E 42, as a vision of the ‘*Novus Ordo*,’ would therefore have to establish the ideals of the new, victorious fascist era. After the war concludes and the reign of “peace with justice” is achieved, writes Cini, “the EUR will constitute one of the most important international events of top political and spiritual significance; a potent means for asserting the fascist idea in the world.” Fascism, according to Cini, was forming “a new economy, a new morality, and a new culture.”¹³⁹ It was creating “an unmistakably new historical cycle,” similar to the “civilization of the 1800s that began with the French Revolution and instituted the principles of modern life until the dawn of fascism.”¹⁴⁰ Cini here articulates the newness of Fascism as auguring in a new historical cycle, providing a standpoint of critique that places Rome as the ideological locus of a new universalism.¹⁴¹

The principal aspects of this new civilization – in their political, social, ethnic, cultural, artistic, religious, economic, and geopolitical profile – will be determined by the vast crucible of the war; the Universal Exposition of Rome has the major assignment of constructing, translating, illustrating, and thoroughly exalting [the new civilization].¹⁴²

exact number of states willing to participate in the Exhibition, today there is no way to make such a prediction.” At the very least, Cini writes, the Exposition could feature Italy and Germany and a “grand, courteous competition between the two hegemonic empires of the world.”

¹³⁹ Ibid. This newness, Cini states, was formed by “tapping into the perennial fountains of human civilization, associated with the rigorous German method.”

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ It is not fully clear here if Cini actually sees all of history as “cyclical” or rather that capitalism has distinct long cycles within it (as highly peculiar dynamic social form). When considered in the context of Cini’s other statements in a variety of his writings reviewed in this dissertation, the latter position seems more probable.

¹⁴² Ibid.

In accomplishing these goals, the corporatist “third way” would be represented at the E 42 as the embodiment of the many aspects of the new civilization. “The Exhibition will illuminate all aspects of corporatism,” Cini writes, “the illustration of corporatism assumes absolute importance, in essence, for ideal and practical ends.”¹⁴³ Cini adds that “between capitalism and communism, between individualism and collectivism, one finds at the center” the “triumphant” corporatist state system. The E 42 would fully “document” how “this formula of social equilibrium alone will give lasting order to the world.”¹⁴⁴ The way to articulate this “truth” would be to show corporatism as “otherness.” To further counter the modern, materialist form of abstraction, the Fascists asserted another historically realized “universalist” moment through the appropriation of ancient Roman symbols. To fully presence “the system that will mark itself as the future civilization of the world,” E 42 exhibits would still have to reproduce a sense of difference and universality in a single stroke.

In its totality, writes Cini, the display of productivism (as the source of values and use-values) would counter all myth and criticism. “The Exhibits must express the potency and productive capacity of Italy, in quantity and quality, in order to explode legends and common knowledge, and to disprove artificial arguments or interests.”¹⁴⁵ The *Museo della Civiltà Italiana*, Cini writes, “will remain permanent testimony and an extremely eloquent documentation of Italian primacy in all fields at all times.”¹⁴⁶ He further suggests the possibility of reorganizing the “Exhibition of Autarchy, Corporatism, and Social Welfare” around the

¹⁴³ Ibid. Corporatism, writes Cini, “rules and develops the nation in every sphere.”

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

notion of “European Autarky” upon Italy’s “imminent” victory in the war. Beyond these changes, Cini reassures that the fundamental character of EUR would remain intact and that there would be “no variations in its essential lines.”¹⁴⁷ The E 42, as “compendium of our past, just glorification of the present, anticipation of the future,” would ensure, upon the war’s conclusion, the “reversal of many past results.”¹⁴⁸

As even Cini’s revised war time plans for the 1942 World’s Fair of Rome show, Fascists planned exhibits to display a synthesis of apparently oppositional modern productivist Italian achievements and concrete “anti-modern” cultures in order to embody the central tenets of corporatism as a growth-oriented system said to have its cultural roots in the pre-industrial world. As shown in this chapter, the cultural differences constituted by the Italian Fascist regime for the E 42 were not natural or “neutrally performed,” (if such an approach were even possible), but the effect of politics and ideology. The Italian state, for example, did not appropriate a history of lascivious acts by Roman emperors in its idealized representations of the ancients. Instead, the cultural features it took up were politically desirable, appropriated by the regime to communicate ideology in their present. As a “third way” ideology between capitalism and communism, Fascist corporatism was pitched by planners as a revolt against a homogenizing modernity, a world progressively lost to abstraction. In exhibitions of corporatist otherness, folklore provided a Fascist vision on the persistence of pre-modern traditions of “virtuous

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., underscored in the original.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. Cini believed that the Exposition should be inaugurated immediately following the war’s end, “to provide the world with an ultimate example of our organizational capacity, to limit costs, to take advantage of the favorable psychological moment that immediately follows war, and to avoid the risk of the exhibit complex aging.” He adds that a total of three years would be required from the war’s end to inaugurate the EUR so that for example, “if the war ends in 1941, the exhibit would be held in 1944.”

producers” standing against the tide of modernity’s encroaching abstraction. Ancient Rome meanwhile was symbolized as the pre-modern organic basis for an alternative transhistorical universality, communicating corporatism’s adequacy to “Italian” and “universal” traditions at the same instant.

Writing in 1934, Herbert Marcuse argued that the fascists aimed to create a “classless society” but on the basis of “the existing class society.”¹⁴⁹ Because the abolition of the economic system that produced classes was impossible, (“indeed, it cannot even recognize [the problem] as an economic one”), the fascist “overcoming” of an ailing modernity is realized in a non-economic sphere. In the folk, writes Marcuse, fascists found an ideal society that existed “prior to the ‘artificial’ system of society.”¹⁵⁰ In producing Italian World’s Fair exhibits, folklorists and Romanists synthesized divergent pre-modern “traditions” into a unity of “anti-modern” cultures, in which qualitative particularities represented Fascism as the beacon of a concrete universality. The Fascist idea of “‘otherness’ as an ontological fact (in the form of being or alterity),”¹⁵¹ presented in the form of Italy’s authentic *ante*-moderns, exhibited culture as supposed resistance to the relentless march of cultural homogenization in modernity. A contra-abstract universality based upon “organic” cultural identities, every bit the “unity that unified its parts” as per Marcuse’s claim, provided a “non-economic sphere” in which just such a non-progressive “overcoming” could be realized.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ See page 22 in Marcuse, “The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State.”

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Brennan, *Subaltern Stakes*.

¹⁵² See Marcuse, “The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State.”

Chapter 2. Fascism's Alternative Modernity: Universalism, Autarky, and Aesthetic Culturalism at the Great Rome Exposition of '42

“This Europe, in its unholy blindness always on the point of cutting its own throat, lies today in the great pincers between Russia on the one side and America on the other. Russia and America, seen metaphysically, are both the same: the same hopeless frenzy of unchained technology and of the rootless organization of the average man. When the farthest corner of the globe has been conquered technologically and can be exploited economically; [...] when time is nothing but speed, instantaneity, simultaneity, and time as history has vanished from all Dasein of all peoples; [...] then, there still looms like a specter over all this uproar the question: What for? - Where to? - and what then?”¹

Martin Heidegger, Freiburg, 1935

The Fascist regime's 1942 World Exhibition of Rome was devised as the definitive celebration of Fascism's 20th anniversary of rule in Italy. Known as the E 42, the Exhibition would take place in a massive, freshly constructed permanent city known as the EUR (*Esposizione Universale di Roma*). The EUR city was built on 400 hectares (the precise size of Rome's old city center) on the periphery of the original “*città eterna*.” As a “total city” in breadth, aesthetic, and monumental permanence, the EUR would form an integral part of the Roman World's Fair rejection of “carnavalesque” fairs past.² The city would be permanent and lasting, a reaction to ephemerality and change in capitalism. Fascist emphasis on permanence in this respect had the EUR pitched as the counterpart to transient fairgrounds like those developed

¹ See page 40 in Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Question of Metaphysics*. Translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven 2000).

² For Fascists, these past world's fairs came dangerously close to what Mikhail Bakhtin called the suspension of hierarchy and social norms. See Mikhail Bakhtin, “Carnival and Carnavalesque” *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. 2nd Ed. John Storey, editor. (Essex 1998): 250-259.

for the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 or the Paris *Exposition Universelle* of 1889, where the lone Eiffel Tower survives.³ As an homage to Fascist aspirations for an altogether different future, the EUR was designed to communicate the historical basis for an alternative modernity as rooted in the universal tradition of the ancient Empire.

To represent Fascism's break with universal modernism in spatial form, EUR architects hybridized the rectilinear façades and sharp edges of rationalism with "spiritually Roman" arches and columns, all of it in white or slight taupe. To achieve an original evocation of Italy's "primordial" cultural difference as the source of a new Fascist universality, classical-inspired statues of (now virile) Roman gods were chiseled out of Italian marble and positioned near modern Fascist renditions of ancient structures, such as the Coliseum and the Pantheon. Built with Italian commodities like marble, travertine, and pozzolana, the EUR was also a city of autarky, with cultural difference in the objective realm a potential boon to domestic production and employment.

Regime officials and "star" architects became embroiled in sustained public debates on the many permanent structures designed and built for the 1942 World's Fair in Rome. Proponents of the distinctive EUR aesthetic argued that it was an adequate expression of Fascism's break with contemporary, cosmopolitan civilization and the universalizing tendency of modernity, which authors date back to 1789. Italian identity, based on primordial cultural difference, would be revealed through the selective appropriation of ancient Roman symbols. As I will document here, Fascists applied these symbols to modern architecture and planned to make them

³ Fascist officials utilized this motive of creating a break with past "liberal" world's fairs in a variety of documents. Giuseppe Bottai cited this "break" in his original proposal for a World's Fair of 1942. See pages 11 to 16 in Luigi Di Majo and Italo Insolera, *L'EUR e Roma dagli anni trenta al duemila* (Bari 1986).

subliminally omnipresent in all forms of labor and amusement. Accordingly, Italian cultural difference expressed in the EUR structures was designed to be symbolic of Fascism's resistance to internationalism and modernity's "soulless" homogenization. In plans and debates on the EUR aesthetic, Fascism's most important architects, intellectuals, and political leaders begin with modernism as a starting point from which they outline a critique of both modernism's flattening of difference in the aesthetic realm and its correlating tendency in modern life writ large. In this way, Fascists intended to exhibit Italian cultural difference as the core of a reactionary critique of societies based upon Enlightenment reason, and their culturally homogenizing aesthetic productions. Per Fascist use, Enlightenment here references the prevailing global-universal framework moored in economic or social egalitarianism said to be characteristic of both capitalism and communism. Authors articulate the ways in which the inflection of cultural difference in aesthetic form would symbolize Fascism's radical break with Enlightenment reason, and importantly, the homogenization produced by capitalism – then in crisis – as well as communism.

The EUR would supply a concrete example of the Fascist alternative ethos by embodying Italianness and thereby thwarting the subsumption of Italian culture by liberalism and Bolshevism. Just as the EUR-style declared its resistance to "western" cultural imperialism and increased homogeneity in the aesthetic realm, Italian intellectuals posited Fascism as a "third way" through which capitalism and communism would be transcended. Fascist thinkers considered aspects of capitalism (such as Taylorism) and communism (collectivism) as leading to the demise of individual identity.⁴ Ruth Ben-Ghiat has examined how "Italian intellectuals

⁴ Ruth Ben-Ghiat writes that right-wing texts of the 1930s considered Fascism a golden mean (or negotiation) between east and west. For others, Ben-Ghiat notes, the spiritual aspect of

attempted to translate the ideology of the ‘third way’ into the (Fascist) cultural sphere.”⁵ Ben-Ghiat shows that Italian intellectuals looked abroad in their desire “to create a ‘new’ culture that would mirror the ‘revolutionary’ spirit of the regime” and stake out a unique Italian Fascist cultural ground.⁶ At the center of the Italian Fascist “third way” was corporatism,⁷ proclaimed to be a unique approach to managing the economy through a united *corpus*. Corporatism was a system in which private wealth was “drawn into the public sphere” by way of Fascist business enterprise, what Mabel Berezin describes as “the regime policy that permitted the state to adjudicate market failures” through the “apparently incompatible goals of state subsidy and free markets.”⁸ As a system said to oversee the economy with state cartels representing the mutual interests of labor and employers, corporatism was also believed to provide a spiritual negation of both liberalism and bolshevism.⁹ Fascist corporatism was to be experienced at the E 42 as a “third way” remedy for the “ills” of the materialism of these two political systems.¹⁰ The end

Fascism made it radical in comparison to competing systems. See Ben-Ghiat (April 1996). “Italian Fascism and the Aesthetics of the ‘Third Way,’” *Journal of Contemporary History* 31 (2): 293-316.

⁵ Ibid., 294.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ See Alexander De Grand *Italian Fascism: Its Origins & Development* (Lincoln 1982): 81-84.

⁸ See page 1251 in Mabel Berezin (March 1994). “Cultural Form and Political Meaning: State-subsidized Theater, Ideology, and the Language of Style in Fascist Italy,” *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (5): 1237-1286.

⁹ The Fascist concept of “spirituality,” Ruth Ben-Ghiat states, “functioned as a container for qualities such as individuality, heroism, and creativity that were perceived as threatened by the ‘materialistic’ ethos of communist and capitalist societies.” See page 293 in Ben-Ghiat, “Italian Fascism and the Aesthetics of the ‘Third Way.’”

¹⁰ Ibid.

product was a hybrid aesthetic that would “localize” the global in the form of anti-modern traditions. Because of its origin in ancient Rome, these same forms would “re-universalize” the emphasis on “the local,” demonstrating that Fascism allowed for “the retention of specificity at both the personal and the national level.”¹¹ As we will soon see, this last point on specificity was central to the regime’s articulation of a distinct Fascist universalism.

While local culture-based ruptures with modern functionalism emerged around the world in the interwar period, including in Turkey, Argentina, Germany, Greece, Chile, and Mexico, aesthetic hybridization was still far from a global norm.¹² By the 1930s, gratuitous decoration was increasingly out of vogue.¹³ Local and national architectural distinctions were claimed to be disappearing as “design was executed according to an economy of function.”¹⁴ According to Italian Fascists during the 1930s, the spread of universal modernism was undermining the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² In the case of 1930s Mexico, a group of prominent Mexican architects sought to develop a Mexican aesthetic that would break with modernism. This group of some of twentieth century Mexico’s most prominent architects, including Luis Barragán, Juan Jose Barragán, Pedro Castellanos, among others, sought to hybridize “Catholic” and “colonial” styles with contemporary modernism to arrive at an “essentially Mexican” aesthetic, or a style that expressed Mexican cultural identity. Furthermore, the “*Consejo de Arquitectos del Departamento Central*” was formed in this period to specifically prohibit the use of modernist architecture in Mexico City, and in its place, called for the imposition of a style it referred to as “Neo-Colonial.”

¹³ Jameson argues that a cultural dominant exists in late-capitalism, which took form in the aftermath of World War II (against which all other cultural forms constituted in the age of post-modernism have to contend with). As per the question of periodization, Jameson sees it not as obliterating difference, but rather as creating the possibility of analyzing difference. Fascist intellectuals too were well aware of modernism as forming a cultural dominant. In fact, if we take Jameson at his word, then it would have been conceivably necessary for the Fascists to see modernism as a cultural dominant in order for them to constitute the break they so desired. See Jameson (September 1984). “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” *New Left Review* 146: 53-92.

¹⁴ See page 265 in *Postmodernism: A Reader*. Thomas Docherty, ed. (New York 1993).

historical and cultural specificities of place for a growing homogeneity of urban design. Curiously, a new type of culture-based inspiration in architecture sprang up and began to challenge the growing trend toward homogeneity: the answer to a bland new world of sameness, where one conceivably could not differentiate an Italian city from an American metropolis, was hybridized architecture that made explicit reference to the specificity of place.

It is now worth noting for our purposes here that both Italian Fascists during the 1930s and postmodernists in the 1970s and 80s shared many of the same criticisms of universal modernism.¹⁵ Theories of postmodernity (both positive and negative) provide us with discourses and analytical frameworks through which Fascist difference can be interpreted. What then can be said with regard to unique attempts during the 1930s and the 1970s to break with a bland modernism through the mobilization of culture as a category to announce difference? As David Harvey has noted, “the preoccupation with identity, with personal and collective roots, has become far more pervasive since the early 1970s because of widespread insecurity in labor markets.”¹⁶ Actors in both historical epochs experienced forms of this general anxiety, with divergent political and economic responses to the crises of each decade informing subsequent attempts in the arts to generate a rupture with the world of universalizing abstraction. Yet in both Fascist and postmodernist hypostatizing of difference, the category of culture only appeared to constitute a “liberative force” (for reasons that I further develop here and revisit in the conclusion).¹⁷ Suffice to say for now that there is nothing *inherently* emancipatory about

¹⁵ Ibid. See also David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge 1987): 7-9; 66-87; 205-209, et al.

¹⁶ See Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 87.

¹⁷ *PRECIS 6. The Culture of Fragments: Notes on the Question of Order in a Pluralistic*

arousing difference as resistance to the cultural dominant of capitalist modernity. In both epochs, ruptures of this kind fully satisfied the interests of those most invested in interwar autarkic productivism or postmodern neoliberalism.¹⁸

The Fascist attempt to articulate an aesthetic of the “third way” in the EUR structures resulted in the creation of a “hybrid.” Homi Bhabha has defined “hybridity,” as emerging in the post-colonial context,¹⁹ not simply as a “half and half” but rather something new in that “nothing common” was produced.²⁰ An application of this understanding to Fascism shows that by integrating “ancient” characteristics into the EUR architecture, the regime had generated an entirely new aesthetic of hybrid cultural forms. In this sense, the EUR aesthetic closely resembles what Kenneth Frampton in 1983 called an architectural *arriere-garde*, which he writes, would form a “Critical Regionalism” to dominant aesthetic tropes.²¹ Frampton, who builds his argument around the problematic posed by Paul Ricœur, that is, “how to become

World, (New York 1987): 7-24. Cited in Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 7.

¹⁸ Fredric Jameson writes that architecture “has a virtually unmediated relationship” to the economic sphere. “It will therefore not be surprising to find the extraordinary flowering of the new postmodern architecture grounded in the patronage of multinational business, whose expansion and development is strictly contemporaneous with it.” See Jameson, “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” 56-7. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri meanwhile argue that “postmodernist discourses appeal primarily to the winners in the processes of globalization.” See page 150 in *Empire* (Cambridge and London 2000).

¹⁹ Or one might say, at the interstices of “being” and “becoming.”

²⁰ See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York 1994). Several authors have referred to fascist ideology as a “hodgepodge” or mishmash of different political positions. Perhaps closest to the spirit in which I use the term “hybrid” here is Robert Wohl’s reference to the “hybrid ancestry of fascist ideology.” See Wohl (Mar., 1991). “French Fascism, Both Right and Left: Reflections on the Sternhell Controversy,” *The Journal of Modern History* 63 (1): 91-98.

²¹ See Kenneth Frampton, “Toward a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance,” *Postmodernism: A Reader*. Thomas Docherty, editor. (New York 1993): 273.

modern and return to sources,” argues for an “architecture which will enable a critical resistance” rather than conformism to a universal aesthetic. Frampton viewed aesthetic universals, such as the International Style, as blindly erasing history, culture and local referential points.²² While distinguishing his architectural archetype from the “demagogic tendencies of populism,” Frampton maintains, “that only an *arriere-garde* has the capacity to cultivate a resistant, identity-giving culture while at the same time having discreet recourse to universal technique.”²³ In contrast to Frampton’s Manichean polarization between “populist” architecture and “critical regionalism,” the EUR, as exemplar of “third way” aestheticism, filled a space that invoked both a “demagogic populism” and a “resistant, identity giving culture.” In the same instant, the EUR-style appealed to the “retention of specificity” and the supposed alternative “universal technique” of the ancient Romans.

This nuanced application of Frampton is employed to help formulate an understanding of the unique EUR aesthetic and the Italian state’s highly selective, populist mobilization of an authentic cultural past. Arjun Appadurai has described the “deliberate, strategic, and populist mobilization of cultural material” by political movements as “Culturalist.”²⁴ Although Appadurai or Bhabha never take cognition of Fascist culturalism directly, the definitions these authors establish in particular post-colonial contexts provide important tools for developing new insights

²² Ibid., 266.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis 1996): pages 12-16. While Appadurai is referring to a postcolonial world, where ideology is mediated through electronic media and where diasporic public spheres have access to such media and where meta-national groups such as the Basques align themselves in contrast to Madrid, he also suggests, like Benedict Anderson, that when print media dominated the public sphere, “primordial” national identity was the predominant ideology disseminated.

into Fascist iterations of cultural difference. Application of their work here can also help to better understand the context in which these more current theories themselves emerge. Culturalist movements according to Appadurai mobilize culture “to articulate the boundary of difference” to ultimately “exploit difference to generate diverse conceptions of group identity.”²⁵ By applying these theoretical contributions to 1930s Italy, it can be said that Fascists disseminated an idealized, essentialized notion of Italian culture through the articulation and exploitation of difference to sustain and strengthen a notion of “rupture” with a universalizing global system in crisis. As I will show in this chapter, this (shall we say) “*arriere-garde* populism” was mobilized through the EUR aesthetic to show Italian culture as the “radical other” to modernity’s universalizing, impersonal, homogenizing character.²⁶ The reactionary Fascist critique of industrial modernity, it will be shown, was also mobilized to provide the basis for an alternative corporatist universality based on Being and Becoming.²⁷

In preparation for the 1942 World’s Fair of Rome, Fascist renditions of the ancient Roman Trajan’s Market, the Palazzo INFPS and Palazzo INA were planned and actually built to

²⁵ Ibid., 14. The notion of difference as a “pervasive dimension of human discourse” that Appadurai develops here is rather ahistorical and requires further development.

²⁶ Moishe Postone’s writings have influenced my interpretation of Fascism as a reactionary critique of industrial capitalism. See Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (New York and Cambridge 1993). See also Moishe Postone (Winter 1980). “Anti-Semitism and National Socialism: Notes on the German Reaction to ‘Holocaust,’” *New German Critique* 19 (Special Issue 1: Germans and Jews): 97-115.

²⁷ See Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 207. Harvey writes that Heidegger “proclaimed the permanence of Being over the transitoriness of Becoming. His investigations of Being led him away from the universals of modernism and of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and back to the intense and creative nationalism of pre-Socratic Greek thought.” A similar set of criticisms also emerged in Italian Fascist thought, though with a new corporatist universality offered as a counterpoint.

completion [see Figures 2.1 and 2.2]. In these structures, cues from Trajan's Market (completed circa 100 AD) are blended into modern E 42 structures to create a break with the neo-classicism and monumentalism of the period. The centerpiece of the E 42 site was the *Palazzo della Civiltà*, also known as the *Colosseo Quadrato* or "Square Coliseum," replete with both functional lines and 216 Roman arches [see Figures 2.3, 2.4 and 2.6]. The interior of the building was never intended for any kind of practical use. At 68 meters, it stands today as a monument and one of Rome's tallest structures. With more overt monumentalist features, such as virile horse and warrior statues, its rectangular vertical shape and square horizontal design is ostensibly an aesthetic forbearer to post-World War II architectural trends. This trope, which localizes structures through historicist reference to the past, can be seen today in "throwback" baseball stadiums in the United States or in the "Oriental Revivalism" present in skyscrapers such as Taipei 101. From Fascist resistance to a sickly global system, the postmodern technique of referencing local cultural distinction (either as romantic nostalgia or playful historicism) rapidly became tethered to corporate power and finance in the late twentieth century global economy.²⁸ Important distinctions between the EUR structures and its contemporaries are evident when comparing the *Palazzo dei Congressi*, which is a Fascist rendition of the Pantheon [see Figures 2.5 and 2.6], and other renditions of the Pantheon, such as the Jefferson Memorial (1942) and the National Gallery of Art (1941) in Washington D.C.²⁹ More than a simple repetition of ancient style, the Fascist structure uses distinctly modernist cues to form a break with neo-classicism. Modernism is thus

²⁸ See Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism."

²⁹ The structures in Washington are more clearly neo-classical.



Figure 2.1 (*above*): Trajan's Market, Rome (*above*, photo by author).



Figure 2.2 (*below*): The Palazzo INA and Palazzo INFPS are each modern Fascist renditions of Trajan's Market, EUR, Rome (photo by author).

the starting point for the Fascist culturalist critique of the universal in the EUR architecture, much as it for postmodernists.

The current historiography on the EUR, while somewhat extensive, does not fully investigate the symbolic inflection of cultural difference as a physical substantiation of the Fascist "third way."³⁰ One type of literature on aesthetics importantly acknowledges

³⁰ Just a smattering of studies of the nature described above include the following: see Mario Sanfilippo, *Le tre città di Roma: lo sviluppo urbano dalle origini a oggi* (Rome and Bari 1993); John Agnew *Rome* (New York 1995); Saverio De Paolis and Armando Ravaglioli, eds. *La Terza Roma: lo sviluppo urbanistico, edilizio e tecnico di Roma capitale* (Rome 1971), in particular the article by Virgilio Testa; Leonardo Benevolo. *Roma dal 1870 al 1990* (Rome 1992); Italo Insolera and Francesco Perego. *Archeologia e città: storia moderna dei Fori di Roma*. Bari: Laterza, 1983; Filippo Mazzoni, "Un problema Capitale." *In Stato dell'Italia*, edited by Paul Ginsborg, 108-114. (Milan 1994); Italo Insolera. *Roma moderna: Un secolo di storia urbanistica, 1870-1970* (Turin 1993). See also Dianne Yvonne Ghirardo's "Citta Fascista: Surveillance and Spectacle," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Special Issue: The Aesthetics of Fascism (Apr., 1996), pages 347 and 349; Antonio Cederna, *Mussolini urbanista: lo sventramento di Roma negli anni di consenso* (Bari 1981); Luigi Di Majo and Italo



Figure 2.3 (left): the *Palazzo della Civiltà*, or the “Square Coliseum,” EUR, Rome. Designed by architects Giovanni Guerrini, Ernesto La Padula and Mario Romano, the structure is a clear hybridization of modernism and culturalism influenced by the ancient Roman Coliseum, (photo by author).

Figure 2.4 (right): the *Palazzo della Civiltà* and virile statue, EUR, Rome. The words chiseled into the travertine near the top of the edifice are directly from a Mussolini speech and read, “A nation of poets, artists, heroes, saints, thinkers, scientists, navigators, emigrants,” (photo by author).

that the EUR architecture represented a unique formulation of past and present, neo-classicism and modernism. Spiro Kostof argues that the Fascist regime represented this contradiction as resolving problems of both form and function in the construction of the EUR.³¹ Giorgio Ciucci

Insolera, *L'EUR e Roma dagli anni trenta al duemila* (Bari 1986). See Giorgio Ciucci (Feb. 1989). “The Classicism of the E42: Between Modernity and Tradition.” Spiro Kostof, *The Third Rome: Traffic and Glory* (Berkeley 1973).

³¹ See pages 9 and 73 in Spiro Kostof, *The Third Rome: Traffic and Glory*. Kostof notes that the “prototype (for EUR) was an idealized Greco-Roman city of antiquity but without a rigid grid.” A revision of this plan was put forth that favored “a rigidly orthogonal layout. The



Figure 2.5 (left): *Palazzo dei Congressi*, a Fascist rendition of the ancient Pantheon, designed by architect Giuseppe Pagano, Rome, EUR, (photo by author).

Figure 2.6 (right): the view from the *Palazzo dei Congressi* toward the *Palazzo della Civiltà*, (photo by author).

writes that the EUR aesthetic was “Nonfunctionalist [...] in that it was imbued with ‘rationality’ of form, filled with ‘classical’ intentions, and pervaded by Roman ‘spirituality,’ but always rigorously modern.”³² Other authors form aesthetic judgments of the “conflated” EUR-style. Mario Sanfilippo writes that the EUR was built with “wasteful arches and columns (used) as symbolic expression of ‘*Romanità*.’” For Sanfilippo, the EUR represents a mixture of classicism, monumentalism, and a sense of autarky, all as part of a “great mirage of a regime devoid of a true industrial culture.” Vittorio Vidotto, on the other hand, writes that the EUR was built with a “generic rationalism” that “coincided with the modern: net volumes, essential lines, with

inspiration came, of course, from the cross-axial arrangement of ancient Roman and other classical grids.”

³² See page 82 in Giorgio Ciucci, “The Classicism of the E42: Between Modernity and Tradition.” For more arguments on the EUR architecture, see Mario Sanfilippo, *La costruzione di una capitale: Roma 1911-1945*; and Vittorio Vidotto, *Roma contemporanea*.

decoration reduced to the minimum.”³³ While offering notable insights into the EUR aesthetic, urban planning, and ideology (with a focus on the regime’s attempts at hegemony), the current literature overlooks the relationship between the sweeping cultural hybridity in the EUR aesthetic as a particular spatialization of Fascist ideology more generally.³⁴

To understand the origins of Fascist culturalism as well as the debates over Italian cultural inflection in the EUR architecture, this chapter will first review the EUR and its relationship to Italian Fascist thought. Upon taking the regime’s aims into account, the chapter will next examine the Italian Fascist state’s promulgation of so-called “Culturalist” thought in aesthetic representation beginning in the early 1930s. In response to a purported “crisis of identity,” the Italian state in this period began to invest in the development and solidification of a unique Italian culture with a major focus in the area of aesthetics. The often-contentious debates held around Rationalist architecture in the late 1920s and early 1930s would directly impact the

³³ Vittorio Vidotto, *Roma contemporanea*.

³⁴ This argument utilizes works such as Walter Benjamin’s treatise on Baudelaire in Paris, David Harvey’s analysis of the Sacre Coeur Basilica at Montmartre, and Fredric Jameson’s two-sided critique of postmodernist cultural forms (such as the Bonaventure Hotel) as theoretical impetuses from which to place dwellings and structures in relationship to the mode of production (historically contextualized). Fredric Jameson for example writes that of all the arts, architecture has a “virtually unmediated” structural relationship to the economy “in the form of commissions and land values.” In the first chapter of *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham 1991), Fredric Jameson finds the extraordinary flowering of new postmodern architecture in the 1970s and 1980s as “strictly contemporaneous with” the “expansion and development” of neoliberal capitalism. If in Jameson’s description of postmodern aesthetic production one can “find the extraordinary flowering of the new postmodern architecture grounded in the patronage of multinational business,” then Fascist architecture in the corporatist state can be seen as an effort to integrate aesthetic production into commodity production more completely, an argument which is supported by the work of Theodor Adorno, “The Fetish Character of Music and the Regression in Listening,” *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York 1982 [1938]): 270-299. See also Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet In The Era Of High Capitalism* (London 1997), and Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*.

totalization of style achieved during the final years of Fascist rule, such as at the E 42. This chapter will then examine the polemics over the ideal way to articulate Italian cultural difference at the World's Fair, and the relationship of cultural difference to the Fascist mission of a fully self-sufficient economy. Lastly, the conclusion will postulate on the matter of mobilizing cultural difference for political ends in a more general sense. This will include considerations on the application of cultural difference in corporatist and neoliberal architectural styles with reference to their origins in moments of global crisis.

I. Preamble to the E 42

Fascist author and journalist Oreste Mosca published a historical primer to the E 42 in *Il Popolo Di Roma*, which shows the Fair as the ultimate realization of Italian history, realized in Fascist values. While a number of similar sources could have been used here to contextualize the EUR aesthetic in specific forms of Fascist thought from the late 1930s, Mosca's 1938 essay "Preamble to the Exposition of 1942" effortlessly connects Italy's cultural difference in the EUR-city to Fascism's program of autarky and its reaction to the Enlightenment in both its global capitalist and communist manifestations.³⁵ The article begins with a quote from 1843 by Italian philosopher Vincenzo Gioberti. "What beautiful or great thing do we Italians make? Where are our armadas and colonies?" laments Gioberti, a leading Risorgimento moderate.³⁶ "What weight does the name 'Italian' have on the scales of Europe? Could it be that foreigners only visit our

³⁵ See Oreste Mosca, "Proemio all'Esposizione del 1942," *Il Popolo di Roma*, 27 Settembre 1938, 3. Following the conclusion of the Second World War, Mosca would become Assistant Director of the right-wing daily, *Il Tempo*.

³⁶ See page 399 in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York 1971).

peninsula to get pleasure from the immutable beauty of its sky and to contemplate its ruins?”³⁷

Mosca shows that Italy was not taken seriously as a competitor. Foreigners only experienced the peninsula as a place of escape from the major circuits of expanding markets, for its sunshine and past remains. Gioberti is cited here by Mosca as the progenitor to both Fascism and the EUR-style.³⁸

Through recourse to a specific politics of resentment, Mosca writes that even after the Italian nation-state was formed in 1861, Italy remained subservient to foreign rule. “By 1922,” the year of Mussolini’s “March on Rome” and the Fascist ascension to state power, Mosca continues, “many things had changed. [...] Italy became a nation with its own life and political autonomy.”³⁹ However, Italy “was still “at the mercy of foreign whims.”⁴⁰ Mosca here references Italy’s economic dependence on the importation of natural resources such as oil, coal, and iron from abroad, a modern economic reality on the peninsula that the Fascists attempted to overcome through autarkic policy.⁴¹ The author concurrently references the “whim” of foreign decisions

³⁷ See Mosca, “Proemio all’Esposizione del 1942.”

³⁸ See pages 102, 104, and 399 in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. According to Antonio Gramsci, Gioberti had given “a whole new dignity to Italian thought” during the Risorgimento in creating “a philosophy which appeared original and at the same time national.” Gramsci compares Vincenzo Gioberti to the nineteenth century French contemporary Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Gramsci claims that Gioberti is the more radical thinker given that within their respective nationalist movements, “the conservative element of Proudhon takes precedent over the Jacobin, where in Gioberti the process is reversed.” When comparing Gioberti to fellow *Risorgimento* intellectuals like Giuseppe Mazzini, Gramsci still preferred Gioberti, writing that Mazzini “only offered wooly statements, and philosophical allusions.”

³⁹ See Mosca, “Proemio all’Esposizione del 1942.” Nineteen twenty-two was the year of Mussolini’s “March on Rome” and thereby recognized as the year of the Fascist Revolution.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Mussolini’s rhetoric on economic autarky began to grow after the League of Nations

such as those made at the end of the First World War at the Paris Peace Conference. Many Italians believed that its allies had not fulfilled their pre-war commitments, resulting in an embarrassing *vittoria mutilata*.⁴² The Fascists, meanwhile, were creating “an economically independent Italy that is much more exciting than the other (Italy).”⁴³ This new autarkic Italy was also seen as forming a new Italian persona to overcome the humiliation of the *vittoria mutilata*. Due to the work of the regime, the article continues, “there is a tough, volatile, warrior Italy and it is essential to make it conscious.”⁴⁴ This “exciting” new Italy was worthy of being expressed

imposed a trade embargo on Italy. Though Italy talked a great deal about its turn toward full economic self-determination, the reality was that Italy was resource-poor, particularly with regard to critical commodities like iron and petroleum. In September 1938 for example, Mussolini was forced to engage Mexico’s avowedly anti-fascist and anti-Franquista president Lázaro Cárdenas in an oil deal. Mexico was experiencing the effects of a trade embargo during the same period, imposed by the United States and the United Kingdom following Cárdenas’ decision in March 1938 to nationalize Mexican oil. The embargo included a refusal to engage in trade with any country “which shipped, purchased, or otherwise handled Mexican oil.” In response to the embargo, Italy and Germany entered into agreement for the sale of Mexican petroleum. A US State Department document dated September 20, 1938 confirmed reports of Mexico’s negotiations with Mussolini’s Italy: “The [US] Embassy is reliably informed that the Italian Government is now negotiating for about \$10,000,000 worth of Mexican petroleum.” For more, please see Frank L. Kluckhohn, “Mexico and Reich in Direct Oil Deal,” *New York Times*, 6 September 1938, 1; Frank L. Kluckhohn, “Fascist Boycott is Urged by Unions: German Ship is Unloaded,” *New York Times*, 7 September 1938, 10; See also September 20, 1938. Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1930-1939. National Archives and Records Service, General Service Administration, (Washington 1985). See also Joe C. Ashby, *Organized labor and the Mexican Revolution under Lázaro Cárdenas* (Chapel Hill 1967).

⁴² For more on the “*vittoria mutilata*,” see James H. Burgwyn, *The Legend of the Mutilated Victory: Italy, the Great War, and the Paris Peace Conference, 1915-1919* (Westport 1993). To inspire Italian intervention in 1915, England and France promised Italy a share of the rewards for victory in the war. The intervention of the Americans and the post-war involvement of Woodrow Wilson at Versailles altered the original conditions of the 1915 agreement, according to France and England. As a result, Italians believed that they had been disgraced and deceived out of their “natural right” to territories in modern day Croatia and Slovenia, leading to Gabriele D’Annunzio’s occupation of Fiume in 1919.

⁴³ Oreste Mosca, “Proemio all’Esposizione del 1942.”

⁴⁴ Ibid.

spatially. To raise this awareness abroad, Oreste Mosca repeatedly suggests that the expression “Visit the Country of Autarky” should be “written in bright lights” in places like Times Square and Trafalgar Square to articulate the news of “Italy’s new economy.” For Mosca, this would make it evident that Italy, “creator of the new civilization,” was no longer a place to visit just for its ruins but also for its current achievements.⁴⁵ In other words, Fascism had made Italy into a worthy competitor in the international sphere, mitigating the possibility of future humiliations.

While something new and unique was being created that was worth observing for Mosca, the residues of the Roman past were not to be subsumed. “Come foreigners, to observe this new, grand miracle of the great lineage,” Mosca states.⁴⁶ According to the article, Italy’s number one attraction was to be the greatest of its recent achievements, namely the implementation and successes of the Fascist “third way.” “The independent economic state is the most complete and the most persuasive operation of the Regime,” Mosca writes. Simultaneously, the presence and recognition of the Fascist “third way” (that Mosca is longing for) would, in effect, also disprove those who claimed that Italy lacked the raw materials for the self-sufficient economy.

According to Mosca, the Fascist Revolution was the transformative break with the system before it, the “French Revolution” of the twentieth century. Just as “1789” had “initiated great social change in Europe until the end of the Great War,” Fascist Italy was initiating a similar change, one arising from the “need for greater social justice in national and international spheres.”⁴⁷ After providing various instances of fascist-like initiatives in the US, England, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, and Turkey, Mosca says “it’s undeniable that the world already

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

imitates many of our measures.” However, he adds that the world had insistently denied this fact as it had denied that Fascism was once again placing Rome at the center of Western civilization. Mosca perceives this ‘denial’ as a paradox and as part of the transhistorical antipathy and prejudice against Italy and Italians. “Instead of rising with us” after the imperial victory in Ethiopia, “52 nations dared to inflict sanctions to humiliate us and weaken our resistance, to strike us in the back while we were working to obtain our place in the sun, a place that we had the right to obtain in ‘18 for the 680,000 deaths and the million and a half wounded.” Mosca references the sanctions that followed the Ethiopian invasion, placing them in the context of the *vittoria mutilata* and greater Europe’s history of unequal treatment toward Italy. He describes this “hatred” toward Italians as being further “augmented by our reaction to the fairytale that international trade is inescapable.” Hence, Fascism’s “third way” and Italy’s push towards an autarkic economic system had only increased the preexisting aversion for Italy abroad. Mosca says this resulted from the successes of the Fascist “third way.” By disproving that a nation must rely on foreign exchange to be successful, Italy had “successfully” defied the capitalist nations. Despite Italy’s place in (what Mosca refers to as) the worldwide “political caste,” he provides reassurance that “great masses exist in every country love Italy.”⁴⁸

The only time that the Exposition is mentioned in the article, with the exception of the title, is at the very end of the piece. There, three asterisks separate Mosca’s extensive work from two closing sentences on the E 42. Mosca writes: “The exposition of 1942 will rightfully open a century after the publication of Gioberti’s book. We Italians can be extremely proud of the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

journey we have made in the past century.”⁴⁹ The placement of EUR as separate from all of that before it has the effect of suggesting, as indeed the article’s title states, that the past century was a “preamble” to the E 42. Therefore, the E 42 is posited as the ultimate realization of Italian redemption from the maltreatment of the prior century, with the EUR’s physical placement in the article standing as the fulfillment of Italian history and the mission of economic self-sufficiency. The EUR structures would concretize an ideal of the “third way” that, like Mosca’s giant neon signs in Times and Trafalgar Squares, would make the world cognizant of the successes of the Fascist “third way.” The E 42 would redeem the Italian state and its people much like the “third way” claimed to itself. The EUR-city would also provide physical proof of Italy’s emergence as a power in the hierarchy of European nation-states, despite consistent efforts to keep it from achieving its “own place in the sun.” The EUR, according to Mosca, would make the “ignorant world” aware of this new Italian society, with the Fascist “third way” as Italy’s guiding principle in its attainment of political and economic autonomy.

II. Generating Fascist Appearances

In 1924, on the day in which the 2,677th anniversary of the founding of Rome was celebrated, Benito Mussolini made a now famous speech on the “Rome of the twentieth century.” In the talk Mussolini advocates for new Italian constructions that would confront both the “problems of necessity and the problems of grandeur.”⁵⁰ In the period following Mussolini’s

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ In Mussolini’s full speech, he declared: “I would divide the problems of Rome, Rome of the twentieth century, in two categories: the problems of necessity and the problems of grandeur. One cannot confront the latter if the former are not resolved. The problems of necessity are being flushed out. However, Roma cannot only be a modern city, in the now banal sense of

development of this dyad, two different sets of structures were built to account for the “problems of necessity and the problems of grandeur.” Interestingly, Slavoj Žižek has ascribed this aesthetic duality in Italian Fascist architecture to the contradictory nature of fascist ideology itself. For Žižek, Italian use of diverse styles represented the intrinsic “contradiction of the Fascist ideological project,” that is, to simultaneously return to “pre-modern organicist corporatism” and to mobilize society for a process of rapid modernization.⁵¹ The Fascist development of a “multiplicity of style” was indeed central to its mobilization of cultural distinction, which would redress the ills of modern society.⁵² However, by the late 1930s, Italian intellectuals and architects sought to transcend such contradictory forms. They advocated for the design of hybrid structures that would utilize universal modernist forms while heavily incorporating reference to Italian cultural elements in the same breath. The newly totalizing EUR aesthetic was implemented with the regime’s realization of corporatism in 1934 and Empire in 1936, the sine qua non of the Fascist universal based upon the grandeur of Imperial Rome.⁵³ In this period debates grew heated around the meaning of culture and its relation to the Fascist “third way,”

the word: it must be a city worthy of its glory and this glory must be incessantly renewed to hand down the heritage of the Fascist age to the generations to come.” For more, see Ugo Ojetti, “La Settima Triennale,” *Corriere della Sera*. 3 April 1940.

⁵¹ See page 3 in Slavoj Žižek, *Plague of Fantasies* (London 1997).

⁵² “Multiplicity of style” is a term borrowed from Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley 1996), where she contextualizes the relationship between the deployment of culture and the relation to commodities and consumption across the longue-durée of modern French statehood. Auslander shows that discourses on France as a place in which products of “quality” and aesthetic beauty are produced are directed by state-involvement.

⁵³ Stanley G. Payne, among several other historians, has referenced 1934 as a turning point in the regime, one that “featured an activist foreign policy, military campaigns abroad, and growing economic autarchy, climaxed by semi-Nazification.” See page 212 in Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison 1995).

notably in the field of state-sponsored architecture. An examination of the ways in which the Italian state and its commissioned artists and architects sought a unified Italian-specific representation can demonstrate that aesthetic culturalism was a representation of the Italian state's plans for an alternative corporatist universality.

In 1930s Italy, the critical point of contention between Italian architects was the issue of representation of Italian cultural identity in architecture. Rationalist architects advocating for *aggiornamentismo* – a fully modernized aesthetic in line with the rest of Europe – gained notoriety in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Rationalist positions would have a significant impact on architecture throughout the remainder of the Fascist period. Influenced by Le Corbusier, Italian Rationalists were generally opposed to the overt use of Italian culturalist content in architecture and design.⁵⁴ Several prominent Rationalist architects would later be publicly accused of being too “radical,” internationalist and Bolshevik for this stance against unrestrained culturalism. Amid sharp polemics and under pressure from professional quarters, these architects were mostly subsumed by the National Union of Architects, making them into semi-placated architects of the regime. Others were barred from practicing and teaching and left the profession altogether. Several EUR architects were key figures in the Rationalist movement, while others were earlier recipients of scathing Rationalist critiques, an indicator of the regime's success in co-opting various positions under the singular EUR aesthetic.

One of Rationalism's most renowned critics was Marcello Piacentini, son of important Roman architect Pio Piacentini. By the 1920s, Marcello Piacentini emerged as “the leading

⁵⁴ Dennis P. Doordan, *Building Modern Italy: Italian Architecture, 1914-1936* (New York 1988). The Rationalist position was developed in contrast to the popular Novecento architects of the period, who were “uncomfortable with the idea of rationalization of form and the standardization of architectural details.”

architect of the Roman bourgeoisie.”⁵⁵ After strengthening relationships with Italian corporate benefactors and the Fascist regime, Piacentini would become the most powerful figure in Italian architecture and design by the next decade. “In the 1930s, his role in the award of important commissions, his influence on competition juries, and his control of the magazine *Architettura* made him one of the most powerful architects in Italy,” writes Dennis Doordan.⁵⁶ Piacentini is described as skillful in manipulating political influence and at negotiating the levers of power in the Fascist state in order to achieve his political objectives.⁵⁷ In matters of aesthetic preference, Piacentini was rather suspicious of Rationalist architecture, finding its lack of Italian influence in design problematic considering Italy’s “unique” cultural traditions. Further, he criticized the Rationalists for lacking an appreciation of hierarchy in design, a charge that offended them.

In 1931, a Rationalist exhibit in Rome developed a scathing critique of Piacentini. The Rationalists labeled the powerful Roman an “*architetto culturalista*,” or culturalist architect. The key medium of critique at the exhibit was Pietro Maria Bardi’s *Tavola degli orrori* (or “Panel of Horrors”), a montage of pictures and illustrations from Italian press featuring folkloric fashion and culturalist architecture, including the works of Piacentini himself [see *Figure 2.7*].⁵⁸ P.M. Bardi claimed that the goal of his *Tavola degli orrori* was to conduct a type of depth analysis to uncover the motives of the “*architetto culturalista*”:

⁵⁵ Ibid., 62.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 73.

Depression began to wash upon Italian shores. Yet in several critical respects, Bardi's illustration of the culturalist position – communicated through an eclectic pastiche of intertextuality and historical and present day symbols, such as cultural images, corporate logos, and erratically placed text of varied sources (some of which is illegible) – shares a likeness with late twentieth century critiques of postmodernism while parodying postmodernist productions themselves. Meanwhile, the critique of culturalism in Bardi's accompanying text performs much of the same function. Culturalism is said to have emerged in a space in which "architectural principles had been lost," suggesting that no longer was there a dominant theory or approach, no anchor, a refrain not unlike Lyotard's well-known quote, "I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives."⁶⁰ Bardi also references the class position of culturalist architecture's patrons ("bourgeoisie"; the wealth of culturalism's figurative parents), with wealthy benefactors producing the demand for this aesthetic. "Baby culturalism" meanwhile is said to have emerged from a type of fragmentary junk space, pieced together by an eclectic father and agreeable mother lacking "discipline" (in the sense of both regulation and the expert knowledge typical of an academic discipline). Lastly, Bardi provides a depth analysis, the classic modernist trope, in his analogy of an excision and examination of culturalism's skull, providing for an unmasking of truth the likes of which postmodernists have so long criticized.⁶¹ While not "full-blown" postmodernism in all of the ways in which we understand it, Bardi's 1931 critique of the culturalist "anti-universal" can provide us with broader insight into the kinds of thought

⁶⁰ Refer to page XXIV in Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis 1984).

⁶¹ See Hasan's Schematic Difference between Modernism and Postmodernism, as featured in its entirety in Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 43. For further development on specific postmodernist features that emerge in a field in which modernism is the "cultural dominant," see also Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," 61-87.

generated in capitalism, as well as a variety of responses to capitalism in times of crisis, points taken up again in the conclusion.

In response to Bardi's critical photomontage, the Rationalist Exhibit was censured, while Piacentini personally organized a public campaign to damage the Rationalist movement. In Piacentini's response to the Rationalist critique, he attempted to discredit Rationalism aesthetically and politically, writing that Rationalism was more adequate to communism than to the Fascist "third way."⁶² What is more, Piacentini claimed that the Rationalist embrace of "pure and simple technical calculations" of architecture was foreign to Italy, and was more in line with northern European notions of building.⁶³ In the end, Piacentini forced Rationalist architects to accept his authority in architectural affairs and aesthetic direction in exchange for positions with the National Syndicate of Architects and with the journal, *Architettura*, directed by Piacentini.⁶⁴ Soon after, the Rationalists began to receive important government commissions for sites such as the new campus of the University of Rome in 1932.⁶⁵ When Mussolini called for the construction of a massive new campus capable of bringing international prestige to the Italian university system, Piacentini was placed in charge of project direction and design, even granting prominent Rationalist Giuseppe Pagano a building commission. Pagano's plan for the new physics department building utilized unmistakably rationalist lines. Meanwhile, Piacentini's own design for the University Administration Building signaled a new direction in Fascist architecture,

⁶² See Marcello Piacentini, "Difesa dell'architettura italiana," *Il Giornale d'Italia*, May 1931.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ See page 93 in Doordan, *Building Modern Italy: Italian Architecture, 1914-1936*.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

influenced by the Rationalists yet characterized by references to ancient Rome that would become dominant in Italian design in the following years [see *Figures 2.8 and 2.9*]. In fact, the variety of styles among the different buildings in the Sapienza project stands in relief to the total coordination of design later implemented at the EUR.



Figure 2.8 (*above*): Marcello Piacentini's 1932-1935 University Administration Building at the *Sapienza Università di Roma*, (photo by author).



Figure 2.9 (*below*): Piacentini's entry gate at the *Sapienza Università di Roma*, (photo by author).

Though Piacentini's new totalized aesthetic, representing a hybrid of modern productivism and past-oriented culturalism, would become the dominant mode of state design in the second half of the 1930s, powerful conservative critic Ugo Ojetto lambasted Piacentini's design for its absence of arches and columns. In the years to come, the resolution of bitter divisions between Ojetto and Piacentini would prove essential in the regime's formation of the totalizing hybrid aesthetic at the EUR-city. Ojetto, a "conservative traditionalist," had been a

timeworn foe of both the futurists and the Rationalists. As Walter Adamson has noted, Ojetti was a “wealthy establishment fixture on art and literary committees” that “staunchly opposed all modernist initiatives.”⁶⁶ Joshua Arthurs writes that the milieu of Florentine intellectuals from which Ojetti emerged promoted “a new religious sensibility” in aesthetics and culture to combat the “excessive rationalism and materialism of modern civilization.”⁶⁷ In comparison to Marinetti and the modernists, who “exalted the machine age and the dynamism of urban culture,” states Arthurs, “the Florentines sought to provide a ‘spiritual’ or ‘idealist’ alternative—influenced by Nietzsche, Bergson, and Benedetto Croce.”⁶⁸

In 1925, Mussolini’s mistress Margherita Sarfatti called upon Ojetti to take part in her project to formulate an Italian specific architecture. The team of intellectuals working on the project included figures representing a variety of positions, with Marinetti on one side, and Ojetti on the other. In 1928, Ojetti defected from Sarfatti’s project and became its sharpest critic and its greatest foe. Afterward, Ojetti became a culture critic for *Il Corriere della Sera* where he lodged critiques against Piacentini’s designs for lacking classical Roman inflection. Piacentini responded to Ojetti by stating, “traditional arches and columns did not correspond to the tectonic

⁶⁶ See Walter L. Adamson (Aug. 2001). “Avant-garde Modernism and Italian Fascism: Cultural Politics in the Era of Mussolini,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 6 (2): 230-248.

⁶⁷ See page 20 in Joshua Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity: the Roman Past in Fascist Italy* (Ithaca 2012).

⁶⁸ Cannistraro describes the change during the 1920s in Marinetti’s views on the representation of Italian culture in art. “Even Marinetti’s Futurist movement, fervently committed to a revolt against the past, abandoned its intellectual links with Europe in favor of nationalism in art and culture. Marinetti’s idea that the nation’s culture had to be infused with a sense of *Italianità* - the quality and essence of being Italian - was readily adopted by the fascists as a cardinal point of their cultural policies.” See page 119 in Cannistraro, “Mussolini’s Cultural Revolution: Fascist or Nationalist?”

logic inherent in modern building materials and construction systems.”⁶⁹ Though attacked as “culturalist” by Rationalists and avant-gardist by conservatives, Piacentini ultimately defended modernist architecture against the conservatives. Traditionalists like Ojetti continued to attack new directions in Fascist architecture – including Sabaudia, a new town built in recently drained Pontine Marshes, and the Florence train station – as Bolshevik “monstrosities” lacking in “Italian values.” When conflict between conservatives like Ojetti and the Piacentini-dominated coalition led to fierce debate in the National Chamber of Deputies in 1934, Mussolini was forced to decisively intervene. The Fascist leader publicly defended Piacentini’s hybrid aesthetic as the representational form for the corporatist “third way,” solidifying the 57 year old as Fascism’s most powerful architect.⁷⁰

III. The EUR Aesthetic and the “Tendencies of the Era”

Even though the regime showed that it favored Piacentini’s new “total” hybrid aesthetic, plans for the EUR continued to be debated among Italian intellectuals, architects, and urban planners, as Giorgio Ciucci has discovered.⁷¹ Ben-Ghiat has added that “encounters gave rise to debates among Italians over the nature and boundaries of their own aesthetic.”⁷² Under pressure from the regime to pursue an aesthetic that “revealed the tendencies of the era,” a debate ensued

⁶⁹ See pages 100-110 in Doordan, *Building Modern Italy: Italian Architecture, 1914-1936*.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ See Giorgio Ciucci, “The Classicism of the E42: Between Modernity and Tradition.”

⁷² See Ben-Ghiat, “Italian Fascism and the Aesthetics of the ‘Third Way.’”

among Italian and Fascist architects on the issue of cultural inflection.⁷³ As in art and literature, the EUR represented another opportunity for the regime to develop and concretize an aesthetic of the “third way,” only this time on a stage of grandiose international proportions, which provided for the showcasing of an alternative modernity.

To execute the astounding plans for constructing the city and implementing the World’s Fair, the Fascist regime formed the parastatal *Ente Autonomo Esposizione Universale di Roma* (the Autonomous Agency of the Universal Exposition of Rome, hereafter, EUR Agency).⁷⁴ The EUR Agency was a management firm tasked with overseeing all the minute details of day-to-day organization. Like other newly formed parastatal firms under Fascism, the EUR Agency had its own juridical structure and management “personality” independent of regular administrative hierarchy. Yet, it was under the direct dependence of Mussolini.⁷⁵ Unlike other parastatal agencies, the EUR Agency had its own internal security forces and maintained its own municipal

⁷³ See Ciucci, “The Classicism of the E42: Between Modernity and Tradition,” 83. This point is referenced as an apparent example of the regime’s inconsistency on the issue of aesthetics.

⁷⁴ According to Senator Emilio Bodrero, “the [EUR] cannot be regulated by the same norms in its organizational and administrative reflexes in that it is destined to rise to great importance and will necessarily assume particular characteristics in relation to its complex finality that we are aiming to achieve.” Mussolini formed the “Ente autonomo Esposizione Universale e Internazionale di Roma” with law no. 2174 on December 26, 1936. See *ACS, E42, Busta 40, Fascicolo 42*.

⁷⁵ According to James Gregor, “The first years of the Fascist regime saw the creation of a special class of parastate agencies, independent of the regular administrative structure of the state and responsible by and large only to the immediate Fascist leadership, that were clearly designed to further the control and development of critical key industries.” With the onset of the Great Depression and its subsequent deepening, Gregor notes that there were growing numbers of parastatal agencies formed in both industrial and non-industrial areas of the economy. Gregor uses the example of Fascism’s parastatal agencies to support his argument that the Fascism was in essence a developmental dictatorship, not unlike so-called Marxist dictatorships of the twentieth century. See pages 154-156 in Gregor, *Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship* (Princeton 1979).

services. The Agency was an “autonomous” state firm that organized and brokered relationships between state and private business interests, and negotiated contracts between the state and private sector in the interest of the Agency. The EUR Agency would attempt to implement a “mixed” approach to designing, planning, and implementing the 1942 World's Fair, neither fully dependent on the state nor on the private sector.⁷⁶ The Agency congealed the massive state and private forces – “all of the Italian forces” – to create the great 1942 Roman World’s Fair under the ultimate oversight of Mussolini.

The EUR Agency, with its top-heavy leadership, operated an immense bureaucratic machine in the capacity of a corporate, global-oriented enterprise on behalf of the state, itself providing a model for an alternative form of development.⁷⁷ The EUR Agency included several divisions within its structure, including a public relations and media relations department that dealt with the ruling hierarchies of other nations as well as international news outlets on a regular basis. The Agency brought many of Italy’s important young artists and architects into the fold of the state by providing them with gainful employment. By 1939, the EUR Agency directly employed 650 people, while the construction projects it oversaw at the fairgrounds produced thousands of more jobs. In December 1937, Piacentini was named Superintendent to the EUR Agency’s Architecture, Parks, and Garden Services division as indicated by decree from Mussolini.⁷⁸ The Roman was given ultimate authority over personnel, design, and engineering

⁷⁶ See Vittorio Cini, “E 42: Programma di Massima,” June 25, 1937: 1. The complete document is published in, *E 42: L’Esposizione Universale di Roma: Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Tullio Gregory and Achille Tartaro, eds. (Venezia 1987): 157-166.

⁷⁷ See Max Weber’s essays “Bureaucracy” and “The Meaning of Discipline” in *Essays in Sociology* (New York 1946).

⁷⁸ *ACS, E42, Busta 40, Fascicolo 42*. Or see Mussolini’s Presidential decree N.160 of

decisions in the construction of the EUR, once again cementing him as the most powerful figure in Italian architecture and design.

The permanent structures for the Exposition built under Piacentini's direction were to be physical testament to the realms of difference and primacy achieved by the regime, as evidenced by their aesthetical hybridity, unique grandiosity, and spiritual evocation of a "universal" ancient Rome. The aesthetic consensus achieved under the sway of Marcello Piacentini was not however unanimous. While Piacentini's aesthetic "victory" over competing Fascist approaches was probably never truly in doubt, his work was subjected to public smearing.⁷⁹ After the regime called for architecture at the EUR that "revealed the tendencies of the era," lively debate ensued. What were the predominant "tendencies of the era" and how should these be articulated?

One individual with the authority to resolve these questions was Vittorio Cini, whom Mussolini entrusted to serve as President of the EUR Agency as well as General Commissioner for the World's Fair, thrusting him into one of the most powerful civilian roles in Italy.⁸⁰ Cini, a wealthy, highly influential industry magnate, inherited great wealth and grew his fortune many times over during the Fascist *ventennio*. Vittorio Cini was the son of wealthy Venetian aristocrat cum-entrepreneur Giorgio Cini. At the age of 18, young Vittorio set off for Switzerland and then London, where he received formal training in banking and finance. After inheriting his father's wealth and businesses in 1915. During World War I, Cini married famous movie starlet Lyda Borelli and expanded family enterprises into new sectors, such as weapons manufacturing. He

December 13, 1937. Piacentini's annual salary is cited as "30.000+" lira.

⁷⁹ See page 82 in Ciucci, "The Classicism of the E42: Between Modernity and Tradition."

⁸⁰ On December 31, 1936 Mussolini appointed as both President of the EUR Agency as well as General Commissioner for the World's Fair.

soon became one of the most influential members of the “Venetian Group,” a powerful faction of capitalists with significant holdings in a variety of economic sectors. In 1926 Cini joined the Fascist party and quickly ascended its ranks.⁸¹ By the close of the 1920s Cini was president or top advisor for some 29 corporations. By the mid-1930s Cini held a monopoly over shipping in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, his shipping businesses, construction firms, and energy holdings, allowing him to profit on everything from the construction of ships and ports, to the shipment of goods and the insurance protection of those shipments.⁸² Between 1919 and 1934, Cini had increased his personal wealth from 43 million ITL to 121 million ITL (roughly equivalent to 175 million USD in 2015).⁸³ This “lucky run” of things continued for Cini into the economic depression, with his wealth continuing to expand in a corporatist system in which the state became the “guarantor of the interests of producers and the wealthy.”⁸⁴

If Fascist leaders during the regime’s early stages of rule fit Max Weber’s definition of “charismatic authority,” Cini represented a different type of character – a charismatic managerial figure who could facilitate the development of a hybrid routinization adequate to Fascism’s

⁸¹ In terms of his formal political affiliation with Fascism, Cini was appointed Government Trustee for his home province of Ferrara (still largely impervious to Fascism) in 1927, where he implemented measures concerning political, social, and economic order. Cini was nominated to the Senate in January 1934, but his “participation was rare and episodic, a sign of disinterestedness and perhaps a feeling of being too high-class for official politics.”

⁸² See Maurizio Reberschak in the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* on “Cini, Vittorio.” <28 Oct. 2014>. http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/vittorio-cini_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/.

⁸³ One US Dollar had an exchange value of 11.68 lira in 1934, and the rate of inflation of the US Dollar is about 1,700 percent since 1934. Data compiled from the Economic History Association, (eh.net). <July 17, 2014>.

⁸⁴ See Maurizio Reberschak in the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* on “Cini, Vittorio.”

“corporatist” forms.⁸⁵ Bureaucracy, according to Weber, “has a ‘rational’ character: rules, means, ends, and matter-of-factness dominate its bearing.” For Max Weber, the normalization of processes through bureaucratization can level power and eradicate “irrational” power structures, which he defines as “the structures of domination that had no rational character.” Fascism can at once be viewed as an attempt to debase the instrumental reason of the Enlightenment, yet discovered it socially necessary to acquiesce to the very Enlightenment techniques of the mechanically advanced world of the twentieth century that it sought to transform. As EUR Agency president, Cini answered directly to Mussolini and regularly consulted with the Fascist dictator. At the same time, Cini was granted full authority over the management, finances, and diplomatic functions of the world’s fair, as well as Fascist signification through its aesthetic productions.⁸⁶ Through a mix of personal contacts, “practical” business skills, and charisma, Cini was able to apply his influence to a wide array of sectors and wear many different hats simultaneously.

Giorgio Ciucci has charted the rhetoric of Vittorio Cini as President of the EUR Agency through two distinct phases. During the original planning phase, Cini held a January 1937 press conference to promote the exposition in which he states that the EUR aesthetic would point to

⁸⁵ Max Weber, in his work on bureaucracy, determines that the “charismatic” authority that administered power in pre-modern and early modern times has been replaced by the scientific efficiency of bureaucracy resulting in the “routinization” and “normalization” of human action, law, and administration. To bridge such conceptual lacunae, hybrid forms were often utilized. See Max Weber “Bureaucracy” and “The Meaning of Discipline” from *Essays in Sociology*.

⁸⁶ One of the stipulations of being an official world’s fair event, or a fair officially approved by the *Bureau International des Expositions* under the Paris conventions of 1928, was an agreement that the state was obliged to create a commissioner position to oversee the implementation of Fair plans. The first suggestion for this commissioner was industrialist Alberto Pirelli of tire fame, but Cini was ultimately selected.

the future. “The style of the buildings should constitute grounds for the ornamentation of the future city: it should reveal the tendencies of the era,” said Cini.⁸⁷ At the time the E 42 was designed to be a modern urban grid of steel, cement, and glass office buildings.⁸⁸ The main avenue through the E 42 on toward the ancient city center of Rome, the *via Imperiale*, was to be an elevated roadway. Just six months later, Cini backed away from futurist plans saying instead that the E 42 “will obey criteria of grandeur and monumentality” through “constructions destined to endure.” As a striking alternative to his earlier affinity with futurist or purely rationalist plans for the EUR, Cini says that, “artists will attempt daring, futuristic solutions [only] in the pavilions destined for demolition,” or those constructions lasting only as long as the World’s Fair. For only the permanence of Fascism, with its invigoration of the primordial-universal Rome, could compete with the fleeting commodity, the consumable E 42.

In the “E 42 Provisional Plan,” an internal government document that frames much of the regime’s early discourse on the Fair, Vittorio Cini reiterates the critical significance of architectural permanence as ideally suited to the historical backdrop provided by the “eternal city.” According to Cini, it was vital that the E 42 avoid similarities with expositions in other nations, fleeting and rapidly consumed like a mass produced trinket in accordance with the liberal function of those states. In contrast, the EUR as everlasting would stand against this flow of capital, representing a bulwark against homogeneous capitalist time. Inversely, the EUR was to be a “definitive creation” that would “reduce the use of the short lived material” to a

⁸⁷ See chapter 10 in Giorgio Ciucci, *Gli architetti e il fascismo: Architettura e città 1922-1944* (Torino 1989).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

minimum; “long lasting [materials] will predominate.”⁸⁹ Further, the particular hybrid aesthetic was summoned, in Cini’s words, to “above all avoid every monotonous repetition of the preceding expositions.”⁹⁰ The site built to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Fascism, for the Fascists, would forever reverberate through the centuries in irreducible architectural form. This permanence would form an essential part of its superiority to past World’s Fairs.

Past fairs were seen as historically accurate representations of the societies that had created them: cheap, nondurable, consumable, coming and going like the traveling circus. Through this understanding of the relationship of past fairs as expressions of context, Cini writes, the “E 42’ style” would be the “definitive style of our epoch: that of the 20th year of the Fascist era.”⁹¹ Cini believed that “ephemeral fashions such as generic internationalism” were to be avoided at all costs.⁹² Instead, the EUR structures, designed to give presence to the Fascist period for all posterity, would feature “rational and aesthetic principles” simultaneously.” To appeal to this future, the past glories of Rome and the modern practical forms “will not appear antithetically.”⁹³ This aesthetic hybrid, Cini writes, which was itself an admixture of all the elements of the Fascist state, was a “test of high preparation and fantasy” requiring the national mobilization of all skilled laborers, architects, artists, designers, and engineers. For Cini, the ancient Roman aesthetic would be invoked because it “was destined to last, so that in 50 or 100

⁸⁹ See Vittorio Cini, “E 42: Programma di Massima.”

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid. The single quotation marks around *E 42* are featured in the original text.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid. Cini notes that all skilled architects, sculptors, designers, and urban planners would participate in a “test of high preparation and fantasy.”

years styles will not be outdated, or worse, rendered vile.”⁹⁴ By invoking ancient Roman symbols in the aesthetic of the “third way,” the EUR architecture would mark a critical juxtaposition between modern Fascism, with its essential roots allegedly deep in Italian culture, and the monotonous homogeneity of the outside world.

Days after the Italian press featured definitive public statements by Cini on the EUR aesthetic, newspaper *Il Meridiano di Roma* published an attack on some of the fundamental features of the proposed EUR style.⁹⁵ The anonymously authored piece takes on the regime’s new criticism of rationalism, calling it “the tall tale of modern architecture that not even a child would believe: that ‘rational architecture’ is bankrupt.”⁹⁶ The unsigned critique also confronts the regime’s claim that the “animating spirit” of the EUR aesthetic is “unassailable.” Perhaps most interestingly, the article questions whether Fascist Italian society had reached the state of “spiritual unity” necessary to create architecture that brought together utilitarian and aesthetically pleasing attributes. “Architecture is the mirror of life, and if our time has an uncertain architecture, it is because the spiritual unity is still uncertain.” According to the anonymous authors, Fascism had yet to achieve the unity sought by the regime, and as a result, “the character, the ideal of our time, is still fluctuating on the way to stabilization.” Thus, Fascism – still in the process of becoming – was making a critical mistake by moving forward to give architectural representation to the nation’s “spiritual unity” at the E 42 before the ideal had been realized. “We will say that architecture summarizes, follows, arrives later,” after “real unity” was

⁹⁴ Ibid., 5.

⁹⁵ See “Architettura del ’41,” *Il Meridiano di Roma*, 4 July 1937: 12.

⁹⁶ Ibid. The language on the supposed “failure” of modernist architecture, writes the essayist, says for the regime it’s as if modernist architects like “Mendelsohn, Gropius, Le Corbusier, Sauvage, Rava, and Luigi Moretti should have mumbled a mea culpa.”

achieved within Italy.⁹⁷

In the following months, public criticism of the planned aesthetic for the EUR continued unabated. In December 1937, Piacentini, by then chief of all the EUR design-decisions, wrote in the *“Illustrazione Italiana”* that the EUR “must be completely beautiful but also imperiously fun.”⁹⁸ He goes on to distinguish the permanent EUR structures from the temporary pavilions used for the World’s Fair. Temporary structures built for the Fair, he writes, should be stylistically “free with unique lines” because in them “the young will satisfy their whims in fantasy.” Four days later, a scathing article (again without a byline) took on Marcello Piacentini’s notion that the EUR architecture needed to be “imperiously fun.” Published within the pages of newspaper *“Popolo di Brescia,”* the author(s) of the piece claim that Piacentini’s plan for amusement in the temporary pavilions contradicts critical Fascist dogma.⁹⁹ “Fun? And imperiously fun in addition? Our sensibility and our preparation do not allow us to grasp this new aesthetic sense,” write the unnamed critics, adding in the conclusion that Piacentinian architecture was “the only thing that has moved us on occasion in good humor.”¹⁰⁰

At times these architectural debates became acerbic and personal, as the prior example substantiates—even if by early-1938 Piacentini’s hybrid ancient Roman-rationalism had already been determined the victor. Nevertheless, to enter into a debate on aesthetics in the Fascist press in late 1930s Italy was a curious thing, reserved for courted journalists and the main ideologues in the regime’s meaning-making operations. Given the endless array of important matters to

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ See “Architettura divertente,” *Il Popolo di Brescia*, 22 December 1937.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

debate in the public sphere, was the creation of this space for disagreement diversionary, a stand-in for more serious debates on the political affairs of the time? Regardless, the ideological and political content within these debates is worth analyzing. Heated debates on the EUR aesthetic are a medium through which to capture the regime's rejection of a global order based on the increased abstraction and homogeneity of individuals, labor, time, and society in modernity. They also provide insight on the Fascist ideal, evidence of the specific form of universality sought after by the regime in its final years of rule over Italy.

In July of 1938, amid growing public criticism of early plans for the EUR architecture, Marcello Piacentini published a three-part essay series in Italian daily *Giornale d'Italia* titled "For Autarky: the Politics of Architecture."¹⁰¹ The essay provides an additional intervention on the relationship between the Fascist "third way" and aesthetic *Italianità* at the EUR.¹⁰² The long piece was (allegedly) produced in response to an article published by the *Giornale d'Italia* only a day earlier, which had addressed the issue of autarky in architecture. The first of Piacentini's three essays, an "Analysis of Rationalism," is on one hand a treatise on aesthetic taste, on the need to decipher quality rationalism from tasteless reproductions. On the other hand, it is a piece that provides a Fascist interpretation of their historical moment and their role in history, all of which serves to justify the selection of rational and ancient Roman architectural elements for the EUR.

¹⁰¹ See Marcello Piacentini, "Per l'autarchia: Politica dell'Architettura: I – Bilancio del razionalismo," *Giornale d'Italia*, 13 July 1938; "Per l'autarchia: Politica dell'Architettura: II – Nuova rinascita *Giornale d'Italia*, 15 July 1938; "Per l'autarchia: Politica dell'Architettura: III – Riforme concrete," *Giornale d'Italia*, 17 July 1938.

¹⁰² I say allegedly here, as the length and quality of the piece would seem to suggest that it required more than a day or two to formulate it. See Marcello Piacentini, "Per l'autarchia: Politica dell'Architettura: I – Bilancio del razionalismo."

Piacentini begins with a tract on historical transformation. Though humanity has passed through historical periods of progress and change that remain the foundation of civilization, “never before,” he writes, “has it found itself in the midst of such a rapid, unfolding of circumstances and ideas as in these latest decades.”¹⁰³ Recent epochal changes, such as “automation in everyday life and the rapidity of reciprocal relations that have practically abolished distances” have led to forms of intercourse that “condition our customs and approaches to social life.” Today, Piacentini explains, “theories, systems, customs, and orientations” can spread to every corner of the world within a few years whereas “one century ago,” such an exchange would have been impossible even within a single state. “We have the sensation of living one of the most intense periods of change and surprise in history, and equally, in every other field of labor and human thought, we participate in the most astonishing and profound innovations,” says Piacentini, closely mirroring Heidegger’s interpretation of modernity as quoted at the very start of this chapter.¹⁰⁴

Architecture too has developed along with these greater historical transformations. After several decades in which the pace of change had rapidly accelerated, Piacentini writes that “only today has enough time passed that can we classify the results, distinguishing the best from the worst” aesthetic developments in the field of architecture.¹⁰⁵ Piacentini directs his discussion to the rationalist aesthetic movement, which he notes, “has caused much backlash by critics,” both “in the professional context” and in the public at large. This public, he adds, might be interested

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ The quote by Heidegger can also be found in page 40 of his *The Fundamental Question of Metaphysics*.

¹⁰⁵ See Piacentini, “Per l’autarchia: Politica dell’Architettura: I – Bilancio del razionalismo.”

in forming judgments, but typically lacks the analytical training to penetrate the level of appearances. “Rationalism in architecture has had all of the components of a revolutionary movement and responds to a function – historical necessity,” writes Piacentini in defense of Rationalism as a historical necessity. “Like every revolution, rationalism in architecture had to demolish everything that was sustained only through the force of inertia or tradition.” As rationalism continued to win many conquests, buildings with the most practical function, structures that demonstrated “the greatest estrangement from the past” were considered the most authentic. The stripping of decoration in the new structures that appeared at the start of the twentieth century, he adds, though “logically corresponded to the material exigencies and the spiritual attitudes of their time” are actually “much closer to our mentality than to that of the century from which they originate.”¹⁰⁶ Piacentini connects the ancient Roman structures to rational architecture of the twentieth century. “With the resurgence of rhythm, with the value of proportions, modern architecture has been recombined with more justice to the fundamentals of good ancient architecture, losing the romantic eclecticism and academicism of the nineteenth century.”¹⁰⁷ To prove the validity of his claim that ancient architecture *is* rational, Piacentini cites an exhibit in Milan in which three distinct periods of architecture were put on display: ancient Rome, the Renaissance, and the modern (rational structures), providing evidence of the lineage. In the process, Piacentini appropriates the rational and the universal as distinctively Roman.

The result, according to Piacentini, was that modern architectural forms had more in common with the ancient structures than buildings of the nineteenth century. Even worse than

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

the neoclassical style of the nineteenth century, according to Piacentini, was the Novecento style, which was “banal and devoid of artistic sense.” Until recently, the Novecento style had been increasingly the aesthetic norm of residential neighborhoods in Italian cities. He writes that these neighborhoods “slide by in the name of mediocrity, of speculation; that which predominates is the stingy commercial sense of things, it is the shoddy imitation of better examples, it is the immediate vulgarization and transposition of prevalent designs.” In his criticism of *Novecentismo* and neoclassicism, Piacentini advocates for architecture that is rationalist and demands that critics learn to decipher “authentic, noble productions” from vulgar reproductions. For Piacentini, this fundamental distinction—quality versus commercialized productions—is self-evident “throughout time and in every field of work.”¹⁰⁸

Part two of Piacentini’s “For Autarky: the Politics of Architecture,” featured two days later in the *Giornale d’Italia*, would recover the more important themes of part one while describing the “New Renaissance” in architecture as instituted by Fascism.¹⁰⁹ “The political event destined to produce the greatest consequences, from the [Great] war going forth,” writes Piacentini, “is the affirmation of national values in the totalitarian authority, as reaction to the crumbling internationalist movement.” The crumbling of internationalism had threatened all of humanity before Fascism. It represented “a truly new historical period,” allowing the strongest peoples to “rediscover in themselves the forces of their own renewal” and “lose themselves in the negation and demolition of collectivism.” This rebirth of national values, which “extends from the field of politics to morality, art, and culture,” came after a long period of uncertainty

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ See Piacentini, “Per l’autarchia: Politica dell’Architettura: II – Nuova rinascita.”

and subsequent experimentation in the “complimentary and misleading fields of internationalism and cosmopolitanism.” Alternatively for Piacentini, Fascism had finally created “the sensation of stability, a secure base,” and more than anything else, a “continuity of thought” that compelled the Italian people to connect to their past.¹¹⁰

In architecture, since the first iron constructions, Piacentini argues, “we are blinded as if by the splendor of an idol: technical innovation.”¹¹¹ The development and use of iron in architecture was not intrinsically a terrible thing. “The early results of this new innovation have undeniably allowed astonishing boldness, to which, as architects, we were not prepared.” The same applied to rationalism, which “brought to our field the sense of logic which seemed to have been lost. But to the pure and cold rationalism is inserted today a new aspiration of Italian architecture, and it is with immense satisfaction that we witness the ascendance, not in the form of past styles, but to the elementary forms of our spirit, of our race, to the divine harmony, to the clarity, to nobility.” Piacentini again writes in the language of the irreducible particle of the culture. “With this spirit perfectly liberated, that we are creating, we call on once again the great Roman conceptions, not to repeat the forms and the modality, but to adapt to them our breath.”¹¹²

Architectural autarky served at least two purposes for Piacentini, one practical and one aesthetic. Piacentini advocates for autarky, for the use of “materials and resources that are produced in our soil, limiting forever more the employment of everything that comes from

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

abroad.”¹¹³ The use of local materials such as marble, travertine, and pozzolana in construction projects would also cut transport costs and eliminate the burden of international trade. Furthermore, the use of such materials “corresponds to the spiritual ends of our architectural renaissance,” allowing for Italian architecture to express its regional character. Autarky came about historically, according to Piacentini, because of “the necessity of finding the materials needed for life and defense.”¹¹⁴ This “national independence” from international trade is said to have given rise to “the political and spiritual” elements of autarky.

The reduction of the use of iron in construction, a limited natural resource on the peninsula, was the most important step that Italian architecture could take on the road to self-sufficiency. According to Piacentini in “Concrete Reforms,” part three of his *Giornale d’Italia* series, Italy consumed around 400,000 metric tons of iron per year in construction projects, far too much if the nation’s industry was to become self-reliant.¹¹⁵ “The architect today must habituate himself to discipline the imagination, collaborating more strictly with the technique and submitting the general conception and the particulars of building to a rigorous criteria with regard to the use of iron.” The growth of technological innovation has created new potential for timeworn materials. In place of iron, Piacentini calls for innovative, rational uses of cement and marble in architecture. “A series of homes made from bricks, with vaulted ceilings and mosaic-tiled marble flooring would give us a truly Italian, autarkic architecture, spiritually and materially,” writes Piacentini. Through appropriate and careful selection of materials for

¹¹³ See Marcello Piacentini, “Per l’autarchia: Politica dell’Architettura: III – Riforme concrete,” 2-3.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

authentic Italian structures, architects would contribute to autarky. “It is in the return of the architecture to the spiritual sources of our tradition, that we will find the means of winning the economic battle, and will be the easiest and most spontaneous way.” A truly autarkic architecture adequate to Fascism, writes Piacentini, would complete the “new renaissance emerging from the reaction against internationalism.”¹¹⁶

More than a return to some pre-modern past, Italy’s new EUR architecture would reveal the true functionality, “the essence” of classical constructions in their “clear compositions, wide and functional.” Unlike neo-classicism with its gratuitous decoration, the classical elements used in the EUR structures would serve a functional and original purpose. “Columns would truly sustain a load—not as a product of art, but as a standardized product’ meant to serve a purpose,” writes Piacentini. “Even the arch should serve [a function] like it did in the time when it was born.” Thus, the use of national products in the construction of Fascist architecture would not signify a return to a period of lesser development, but the fulfillment of the aims of that historical past. Piacentini is certain to iterate the point that this Fascist “return to origins” would not result in a full repudiation of national modernization projects. “It would be absurd to return to the artisan systems of the past in our constructions,” writes Piacentini. “It would be an unjust negation of progress [...], ridiculous like a general today going to war with the bombs and artillery of the seventeenth century.” A total reversal of modernization would be “damaging for

¹¹⁶ According to Piacentini, the “new renaissance” that Mussolini’s Fascism was instituting in all fields, including architecture, would have “substantial difference from the Renaissance of the 15th century, which was in architecture mainly formal and exterior in the sense that the return to the classic was intended more as a costume, a superficial encasement applied to the walls of [older] structures like the medieval castles of the prior centuries.” Whereas Renaissance architecture applied new content to existing forms and did not represent a revolution of innovation, Fascist architecture was truly a break. See Piacentini, “Per l’autarchia: Politica dell’Architettura: II – Nuova rinascita.”

many industries and sources of work, a degree of ruin that would create a disadvantage for the national economy.”¹¹⁷ The regime’s strategy to advance domestic production around the use of Italian materials would have ideally lead to an “alternative modernity” in which technical development would help Italy transcend its natural material limitations while exposing the failures of capital to universalize itself in Italy.¹¹⁸

Two days later, Gio Ponti, one of Italy’s most respected twentieth century designers and architects, was invited to write a follow-up to Marcello Piacentini’s piece on autarky in architecture, also in the *Giornale d’Italia*.¹¹⁹ As a sign of his public support, Ponti called it “a high honor” to write “alongside Marcello Piacentini, this extremely great architect of ours who towers over all of us and represents us.”¹²⁰ Echoing Piacentini’s sentiments, Ponti writes that if

¹¹⁷ See Marcello Piacentini, “Per l’autarchia: Politica dell’Architettura: III – Riforme concrete.”

¹¹⁸ See Timothy Brennan (Sep-Oct 2014). “Subaltern Stakes” *New Left Review* 89: 67-87. Postcolonial theory, according to Brennan, “involves postulating the failure of capital to universalize itself in India.” The Fascists in Italy would try to demonstrate a similar failure of universalization in anything but paradoxical, Italian cultural forms.

¹¹⁹ Perhaps most well known for his La Pavoni espresso machine (1947) and his avant-garde Pirelli Tower in Milan (1958), Ponti’s “seeming determination not to be typecast or pigeonholed” had already become evident through his “creative dabbling in the [inter] war years.” Ponti’s most famous art design was an object from 1952, “a somewhat tongue-in-cheek reworking of a traditional rush-seated Italian chair that he called the ‘superleggera.’” Pearman adds that “he designed everything from a coffee machine to a cathedral, he edited magazines, he was a poet and artist and all-round Renaissance man.” For an article on Ponti’s works and career, see Hugh Pearman, “A Full House,” *The Sunday Times*, 5 May 2002. For more please refer to “Ponti, Giovanni.” *Enciclopedia biografica e bibliografica Italiana* (Milano 1936-1947), Ser. 4, “Teoricii storici critici delle arti figurative (1800-1940).”

¹²⁰ Ponti, “Per l’autarchia: Politica dell’Architettura – Idee di Gio. Ponti,” *Giornale d’Italia*, 19 July 1938, 2-3. Ponti writes that Piacentini’s piece was thoroughly conclusive on the topic of autarky in architecture, noting, “there is in general nothing to be added.” And while Piacentini had succeeded in the mission of “guiding architects, builders, and the public to methods with a healthier autarkic content, every architect brings their own contribution to this

Italy must pursue autarky, “it must be inescapably connected to the developments of a modern architecture.” Autarky in architecture, with its *avant la lettre* use of materials, is a “creative conquest,” writes Ponti. Its mission is to avoid an “anti-autarkic technical and conceptual regression with the indulgence of old styles [...] still used in all other nations.”¹²¹ Like Piacentini, Ponti bases the application of the culturalist aesthetic within the concrete necessity facing Italians to attain resource self-sufficiency. Instead of glass and the use of (too much) iron, the EUR buildings would be made from domestic products.

The ideal structure built under autarky for Ponti would be built with “eternally” durable concrete, travertine, and marble. Indeed, Ponti promised that marble would make its “blessed return” in the name of autarky, even though architects adhering to modernism’s “innovative tendency” were already using the “noble material”.¹²² These materials, along with classical construction supplies, would form the basis of Italy’s culturalist autarky in architecture. “In these buildings stone and marble are not only *employed* but the marble is *expressed* at last with such a desired clarity, with such loving comprehension of beauty, with such a conception it connects us to the origins of marble works to represent a new phenomenon.” The E 42 would be the “world’s opportunity” to take in these new hybrid forms and to “relearn splendor” from the “stupefying affirmation” of autarky and Italy, the place from the which the same “materials and talented artists originate.”¹²³

effort.” It is thus with great sensitivity that Ponti creates a space for his own contribution to the discussion of autarky in architecture.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

Gio Ponti followed up with further defenses of the EUR aesthetic in the *Corriere della Sera*, in which he argues for the use of the culturalist Italian aesthetic for the political mobilization of difference.¹²⁴ In one such piece, “Let’s Mobilize our Art Productions,” Ponti writes an appeal to the masses for the “deliberate, strategic, and populist mobilization of cultural material” that “articulates the boundary of difference” between Italy and the other.¹²⁵ To this extent, the article seeks to mobilize artisans and Italian males, often stereotyped as brooding intellectuals incapable of quick-witted decisiveness,¹²⁶ to “outdo” themselves in art “as in other matters.”¹²⁷ To mobilize Italian artists, Ponti conveys a sense of anxiety to motivate artists to rise to the “challenge,” and to meet it in a manner utterly “Italian.” If “the preceding international exhibitions were for us a way to come to learn the marvels of the world,” writes Ponti, “the E 42 must be the method for making the world learn about Italian marvels.”¹²⁸ Because Italy would be on display, Ponti writes, “the fortunes of Rome ‘42 must not be left to outside sources; it must be Italian work.”¹²⁹ Italian art would be of supreme importance because of its cultural influence in all spheres of the exhibit:

These great works of art *all’italiana* [...] are hastened to [influence] the

¹²⁴ See “Ponti, Giovanni” in Ser. 4 of *Enciclopedia biografica e bibliografica Italiana* (Milano 1936-1947).

¹²⁵ See pages 12-16 in Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Appadurai says this about “culturalist movements.”

¹²⁶ See Patrizia Dogliani (Jan. 2001). “Sport and Fascism,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 5 (3): 326-343. See page 337 for specifics on this argument.

¹²⁷ See Gio Ponti, “Mobilitiamo le nostre produzioni d’arte,” *Corriere della Sera*, 17 February 1939: 5.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

architecture and the life of man: these are the frescos and the mosaics for our murals, they are the tapestries for our walls, they are the stained glass for our architecture, they are our marbles and monumental ceramics for the statues and ornaments and the cantos [inscribed] on our architecture.¹³⁰

Ponti, as one of the key culturalist architects and designers of the period, attempts to localize or “make different” something with an international character. Further, Ponti stresses that artists and craftsmen would be of critical importance for physically substantiating the “third way.” For EUR architecture to establish itself as uniquely Italian, the mobilization of all Italians would be required. Ponti states that in spite of the “international character of E 42, Italians are not future visitors, they must feel like actors.”¹³¹

Rather than ward off condemnation of Piacentini’s EUR aesthetic, new critics would emerge in the wake of the abovementioned publications. Criticism now focused on Piacentini’s sway in the regime’s aesthetic directions and his choice of hybrid rationalism, attacked as both “Bolshevik” and backward looking for its revival of traditional elements. A cartoon appearing in the Italian journal *Omnibus* on July 23, 1938 [see *Figure 2.10*] features Piacentini seated at a dining table eating models of his hybrid-rationalist EUR structures. Beneath the cartoon is the caption, “The academic Piacentini demonstrated in three articles that he seeks a return to traditional Italian architecture.” The cartoon features two waiters, one whispering to the other in reference to Piacentini’s peculiar meal, “See, now he’s eating everything.” In the cartoon, Piacentini is dressed in a bicorn hat with full feather regalia, suggestive of the hats French ministers wore during the first Empire. This component discreetly connects Piacentini with the

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid. To further mobilize the notion of the new, active Italian, the article also calls upon “all Italian publications” to “present to the world the renewed, extremely civil life of Italians of every condition.”

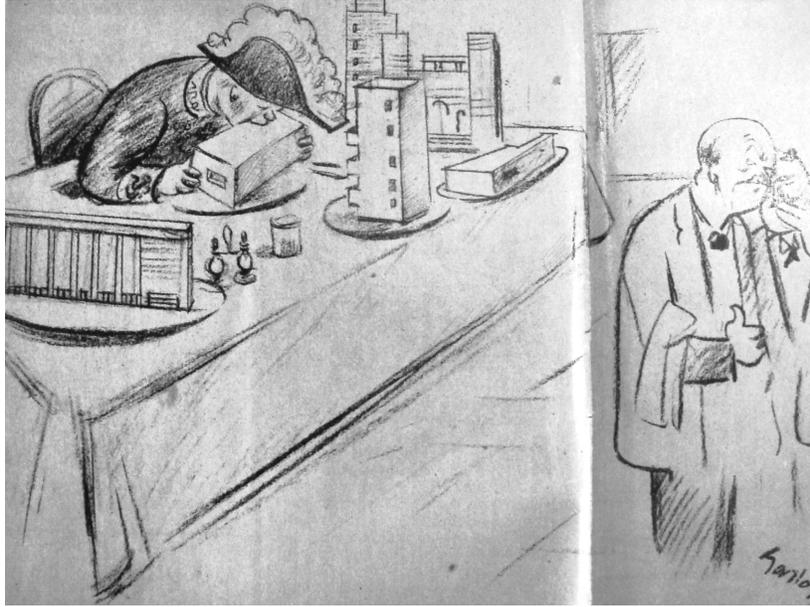


Figure 2.10: a cartoon mocking Piacentini, published by *Omnibus* on July 23, 1938.

Enlightenment tradition and Napoleonic rule in parts of Italy during the first decades of the 19th century, implying that Piacentini's aesthetic has internationalist and even neo-imperialist elements.

Piacentini's old foe, Ugo Ojetti vigorously pursued critics of the EUR architecture with an August 1938 article in the *Corriere della Sera* titled "Piacentini is right."¹³² Though documents show Ojetti maintained a close – even affectionate – relationship with EUR Agency President Vittorio Cini, there is little record of a personal relationship with Piacentini.¹³³

¹³² Ugo Ojetti, "Piacentini ha ragione," *Corriere della Sera*, 24 August 1938.

¹³³ *ACS, E42, Busta 40, Fascicolo 42*. Several personal correspondences show the close and personal friendship between Ojetti and Cini. For example, in 1938, Ojetti was appointed to the commission for the World's Fair of Rome Exhibit on "Italian Civilization." Due to illness, Ojetti wrote to Cini asking for a delay in the start of commission meetings or his permanent substitution if the delay could not be granted, saying that a doctor had ordered him to "rest at all costs." Cini replied, "Dearest, I cannot nor do I want to, my dear Ugo, renounce your extremely

Nevertheless, Ojetti's article begins with a massive quote pulled directly from one of Piacentini's *Giornale d'Italia* pieces, but then proceeds to build upon it with an extensive essay in which he describes the need for an architecture that properly articulates "the characteristics of our civilization and race." Such an aesthetic would firmly repudiate, in Ojetti's words, "the flattening civilization of the *homo occidentalis mechanicus neobarbarus*."¹³⁴ In this endeavor, Ojetti writes that Marcello Piacentini had demonstrated tremendous foresight "to envisage what in four years will be acceptable architecture to us, amid this dizziness of fashions, this grim decline of all Internationals, the rising borders between peoples and civilizations, higher than the mountains and deeper than the seas." With reference points unstable, Ojetti asks, how can one "not return to the origins, to tradition and *Romanità*?"

An anonymous article appeared days later in hardline Fascist paper *Il Regime Fascista* rebuking Ojetti's central claims.¹³⁵ The newspaper was presided over by Roberto Farinacci, Fascist National Party leader and one of the more radical, anti-clerical, and anti-Semitic ideologues whom Mussolini had incorporated into the regime. "Ugo Ojetti published a long

valuable collaboration. If you desire a reduction in your occupations it isn't certain that you must begin with the Exposition!" The archive shows that Ojetti's health would continue to deteriorate into the summer of 1938. The 67-year-old Ojetti wrote Cini on June 11, 1938 complaining that he had become ill because of too many trips to the theater. "I am in bed because I am an imbecile. I shouldn't have gone to Venice. I shouldn't have gone to the first act of 'As You Like It' by Shakespeare and Paola. I shouldn't have gone to the opening of Valkyrie at Boboli. The doctors told me straight out that, if I don't want to worsen, I must stay in absolute rest for some days with my crazy leg placidly extended. [...] I ask you, if the work is urgent, to substitute me with whatever Ojetti, more mobile than me." Cini however continued to block Ojetti's wish to recuse himself from the committee on "Italian Civilization." Later that month, Ojetti sent a copy of his newly released book to Cini, who responded, "Dearest, Thanks for the book and for the affectionate dedication, I will read it with the lively interest that your writings always arouse."

¹³⁴ "Western mechanical neobarbarian man."

¹³⁵ "Eravamo soli...", *Il Regime Fascista*, 25 August 1938: 1.

article in the *Corriere della Sera* to say that the architect Piacentini is right. The friend Ojetti, extremely nice friend, must allow us to disagree with him.”¹³⁶ According to the piece, the Italian press had regularly attacked Piacentini for his earlier designs. For Piacentini to get ahead in Italy, “to make money, he intuited that it was better to be carried away by the current, and soon he became so much like everyone else that his projects made us into his harshest critics.”¹³⁷ Years before, the hardline Fascists had formed an alliance with Piacentini based on his allegation that the Novecento style had a foreign derivation, for which the press at the time “compared us with drawstring knickers, defining us with everything old-fashioned.” Later, Ojetti and Piacentini made peace with one another and came to see eye to eye on matters of aesthetic preference. “Perhaps with a presentiment that the wind was preparing to change direction” and with it the regime’s aesthetic preference, “today the two are in agreement. What a race of anticipators!”¹³⁸ The article accuses Piacentini and Ojetti of turning toward advocacy of the regime’s totalized hybrid aesthetic in order to achieve success within the Fascist system. It also questions the extent to which Piacentini had truly believed in the EUR aesthetic, suggesting that higher powers within the regime were its true proponents.

Ugo Ojetti would have the opportunity to publish more developed thought on the EUR aesthetic in the Italian press. In April 1940, Ugo Ojetti penned an article for the Italian daily *Il Corriere della Sera* in which he lambastes the modernist aesthetic for its pursuit of perfection and its smearing of local specificity. At the same time, he praises the EUR-style for its unique

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ For a cartoon that mocks the budding friendship between Piacentini and Ojetti, see page 7 in (May 1940). “Meteorologia nell’architettura,” *Origini* 9 (7).

grandiosity and virtuous *imperfection*. Ojetti, always the critic of rationalism, walks a rhetorical tightrope in praising the E 42-style as forming an ideal-type of Fascist architecture. His rhetorical focus on the inflection of cultural difference at the EUR allows him to accept the aesthetic as a break with modernism.

Ojetti structures the article by summoning Mussolini's 1924 plea for Italian architecture that would confront both the "problems of necessity and the problems of grandeur," or the former as essential to the constitution of quantity and the latter the formation of quality.¹³⁹ According to Ojetti, it was "natural that in all Italian cities, 'the problems of necessity' have been, for the most part, solved in the rational and functional forms that idolize science, popular in Europe and America until the end of the 1800s and stemming from the reign of positivism."¹⁴⁰ By the late 1930s, intellectuals like Ugo Ojetti advocated for a new principled approach to Italy's cultural artifacts. Hybrid structures that would encompass both the universal modernist style and the essential Italian cultural elements of Fascist ideology at the same instant would transcend the incongruous dyad of "necessity" and "art."¹⁴¹

Ojetti reasons that modernist architects, like their Enlightenment forbearers, were universalist and utopian; their fetishization of the new formed a "*routine*" that was ceaseless in its infinite drive toward perfection.¹⁴² Italian architecture, on the other hand, would be concrete, attainable, and inexorably local. Culture would form a break with the universalizing modernist

¹³⁹ See Ugo Ojetti, "La Settima Triennale," *Corriere della Sera*. 3 Aprile 1940: 3. For the full text of this speech by Mussolini, see footnote 50 in this chapter.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ This hybrid form, it could be said, would more "purely" express the commodity and its two-sided character.

¹⁴² Ibid.

aesthetic, and would be symbolic of the regime's desire to overcome the homogenization and routinization of life specific to modern capitalism. The culturalism of the "third way" represented a sound alternative to the modernists "who adore the black automobile, the ship, and the airplane, not with the intent of creating a better and faster product, but for their inexorable fetish for steel that can be found in many other nations like France, Germany, Russia, etc." Ojetti adds that "in regard to 'problems of grandeur' in Rome, [architects] are making gigantic steps in the right direction, that is, toward an Italian and Roman architecture." In the construction of the EUR, the material expression of culturalism would appear in contrast to the soulless, universal modernist aesthetic. Once his most significant opponent, Ojetti now sounded an awful lot like Piacentini, showing the regime's success in establishing the EUR aesthetic as the official representation of Fascism's many divergent elements.

Ojetti then shifts to the "issue of substituting a generic and cloudy modernity for *Italianità*" in design.¹⁴³ He asks, "In Italy, does art have to be Italian?"¹⁴⁴ In the recent past, Italian art had been unable to hybridize recent trends from abroad into something distinctly Italian. "Our glorious and millenarian Italian art," writes Ojetti, "revered and imitated throughout the entire world, was incapable of transforming itself and adapting to the times without losing its true character." In adopting the universal aesthetic forms, Italian cultural specificity was undermined. However, Ojetti describes the EUR as developing a break with this recent trend in Italian art. The EUR designers, according to Ojetti, had created "a hastening and a genuflection" that "touch" simultaneously. Thus, Italian designers had reconciled the universal, modernist

¹⁴³ For more on the concept of *Italianità* in the Fascist *ventennio*, see Joshua Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity: the Roman Past in Fascist Italy*.

¹⁴⁴ See Ugo Ojetti, "La Settima Triennale."

aesthetic by rushing forward, all the while maintaining a reverence to the past and to the idea of Italian cultural specificity. The end result, as evidenced by the EUR aesthetic, was an alternative modernity.

Clearly, Ojetti is critical of what he interchangeably refers to as “positivist” or “mechanized” modernist structures, specifically the rational and functional forms that idolize science.¹⁴⁵ The construction of “practical buildings for workshops, stations, schools, barracks, offices, stadiums, factories, silos, electrical stations, prisons, hospitals, sanatoriums, slaughterhouses, and markets” relied upon totalizing principles according to Ojetti, “with only a faint hope of finally creating a model worthy of infinite repetition.” This type of architecture for Ojetti was comparable to the automobile or the ship, “where a new material or an unexpected shift in desire often changes the template while maintaining its continual course toward an unattainable perfection.” The modernist “projects for monotonous apartment complexes,” he writes, “replicate this boring contagion tirelessly through all of Europe, from one city to another, in a disconsolate lament.”

In this continual pursuit “toward an unattainable perfection,” something was lost, writes Ojetti. As modernist architecture further homogenized the object world, local cultural specificity was subsumed under one-dimensional universal principles. In reaction to the dominant, “tasteless” style of the “petulant modernists,” Ojetti believes that the architecture of the EUR, as purely symbolic of the Fascist “third way,” might become the archetype “to the world.” Thus, Ojetti is advocating a concept of cultural difference, in architectural *form*, to become its own universal aesthetic. Naturally however, the content of that form could not itself be abstracted to

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

universal dimensions. As a reproducible universal form, the specific content, by its very nature, would have to be culturally distinct, determined by the “primordial” culture of each nation. Here Ojetti closely echoes Heidegger, who according to David Harvey, was “disturbed by the bland universalisms of technology, the collapse of spatial distinctiveness and identity, and the seemingly uncontrolled acceleration of temporal processes.”¹⁴⁶

Italian architecture, on the other hand, would be something concrete and attainable. Ojetti adds that “in regard to ‘problems of grandeur’ in Rome, [architects] are making gigantic steps in the right direction, that is, toward an Italian and Roman architecture.”¹⁴⁷ Ojetti states that rationalist architecture fails to account for organic Italian cultural tradition and the geographic specificity of Rome, which itself was allotted its specific meaning through the grandiosity of Italian culture.¹⁴⁸ The “critical regionalism” of the “third way” would provide a sound alternative to those “who adore the black automobile, the ship, and the airplane, not to create a better and faster product, but as an inexorable fetish of steel that can be found in many other nations like France, Germany, Russia, etc.”¹⁴⁹ The expression of regionalism appears in contrast to the soulless modernist aesthetic.

“Consider the great plastic model of the Piazza Imperiale for the Universal Exhibition of 1942. Who would have, only 5 years ago, imagined that this symmetrical colonnade could encircle such a vast a piazza? And the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, with its hundreds of large arches like those of the Coliseum? And the church with its exceedingly *Roman* [style] dome? All is not perfect, but the

¹⁴⁶ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 209.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Payne has described fascism, in its generic form, as utopian, only without a determinate vision or end goal. See page 9 in Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

inspiration is clear.”¹⁵⁰

In the final sentence above, Ojetti once more portends to a postmodernist critique of modernism in repeating that the aim of the EUR architecture was not perfection, (which was unattainable anyway), but a clear iteration of local specificity.

IV. Conclusion: Fascist ‘Past-Modernism’

The aesthetic direction in architecture employed by the regime for its 1942 Universal Exhibition of Rome was considered an “ideal” testament to Italian Fascism’s own goal of being universally reproducible while simultaneously fixed and locally distinct. Italian Fascists of the late 1930s, indisposed to accept a modern world without banisters, claimed that Italy’s cultural rootedness in ancient Imperial Rome provided the basis for the regime’s “third way” hybridization of universal modernism—imbued with meaning and irreducible Italian difference.¹⁵¹ Reaching into the past, Fascist thinkers claimed ancient and authentic sources for Italian cultural difference in order to impede the dynamic growth of homogeneity. In this sense, the Fascist corporatist “third way” was an anti-global ideology, yet one that sought to create a specific form of universality in its place, an “alternative” productivist modernity in which Italian

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ See Hannah Arendt, “Understanding and Politics (The Difficulties of Understanding),” *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* (New York 1994): 321. First published in 1953 Arendt writes, “Even though we have lost yardsticks by which to measure, and rules under which to subsume the particular, a being whose essence is beginning may have enough of origin within himself to understand without preconceived categories and to judge without the set of customary rules which is morality.” In this sense, Arendt augurs in the postmodernist “individual,” untethered from religious and statal metanarratives, though whose singular essence (here suggesting a type of *a priorism* that is innate or universal) would provide a way beyond the loss of grand narratives – the proverbial “handrail.”

cultural difference served as the standpoint of critique for the existing global order.

As discussed earlier, both “highly regulated” interwar Italian Fascist and “deregulated” postmodernist architectural forms begin from a critique of the functionalism of universal modernism. Beyond their converging criticisms, these architectural forms also share striking similarities in their attempts to break with utilitarianism through annunciations of difference.¹⁵² To return to a question posed earlier in this chapter, is it possible that Fascism in Italy represented one of the earliest examples of the “postmodern condition,” perhaps in its “regulated” state-form? After all, it was Arnold Toynbee to first coin the term “post-modern” in 1939, when he stated that the postmodern “begins to articulate and shape itself in the years between the two [world] wars.”¹⁵³ Furthermore, it seems that several of the planned features of the Exposition would only later attain their somewhat altered presence *in extremis*, from the selective cultural historicism of Epcot Center in Disney World to contemporary urban design that aims at being “sensitive to vernacular traditions, local histories, particular wants, needs, and fancies.”¹⁵⁴ Given the degree of likeness between these positions, it is not surprising that particular postmodern theorists have even been criticized for their alleged affinities for Fascism.¹⁵⁵ However, it is certain that the established hypothetical relationship between Fascist culturalism and postmodernism needs further refinement. For one, many paradoxes exist within

¹⁵² See Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*: 7-9; 43-51; 66-87.

¹⁵³ See *Postmodernism: A Reader*. Thomas Docherty, ed. (New York 1993): 1.

¹⁵⁴ See Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 66.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 85. David Harvey for example cites the work of postmodern architect Aldo Rossi, who in 1982 wrote, “Architects should construct monuments expressive of collective memory,” which for Rossi was to be located “in the secret and ceaseless will of its collective manifestations.” Harvey adds that Umberto Eco describes Rossi’s architecture as “‘frightening,’ while others point to what they see as its fascist overtones.”

the Fascist notion of difference, particularly with regard to the role of the state in formulating such culturalist discourses, as examined in this chapter. In this respect, certain “classical” postmodernist notions of play, even anarchy, are lacking in the hierarchical and centrally planned EUR-city. What is more, the aim of Fascist culturalism’s counter-universality was less to destroy all existing metanarratives but rather to summon a new Fascist universal in its place, (though in fairness, even Lyotard’s critics argue that by proclaiming all universals dead, postmodernism itself became a new grand narrative).

Perhaps scrutiny from a different level of theoretical abstraction is needed in order to make sense of the noted similarities between Fascist culturalism in the aesthetic form and postmodernism. As established above, both Fascist culturalists and postmodernists generated ruptures with universalizing abstraction in the aesthetic realm. While Fascist culturalism explicitly rejected commodification and the free market, it was directly implicated in the realization of Italian autarky, as showed by the review of Piacentini’s essays on the relationship of culturalist aesthetics and domestic production. Thus, spatialization of cultural specificity had very practical motivations for both culturalists and postmodernists. While corporatist productivism functioned for powerful Italian interests, beneficiaries that included EUR Agency President Vittorio Cini, the postmodern position toward the object world only further served the monied global elite of neoliberalism.

Considering this Fascist “backward” glance, it is here that I would like to propose a consideration of the EUR aesthetic as “*Past-Modernism*” rather than “full-blown” postmodernism. In a world increasingly over determined by an expanding system, that was said to be consuming forms of local culture and tradition, the postmodernists “wallow in the

fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is,”¹⁵⁶ or attempt to reject this current through allusions to ancient and authentic forms, riding the fetishized wave of value all the same. On the other hand, I would like to suggest that the Fascist culturalist reaction to dynamic movement within the global system involved returning back toward concrete pre-capitalist forms to further generate value in highly controlled ways. Thus, *past-modernism*, like postmodernism, is a form of thought rendered possible by capitalist forms themselves that only apparently point beyond capital. Both aesthetic forms find being and satisfaction in otherness, though neither is liberatory. In the Conclusion of this dissertation, I will take up again the question of actors in different historical contexts that strive to generate ruptures with symptoms of insecurity and crisis in capitalism.

¹⁵⁶ See Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 44.

Chapter 3. Fascism's Authentic Laboring Subject and the 1942 Universal Exposition of Rome

“Class collaboration is another fundamental point of Fascist syndicalism. Capital and labor are not antagonistic terms, they complete one another; one cannot do without the other, and therefore they must understand each other, and it is possible for them to understand each other.”¹

Benito Mussolini, 1926

The 1942 World's Fair of Rome (E 42) would take place in a massive, freshly constructed permanent *Esposizione Universale di Roma* (EUR) city on the periphery of the original *città eterna*. To conform with Mussolini's program of autarky, the 400-hectare city was built largely with Italian resources like marble, travertine, and pozzolana. Instituted with the League of Nations trade embargo, a consequence of Italy's 1935 invasion of Ethiopia, autarky demanded that commodities previously acquired through international trade be replaced with goods manufactured in Italy, from Italian materials. To stimulate the production of specifically domestic commodities, the regime placed renewed importance on recreating symbols and systems of representation constitutive of Italian particularity.² With life-sized *past*-modernist renditions of iconic Roman structures like the Coliseum and the Pantheon, the new city aimed to show that Fascism had thoroughly Italianized the world of objects. From an ideological

¹ See the March 11, 1926 speech of Benito Mussolini, “La legge sindacale,” *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXII (Florence 1957), 93.

² Marcello Piacentini, “Per l'autarchia: Politica dell'Architettura: II – Nuova rinascita,” *Giornale d'Italia*. 15 July 1938. The use of local materials such as marble and travertine, writes Mussolini's chief architect Piacentini, would cut transport costs and eliminate the burden of international trade while allowing Italian architecture to express its regional cultural essence.

perspective, the EUR city was thus built as a defiant statement on material compulsion, as well as a critique of growing homogeneity and decaying rootedness in modernity.

This fresh Fascist exteriority was to be matched by a new interiority. Construction of the EUR city occasioned new opportunities for indicating Fascism's transformative nature through the exemplary "new" Italian worker. Much like the new city's enormous architectural developments, the labor utilized to construct the EUR became a critical public spectacle, highlighted in films, covered by the Fascist press, and featured on the itineraries of Rome's most important international visitors. Italian labor power, available on the cheap and in excess supply, was likewise a domestic commodity befitting the objectives of autarky.³ At peak production between 1937 and 1941, an army of 5,000 workers labored up to 54 hours a week to construct the EUR city from the ground up in "record time."⁴ Coupled with the total management of everyday life in the adjacent *Villaggio Operaio* (Worker's Village), a new complex of dormitories that lodged 1,400 men from all over Italy, construction of the new city was said to be generative of a new culture—a unique set of experiences and identifications for workers under Fascism.

In this chapter I argue that the social activity of thousands of wage laborers was guided by more than the production of buildings, but also the fabrication of a distinct Italian Fascist

³ Jon Cohen and Giovanni Federico, *The Growth of the Italian Economy, 1820-1960* (Cambridge 2001), 61. The supply of unskilled workers was "very high, if not infinite, for much of Italy's first century," write Cohen and Federico, adding that skilled labor was typically in demand.

⁴ Vittorio Cini, "Revisione del 'Programma di Massima' del 1937," in *E 42: L'Esposizione Universale di Roma; Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Tullio Gregory and Achille Tartaro, editors. (Venezia 1987), 166-170. When the E 42 was first announced in 1936, the regime boasted that the World's Fair site would be fully constructed in less than half the time typically required by other countries.

worker subjectivity. Fascist thinkers, this chapter maintains, replaced class antagonisms in the division of labor with illustrations of exemplary servitude to a hierarchical order, typically masked as familial and interpersonal in origin. Through analysis of a lengthy dramatic screenplay and a documentary film on labor at the EUR, as well as publicized visits to the work zone for select dignitaries, I will show that such narratives of the Italian worker attempted to naturalize Fascist hierarchies with the effect of making transhistorical the relations of thoroughly modern wage labor.⁵ Fascism was heralded as a “third way” rupture with capitalism and communism, an ideology that was said to have successfully mediated the abstraction and cultural homogeneity of the modern world with earlier, glorious modes of Italian social organization [See *Figure 3.1*].⁶ In terms of an appeal to newly mobilized Italian workers, illustrations of labor at the EUR referenced “more familiar” types of labor sociality as a way to ease anxieties about the unfolding of their own lives in an unfamiliar world, amid ongoing Fascist social transformation. Mapped on to the Fascist present, these carefully selected traditions further naturalized Fascism’s intensely hierarchical social relations with the function of undermining mass worker organizations, which was at the heart of corporatism as a system that subsumed “class interests”

⁵ Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: the Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy* (Berkeley, CA 2000), 91-92. Falasca-Zamponi notes that Gramsci had warned about the dangers within the regime’s claim to ancient Roman origins, through which “Fascism naturalized its role within Italian history.”

⁶ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, “Italian Fascism and the Aesthetics of the ‘Third Way,’” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 31, 2 (April 1996): 293.



Figure 3.1: a cologne advertisement features the “New Man,” published by *Gazzetta dello Sport* on May 14, 1939. The archetypical “New Fascist Man,” direct descendent of a pre-modern ancient Roman ideal-type, is here placed within the context of a transforming world of industrialization. This culturally authentic form of difference is mobilized to sell a commodity, in this case cologne. As far as its aim as a cologne advertisement, the incredible persistence (*ultrapersistente*) of *Acqua di Lavanda* is here likened to the enduring culture of Roman civilization. It is however not clear if *Acqua di Lavanda* is pitched to mask the “stench” of industrialization, or if the smell of the new Fascist man is to be combined with the belch of factories to emit a new “hybrid essence.” My empirical evidence suggests the latter to be the case.

to employers and the state.⁷ I conclude with examinations of managed lives in the Worker's Village and general reflections on so-called "Fascist" labor.

In terms of its value as spectacle, labor activity in the construction of the EUR would claim a place alongside football matches and exhibitions of military firepower.⁸ Jacopo Comin, Fascist film functionary and former Ministry of Popular Culture official,⁹ had developed just such a penchant for filming war games as *Istituto LUCE* coordinator for Hitler's 1938 Rome visit.¹⁰ The filmmaker and propagandist, "now dedicated to independent work," was seeking the

⁷ The Fascist regime passed a series of measures between 1925 and 1927 banning the right of workers to unionize and strike, effectively consigning organized labor to state control. Thompson lists this series of anti-union measures as the "Vidoni Palaca Agreement of 2 October 1925, the creation of the Labor Courts, the legge Rocco, and the wholly cynical and legally meaningless Work Charter of 1927." See Doug Thompson, *State Control in Fascist Italy: Culture and Conformity, 1925-43* (Manchester 1991), 63. See also Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison, WI 1995), 116; Tobias Abse, "Fascism and Working Class: Workers under Italian Fascism," in Aristotle Kallis, editor. *The Fascism Reader* (London 2003), 391-398.

⁸ For more on Italian Fascist mass spectacle, such as football, in the 1930s, see F. Fabrizio, *Sport e fascismo: La Politica Sportiva Del Regime 1924-1936* (Padova 1976), 63; Guido Panico and Antonio Papa, *Storia sociale del calcio in Italia* (Bologna 1993), 138-140; Patrizia Dogliani, "Sport and Fascism," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 5.3 (January 2001), 326-343; Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge 1981), 179.

⁹ The Ministry of Popular Culture, according to Cannistraro, was a "state agency that could produce culture according to the theoretical premises of fascism and deliver it to the people in a uniform and systematic manner." See page 136 in Philip V. Cannistraro (Jul. - Oct. 1972). "Mussolini's Cultural Revolution: Fascist or Nationalist?" *Journal of Contemporary History* 7 (3/4): 115-139.

¹⁰ The *Istituto LUCE* (*L'Unione cinematografica educativa*) was founded in 1924. Under the dependency of the *Capo del Governo*, LUCE became a powerful cinematic propaganda wing of the Fascist regime. In 1936, LUCE was placed under the direction of the Ministry of Popular Culture, where Jacopo Comin was an official. Comin, a state propagandist and young filmmaker of budding notoriety, also wrote the screenplay for the 1938 film *Sotto la Croce del Sud*, which won an award at the Mostra di Venezia. The film, set in Italian-occupied Abyssinia, is about Italian settlers in the newly declared Fascist Empire in East Africa. Throughout Comin's career,

EUR Agency's approval to film in the E 42 construction zone.¹¹ In 1939 Comin submitted an original screenplay on the E 42 and the "New Worker" of Fascism to the *Ente Autonomo Esposizione Universale di Roma* (EUR Agency)—the parastatal management firm tasked with overseeing all aspects of construction and organization of the 1942 World's Fair. In a letter to the EUR Agency, Comin writes that *Nascita* (meaning "Birth" or "Origin") must be filmed at the EUR worksite, as it provided the preeminent public spectacle of labor-power in the regime's imperial epoch.¹² Comin viewed the site as the natural place to demonstrate the "character" of the "new Fascist man" that Italy was giving birth to, as constituted by the new Fascist labor form. The stars of the "blockbuster" film, asserted Comin, would be "the workers, the foremen, the engineers; the men who live in the E 42 environs."¹³ At a time in which labor was "exalted as a formative element of character,"¹⁴ the film *Nascita* said Comin, would thoroughly demonstrate

which spanned well into the postwar period, he directed four films and wrote nine screenplays that were made into films. For more on Comin and *Sotto la Croce del Sud*, see Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Italian Fascism's Empire Cinema* (Bloomington, IN 2015), 192-213.

¹¹ *Archivio Centrale di Stato* (henceforward "ACS"), *Esposizione Universale di Roma* (E42), *Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304, Subfascicolo 4*. Comin, the EUR Agency writes, "has his own independent projects right now" after recently leaving the Ministry for Popular Culture. Authors Chiari, Pasinetti, Caretta, and Romano are also listed after Comin as contributing authors to the screenplay, but nothing else is said about the contributions of those authors and they never engage the EUR Agency on the screenplay, according to the available records.

¹² *Ibid.* On the cover page of the screenplay, Chiari, Pasinetti, Caretta, and Romano are also listed after Comin as contributing authors to the screenplay, but nothing else is said about the contributions of those authors and they never directly engaged the EUR Agency. Comin meanwhile flouted his own credentials to ensure that he would be permitted access to film in the work sites and Worker's Village.

¹³ *Ibid.* Comin provided plans for global distribution of *Nascita* and expected it to be a great success.

¹⁴ The quote, from labor exhibit engineer Giulio Terzaghi, appears in a piece advocating for an Italian museum of labor. See "Il Deutsches Museum di Monaco, Per un Museo Italiano del Lavoro." *ACS, E42, Busta 1048 Fascicolo 9970*.

the Fascist regime's new "political" and "ethical" approach to labor.¹⁵ *Nascita*, wrote Comin, would articulate the new "social values" of the Fascist approach to labor, such as "assistance to the worker, internal migration, the constitution of national conglomerates, the abolition of regionalism, [and] the reabsorption of migrants into the national life of the fatherland."¹⁶ The EUR would be rectified with strictly disciplined, productive labor that would exalt the Fascist principles of fatherhood, honor, and autarky.¹⁷

Comin's screenplay, a veritable epic of "Fascist" primitive accumulation, charts Angelo's transition from peasant boy to wage-earning Fascist man. We learn that 18-year-old Angelo, who not by coincidence shares the same 1922 birth as the regime itself, was put up for adoption as a newborn and raised by an old shepherd in a shack in Rome's desolate outskirts. The screenplay begins with Angelo rising from his slumber to the sounds of sleeping sheep in the manger. The setting for the movie is romantic and pastoral, but the idyllic is quickly shattered. A loud siren emanating from the nearby E 42 work zone suddenly shatters this bucolic scene with labor discipline oriented around clock time. That day Angelo would begin his life as a wage laborer. The old shepherd had urged Angelo to find new work, "noting that every day their profession has become more difficult."¹⁸ The scene is replete with imagery of provisional fences to suggest that enclosure was encroaching on common grazing lands. As Angelo departs for his first day of

¹⁵ Comin's screenplay and exchanges with the EUR Agency are found in *ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304, Subfascicolo 4*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.* In fact, the archive shows that disputes over sheep herding, arising from growing property and land use restrictions, were extremely common before, during, and after the construction of the E 42. Police reports on this issue can be found in *ACS, E42, Busta 1167, Fascicolo 11751 to Busta 1168, Fascicolo 11838*.

manual labor the siren stands in sharp relief to the peacefulness of sheep grazing on the prairie. “The initial theme contrasting the prehistoric world and environs of the Roman countryside, personified by the two shepherds, and the new world, the Exposition, that rises and advances, represents a FITTING commentary,” writes Comin in his proposal to the EUR Agency.¹⁹ The “machine in the garden” trope, whereby machines suddenly disrupt idyllic landscapes as a sign of rapid industrialization, appears here with inevitability, even necessity.²⁰ After a brief lament for the passing of the natural world, labor-time must inevitably be given over by individuals to a society plying labor power en masse. The interpersonal, pre-capitalist forms of labor sociality that Angelo was more habituated to would not be wholly obliterated; by joining older forms with modern wage labor, as personified by Angelo, the new Fascist man would be realized.

In *Nascita*, workers from all over Italy heed the siren and crowd the entrance gate to the EUR. Crossing the fence, earlier a barrier to Angelo’s continued peasant existence here signifies his entry into a national community of wage laborers. As Angelo leaves the fluffy, sleeping sheep for the mechanized construction zone, he at first feels out of place. The new world around him is loud, full of large manmade structures and powerful machines that control the nature in which Angelo had only hours before left behind. Comin provides a valuable description of the dynamic new world of the worksite:

The earth mover crushes the hills, the cranes hoist heavy loads, trucks follow transporting loads of materials, convoys of Decauville trains intersect, the rhythm of the machines and the exertion of the men are in full swing in all of the

¹⁹ The emphasis appears in the original screenplay by Comin. *ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304, Subfascicolo 4*.

²⁰ Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (London 1964), 3-33.

construction site. Angelo feels overpowered by the immense force of work around him.²¹

Angelo, who has never been to Rome itself and has only admired its lights at night while tending sheep, has now been entrusted with the construction of the New Rome.

After the first day of work, we are introduced to Angelo's new coworkers in the mess hall. "Accustomed to the extended silences of the pastures, the immense horizons that he's always viewed in solitude have been transformed by his companions."²² His fellow workers have been mobilized by the Fascist state from all parts of Italy to build the EUR.²³ "The continuous arrival of new workers, the mix of new dialects – the reinvention of man's essence and the character of the earth – amaze Angelo like the revelation of a new world."²⁴ The experience of labor begins to reconstitute Angelo much as it transforms the natural world. Though a highly romantic depiction, there was a modicum of accuracy in Comin's depiction of these workers. Upon migrating to cities, rural peasants during the *ventennio* typically secured employment in construction, where lack of skill was a lesser hindrance, with only second-generation migrants

²¹ *ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Workers have come from "the Veneto, Umbria, Calabria, Emilia Romagna, and Liguria," writes Comin. Though Comin's portrayal that Italians from the around the world were laboring at the E 42 is technically true, it is slightly overstated. In a 1939 report on the origins of the workers staying in the Worker's Village, where workers from outside of Rome generally stayed, more workers were Roman and Laziale. Roughly 14% of the workers in the Worker's Village came from the province of Frosinone, 12.5% came from the recently built town of Littoria in the Pontine Marshes, 10.5% came from Rome itself. Additionally, 10.5% were from Aquila, 7 to 9.5% from Catanzaro, Padova, Benevento, and Bologna, with 4% from Reggio Calabria and 2.5% from Rovigo. *ACS, E42, Busta 51, Fascicolo 218.*

²⁴ *ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304.* Luisa Passerini argues that "the worst working and living conditions" under Fascism "were suffered by the common laborers," most notably when they were single migrants. See *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* (Cambridge 1987), 137.

securing industrial work.²⁵ Many of the lives that were used and at times exhausted in the “brick by brick” construction of Fascist ideology at the EUR were recent migrants from the impoverished countryside, places where social relations often did harken back to an earlier time.²⁶

Though at first Angelo pines for his boyhood as a shepherd, he soon begins to lose himself in his new work, made meaningful by these new forms of “classical” solidarity. A paternal foreman selects Angelo for his labor team, which is building the upper sections of the *Civiltà Italiana*, or *Colosseo Quadrato* (Square Coliseum), the architectural centerpiece of the EUR, and the quintessence of Fascism’s desire to simultaneously return to “pre-modern organicist corporatism” and rapidly modernize.²⁷ “Up there,” writes Comin, “Angelo, who has never seen the complexity of the work from above, began to feel the grandiosity of the panorama, filled with the iron frames of tall buildings.”²⁸ Once there were stark differences between nature and the mechanized world, but now Angelo is drawing likeness between the two. Comin writes that Angelo is captured by the aesthetic, one that rivals nature itself, noting the

²⁵ Refer to page 62 in Cohen and Federico, *The Growth of the Italian Economy, 1820-1960*.

²⁶ *ACS, E42, Busta 51, Fascicolo 218*. A 1939 report on the origins of workers in the Worker’s Village shows that 14 per cent were from the province of Frosinone, 12.5 per cent were from the recently built town of Littoria in the Pontine Marshes, and 10.5 per cent were from Rome itself. Additionally, 10.5 per cent were from Aquila, 7 to 9.5 per cent from Catanzaro, Padova, Benevento, and Bologna, with 4 per cent from Reggio Calabria and 2.5 per cent from Rovigo.

²⁷ Slavoj Žižek, *Plague of Fantasies* (London 1997), 3. Žižek ascribes the earlier aesthetic duality in Italian Fascist architecture to the contradictory nature of fascist ideology, with the diversity of styles used in different structures, as representing the intrinsic “contradiction of the Fascist ideological project.” I contend that the later EUR aesthetic was designed to resolve these earlier contradictions in unitary structures.

²⁸ *ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304*.

“remote similarity between the grandiosity of nature and the immense labor power that creates the structures.” In this way, Fascist labor is also transhistoricized and naturalized. Angelo is relieved to see Fascist labor, as a notably distinct labor form, favorably mediate the “violence” associated with leaving the womb of nature (origins), and the alienation of the frightening mechanized world.

As Angelo’s new companions discuss the arrival of workers from throughout Italy and repatriated from abroad, we are introduced to Vincenzo, who is processing his papers at a nearby police station. Vincenzo is 50 years old and returning to Italy from Tunisia, where he had been working in agriculture for the past 18 years. Vincenzo had left the peninsula in search of stable employment, and also to evade the responsibility of caring for a newborn son born out of wedlock and given up for adoption. We soon learn that Vincenzo is Angelo’s estranged father. As Vincenzo is hired as a security guard to police the EUR workers, he is the father who becomes again the rightful guardian in more than one sense. It is through Vincenzo’s character, with hierarchy disguised in a familial relation, that Comin shows how Fascist culture was claiming to institute a hybrid economic form, both modern and a return to “older” modes of social cohesion. The reunion of father and son also marks Fascism’s historical break with the liberal period that preceded it, during which 15 million Italians emigrated.²⁹ The “fatherland” was now reclaiming the sons it had lost over the prior half century. Though the exigencies of a changing world had suddenly thrust both Angelo and Vincenzo from their lives in more

²⁹ The figure takes into account emigration from Italy from 1876 to 1918 as documented by Daniela Del Boca and Alessandra Venturini in “Italian Migration,” *Iza*, No. 938 (Nov 2003), page 2. The figure on emigration until late 1922 was extrapolated from, Philip V. Cannistraro and Rosoli Gianfusto (Winter 1979). “Fascist Emigration Policy in the 1930s: an Interpretative Framework,” *International Migration Review* 13 (4): 673–692.

“organic” settings, the labor antagonism between the impersonal monitors and the monitored is here broken down and resurrected along the reconstituted lines of patriarchy.

Angelo soon falls in love with Luisa, a poor young woman, described as “a simple, rural beauty, almost a maiden,” (we will turn shortly to the gendered dynamics of Fascist labor subjectivity).³⁰ Born to a drifter family that roams about the countryside panhandling in a mule-drawn wagon, Luisa also found steady work around the construction of the EUR. In one scene, Angelo and Luisa sneak through a perimeter fence after hours to frolic in the work zone. Suddenly, a security guard spots the young couple. The guard is Vincenzo. The young couple attempts to escape but Angelo is caught. When Vincenzo shines his light onto Angelo, he is astonished by Angelo’s striking resemblance to himself. Vincenzo immediately wonders if Angelo is the son whom he had left behind 18 years earlier. Vincenzo does not tell Angelo that he might be his father, as he believed his son to be working nearby as a shepherd. However, instead of taking Angelo to police headquarters for prosecution, Vincenzo escorts him through the gated entrance to the work zone and sends him on his way. Thus “father cop” neutralizes the antagonism between the worker-overseer and the worker-overseen while peacefully mediating the private property opposition of inclusion and exclusion generated by enclosure itself. The abstract paternalism of the anonymous yet authentic father in the form of the fatherly figure of police authority represents the coming together of opposing interests in the division of labor. The sense of the Fascist “family of workers” here is both actual and symbolic: all workers in the division of labor, whether they are managers, police officers, or unskilled transient laborers, are objects of family-based attachments and subjects of paternal compassion. Worker solidarity is

³⁰ *ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304.*

not formed along class lines, or in the victory of the proletariat in the form of a new state; instead, solidarity for the new Fascist worker is based upon older deferential, patriarchal bonds.

The next scene takes place in a remote location in the work zone. A worker embittered by news of Angelo's relationship with Luisa gives in to his impulsive desires and proceeds to attack Angelo with a "primitive violence." Though Angelo fights back, the fellow worker, Pietro, ultimately overpowers him. Angelo is thus returned to the natural state in which *Nascita* begins, lying near a simple and rustic rural shack on the periphery of the EUR worksite. However, this thatched hut will momentarily be blown apart with dynamite, a final symbolic act for that pastoral world which Fascism was destroying. Will the jealous provocation over Luisa, infused with passion, sentimentality, and self-interest rupture Fascist family-labor solidarity and jeopardize the life of the new wage laborer man? With Angelo about to be blown to pieces, the new worker and the progress of the Fascist nation itself now hangs in the balance. Should "honorific" patriarchal-labor solidarity break apart as Italy embraced the explosive technologies of modernity, the Fascist revolution could fail.³¹ As Europe plunged into the theater of destruction, the "ancient" values as workers, as fathers, are thus portrayed as an amulet to ward off the threats to men.

Meanwhile, other workers take notice of Pietro's battered face and begin to press him for answers. Pietro confesses to the workers that he left Angelo beaten and unconscious near the pre-

³¹ It is worth noting that the fight between Pietro and Angelo is based on honor and not laboring conditions, work hours, or the special privileges enjoyed by their managers. For more on the persistence of honor-based interpersonal relations and "honor" as a categorial ground of contestation in central Europe after modernization and the industrial revolution, see Steven C. Hughes, *Politics of the Sword: Dueling, Honor, and Masculinity in Modern Italy* (Columbus 2007); see also Ann Goldberg, *Honor, Politics, and the Law in Imperial Germany, 1871–1914* (Cambridge 2010): 5-14.

EUR period rural shack. The sounds of exploding dynamite are countered by the workers' shouts of distress. The thatched hut where Angelo lies is mined and ready to blow. Of everyone, "Pietro ran first to save Angelo." But the security guards cannot allow the workers to risk their own lives. Just then Angelo's estranged mother Giuditta arrives to inform Vincenzo that his son is among the laborers at the EUR. Vincenzo's sense that Angelo was his son is quickly affirmed, motivating him to sprint alone toward the shack to save his son. In this race against time, Vincenzo mediates the oppositions between the progress of man and the time-honored principles of duty, sacrifice, and family-based labor harmony. As the successive explosions approach Angelo, the workers genuflect and pray. This time, the pater-worker would not abandon the son. Reaching the rustic hut, Vincenzo grabs the unconscious Angelo and carries him off, dynamite exploding at his feet. A stone launched into the air violently strikes him, but with superhuman strength, he is able to bring Angelo to safety. Back in the emergency clinic of the Worker's Village, Vincenzo tells Angelo that he is the father and makes a final request as he lay dying from his wound: that Angelo take his name. The workers will forever more refer to Angelo as "Vincenzo" in unison during roll call. Exertion of the body's mechanics is on display in Vincenzo's final act, expressing human labor expenditure in the form of virtuous sacrifice to reconstitute the *pater familias*. As the abstract paternalism of the anonymous yet authentic father becomes concrete in this very last moment, Mussolini's Fascist project is itself salvaged.

Much like Mussolini's favored architects, artists, and social scientists examined in previous chapters, Comin was a defender of the cultural specificity of "Italian" film.³² Whereas Fascist architects used modern techniques within a "nativist" framework of ancient Roman

³² See page 136 in Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley 2001).

tradition, Comin, an “Italian culturalist,” sought to utilize film, a universal form, but imbue it with Italian “cultural” content. When it came to the homogeneous labor power expenditure unique to capitalism, the wage laborer had to be made meaningful by a superabundance of Fascist cultural significance.³³ This public position on labor was crucial for the regime as it sought to differentiate Fascist labor from the “meaningless toil” of the worker in communist and capitalist societies.³⁴

Jacopo Comin’s script both transmits an ethic of “Fascist” labor and indicates the pivotal role that laboring activities were to play in the greater project of Fascist social engineering. He shows “authentic” pre-capitalist relations of production as mediating the abstraction and impersonal nature of wage labor for transitioning workers. In *Nascita*, the present and future of the “new Fascist man” would be ensured through a distinctly “Italian” appropriation of the now

³³ For a more complete development of the concept of homogeneous labor power expenditure that is unique to capitalism, see selections of Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1. Translated by Ben Fowkes (London 1990); and Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, R. Tucker, editor. (New York 1979). My interpretation here is also indebted to Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (New York and Cambridge 1993): 123-125. Postone demonstrates that “value-constituting labor” in Marx’s mature social theory of capitalist modernity connotes a historically specific form of labor as constitutive of particular social relations and wealth. For Marx, “direct labor time [is the] decisive factor in the production of wealth” which leads Postone to argue that Marx’s “category of value should be examined as a form of wealth whose specificity is related to its temporal dimension.” Time is thus said to form an essential characteristic of the constitution of value and is also a way to work toward an understanding of the dynamism of capitalist society.

³⁴ Antonio Gramsci noted this phenomenon in 1934, writing that attempts to institute Fordist standardized mass production in Italy had led to an attempt by “the old plutocratic stratum” to “reconcile” at once “the old, anachronistic, demographic social structure of Europe,” and “an ultra-modern form of production and of working methods.” See pages 280 and 281 in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York 1971). For this reason, writes Gramsci, the introduction of Fordism in Italy encountered so much “intellectual” and “moral” resistance, and took “place in particularly brutal and insidious forms, and by means of the most extreme coercion.

dominant modern form of labor power expenditure. The impersonal workplace relations commensurate with a regime of accumulation are here disguised as modes of traditional labor sociality based on kinship. Critically, worker solidarity in *Nascita* is not developed along class lines, or the victory of the proletariat in the form of a new state; instead, solidarity for the new Fascist worker is based upon older familial, patriarchal bonds.

It does not appear that *Nascita* ever proceeded to production, likely due to the outbreak of war.³⁵ Parts of Comin's script do though closely mimic the production of knowledge disseminated to the public around the World's Fair. Indeed, it seems that Comin was very familiar with a documentary released to the public by his former employer, the Ministry of Popular Culture, a year before his screenplay was first offered to the EUR Agency. The name of Comin's screenplay, *Nascita* even appears as a play on the title of that documentary, *Come nasce l'E 42*, or "How the E 42 Was Born." Comin's vivid description of the EUR work zone activity mirrors segments of the documentary film showing labor productivity, even perfectly describing a scene of action in the film. ("The earthmover crushes the hills, the cranes hoist heavy loads [...], convoys of Decauville trains intersect, the rhythm of the machines and the exertion of the men are in full swing...").

³⁵ *ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304*. The film does not appear in Comin's anthology of completed films. Though EUR Agency president Vittorio Cini ultimately granted Comin permission to make *Nascita* in the E 42 worksite, the Agency did not offer any financial support. The Agency did invite Comin to participate in a competition that would award full funding and open access for winning film script submissions. Comin though declined the Agency's offer, claiming that he had the requisite funds necessary for production.

The film *Come nasce l'E 42* was a state-sanctioned propaganda film in which labor for the 1942 World's Fair takes on a prominent role.³⁶ The film has a total runtime of 15 minutes, longer than a newsreel.³⁷ There are many things to be said about this documentary, both from a technical perspective and from the archive surrounding its production. Rather than focusing on this data, however, I would like to suggest here a hermeneutical reading, or a depth-analysis of the film itself.³⁸ Because the structure of the film is less narrative than it is associative and symbolic, such a reading will help us to critically interrogate how the Fascist regime used a very specific image of labor (so-called "Fascist labor") to demonstrate how tradition was mediating the abstract, homogeneous labor form immanent to production in modernity.

In *Come nasce l'E 42*, the transformation of nature trope appears again, but even nature here has a different valence, its value is borne of a particular cultural importance. As the final lines of the film suggest, this nature was more than conquered, it was being "reconsecrated."

This was not just not "any nature" being conquered, but a land that had been "consecrated" once

³⁶ The EUR Agency was involved in a protracted dispute with LUCE over a variety of issues, including by-laws, distribution rights, and expenses. In fact, documents show the EUR Agency to be legally aggressive, and combative with other government agencies on almost every point. For more on the disputes between the *Istituto Luce* and the EUR Agency, see *ACS, E42, Busta 1112*. One thing that is apparent after examining the exchanges between the Istituto Luce and the EUR Agency (not to mention its exchanges with other agencies) is that different Fascist government agencies had different, often competing interests. Frank M. Snowden describes this phenomenon under Fascism as "the systematic competition of multiple agencies with overlapping jurisdictions and competing responsibilities but no public accountability," drawing comparisons to the Nazi practice of "Institutional Darwinism." See page 173 in *The conquest of malaria: Italy, 1900-1962*. (New Haven 2006).

³⁷ Istituto LUCE, (1937-1938) *Come nasce l'E 42*. Available at: <http://www.archivioluce.com/archivio/jsp/schede/videoPlayer.jsp?tipologia=&id=&physDoc=495&db=cinematograficoDOCUMENTARI&findIt=false§ion=/> (accessed 23 March 2016).

³⁸ The conceptual framework for this maneuver here is inspired by pages 58-60 in Fredric Jameson (September 1984). "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146: 53-92.

before. For the Fascists it was symbolic land that had been reclaimed from an encroaching nature that stood in the way of Rome and the sea. With it, the whole mythical fantasy of returning Rome to its ancient imperial grandeur by way of the sea comes to the fore. With the fall of the Roman Empire, the port from which the Mediterranean world was ruled died – in the real and figurative sense – and Rome receded into its interior state of decline. In the intervening centuries, nature had encroached on the grandeur of Ancient Rome, reclaiming and consuming it, as evidenced by the ruins it left behind. In this sense, the massive labor project was also reclaiming time itself, a spiritual endeavor of gross cultural magnitude.

The film in fact begins with the portrayal of barren nature. As a narrator pleasantly describes the location, the scene adopts gentler music accompanied by images of the pastoral Roman “steppe” as a narrator pleasantly describes the location. It then features the Tiber cutting through picturesque countryside, not stylistically dissimilar from the romanticization of the American plains in Western films. The original residents of the EUR, hundreds of people who lived in thatched huts and were removed from the land, are not shown. The depiction closely follows the regime’s apocryphal position that the World’s Fair site was a barren, empty landscape destined for glory upon the entry of the state.³⁹

Enter the state and its capacity to mobilize labor, and the score changes, this time to a celebratory hymn. The pastoral landscape returns as the narrator tells us that the EUR will have the same dimensions as the historic center of Rome itself. Then there is a sudden, radical shift in

³⁹ While some of the land destined for the World’s Fair was barren, population statistics compiled by the Agency medical doctor show the truth to be a little different than portrayed. Approximately 7,500 people resided in and around the E 42 site in 1937. The doctor’s figures suggest that about 1,500 people were removed through land expropriations or left of their own volition, as the stable population dropped to 6,000 by 1938. *ACS, E42, Busta 1144, Fascicolo 11311*.

music. The narrator cuts out, and the movie score becomes violent, coupled with a montage of brief, stirring clips, suggesting man's "rape of nature." Breathing, smoking, laboring machines flash across the screen in succession as they slash across the firmament. Close-ups show earthmovers grinding and flattening the earth. Against the backdrop of machines, the narrator discusses plans to construct the EUR. Statistics pointing to the immensity of the World's Fair project are cited one after the other. The proximate shift in movie score, from the harrowing to a more stately, slightly playful rhythm, connotes the taming of nature. The earth is flat and ready to be built upon.

Come Nasce l'E 42 puts into action the "spectacle" of concrete labor, the productive power of labor, in a way that portends to the antithesis of labor in its abstract, universal form.⁴⁰ While the piece begins in nature and progresses through different phases, the manual laborer (writ large) returns as the focus. In the film's early stages, man dominates the earth through laboring activity. The worker meanwhile conquers time in two ways: on one hand, through his arduous, concrete labor power, he gives over part of his life, and on the other, by working as a mass of labor power, he reclaims nature and time from the fall of the Ancient Empire. This Italian cultural rebirth was realized with regard to the public image of labor practice as generating specific forms of identity and relationship, knowledge and expression.

Labor in its alleged Fascist form helped to achieve the conquering of nature and time in yet another sense: the nature of man, or the proclivities of the Italian accrued in the centuries since the collapse of Rome, the stereotype of the lazy Italian worker left to his whims and

⁴⁰ The wage laborer expends abstract labor time as a commodity in exchange for a wage, which allows the worker to purchase the commodities produced by other workers, allowing him to maintain his existence and sell his labor power as a commodity yet another day. Refer to pages 310-327 and 384-397 in Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume One* in *The Marx-Engels Reader*.

desires. In both Comin's screenplay *Nascita* and in *Come nasce l'E 42*, labor takes on a gendered form that is essential to the new interiority of the Fascist man. The regime mobilized the image of the "new Fascist man," as constituted by this new mode of labor sociality, to stabilize the category of the Italian "masculine" around traditional ideals. Italy's more powerful European brethren had long stereotyped the Italian man, attributing military defeats and economic "backwardness" to proclivities such as lack of order and discipline.⁴¹ Fascism sought to transform this liberal, "capillary" Italian masculine "soul" (to use Foucauldian terms), "redeeming" Italy as a nation of great male potency once again after the compounded "humiliations" of poverty, mass expatriation, and the First World War. As Gigliola Gori has noted, "The virility of male bodies was, in fact, essential to reconstruct, in a modern context, the ancient and warlike "Italian descent" as national model."⁴² By ensuring that labor was a distinctly male sphere, the state furthered its normalizing and interventionist control of "work" and its associative meanings – in the sense of actual labor power expenditure, the real toil of living people, and the category of work in its signification.

While the category of the masculine was redeveloped through "positive" labor associations, womanly desire was demonstrated through passive-aggressive manifestations of discontent with men who failed to meet the Fascist ideal. In Comin's screenplay, Angelo's estranged mother Giuditta owns a roadside hostel with her husband Gaetano, described as a

⁴¹ Dogliani, "Sport and Fascism," 337.

⁴² Gigliola Gori, "Model of Masculinity: Mussolini, the 'New Italian' of the Fascist Era," in J.A. Mangan, editor. *Superman Supreme, Fascist Body as Political Icon – Global Fascism* (London 2000), 28.

typical “old Italian man,” “a lazy do-nothing.”⁴³ This woman is responsible for domestic labor in the home, the social reproduction of the family, as well as that labor’s direct commodification for a consumer market.⁴⁴ Not only does Giuditta engage in “domestic duties” as part of her business operation, but her domestic relations also begin to take on the appearance of business relations. Embittered that she must earn a living by commodifying her typically or ideally “feminine” domestic responsibilities, the 45-year-old Giuditta is described with typically masculine character traits: she’s “tough,” “authoritarian,” and “domineering.”⁴⁵ In *Nascita Comin* regularly describes the physical attributes of females as constitutive of character, and Giuditta’s “traces of ancient beauty” show the remnants of something distinguishably female: the “traces” of a traditional way of life in which the rightful place for women was in performing domestic responsibilities.

The documentary *Come nasce l'E 42* meanwhile reproduces the ancient Roman warrior culture of *disciplina* and obedience in a modern, yet hierarchical order, with Italian workmen as worthy subjects epitomized by stoical virtues.⁴⁶ They are submissive with more powerful men in

⁴³ ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304.

⁴⁴ According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 1936 women constituted 5.25 million, or 27.2 percent of the total workforce. See “Labor Conditions in Fascist Italy,” *U.S. Department of Labor Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 57, No. 5 (November 1943), 911.

⁴⁵ For more on the dual productive and reproductive nature of women’s toil, specifically under the mandates of racial slavery in the New World, see Jennifer L. Morgan “‘Women’s Sweat:’ Gender and Agricultural Labor in the Atlantic World,” *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia 2004), 144-165. See also Angela Davis, “The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working Class Perspective,” *Women, Race, and Class* (New York 1981), 222-243.

⁴⁶ Phillip V. Cannistraro, “Mussolini’s Cultural Revolution: Fascist or Nationalist?” *Journal of Contemporary History* 7, 3/4 (July-October 1972), 115-139. On 122, Cannistraro cites

the public sphere, yet masters of their own domestic kingdoms, feminine sites of social reproduction. To create the image of a revitalized masculinity in the film, virile, masculine workers appear individually with focus on the movement of the laboring body. One man is shown repeatedly, shirtless as he swings a pickaxe, the laboring model of the new Fascist man.⁴⁷ These individual shots are quickly juxtaposed with individuals working in teams, if not in unison, set to a violent, brutal score. Workers are engaged in the same activity but set to their own rhythm, albeit fervently, not striking a harmonious single, joyous note as in the films of Soviet Socialist Realism from the same period.⁴⁸ Relations of solidarity among Fascist workers are not formed here by equality, wealth sharing, or cultivating one's own capital, but through respect for hierarchy. Whether individually or in groups, labor under Fascism is shown to be a virtuous duty for *Italianità*.

Come Nasce l'E 42 has scenes in clever order to show hierarchy continuously restored. The documentary film features a distinct hierarchy of labor that confers power to managers through a particular relationship between planning and practice. When labor managers appear, they direct workers with immediate effect. When at the start, a large team of unskilled workers is shown sprinting into the work zone with the primitive tools of manual labor, such as pickaxes and shovels, to plant a symbolic Roman tree, Mussolini is next seen strutting across the site with

Roberto Forges Davanzati, who declared that Fascism “seeks to infuse culture with the severe and profound spirit of discipline which is found in the barracks.”

⁴⁷ ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304. Documents show that LUCE worked closely with the EUR Agency and private construction firms to handpick the most desirable workers for the film.

⁴⁸ For comparative purposes see 1939 Soviet film *Tractor Drivers (Traktoristy)*, which depicts the joyous lives of a corps of farm tractor drivers engaged in agrarian labor in Ukraine under Stalin. As part of the general harmony and comraderie of workers in *Tractor Drivers*, gender relations are portrayed as far more equal than in the Italian films under review.

a team of military officials. Subsequently, Mussolini is shown examining the scaled model of the final EUR product with foreign dignitaries. The music is triumphant before slowing into a paced military march rhythm, and then into a triumphant military parade celebration score. This is the world of men mapping strategy and making decisions, the managerial work of statesmen. When the narrator returns, Mussolini is shown signing an inaugural document; a building foundation is constructed in the next clip.

In the final scenes of the film, sacrifice to the hierarchal order is shown to accomplish a previously unimaginable national accumulation of wealth in the form of grandiose, “distinctly Italian” modern buildings and massive machines that practically disappear laboring man. It is here that the Fascist “third way,” based on a distinct cultural mediation of modern abstraction per the exigencies of autarky, is shown to point beyond wage labor altogether. Yet, rather than appearing as a break with modernity’s coextensive decline of objective authenticity and concrete interpersonal relations, this supposed culturalist “overcoming” under Fascism takes the form of productivism as a modern nation constituting value to engage in international competition. In fact, such a break could only be made knowable through the production of objective differences that “always already” reference a creeping homogeneity, and through the practices of workers who consume and are consumed. While Italian cultural distinction claimed to point beyond the loss of various forms of objective and subjective immediacy in modern life, it is a form of thought rendered possible (and knowable) only through capitalist forms themselves.

As portrayed in *Come Nasce l'E 42*, hundreds of esteemed foreign dignitaries were pre-approved by the EUR Agency to tour the E 42 site during the workday. The Fascists believed that there was something tangible within the Fascist labor form that could impress a wide array of visitors, from Italy and abroad. The worker who was pliant to the rhetoric of “pre-capitalist”

forms of labor hierarchy amid contemporary exigency was made the showpiece of the great men who could wield labor power on a mass scale, like generals dispensing of vast armies in the arena of battle, or for Mussolini in particular, the mirage of a Roman Caesar he aspired to replicate. Italians like King Vittorio Emanuele III, Achille Starace, the Ciano family, Pope Pio XII, and Italian born Queen of Bulgaria Tsaritsa Ioanna took in the sight of laboring activities in the construction of the EUR. A group of cardinals took a trip from Vatican City to admire the “ardent labor.” Large delegations came from nations such as Belgium, Argentina, Colombia, Croatia, Japan, Romania, and Brazil. One Lithuanian journalist wrote that the E 42 site was a “true symbol of what is possible with the united will of labor.”⁴⁹ The exiled king of Spain and now resident of Rome, Alfonso XIII, visited the site. Delegations of Nazis also came to view the spectacle of labor at the EUR, including German architects, Nazi party hierarchy, a Reich cultural commission, German filmmakers, Nazi generals and their families.⁵⁰ Dr. Ludwig Fischer, Governor of Nazi occupied Warsaw and engineer of the Jewish Ghetto, Prince Georg of Bavaria, Nazi education minister Bernhard Rust, chief Nazi architect Albert Speer, and Adolf Hitler each took in the display of labor at the EUR.

Fascism also enjoyed popularity among prominent figures in countries that subsequently positioned themselves as ideologically opposed, illustrating the degree of international support that it enjoyed during the period, even after the invasion of Ethiopia.⁵¹ The British sent a

⁴⁹ *ACS, E42, Busta 1097, Fascicolo 10707.*

⁵⁰ *See ACS, E42, Busta 87, Fascicolo 412, Subfascicolo 59.*

⁵¹ While praise for Fascism as late as 1940 might be unexpected, it was rather widespread before World War II. In 1943, British author George Orwell wrote, “there is not one scoundrelism committed by Mussolini between 1922 and 1940 that has not been lauded to the skies by the very people who are now promising to bring him to trial,” including “the British

delegation of twenty-five prominent English industrialists and the City Livery Club, an alliance of various guilds, to visit the E 42 work site. A number of prominent Americans visited as well, including then former “hard hitting” New York City police commissioner Grover Whalen, who was president of the 1939 New York World’s Fair.⁵² The American Academy in Rome sent a delegation. Anne O’Hare McCormick, Pulitzer winning journalist and New York Times foreign correspondent, was granted permission to visit as well. In the spring of 1940, France’s E 42 Chairman Rene Besnard visited the Fascist monuments under construction, and took a full tour of the Worker’s Village, before enjoying refreshments in a bar for workers. The French, Besnard explained, were intent on erecting a Le Corbusier exhibit that would truly recreate a visit to

Government and its official spokesmen [who] supported him through thick and thin.” Franklin Hugh Adler meanwhile has written about the general international popularity enjoyed by the Fascist regime in the period preceding the invasion of Ethiopia, including by major foreign newspapers such as the *Chicago Tribune*. Several important British politicians like statesmen Sir Austen Chamberlain and Winston Churchill vocally supported Mussolini during the 1920s. Churchill, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, said in 1927 “if I had been Italian, I should have been wholeheartedly with you from start to finish in your triumphant struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism.” Adler continues: “American reaction to the Mussolini government, in the main, was substantially similar to that of the British. Celebrities, such as Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, toured Italy and were photographed in poses sympathetic to the regime.” See Orwell, “Who are the War Criminals?” *The Tribune* [London] (22 October 1943), reprinted in Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, editors, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell: Volume 2, My Country Left or Right 1940-43*: 319-325. See also page 285 in Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism: The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906-1934*, (Cambridge 1995).

⁵² Whalen, president of the 1939 New York World’s Fair, famously ordered police to use violence against tens of thousands of protestors during the Great Depression-era march of International Unemployment Day on March 6, 1930. See “Grover A. Whalen Dies at 75; Made City’s Welcome Famous: Career Took Whalen Into Contact With Notables,” *New York Times*. 21 April 1962.

Paris.⁵³ Yet, just weeks after Besnard's visit, Italy declared war on France and the Nazis hoisted the Swastika atop the real Eiffel Tower.⁵⁴

After Italy entered the war on the side of the Nazis in 1940, visitors to the EUR construction site were most often Italian or German. Those most intrigued by the Fascist labor spectacle tended to be German visitors, while German praise for Italian labor was a priority of the Fascists. Because work on the E 42 had slowed considerably by the end of 1940, it was suggested by the EUR Agency that Germans only tour in the afternoon or mid-morning so that they could "visit the worksite in the presence of the workers, without which it would give the impression that the works of the EUR have been abandoned."⁵⁵ Members of the Delegation of *Werberat der Deutschen Wirtschaft*, (Advertising Council of the German Economy) including Heinrich Hunke, the director of Nazi foreign propaganda, were impressed by the "grandiosity,

⁵³ See *ACS, E42, Busta 63, Fascicolo 347*. See also *ACS, E42, Busta 1097, Fascicolo 10707*.

⁵⁴ Famous visitors to the EUR can be placed within Benedict Anderson's paradigm of three distinct types of "political tourists." The first, he writes, "are all those people who see in dramatic political developments in someone else's country a hopeful or hellish vision of the future of their own." While photos might be taken of this tourist alongside "Mussolini, Stalin, Nasser or Nehru," this is more so to authenticate the author's real presence in that event. The real point anyway is the "hopeful or hellish" glimpse into their nation's future. Anne O'Hare McCormick can be said to fit into this category, as evidenced by her criticism of the E 42 and Mussolini's economic policy as published in the *New York Times*. See McCormick, "Europe: Italy's Vast Projects Go On, Stressing Peace Hope A Revolving Magic Possible Peace Hint," *New York Times*. 15 January, 1940, 11. The second type is the "(usually intellectual) celebrity," who wishes to show not the tourist destination but "show events in the great shadow of himself." The third type of political tourist, which Anderson says is a more recent creation, is a type of "Jacques Cousteau" political tourist ("he aims to show you what it feels like to pat a barracuda on its behind") who "exploits the market scarcity of historical events." Several of the Nazi tourists, representing a mix of outsized egos and populist men of action, appear to fulfill the criteria for Anderson's second and third archetypes. For more, see pages 80-81 and 89-90 in Anderson (Jul.-Aug. 1986). "James Fenton's Slideshow," *New Left Review* 158: 81-90.

⁵⁵ See *ACS, E42, Busta 63, Fascicolo 347*. See also *ACS, E42, Busta 1097, Fascicolo 10707*.

the organization, the efficiency, and modernness” of the worksite.⁵⁶ Leonardo Conti, Swiss born Chief of Health in the Reich, was “particularly struck by the Workers Village and its functioning in various aspects, asking many questions and tasting a variety of dishes, commenting favorably on the generosity of the food as well as on its price. The guest was praised by a number of workers.”⁵⁷ German speaking Swiss reporters were pleased with the lively pace of labor in the work zone, calling it a spectacle of calm. “All of the public works proceed in a busy manner. Even with the reduction of work [due to the war], it continues to allow employers to hire through various contracts, it gives work to numerous laborers, and demonstrates to the world that Italy pursues its construction projects with serene virility.”⁵⁸ The *Reichsfilmkammer* (the Film Chamber of the Reich) was moved by the continuation of work on the EUR during the war. It asked permission to “shoot film of the workers close-up and conduct a series of shots of workers’ lives in the EUR and the Workers Village.”⁵⁹ In the same year Baldur von Schirach, head of the *Hitler-Jugend* (Hitler Youth), visited Rome and the EUR work zone. The future convicted war criminal, always a man of the *volksgemeinschaft*, joined sculptors in work on a statue.⁶⁰ Mussolini’s regime planned to make the World’s Fair Exhibit of Labor into a permanent labor museum worthy of comparison with the Deutsches Museum in Munich; the Italian museum of

⁵⁶ ACS, E42, Busta 1097, Fascicolo 10707, Subfascicolo 125.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid, or refer to the *Giornale D’Italia*, 9 September 1939.

⁵⁹ Busta 96, Fascicolo 448, Subfascicolo 174.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

course would rival the German one in every which way, but would remain true to the culturally distinct form of labor in Italy.⁶¹

The supreme ceremonies of labor at the EUR were reserved for the Duce himself, the great Caesar who was creating grandiose structures on the peninsula to rival the massive edifices of the ancient Roman past. The regime's well-orchestrated inauguration of the Worker's Village on 18 April 1939 created an opportunity for the regime to portray Mussolini as the great father of the unskilled laborer.⁶² After initial pomp and circumstance, and "between the incessant demonstrations of faith," Mussolini personally conducted military-like inspection of the new worker quarters, taking "into account the minute details of the structures, the organization, and functioning of the various services. The "'Village' presents itself harmonious and gay," writes *Il Messaggero*. The entire cultural production shows the full public association of Mussolini with the E 42, the workers, and the Worker's Village.

On 21 April 1939, just two days after Mussolini's visit, a massive rally of workers was held in the E 42 construction site. The rally, full of workers and Fascist leaders, had become headline material the next day. As a substitute for the socialist May Day as well as the anniversary celebration of Rome's mythical founding 2,692 years before, 21 April was a modern "revolutionary" state holiday with the content of tradition that preceded modernity. This annual ritual of Fascist ontology, it could be said, "opposed the secular 'clock time of capitalism,' and posited in its stead an alternative time scale that was epic and transcendent."⁶³ As a special

⁶¹ See Giulio Terzaghi in "Il Deutsches Museum di Monaco, Per un Museo Italiano del Lavoro," in *Busta 1048, Fascicolo 9970, Subfascicolo 2*.

⁶² See *ACS, E42, Busta 43, Fascicoli 105; 106; 109-43*.

⁶³ Joshua Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity: the Roman Past in Fascist Italy* (Ithaca 2012),

Italian worker holiday that celebrated the “Roman values of work and discipline,” the 21 April holiday had found an appropriate *mise en scène* in the EUR construction site that year.⁶⁴

The EUR would become a vital national symbol of that mediation of tradition and transformation during the late-Fascist period. In 1922, the Fascist regime came to power amid the political and economic turmoil of the First World War and its aftermath. Of the supposed “great powers” of Western Europe at the time of the First World War, Italy was said to be the least developed. Over half of Italy’s workers were peasants and farmers, an extremely high number compared to Germany (35 percent), and the UK (8 percent).⁶⁵ After seeing the extraordinarily poor living conditions of peasants in the south of Italy, Booker T. Washington quipped that the condition of the African-American sharecropper in the poorest regions of the racially segregated southern US “is incomparably better than the condition and opportunities of the agricultural population in Sicily.”⁶⁶ Compounding widespread problems of poverty and malnutrition, Italy’s lack of organizational capacity for mass-scale mobilizations impaired its

5. See also Mark Antliff, “Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity,” *Art Bulletin*, 84.1 (March 2002), 148-169; Mabel Berezin, “Cultural Form and Political Meaning: State-subsidized Theater, Ideology, and the Language of Style in Fascist Italy,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 99.5 (March 1994), 1237-1286.

⁶⁴ Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: the Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy*, 91-92.

⁶⁵ R.J.B. Bosworth, *Italy and the Approach of the First World War* (London 1983), 10. Exactly 55 percent of Italy’s workforce labored in the agriculture, fishing, or forestry industries. By 1936, this number had not fallen much more, to just under 50 percent of working Italians employed in agriculture. See *U.S. Department*, “Labor Conditions in Fascist Italy,” 911.

⁶⁶ Jerry Mangione and Ben Morreale, *La Storia; Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience* (New York 1992), XV.

performance in the war.⁶⁷ Italy's allies used its relative lack of success to break the 1915 Pact of London, limiting the nation's "entitlements" as war victors in the Treaty of Versailles. Italian nationalists considered the First World War a "mutilated victory" – a popular refrain taken up by revanchist Fascists in the following years.⁶⁸ War veteran-turned dictator Benito Mussolini sought to bring Italy onto the world stage through competition as a way to transform perceptions of Italy and affect reality.

One critical objective of the EUR was to make it seem as though Italian labor under Fascism had ascended to the heights of the more industrialized nations while maintaining Italian specificity, an objective for which "concrete" labor in construction was especially well suited when compared with industrial production.⁶⁹ The regime, in nearly all of its EUR plans, presented the superb capacity of Fascist labor management to execute a massive project requiring thousands of laborers. In an April 1937 memo titled "Making the World Know about Italian Production," it is stated that the E 42 would "occupy a preeminent position, constituting a

⁶⁷ Italian men often arrived from their impoverished villages for military duty malnourished and suffering from congenital diseases and other maladies. Dogliani, "Sport and Fascism," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 337.

⁶⁸ Mussolini frequently referenced the "mutilated victory" of 1918, doing so again during the April 20, 1939 ceremony inaugurating the EUR. For more on the "mutilated victory," see, James H. Burgwyn, *The Legend of the Mutilated Victory: Italy, the Great War, and the Paris Peace Conference, 1915-1919* (Westport, CT 1993).

⁶⁹ By making specifically construction labor a matter for public spectacle, the regime generated an appearance of "concrete" labor in the creation of concrete use-values, (in the form of a city). Compared with industrial production, the exponential increase in productivity achieved by making labor "social" in the division of labor was less apparent in construction. A display of Fascist labor staged in Adam Smith's proverbial pin factory would have been incommensurate with the aim of showing "concrete" labor. See pages 3 to 14 in Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (New York 2000).

channel [...] for the diffusion of our agenda.”⁷⁰ By demonstrating Italy’s accomplishments in the field of production in a way that held to the cultural traditions of the Italian worker, labor in the EUR countered common perceptions of Italy’s “backwardness” while maintaining the “dignity” of Italian difference. Indeed, it was the great national endeavor which gave employment opportunities to peasants like Comin’s fictional Angelo and Vincenzo, where father and son were reunited under a new modern labor ethic of “authentic” Italian origins.

With many unskilled agrarian workers passing through the EUR in construction roles, the regime built the Worker’s Village as a site for cultural reeducation, creating the “new Fascist worker” while turning its production into an object of display for dignitaries. Situated just outside the EUR perimeter fence, the Village also allowed the regime to maintain its labor pool in close proximity to the worksite, maximizing supervision and extraction of labor time. The Village, “a downright miniature city” according to the film *Come Nasce l’E 42*, was equipped with 10 dormitories for a vacillating daily occupancy of 1,300 to 1,400 workers, a vast cafeteria, convention hall, post office, medical clinic, as well as the offices for the Fascist Union of Industrial Workers, which in theory represented the interests of workers.⁷¹ The EUR Agency projected a total expenditure for the Worker’s Village of a relatively cheap price of 3.3 million

⁷⁰ See *ACS, E42, Busta 56, Fascicoli 269*. The source discusses the formation of a propaganda office in Rome to “publicize Italian production.”

⁷¹ In its technical aspects, the Worker’s Village comprised a total area of 47,000 square meters (11.5 acres), with buildings constituting an area of 120,000 square feet. A total of 5,818 unique workers had maintained residence in the Village at some point during the year 1940 for a total annual count of 524,747 nights spent. The cafeteria meanwhile served meals to 778,526 patrons, including a number of day laborers that did not reside in the Village. See *ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304, Subfascicolo 4*. See also *ACS, E42, Busta 43, Fascicoli 105*. *Come nasce l’E 42* is available at: <http://www.archivioluca.com/archivio/jsp/schede/videoPlayer.jsp?tipologia=&id=&physDoc=495&db=cinematograficoDOCUMENTARI&findIt=false§ion=/> (accessed 23 March 2016).

ITL⁷² (equivalent to about 2.9 million in 2015 USD⁷³), which included the cost of building streets and expropriating the area's original inhabitants from their land.⁷⁴ "Given the proximity of the Village to the E 42 site, it is considered to be an object of visits on the part of tourists and foreign authorities," writes the artist, politician, and administrator Cipriano Efisio Oppo to Mussolini. "Because the Worker's Village will be used during the Exposition as collective housing, it has been especially important to give extra attention to its aesthetic dimension."⁷⁵ To meet these demands, the Village featured "two parallel lines of buildings separated by an ample central boulevard with a garden in the middle."⁷⁶ Situated just outside the retaining fence of the E 42 work zone, the Workers Village aesthetic would complement the generalized hybrid-EUR aesthetic through a mix of rationalism and indicators of Italian cultural difference, such as modern renditions of porticos and arches. "All of the buildings are connected by a portico, which provides covered interaction between the buildings of the Village, and corresponds to giving it

⁷² In comparison, 6 million ITL was allocated to build a monument of Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi in one of the main plazas destined for the World's Fair. *ACS, E42, Busta 299, Fascicolo 4838*.

⁷³ The exchange rate, using a couple of online tools and a calculator, is about .90 ITL (Italian lira) in 1938 to 1 USD in 2014. Data compiled from the Economic History Association, (*eh.net*) July 17, 2014.

⁷⁴ Companies paid for their workers to stay in the Village, but the EUR Agency was satisfied with delaying returns from the enterprise. In fact, the Agency had only recovered about 500,000 ITL toward its original outlay after first 18 months of operation. Greater profits would ensue, the EUR Agency believed, once the Workers Village was transformed into dormitories for the large caravans of tourists expected to visit the World's Fair. *ACS, E42, Busta 305, Fascicolo 4919*.

⁷⁵ *ACS, E42, Busta 305, Fascicolo 4919*.

⁷⁶ *ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304, Subfascicolo 4*.

an altogether pleasing architectural component,” writes a group of architects.⁷⁷ To create practical yet aesthetically congenial worker living quarters, aesthetic demands had to be balanced with cost savings. Like the EUR constructions, Worker’s Village buildings were designed to have a “permanent character, with brick walls and covered roofs used to reduce maintenance costs to a minimum, and to maximize the application of autarkic materials.”⁷⁸ The EUR Agency decision to create a more frugal Worker’s Village was therefore justified, not as miserly, but within the mission of Italy’s autonomy from the international economic system.

As Jacopo Comin shows, it would take a village to make the new worker of Fascism. Early in the screenplay for *Nascita*, he depicts the experience of protagonist Angelo and his fellow workers quartering in a dusty, roadside *trattoria* owned and operated by Giuditta, who unbeknownst to Angelo at the time is his long-estranged mother.⁷⁹ Not long into the screenplay, the Worker’s Village is finished and Angelo moves into a new dormitory. Workers adorn their living spaces with mementos and pictures of loved ones. “At night the assemblies in the dining hall are full of happiness and a sense of serene comradeship. Rooms are full of workers writing to their families. It is like a new home.”⁸⁰ Angelo’s world of the Worker’s Village appears at once as a space of abstraction, as if the young protagonist was thrust into Plato’s utopian realm –

⁷⁷ ACS, E42, Busta 305. Fascicolo 4919. A group of architects wrote to Cini seeking to establish an aesthetic for the Worker’s Village that would serve as “a model of worker’s living quarters, to demonstrate how we envision housing to meet the needs of workers in Fascist Italy.” These architects meanwhile wanted to pursue their own agenda by showing that Fascism was meeting the needs of workers with public housing projects.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304. Giuditta rents all of her rooms to E 42 workers, much like other homes near the worksite.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

in which the traditional family no longer exists, and where the intersubjective influences (even recognition) between biological parent guardians and children have vanished. The abstraction of relationships in the dormitory would however be transformed by the regime, with the paternal authority of the Fascist state newly mediating these relationships. Comin shows this space of “zero meaning” fully reconstituted under the auspices of a new form of labor solidarity based around patriarchal and hierarchical authority.

With its prominent placement on the itineraries of visitors, the Worker’s Village provided the regime with the opportunity to showcase the lives of workers under Fascism in a favorably coordinated environment.⁸¹ To ensure the inculcation of a hierarchical labor solidarity based on “Italian tradition” rather than class solidarity, entertainment would be provided for the Worker’s Village with the aim of cultural reeducation. Loudspeakers were positioned around the Village to air Fascist State radio so that workers could “automatically tune in” to programming.⁸² To give culture to hired hands in the hours in which they were not working, propaganda films and newsreels were projected onto a big screen in the main piazza of the Worker’s Village one night per week. *LUCE* president Augusto Fantechi recommended Fascist films such as “*Giovinazza*,” “*Cammino degli Eroi*,” and “*Bonifiche Pontine*” for Village screenings. The Agency responded by saying that the recommendations were highly appropriate for a mass audience of workers.⁸³

⁸¹ *ACS, E42, Busta 305, Fascicolo 4919*. By April 1939, the structural conditions for coordinating and staging the lives of the Fascist Italian worker were in place, right on time for Mussolini’s visit to the Workers Village.

⁸² *ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11305*. The *Ente Italiano audizioni radiofoniche* was Fascist Italy’s public radio, and the only one permitted to officially broadcast over the airwaves.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

The EUR Agency organized regular performances by the “*Dopolavoro* Choir of Factory Workers” for residents of the Worker’s Village. Members of the Choir, 140 workers from industrial factories in Rome, were adorned in folkloric Roman costumes.⁸⁴ The *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro* (hereafter, OND or *Dopolavoro*) was the parent Fascist national “after work” leisure organization which had manufactured and organized the Choir of Factory Workers. The OND strictly directed the leisure-time of workers around state objectives, Victoria de Grazia argues, facilitating a political culture of mass consent to Fascist authority.⁸⁵ Paxton writes that the *Dopolavoro* was the regime’s utmost attempt to bring Fascism into the everyday lives of Italians and to “penetrate Italian society down to country towns.”⁸⁶ The OND however, did not only spread Fascist culture into rural Italy. Rather, through its folkloric programming, the OND brought “authentic” cultural tradition from the countryside into Italy’s industrial centers. The OND had an ambitious folkloric program, constituting the National Commission for the Popular Arts in 1928 “through which it resolved to not only promote the study, but also the defense and revitalization of the popular arts,” writes Cavazza.⁸⁷ The OND was very influential in developing the type of E 42 Folkloric programming examined in chapter two, allowing industrial workers to be practitioners of “ethnic” customs as well as direct purveyors of “traditional” cultural practices for their fellow workers. In *sensu stricto* then, the regime’s organization amounted to less of a “Taylorization of leisure”, and more of a “culturalist” inculcation in which the Italian worker

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ See Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organizations of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge 1981).

⁸⁶ See page 124 in Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*.

⁸⁷ See Stefano Cavazza, “La folkloristica italiana e il fascismo: Il Comitato Nazionale per le Arti Popolari,” 112.

would embody the very traditions that the spread of homogeneous, abstract labor had increasingly undermined.⁸⁸

Fascist *Dopolavoro* programming, like the performance of the Choir of Factory Workers, showcased the participatory role of workers under Fascism in a way that upheld the culturally bound relationship of the worker to management. Dignitaries, agency directors, and personnel in Fascist uniform attended the first concert of the polyphonic Choir of Factory Workers in August 1939.⁸⁹ The Choir performed traditional Roman, Neapolitan, and Romagnoli songs, as well as the “*Dopolavoro* Hymn” and the “Hymn of the Empire,” allowing industrial workers to be direct purveyors of “traditional” cultural practices for their fellow workers. Fascist *Dopolavoro* programming, like the performance of the Choir of Factory Workers, showcased the participatory role of workers under Fascism in a way that upheld the culturally bound relationship of the worker to hierarchy and tradition. The Choir was such a success that it was invited back for an encore performance later that year, at which time it would perform “a nice folkloristic program.”⁹⁰ “The offer on the part of the president to the philharmonic was received with jubilation by our workers,” wrote the EUR Agency.⁹¹ When the encore performance of the “*Dopolavoro* Choir of Factory Workers” took place in the Worker’s Village, the *LUCE* filmed a

⁸⁸ For more on the *National Dopolavoro* and “Taylorization of leisure” see page 81 in Doug Thompson, *State Control in Fascist Italy: Culture and Conformity, 1925-1943*. For more on Taylorism, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, (Cambridge 1987): 124-127.

⁸⁹ *ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11305*. The Choir’s polyphonic approach meant that it sanctioned individuality while allowing for individual contribution to a greater mechanism, thus making it a fitting analogy for the Fascist labor technique.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

short newsreel of the performance, calling it “a concert of regional songs.”⁹² Workers in this way experienced the semblance of real participation, a reconstituted “direct voice” that existed in lieu of direct input over their labor conditions, banned by Fascist law.

Inspired by such displays, EUR workers generated their own *Dopolavoro*, or Fascist national “after work” organization.⁹³ *Dopolavoro* activities at the EUR, the Agency reasoned, would bring moral care to the workers in the form of reestablished relations of hierarchy, while bringing management together in combination to more enthusiastically govern their operations. Additionally, a *Dopolavoro* would uplift the “general culture” of workers and result in increased labor performance.⁹⁴ The “diversionary opportunities” provided by the *Dopolavoro*, noted the EUR Agency, were particularly important in the Worker’s Village, given the challenge of peaceably maintaining a vast number of workers in one location.

Once approved and inaugurated, *Dopolavoro* activities for workers included the organization of a soccer team by the name of “E 42,” language courses, and later, visits to soldiers hospitalized by injuries suffered in combat. In February 1940, a new *Dopolavoro* was established in the Workers Village, “a realization that completes the busy life of this complex,

⁹² ACS, E42, Busta 1111, Fascicolo 10862. *Giornale Luce* 01/11/1939 Rome, Italy. (September 16, 2014). <http://www.archivioluce.com/archivio/jsp/schede/videoPlayer.jsp?tipologia=&id=&physDoc=18294&db=cinematograficoCINEGIORNALI&findIt=false§ion=/>

⁹³ The *Dopolavoro* strictly directed the leisure-time of workers around state objectives. See Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organizations of Leisure in Fascist Italy*. See also Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 124.

⁹⁴ ACS, E42, Busta 1170, Fascicolo 11850.

which welcomes workers from all over Italy.”⁹⁵ Activities would include cultural and recreational initiatives, and sports to demonstrate efficacious yet pleasurable worker “re-instrumentalization.”⁹⁶ Under Fascism, the worker would not be given the opportunity through uncoordinated activity to develop consciousness of his plight. Albert Camus, in his 1942 *The Myth of Sisyphus*, uses Greek mythology to give an account of modernity in which “The workman of today works every day in his life at the same tasks, and this fate is no less absurd.”⁹⁷ Sisyphus, like the toiling modern worker, was doomed “for eternity” to the same grueling, repetitive task of pushing a large rock to a mountaintop. After reaching the summit, Sisyphus would push the stone back down the mountain and follow behind to collect it, only to begin again.⁹⁸ “I see that man going back down with a heavy, yet measured step toward the torment of which he will never know the end,” writes Camus. “That hour like a breathing-space which returns as surely as his suffering, that is the hour of consciousness.”⁹⁹ It was only during the slog down the mountain, in the few moments free of labor expenditure, that Sisyphus finally had the opportunity to develop awareness of his miserable fate, a moment of consciousness of the totality

⁹⁵ Ibid. The *Dopolavoro* hall contained a reading room with books, magazines, and newspapers. The hall is “frequented with regularity, especially in the evenings.” During the summer and on holidays, games of bocce ball “have met an extremely lively support on the part of the workers.”

⁹⁶ *ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304, Subfascicolo 4.*

⁹⁷ See pages 77 and 78 in Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Translated by Justin O'Brien (New York 1955).

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

of the situation in a way that could offer him a real and lasting escape. After all, Camus acknowledged (à la Freud), “crushing truths perish from being acknowledged.”¹⁰⁰

Though the 1942 World’s Fair was cancelled with the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union, construction on the site did continue, albeit at a reduced pace. As the worksite was progressively abandoned, an earlier type of labor saw a return in the form of shepherds who, in open disregard for the enclosure, led flocks of sheep to feast on the lush green lawns planted for the cosmopolitan World’s Fair crowds.¹⁰¹ By the end of 1943, Nazis (and later the Americans) discovered that the EUR structures, built of concrete, travertine, and marble, designed to last millennia, provided stout defense against artillery and aerial bombings.¹⁰² While the “permanent” EUR fortresses did suffer notable damage during the war, they proved largely impervious to annihilation as use-values.

The regime’s desire for permanence, this very concreteness as represented by the autarkic conception of domestic production, took the substance of “authentic” traditions in the struggle against the ephemerality of capitalist time. In the process of differentiating Fascist work from Sisyphean toil, the regime had publicly mediated on labor as an analytical category. Fascist labor, with its specific mode of sociality based on virility, a stoical approach to sacrifice, and hierarchical, family-like solidarity, was deemed true to Italian origins, down to its irreducible Roman elements. In this way, the depiction of a notably Fascist labor with its own moral economy based upon interpersonal, deferential, pre-capitalist modes of labor sociality expressed

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ *ACS, E42, Buste 1168-1171*. Files on illicit shepherds are interspersed in police reports, with damages.

¹⁰² *ACS, E42, Busta 1168, Fascicolo 11782*.

a logic in which the contradictions of modernity were believed to be resolved, if not overcome, through notions of difference. Fascist thinkers however misrecognized this “virtuous” labor practice as pointing beyond the homogeneity of individuals, labor, and time in industrial society.¹⁰³ What emerged instead from the regime’s pairing of alleged tradition-based paternalism and “modern” demand-side planning, rationalization, and intensification of labor based on notions of productivity was an embryonic Fordism befitting the Italian interwar context. The regime had in essence crafted “proletarians” without a Proletariat.

¹⁰³ “The premodern represented the ideal of the virtuous worker.” See D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy* (University Park, PA 2004), 81. Lasansky argues that the regime sought to proletarianize Italy’s working classes, a practice distinguished from “the romantic nineteenth-century celebration of arts and crafts as a preindustrial mode of production.” I contend here that the regime sought a very specific proletarianization involving a romantic harkening to “preindustrial” modes of labor solidarity.

Chapter 4. Policing as a System of Representation: Fascist Image Management and Cultural Diplomacy at the 1942 World's Fair in Rome

By the late 1930s, the Italian Fascist state had developed an international reputation for its use of “enhanced” enforcement and security methods.¹ During its 20 years in power, the Fascist state instituted a distinct form of “total policing” over the Italian population, most specially targeting the working classes, dissidents, and the poor. I use the term “total” here, per Michel Foucault’s well-known juxtaposition of two historically distinct regimes of punishment, to reference the Fascist coupling of modern normalizing policing techniques with the “pre-modern” use of the body in violent and humiliating public spectacles.² On the one hand, and consistent with the regime’s claimed “return to origins” in other fields,³ Mussolini’s security

¹ See for example “Black Farinacci,” *Time Magazine*, 4 February 1929, in which Farinacci is cited for his heavy-handed use of castor oil on dissidents. See also page 338 in Peter D’Agostino (Apr. 2002). “Craniums, Criminals, and the ‘Cursed Race’: Italian Anthropology in American Racial Thought, 1861-1924,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44 (2): 319-343. D’Agostino writes that “For instance, even the most urbane, ecumenical, liberal Protestant of his generation, the Union Seminary professor William Adams Brown, would reflect as late as 1940 in his autobiography: ‘Whatever one may think of Mussolini’s foreign policy, there can be no doubt that his regime has made of Italy-to an extent which seemed unthinkable thirty years ago an orderly and law-abiding country.’”

² For more on Michel Foucault’s juxtaposition, compare punishment and justice in pages 32-69 and 195-228 in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York 1979). There is actually a third form of punishment described in the book as well, the brief period of possibility around the Enlightenment, fueled by reformists and jurists. This period, lasting perhaps from 1760 to 1800, thereafter becomes the order of Napoleon and modern punishment. See Foucault 104-131 in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

³ When in April 1945 Mussolini was killed and then publically displayed in a central plaza in Milan, this appropriation of ritualized violence by anti-Fascist Italians was fully within the logic bestowed by Fascism in its culturally justified intimidatory and retaliatory functions. Writing on Nazi and Fascist penal policy in 1939, Georg Rusche and Otto Kirschheimer argue that “the National Socialists have projected a new system, in which the elements of a biological race-and-predestination doctrine are mixed with the retaliatory principles of classical German

agencies regularly used forms of violence and intimidation to assert control of public space and to generate meaning through spectacles of punishment.⁴ Here it is worth citing the tactic of assaulting and humiliating individuals who disparage the regime, such as the widely known practice of forcing transgressors to consume castor oil in public.⁵ On the other hand, the police state in Italy combined these highly coercive interpersonal techniques with the most precision, knowledge-based intelligence methods of the period in an attempt to always already ensure behavioral and ideological acquiescence.⁶ It is in this sense – if we once again rely on the Foucauldian distinction between two temporally unique social forms – that the Fascist regime was attempting to build a kind of total power by linking “vertical” (pre-modern) power together with “horizontal” (modern) power, achieved through disciplines, normalization, and calibration.

Given the notoriety of Italian Fascist policing methods, how would the regime police a crowd of some 20 million estimated visitors to the planned 1942 World’s Fair of Rome? As I will show, policing a world’s fair of this magnitude presented a conundrum for the self-stylized

penal theory,” and that the Italians began to copy this hybrid form of jurisprudence during the late 1930s. See pages 181 and 182 in Rusche and Kirschheimer, *Punishment and Social Structure* (New Brunswick, NJ 2003).

⁴ For more on the violence and torture of police in Italy during Fascism, see pages 84-85 in Jonathan Dunnage *Mussolini’s Policemen: Behavior, Ideology and Institutional Culture in Representation and Practice* (Manchester and New York 2012).

⁵ See for example Luisa Passerini *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* (Cambridge 1987), 96-97. Passerini’s book provides an anthropology on everyday life in Fascist Turin and covers the regular forms of violence used by law enforcement agents. The use of castor oil by police on those who were overheard badmouthing the regime is one such example.

⁶ For more on the Fascist Italian domestic intelligence agency OVRA, see Mimmo Franzinelli *I tentacoli dell’Ovra: agenti, collaboratori e vittime della polizia politica fascista* (Turin 1999), Mauro Canali *Le spie del regime* (Bologna 2004), and Michael R. Ebner *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini’s Italy* (New York 2011).

Fascist dictatorship. The EUR Agency was tasked with staging the 1942 World's Fair knowing that Italy and Fascism would be judged internationally by a then projected 14 million foreign visitors. The opportunity was dizzying, set to inspire explicitly theorized approaches to policing the World's Fair.⁷ The aggressive, proactive policing for which the regime became known was seen as incommensurate with transforming Fascism's authoritarian image abroad. Thus, in extensive preparation for policing the World's Fair, Fascists planners discarded the public violence component from its regular policing methods due to political expedience, showing the deeply selective nature of content within Fascism's hybrid pre-modern and modern forms.

At the same time, the regime felt that the E 42 created easy opportunities for momentous disturbances by saboteurs and subversives. The Fair gave the regime an opportunity to tout its successes in the field of security. As in other matters, from hybridized, organic "Italian" architecture to the "new" Fascist worker, the site allowed the regime to work from a "clean slate" in presenting the exact image it so desired. In the field of security this meant that the problems existing in Italy's traditional urban cores would be less pervasive, as would ongoing complications with achieving "Fascistization" of Italy's regular police forces.⁸ Set aside from the normal practices of Italian life, the regime could impose measures of security and control exclusive of Italy's preexisting conditions and any potential threats posed by its "subversive" elements. Coupled with the regime's authoritarian policing practices applied outside of World's

⁷ ACS, E42, Busta 1146, Fascicolo 11315, Subfascicolo 2.

⁸ See pages 2 through 4 of Jonathan Dunnage *Mussolini's Policemen: Behavior, Ideology and Institutional Culture in Representation and Practice*. Dunnage shows that while some "processes of 'fascistization' took place, they were highly ambiguous or conducted on an ad hoc basis, rather than being centrally co-ordinated." While Ebner and Dunnage disagree over the extent to which a fascistization of police occurred during the Fascist ventennio, both agree on the effects of Fascist policing in the areas in which fascistization widely occurred.

Fair gates, the EUR Agency held to the principle that it could achieve a degree of control beyond that attained in the rest of Italy. The World's Fair was seen as an ideal space for the regime, a laboratory of policing, to calibrate its security methods, from which a certain "economy" of policing emerges from the sources.

Generally, the Fascist regime heavily analyzed policing as a category of understanding and a practical tool of repression. Because the World's Fair was cancelled with Italy's mounting World War II losses, my research focuses on the regime's plans for policing millions of projected international visitors. It also examines the unique tactics the regime was seeking to adopt in response to its projections. I use police data sources as well as the regime's own words to explore the Italian Fascist approach to most effectively policing an ongoing mass spectacle event. As the first half of this chapter will show, a key focus of the EUR Agency was to ensure that the image of Fascism was appropriately managed under the scrutiny of foreign tourists observing the fair. The management agency planning the Fair understood that Fascism had a side that was not broadly socially acceptable, and saw it as necessary to alter perception at the E 42. The Fascist state's plans for policing tourists at the World's Fair showed a desire to maximize control while delinking Fascism from associations of state-violence and aggression.⁹

Furthermore, the regime viewed its theory of optimizing reputation management within its best economic interests, especially as it related to challenging Fascism's authoritarian image abroad, an image that had come under increased scrutiny in the aftermath of colonization in

⁹ *ACS, E42, Busta 1166, Fascicolo 11774.*

Ethiopia, and the League of Nations embargo from then on.¹⁰ Later, in the second part of this chapter, we will examine a criminology exhibit planned for the 1942 World's Fair. The EUR Agency's Propaganda and Hospitality Division was responsible for planning the Fair's scheduled amusement park, a sort of "Disneyland avant la lettre," as well as the exhibit on policing. Beyond the dissemination of meaning through actual policing techniques, what did the regime want to say with regard to Italian police, what kinds of signs, symbols, and narratives did the regime plan to disseminate around the World's Fair? In this we will see that Italian culture was referenced as both a fertile medium for criminality and the unique historical foundation for Fascism, which was posited as the treatment for delinquency. That is to say, culture and culturally produced meaning were potential markers of criminal personality, while culture under Fascism, "Italian Fascist Culture," was simultaneously articulated as the force capable of sanitizing Italian culture of its backward and criminal elements.

I. Policing the Fair

One of the major appeals of Fascism among international pundits was the "the notion that Fascism was an Italian solution to the Italian problems of criminality, laziness, lack of organization, or political backstabbing," according to the regime's own self-proclaimed successes.¹¹ Hence, even in the eyes of non-nationals, longstanding Italian cultural deficiencies were to be resolved through Italian policing solutions, most notably the problems of poverty and

¹⁰ *ACS, E42, Busta 1166, Fascicolo 11790*. The regime viewed its theory of optimizing presentation within its best economic interests.

¹¹ See page 338 in Peter D'Agostino "Craniums, Criminals, and the 'Cursed Race': Italian Anthropology in American Racial Thought, 1861-1924."

radicalism existing in Italian cities as well as mafia degeneracy in the south.¹² A cultural “reclamation” or *bonifica* was deemed necessary for the creation of the “new Italian.” Not surprisingly, such a radical idea of “cultural cleansing” was followed with highly repressive policing methods. Throughout the Fascist *ventennio*, data on activities deemed problematic by Fascists or on individuals who committed infractions was assiduously collected, processed, and distributed nationally through police data networks.¹³ Though, as Jonathan Dunnage points out, the implementation of authoritarian police tactics was uneven on a national scale, Italians under Fascism were largely profiled by the regime based upon class,¹⁴ political beliefs, and supposed

¹² See Nicole Rafter (Aug. 2008). “Criminology’s Darkest Hour: Biocriminology in Nazi Germany,” *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 41 (2): 287-306. In reference to foreign perception and crime in the south, Rafter writes “At the time Mussolini rose to power, Italy was not experiencing a hysteria over crime analogous to that of Weimar Germany, although its criminal justice officials were preoccupied on an ongoing basis by ‘brigandage’ in the southern half of the country.”

¹³ See Michael R. Ebner *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini’s Italy* (New York 2011). The Fascist state was effectively dealing in what is today called “metadata,” or bits of information gathered from a variety of sources to form complete personal profiles.

¹⁴ See page 94 of Jonathan Dunnage *Mussolini’s Policemen: Behavior, Ideology and Institutional Culture in Representation and Practice*. At first glance it may appear that respective theses on Fascist policing by Ebner and Dunnage are largely incompatible. To apply the terms of historiography on interwar Soviet society, it could be said that Ebner relies more on a “totalitarian model” of state rule while Dunnage shows the limits of the state to implement its totalitarian model. Sheila Fitzpatrick however argues that these positions are not necessarily contrarian. In her valuation of revisionism in Soviet historiography, she writes “It is, after all, impossible to imagine an actual historical situation in which political control was absolute, laws were implemented to the letter and in complete accordance with the legislators’ intentions, and the political leaders had a grand design detailed enough to cover every contingency. Such hypotheses (though not absent from past Sovietological scholarship) fly in the face of common sense.” See Sheila Fitzpatrick (Oct. 1986). “New Perspectives on Stalinism,” *Russian Review* 45 (4): 368.

proclivities for deviance as aberrations from the accepted norms.¹⁵ The regime did not target all members of society equally, but focused enforcement on the working class and sub-proletariat with impunity, creating a climate of fear, intimidation, and uncertainty in the everyday lives of members of the working classes, dissidents, and the poor.¹⁶ “Repressive rule disseminated fear, promoted conformity, and deeply affected the lives of ordinary Italians,” writes Michael Ebner.¹⁷ “[T]he pressure to conform, rendered acute by the threat of punishment and discrimination, affected how people raised their children, spent their leisure time, and conducted other, often mundane aspects of their daily lives.”¹⁸ How could Italy’s police forces openly serve these functions of domination out in the open, in front of the world at the E 42?

During the construction of the World’s Fair site, the job of securing property and preventing worker indolence, as well as anti-Fascist expression and politicization, was critical for its realization with remarkable speed and austerity. Policing the 5,000 workers employed daily in

¹⁵ Ibid. Writes Jonathan Dunnage: “citizens were by nature of their class, politics, religion, nationality, race or sexuality labelled as potentially ‘subversive’ or a threat to the national order and subjected to greater checks and restrictions than in the past. All citizens were monitored more systematically and intensely, with greater emphasis placed on their political and moral conduct and new attention paid to their physical and mental health. Flanked by the Fascist Party, the police oversaw the creation of a highly politicized society which thrived on a notable dose of compulsion, conformity, suspicion and fear.”

¹⁶ See Michael R. Ebner *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini’s Italy*.

¹⁷ Ibid, page 20. Ebner writes that this phenomenon became even more pronounced after the “totalitarian turn” in everyday policing methods after 1936. Ebner describes a “totalitarian turn” in everyday policing methods in the period after 1936. See for example page 15 of his book. “From 1935 onward, the regime prohibited a growing number of ‘political’ activities, opinions, and behaviors,” writes Ebner, signaling “a radical [...] turn in the history of Mussolini’s regime.” See also page 131, in which Ebner writes that the “totalitarian turn” was due to Mussolini’s “radicalization of foreign and domestic policy.”

¹⁸ Ibid.

the construction of this quintessential Fascist landmark was thus a project of consequence.¹⁹ To meet its objectives, the EUR Agency, the management faction within the regime that planned and administered the World's Fair, created its own security guard force. The 1.5 mi² (4 km²) E 42 site, eventually built to near completion before the cancellation of the Fair with the war, was policed over a seven-year period by a semi-autonomous security force loosely affiliated with Rome's regular police, a *guardia giurata* that at its largest reached 104-men. During the World's Fair, the Agency envisioned converting this guard corps into a ready-strike tactical unit, with officers disguised as affable sentries in order to cultivate an image of spontaneous order for the projected 20 million patrons.²⁰ These guards would be tasked with safeguarding the affair from saboteurs and terrorists, all the while enforcing the regime's carefully groomed cultural image of Italian masculinity and Fascist authority.

In planning its security detail for the Fair, the EUR Agency regime felt that the E 42 was an easy target for dissidents and enemy saboteurs. Regardless of whether such threats were real or configured specifically to justify repressive tactics, it is fair to say that optimizing security and control was in high regard. The regime viewed *real* security as essential to fulfilling its goals at the World's Fair, while limiting the degree of visible public force was seen as an essential for transforming international public opinion on the character of the Fascist regime. The EUR Agency had expressly made their awareness of this matter clear in stating, "since the majority of visitors will not have any other contact with the personnel of the Exposition besides those

¹⁹ Reports include daily counts of workers employed in the E 42 worksite during construction, the allocation of workers to a variety of roles in the division of labor, and the breakdown of workers employed by the EUR Agency and various firms.

²⁰ *ACS, E42, Busta 1146, Fascicolo 11315, Subfascicolo 2.*

assigned to surveillance, the conduct of [guards] will shape a concept of the education and instruction of the Italian people.”²¹ To ensure that security guards, as “mini-models” of power, would be continually instilled with the general mission of the E 42, a “spirit of intelligent and ready collaboration” with EUR Agency managers was required. Furthermore, the Security Guard detail was an important front to shape perception of Fascism, since “Foreigners will base their first impressions of the discipline and organization of the E 42.”²² According to Fascist authorities, “Physical presence, elegance of uniform, the manner in which guards comport themselves, their ability to express themselves in good Italian, give impeccable service, and satisfy any potential needs and desires of the public,” would help to create positive first impressions.²³ In sum, the visible guardian at the World’s Fair was to “be a friendly and accommodating tour guide to fair patrons,” always using “maximum courtesy” with the public.²⁴

Beneath the amicable veneer, policing the World’s Fair would involve various layers of security and a number of agencies cooperating in a highly organized, precision-mapped, hierarchical sequence. Police presence and surveillance at the E 42 would be constituted by the EUR Agency’s own security guard detail, as well as the Rome municipal police, Carabinieri, the OVRA (or “Organization for Vigilance and Repression of anti-Fascism”), and National Fascist Party youth organizations for motorcades and processions. To better ensure security at the World’s Fair, the Agency would increase the ratio of policemen to daily visitors dramatically

²¹ *ACS, E42, Busta 1166, Fascicolo 11775.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *ACS, E42, Busta 56, Fascicolo 269.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

over “World’s Fairs” of the previous decade. Sources reveal that for the World’s Fair in 1942, the regime calculated a precise number of guards per quantity of space to maximize patrol effectiveness, with a much higher policeman to patron ratio (2.8 times) than all other recent World’s Fairs. According to EUR Agency statistics, the New York City World’s Fair of 1939 had a guard to visitor ratio of 137:1, while “Paris 1937” had a ratio of 160:1, “Brussels 1935” had a guard to patron ratio of 114:1, and “Paris 1931” a ratio of “225:1.” The E 42, in contrast, was to have a ratio of 57:1 (or 1,800 security guards for an estimated 104,000 daily visitors).²⁵ Policing strategies would be fully developed to best utilize the officer ratio within and around the sprawling new city. Both generic and specific policing tactics would be applied to secure space and achieve directives. State plans include a specific approach to space, calling for the implementation of a “zone defense” in which the relationship between space and hierarchy would be successfully calibrated to contain disturbances in the case of an “event.”

Outside the fairgrounds, on the periphery of the 1942 World’s Fair, Fascist authority was to be aggressive with security always ready for forceful action. Around the E 42 perimeter fence, bicycle and horseback patrols, as well as mobile foot guards, would heavily police access roads and parking lots. Officers would maintain a precise distance from one another, yet always remain within range of visibility. As patrons drew nearer to the access gates of the E 42, they would approach two unarmed security guards. Documents show that the regime wanted patrons entering the fair to have a striking first impression of Italy’s police force.²⁶ Rather than placing heavily armed guards at these critical access points, the Agency developed a plan to keep an

²⁵ *ACS, E42, Busta 1168, Fascicolo 11782.*

²⁶ *ACS, E42, Busta 56, Fascicolo 269.*

emergency cache of arms just out of site in the event that public order needed to be restored. Crack police squads would be stationed in barracks behind the lines, but with the ability to quickly respond to immediate points of action. Mobile squads under the dependence of the Rome police would be suitably outfitted for rapid deployment. Around the interior perimeter of the E 42, “guards would conduct intermittent patrols on every block by bicycle.”²⁷

Inside the gates of the 1942 World’s fair, foot patrols would scour the fair in specific zones with determinant objectives. Mobile patrols would work on bicycle and motorcycle along the avenues. Parks would have foot patrols and horse or bicycle patrols. Squads of police officers would reconnoiter public places of spectacle and entertainment to prevent the possibility of damage, sabotage, attacks, or other “disgraceful situations.” Foot patrols with mobile sentries would be stationed in preselected zones along avenues and in piazzas. Guards on bicycle would also patrol the avenues, riding back and forth on a given patrol route. It was Foucault who quipped, “the disciplinary gaze did, in fact, need relays,” and at the E 42 highly mobile motorcycle police would serve relay information and provide support to all of the other officers.²⁸ Guards would be placed in the on-site temporary jail. Each pavilion would have mobile guards around its perimeter. Guards would also be fixed at optimum surveillance points near the principle access to every building of the World’s Fair. Special armed “cells” were to be used for surveillance inside the pavilions of greatest importance. Each pavilion would also maintain a “reasonably equipped” storage area with weapons for police squads in the event of “special circumstances and particular needs of public order.” Inside the exhibits, guards were

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ See page 174 in Michel Foucault *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

required to enforce and abide by the smoking ban, prevent visitors from touching the objects, or getting too close to the exhibits. Photography, without written consent, was strictly prohibited. Within this capacity was to be a readiness, the ability to strike on any threat, imagined or real.

Officers were further tasked with calibrating the circulation of bodies depending on specific circumstances, such as security threats. Facilitating the flow of the public in space and maintaining the order and cleanliness of roadways would help accomplish this objective. In this respect, policing the crowd required a subtle balance: greater ease of movement for bodies in space would also mean quicker circulation of capital, too many security obstacles and crowds would saunter, making visibility among bodies more difficult, and decreasing the flow of capital. At the same time, diminishing or preventing circulation would be a method practiced and if need be, used for control. Guards on horse and bicycle, fixed traffic guards, and mobile foot guards on the roads and in the parking areas would also be tasked with providing duties the Agency described as “Urban police” duties, which was deemed to include relaying information on grounds aesthetics, maintenance, and cleanliness, traffic discipline, and safety.²⁹ Plans call for a thorough study on the strategic use of steel crowd control barriers to maximize the regulation of bodies in space, especially useful in the event of an uprising.

The next critical agenda for EUR Agency security guards at the World’s Fair was the surveillance of the city’s critical infrastructure, namely its core operation facilities, train stations, airport, and rail supply lines. According to Agency plans, squads of officials from the State Police would work directly with “technical units and capable personnel for systematically

²⁹ *ACS, E42, Busta 1166, Fascicolo 11775.*

inspecting subsoil facilities, buildings, and general artifacts.”³⁰ The security guard corps would have to work to prevent “every possibility of damage, sabotage, and attacks.” These squads would also work in tight collaboration with the fire department and public works agencies. Special officers, meanwhile, would be maintained on the train platforms and at the airport, where the Agency was considering instituting an office staffed with policemen working as border patrol agents.³¹ For the provisions of preventative security, there is a recommendation to study a method of closing all sewers and entry points to subterranean facilities during the construction of the buildings and the streets.

One of the most important measures was to control the space where information was being produced and exchanged.³² The post office, areas with telephones, telegraphs, radios, and other information, would be heavily controlled. A squad of officers from the special information service would be stationed for surveillance around mail processing, telegraphs, and areas with telephones. Special secret police officers would work the lounges and the parlor used by official representatives of participating nations.

The final important objective for the EUR Agency’s Security Guard Corps would position police in a way so that they appear apolitical in order to maximize political reach. Though the state worked on managing an image that would be well received by foreigners, there are clean objectives that more accurately reveal their true intentions. Guards were to be placed in

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

space to best attain information, specifically on foreigners.³³ Language was in fact to be an essential weapon in the dual-struggle to remain “always courteous” while gathering information on foreign visitors. “Urban police” guards “must be knowledgeable in foreign languages, working closely with the [state] police, and supplying information on all of the non-Italian elements.”³⁴ The ability to communicate with foreigners on their terms, in their languages and with knowledge of their cultures, would prove invaluable.

Pedestrian cops and traffic guards were considered to be the frontline and thus of great tactical importance in surveilling foreigners. In addition, according to World’s Fair security plans, strictly limiting the number of armed guards within view was critical for “obvious political reasons, considering foreigners will be among us.”³⁵ For that reason, it was decided that non-police information personnel should be stationed so as to limit the number of visible guards of the “armed corps,” they would still be required to provide information and directions when asked. “Above all, security personnel has the obligation to talk to the public with the maximum of courtesy, but it is never to be separated from the necessary firmness, when needed, and when possible, to calling for the intervention of an elite agent, and when circumstances require, for the

³³ Ibid. For more on the policing of foreigners under Italian Fascism, see pages 79 to 81 in Jonathan Dunnage *Mussolini’s Policemen: Behavior, Ideology and Institutional Culture in Representation and Practice*. Policemen monitored all foreign citizens, including tourists, in their areas of jurisdiction,” writes Dunnage. This phenomenon was particularly stepped up after invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, after which they broadened areas of intervention into “surveillance of citizens of ‘enemy’ nations,” as well as Jews. “Policemen also engaged in the surveillance of the local fascist environment in order to detect dissidence.”

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

armed security forces.”³⁶ Accepting tips and gifts of any kind was prohibited. “Infractions can result in the loss of an officer’s card.”

Interestingly, all foreign nations participating in the Fair would provide their own guards for their own pavilions. “Participants must provide, at their expense and responsibility, continuous surveillance services in their respective sections and buildings.” Each guard would be individually approved by the Agency after the State Police had vetted the candidate. The Agency was particularly concerned about the night shift and the potential for “inevitable, delicate situations” to arise between Italian and foreign guards, and was looking into ways to ensure the prevention of international incidences.

As the EUR Agency continued to develop its security plans for the E 42, it had developing concerns over the quality of the Security Guard Corps it had assembled. The EUR Agency created a full-time Security Guard Corps to police the construction-site in July of 1938.³⁷ Six months after the full-institutionalization of the Security Guard Corps, the Agency considered the discipline of its 45 guards to be “generally good,” though some issues of significance began to trouble the Agency about its Guard Corps. According to one internal memo, “The men hired are ex-workers or unskilled laborers, and that the average level of education of the guards is the 4th grade.” The Agency directorate believed that such low levels of education among guards made it difficult for them to put Fascism in a positive light with the public. “Security at the entrances has been carried out with discretion, but the guards have

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ *ACS, E42, Busta 72, Fascicolo 412.*

demonstrated little ability to maintain contact with the public.”³⁸ The Agency was also concerned about the physical attributes of its guards. International visitors to the World’s Fair were to see a spritely, tall, and attractive Italian male, the ideal “new Fascist man” as discussed in chapter 3. In contrast to this ideal form, “the median height of the guards in the Security Corps actually in service is 1.67 m [5 foot 6]. The physical aspect is good for a few, average for most,” states the internal memo. “It must be kept in mind that, especially with the opening of the Fair, the Security Corps guards will find themselves in contact with Italian and foreign visitors. It would be preferable to have men of good physical specimen, and with higher levels of education than our men at present, and for them to have a greater average height.”³⁹

As a result, the EUR Hospitality Division instituted plans in 1939 to provide “instructional theory-practice courses for security guards.”⁴⁰ Each guard would be forced to take three months of professionalization courses. The Agency considered the training necessary to prepare guards for contact with the masses and to “prevent eventual defectiveness of service” and “the easy embarrassment of our security guards in front of foreign visitors.”⁴¹ The first part of the course would consist of education on police hierarchy and regulations. Guards would learn about police culture and the nature of joint working relationships between the State Police and

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *ACS, E42, Busta 1171, Fascicolo 11878.*

⁴¹ Ibid.

the Security Guard Corps.⁴² The second, more significant portion of the course would provide a history of Fascism, (from the March on Rome, all the way to the political and economic centrality of the E 42 in the 20 year reign of Fascism). In specific preparation for interactions with foreigners, guards would receive essential *sensitivity* training on the differences between democratic and totalitarian regimes, and the nature of commercial relationships between Italy and each of the foreign nations participating in the World's Fair. Language courses would be given in German, Spanish, English, French, *and* Italian. At the end of the three-month period, each officer would undergo a series of examinations. Their aptitude scores would play a central role in immediate rank and all future employment, with "cultural competency" measured by rational, mathematical means. Through this linguistic-cultural reeducation for EUR Agency security guards, it is evident that "reputation" became a policeable quotient and a valuable commodity worthy of investment. What is more, instilling security guards with "cultural competency" could provide authority with knowledge of "the other," but without the concreteness of violence, coercion, and force.

II. Bruno Cassinelli, Criminology's Fascist Pupil

Plans for policing the 1942 World's Fair were handled by the EUR Agency's Propaganda and Hospitality Division, the same one responsible for planning the Fair's scheduled amusement park and its numerous and ambitious Fascist exhibits, addressed in Chapter 1. Influential Italian thinkers planned hundreds of highly ideological exhibits. Fair exhibits, like the E 42 security

⁴² The course would establish a theory of the working relationship between State Police and guards, as many of the guards were themselves the original practitioners in this relationship, as shown in chapter 5.

detail, would show an idealized projection of Italian Fascism. The exhibits were to provide individual “psychologies” with pleasure and entertainment, important techniques to inculcate Fair visitors with Fascism’s greatness in a way that seemed natural, without actually resorting to traditional propaganda techniques.⁴³ Just as the Propaganda and Hospitality Division came to the realization that the most effective form of propaganda is one that did not appear to be propaganda at all, they too designed plans to police the Fair in a way that appeared as something other than brute force and external authority. The Agency imagined and planned for the Fair to be a wholly contrived and controlled environment in which hundreds of high-cultured, handsome, educated “security guards” would convince an international public that the regime’s police forces were “scientific” and professional in their duties, only resorting to violence only as a last resort rather than a tactic in its everyday arsenal.

Though several exhibits would demonstrate the grandeur of the orderly, hierarchical society that Fascism was instituting, one World’s Fair exhibit in particular would attempt to directly confront the sensitive matter of Fascist policing. Bruno Cassinelli’s proposal for an exhibit at the 1942 Roman World’s Fair, bearing the macabre name “Italian World Supremacy in the Prevention of Social Disease,” attempted to explain Fascist security and jurisprudence to Fair patrons.⁴⁴ As the pupil of criminologist Enrico Ferri, who in turn was a disciple of Cesare Lombroso, Cassinelli pays homage to this distinct lineage of criminology to ultimately “defend,

⁴³ The complete 1939 document “Mostra della Civiltà Italiana: Criteri fondamentali per la presentazione della Mostra” is republished in *E 42: L’Esposizione Universale di Roma; Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Tullio Gregory and Achille Tartaro, eds. (Venice 1987): 157-166.

⁴⁴ *ACS, E42, Busta 1048, Fascicolo 9770, Subfascicolo 2.*

verify, and test Italian supremacy in the field of penal law.”⁴⁵ Whereas contemporaries like French sociologist Émile Durkheim believed that criminality was an inevitable part of society, the Positivist school founded by Lombroso held that it was the duty of the modern, salubrious state to excise deviance from within. The subject of criminal anthropology was not crime, but “the criminal,” which connoted a “certain form of being” writes Daniel Pick.⁴⁶ The Fascists recognized a form of being commensurate to the criminal in Lombrosian criminal anthropology, made visible “even in advance of a crime.”⁴⁷ To work most effectively according to its own laws, preemptive policing relies upon reified notions of the “other.” This “Scientific Policing,” molded from the traditions of Lombroso’s criminal anthropology, writes Dunnage, “appealed to the Fascists in view of its supposed contribution to moral renewal of Italian society and the invigoration of the Italian race.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ In *Criminal Man, According to the Classification of Cesare Lombroso* (New York 1911), Gina Lombroso Ferrero wrote about the intellectual influence of her father Cesare Lombroso [1835-1909]. “The Modern, or Positive, School of Penal Jurisprudence,” writes Lombroso Ferrero on page 5, “maintains that the anti-social tendencies of criminals are the result of their physical and psychic organization, which differs essentially from that of normal individuals.” This new anthropology, initiated by Cesare Lombroso, seeks to cure the criminal rather than punish him. “The Modern School is therefore founded on a new science, Criminal Anthropology, which may be defined as the Natural History of the Criminal, because it embraces his organic and psychic constitution and social life, just as anthropology does in the case of normal human beings and the different races,” adds Lombroso Ferrero.

⁴⁶ See page 73 in Daniel Pick “The Faces of Anarchy: Lombroso and the Politics of Criminal Science in Post-Unification Italy,” *History Workshop* 21: 60-86; or chapter 5 (titled “Lombroso’s Criminal Science”) in Pick’s *Faces of Degeneration: a European Disorder, c.1848-c.1918* (Cambridge and New York 1989).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Jonathan Dunnage describes the nexus between Fascism and scientific policing as one of “close association” with “the regime’s ideological program.” He cites ongoing experiments at the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia* and continuous calls for more widespread use of tactics dating to

More than any other thinker of the interwar period, the long-forgotten work of Bruno Cassinelli is indicative of attempts to bring “classical” Italian criminal anthropology together with jurisprudence in a manner suitable to Fascist ideology.⁴⁹ The Florence-born Cassinelli was himself a link between 19th century Italian criminology and the Fascist regime’s use of “scientific policing” tactics. Cassinelli, trained by Ferri the socialist-turned Fascist, would follow a similar political trajectory as his advisor from socialism to Fascism during the 1920s.⁵⁰ The author of several books on criminology, including the 1936 *History of Madness (Storia Della Pazzia)*, Cassinelli was revealed at the end of the Second World War to have been a spy working all-along for the Italian Fascist secret political police, the OVRA.⁵¹ While Lombroso, founder of

the late nineteenth century as evidence of this relationship. “Since the turn of the century, under the directorship of the school’s founder, Salvatore Ottolenghi (a disciple of the criminologist Cesare Lombroso), courses had instructed [police officers] on how to apply anthropological, physiological and psychological theories to the identification and treatment of delinquents.” See page 66 in Jonathan Dunnage *Mussolini’s Policemen: Behavior, Ideology and Institutional Culture in Representation and Practice*.

⁴⁹ Like most other exhibits, as discussed in chapter 2, this one too recreates history to place the origins of criminal anthropology in Italy. *ACS, E42, Busta 1048, Fascicolo 9770, Subfascicolo 2*.

⁵⁰ Daniel Pick writes on Enrico Ferri’s brand of socialism. “Enrico Ferri espoused the cause of “socialism;” by which he meant principally the rejection of anti-social(ist) egoism. This sometimes included the rejection of appeals to any “class politics” whatsoever. Instead he promulgated the ideal of the strong, unified, disinterested state.” See page 64 in Daniel Pick, “The Faces of Anarchy: Lombroso and the Politics of Criminal Science in Post-Unification Italy.”

⁵¹ As Mimmo Franzinelli elucidates in *I tentacoli dell’Ovra: agenti, collaboratori e vittime della polizia politica fascista* (Torino 1999), Cassinelli worked as a spy for the OVRA (*Organizzazione per la Vigilanza e la Repressione dell’Antifascismo*). In a 1999 interview featured in notable Italian daily *La Repubblica*, Franzinelli said that he considers Cassinelli’s work for OVRA a paradigmatic case of Italian secret police apparatuses extending power through insidious means. As a prominent defense attorney and socialist confidant of prominent Italian Communist Amadeo Bordiga, Cassinelli was a highly valuable insider for the Fascist

the Italian School of Positivist Criminology, was focused on the psycho-social and biological factors that produced the “natural born” criminal, Cassinelli began to theorize a mode of crime prevention that assessed cultural signs, such as language, literature, and other forms of meaning production, for markers of criminality. Cassinelli thus posited culture as a way to simultaneously identify subjects who adhered to authority, while differentiating them from degenerates. What is more, Cassinelli repositioned the criminal anthropology of his intellectual forebears into the Fascist struggle against the abstraction of modern mass society, as this section will show.

Cassinelli’s World’s Fair plans for “Italian World Supremacy in the Prevention of Social Disease” would contain several distinct rooms with the exhibit’s major themes visually connected in the entrance parlor. Upon entering the exhibit, “precise and revealing phrases of Greek philosophers” such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates would be featured in the entry corridor. In the same entryway to the exhibit, large murals of Italian renaissance art (“Caravaggio, Giotto, etc.”) on the theme of criminality and madness would connect ancient Greek philosophy to age-old problems of deviance. On the opposite walls of the main parlor, Italian criminal anthropology would be shown as the modern solution to these age-old problems, represented by a “neon relief model with figures that demonstrate the diminution of criminality and madness in Italy.”⁵² Inside the exhibit, an entire room would be dedicated to Lombroso,

police state. See Simonetta Fiori “Così Togliatti chiese aiuto all’Ovra,” *La Repubblica*, 4 June 1999.

⁵² In Italy, the major organization advocating for criminal anthropology was the “Italian Society of Criminal Anthropology and Psychology” [*Società Italiana di Antropologia e Psicologia Criminale*]. In Germany, the corresponding association was titled “The Society of Biological Criminology. The difference in names is either purely formal, or it reflects the unique appropriations of Lombrosian criminology in each nation. Nicole Rafter argues for the latter. While the Nazis developed a criminal biology that would be utilized in the project of eugenics

featuring a display with the “skulls of delinquents, those suffering from madness, brigands.”⁵³ A mural in the same room would show “Lombroso’s diagnoses of the delinquent, the origins and atavistic motives that determine this monstrous natural product.” Written on a wall within the exhibit room would be the names of institutions that “impose” Italian criminal anthropology onto their practices: “‘asylums,’ ‘hospitals,’ ‘workhouses,’ ‘prisons,’ ‘carceral labor,’ ‘doctors working in prisons,’ ‘prison hospitals;’ ‘asylums for the criminally insane.’” The Criminal Prevention room would herald the “Positivist Penal School” initiated by Cassinelli’s master Enrico Ferri, showing “all of the dynamism of judicial and executive power.” Inside this room, environmental and cultural influences on future criminality, such as “climate, ethnicity, economy, politics,” would appear in graphics on a mural. Another section of the room would be dedicated to the tattoo, marks on the body that were “expressions of criminality.” Meanwhile, another wall would feature “graphics that demonstrate the life of the Italian citizen, accompanied, followed, watched over, by the Fascist state.” Cassinelli’s exhibit would be crowned with a reconstruction of both ancient and modern prison cells, built side-by-side for comparison.

The “Scientific Policing” Room would be divided into two parts. The first half would show forensic identification “applied to medicine and police functions,” including “all of the methods used by police in forensic work to create a description through anatomical signaling – characteristics such as the head, brow, face, torso, upper and lower extremities, the nipples, the

and mass murder, Fascist criminologists developed sociological and anthropological approaches to crime prevention and political repression. For more see Rafter (Aug. 2008). “Criminology’s Darkest Hour: Biocriminology in Nazi Germany,” *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 41 (2): 287-306.

⁵³ *ACS, E42, Busta 1048, Fascicolo 9770, Subfascicolo 2.*

genitals, and personal marks: scars, tattoos, anomalies, deformities, fingerprints.”⁵⁴ The second half of the Scientific Policing Room would display “biographical and psychiatric identification in juridical investigations.” Taken together, writes Cassinelli, “all of the dynamism of judicial and executive power will emanate from this room. A part of the room will be reserved to the action of prevention of the forensic police, and not of repression.” Bruno Cassinelli’s proposed exhibit is a decisive attempt to bring together Italian criminal anthropology, Fascist policing, and Fascist ideology for an international public at the World’s Fair. To achieve this objective, the exhibit would ontologize the modern criminal subject, making criminality an essential component of human nature, while positioning the role of Fascist culture in excising this “natural” abhorrence from the social body.⁵⁵

Cassinelli was among the Fascist criminologists who sought “a legal transformation that would bring all aspects of the criminal justice system into line with criminal-anthropological principles.”⁵⁶ Though criminal anthropologists never achieved their objective of creating a revolution in Italian legal code, “criminal anthropology did affect criminal justice practices in nearly all parts of the system,” writes Nicole Rafter. Fascist use of Lombrosian criminology,

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ “Natural, in its relation to heredity (biological re-production, evolution); unacceptable in its relation to society (economic production, social progress). The criminal class was in short an obsolete freight carried by the state,” writes Pick of Lombroso’s work on the subject. See Daniel Pick, “The Faces of Anarchy: Lombroso and the Politics of Criminal Science in Post-Unification Italy.”

⁵⁶ See page 302 in Nicole Rafter, “Criminology’s Darkest Hour: Biocriminology in Nazi Germany.”

with its focus on “scientific” crime prevention, “intensified repressive tendencies already rooted in Italy’s authoritarian police agencies.”⁵⁷

For Cassinelli, Italian policing and criminal justice, under the influence of Italian criminal anthropology, were the means of concretizing the state’s power and authority to ensure behavioral control, a vital component in the cultural refashioning of the “new Fascist man.”⁵⁸ To accomplish its objectives, the police under Fascism necessitated a permanent expansion of the domain of the punishable, extending beyond the domain of legality [i.e. codified law, enforcement of broken laws] and into the realm of morality. Taken as a whole, Cassinelli’s exhibit would contend that criminality could be limited or destroyed through a stark expansion of punishment beyond legally prohibited offenses, superseding the domain of “the enforceable” and moving into thoughts and predilections. Cassinelli elaborates the practices of the “Scientific Police” in terms that point toward exceeding legal statutes, yet in allegiance with the judiciary.

The police are no longer a dark instrument. They collaborate decisively with judicial power to create a more precise knowledge of the individual criminal. The mission of the police is vast: from the identification of behaviors equivalent to criminality, to spotlighting minors predisposed to commit crime; from the surveillance of convicted criminals, methodically followed by police through biographical records, to the preventative action against prostitution; from the observation of those whom the public voice indicates to be a threat, (even if acquitted by the law, and if their activities are not covered by penal law), to the fight against vagabondage; from the neutralization of political subversives, to the strenuous work of prevention against drug dealers, counterfeiters, the exploiters of prostitutes, and usurers; one can see a mission that involves not only the search

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ For more on the role of Fascist police in creating the “new Italian,” see pages 8 and 15 in Michael Ebner *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini’s Italy*.

for criminals, but a gigantic effort to create an elaborate and up-to-date register of delinquency.⁵⁹

A broadening of police discretion that would exceed the legal code would allow for enforcement based upon alleged “proclivities,” as well as transgressions falling beneath the threshold of acts, such as meaning produced by individuals.⁶⁰ As a supralegal technique that pointed toward “total policing,” Cassinelli’s police would oversee the movement of bodies in space, it would examine individuals for movements, body gestures, reactions, that could preemptively enforce laws and affect the most minute aspects of daily life.⁶¹

Cassinelli’s proposal provides plans for an exhibit that traces the Italian origins of criminal anthropology. Cassinelli calls the work of Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle the “intuitive-empirical” phase of Anthropology, for these philosophers had “abstract intuitions, speculations, without any possibility for scientific evidence.” The criminology of Cesare Lombroso and Enrico Ferri would offer a prime example of how Italian advancements in the fields of science were solving classical problems as old as ancient Greece. Modern

⁵⁹ Cassinelli repeats the claim as to the far-reaching effects of Italian criminal anthropology. Another room of the exhibit would feature the cells of “an ancient prison, and those of the new prisons” to show the international influences of Italy in the field of criminal anthropology. A mural would depict all of the modern institutions that rely upon Italian criminal Anthropology: “asylums, hospitals, workhouses, prisons, carceral labor, doctors working in prisons, prison hospitals; insane asylums for criminals.” As a result of the work of criminal anthropology, police institutions had grown into a “modern,” “scientific” entity, while themselves becoming an object of study, worthy of investigation. *ACS, E42, Busta 1048, Fascicolo 9770, Subfascicolo 2.*

⁶⁰ Cassinelli’s position is widely mirrored in the everyday policing tactics in Fascist Italy. “Laws and institutions were not everything,” writes Michael Ebner. The Fascist practice of “ex-post facto juridical-legislative legitimization” privileged action over law, with the state condoning practices outside of law. See page 46 in *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini’s Italy.*

⁶¹ Similar effects can be ascribed to twenty-first century police tactics, even in the United States, as can be demonstrated by the NYPD’s “broken windows” and “stop-and-frisk” tactics.

anthropology, according to Cassinelli, provided these “empirical” endeavors with a “vital international scientific systemization.”⁶² By ontologizing criminality, Cassinelli also transhistoricizes the targets of criminality, such as individual private property, property crimes, and the relations of production through which property is generated. In the exhibit it is shown how “dangerous antisocial activities” develop in biological and social contexts, writes Cassinelli, “against which it is necessary to conduct adequate prevention that serve the interests of developing social and moral hygiene and the physical and moral reinforcement of the nation.” Thus, criminality was shown as a natural pathology requiring the therapeutic intervention of Fascism, a cultural “reclamation” or *bonifica*, necessary for the creation of the new Italian.

One of criminal anthropology’s most essential contributions, for Cassinelli, was the creation of a field of study through which potential offenders could be profiled. While Lombroso was focused on biological factors that produced criminality, the “natural born criminal,” Cassinelli’s master Enrico Ferri concentrated on developing a mode of crime prevention that assessed “bio-psychological” and cultural signs.⁶³ The positivist approach of Enrico Ferri, writes Cassinelli, “orients the laws above that of repression, to the preventative measures and the treatment of criminality.” Language (modes of speech, slang, etc.), literature, and other forms of meaning production were seen as “sure” markers of criminality.⁶⁴ Historical context and socio-

⁶² “The study of the personality and the delinquent,” writes Cassinelli, “has become the same base of modern penal law, the honor and pride of anthropology.” *ACS, E42, Busta 1048, Fascicolo 9770*.

⁶³ *Ibid.* “Each prevention of criminality presupposes an awareness of the causes of phenomena which are considered criminal under the law,” writes Cassinelli in the Exhibit proposal.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

cultural milieu were not useful for explaining criminality itself, only for providing the schema for authorities to identify the signs through which the individual criminal can be prevented before the act, *prima facie*.

Enrico Ferri's positivist criminology school, writes Cassinelli, was "a fecund and glorious application of scientific method in the study of the phenomenon of criminality. Crime is no longer studied as a *juridical abstraction, but as a human action, a natural and social fact.*"⁶⁵ Cassinelli thus positions the work of Lombroso and Ferri within the Fascist project of fighting the abstraction of modern mass society.⁶⁶ "Criminal anthropology becomes, *practical and immediate* action in a sacred fight," adds Cassinelli. The Fascist battle against abstraction took on several manifestations, from architecture that was allegedly contextualized in the "authentic" traditions of the Italian people, to exalting the concrete social relations from an historical period prior to the rise of capitalist modernity. The rise of police institutions was not merely an "evolutionary development" of earlier, everyday disciplinary bodies, like the family or other interpersonal, culturally bound units.⁶⁷ Police institutions emerged historically and were subsequently reiterated in form throughout the planet with the rise of the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century, following a growth commensurate with the spread of commodity production and exchange. In this new context of modernity, where impersonal institutions

⁶⁵ Emphasis mine.

⁶⁶ Interestingly, Cassinelli argues that science allows for breaks with the abstract speculation of pre-scientific modes of thought. Modernity for Cassinelli thus gives birth to a "science of the concrete." *ACS, E42, Busta 1048, Fascicolo 9770, Subfascicolo 2.*

⁶⁷ The notion that the modern patriarchal family is a simple "evolution" over the family in pre-capitalist societies is simplistic, as the family is not a transhistorical category. See page 415 in *Capital Volume 1*, Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, R. Tucker, editor. (New York 1979).

mediate relations between humans, where discourses disseminate through technologies of mass communication, and in which effectively directing the activities of individuals is equated to dollars and cents, the concrete disciplinary attributes of armed enforcers grew in importance. Typically under Fascism, concrete power was wielded through police institutions, which regularly utilized violence as described above.⁶⁸

In the cover letter to his Criminology Exhibit proposal, Cassinelli ensured the EUR Agency's Propaganda and Hospitality Division that his exhibit would be "a natural commercial success."⁶⁹ It was an initiative that would enjoy significant popularity among World's Fair consumers and would "certainly interest the uninformed public." As part of a formal review conducted by the EUR Agency, the Chief of Services for the Exhibits Organization wrote that the proposal is "extremely interesting and is indubitably poised to give Italy a good impression in the field of criminal prevention most specifically."⁷⁰ It is best suited to the Medical or Hygiene Exhibits, or even the Orthogenesis of the Race Exhibit." Cipriano Efsio Oppo, president of the World's Fair Exhibits committee, scribbled in handwriting directly onto the hand-typed Agency review of Cassinelli's exhibit plans.⁷¹ "From a political point of view, an exhibit of this genre seems to me inopportune," adding that Cassinelli's proposed exhibit would better serve as part of one of the major exhibits like the Italian Civilization or Science Exhibits rather than as a stand-

⁶⁸ *ACS, E42, Busta 1048, Fascicolo 9770, Subfascicolo 2.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

alone showcase.⁷² Even here the political message was calibrated with nuance. Cassinelli's exhibit would give away too much on Italian policing – excessive explanation rather than entertainment value – and certainly more information than the regime had wished to disseminate for an international public. The EUR Agency's Security Guard Corps would provide an adequate display of Italian policing at the World's Fair simply through being.

III. Conclusion

My findings show that the 1.5 square mile site, an area at best sporadically patrolled before the expropriation of lands for the 1942 World's Fair of Rome, became a terrain for the Fascist regime to apply original security objectives where none had yet existed. The regime and the EUR Agency developed planned methods for maximizing control over patrons while limiting the visible presence of police. Evidence shows that the regime was focused on enhancing strategic objectives in the given space with as few guards as possible to further maximize its economy of policing. The firm assembled by the state was concerned on one hand with the negative perception of its authoritarian reputation, yet at the same time it seriously believed that optimizing security and control was in the best interests of "Fascism," not to speak of its actual security interests as the target of a possible attack. With Fascism's "public spectacles of violence" unwanted at the World's Fair, policing individuals through the knowledge of cultural education made for a more peaceful and cost-effective way to mobilize the force of the state.

Furthermore, these police overseers were simultaneously devised to be the "overseen," mini-models of Fascism's most-desirable individual qualities, agents of idealized Italian

⁷² Ibid.

masculinity for mass consumption. As shown, normative understandings of “the other” were to be taught to Italian policemen in “re-education” courses and were deployed in Cassinelli’s exhibit as a tactic for more effectively policing society for “diseases” or deviancies among Italians (and within the crowds at the fair?). The use of difference to facilitate security operations also established ancillary objectives, like creating perceptions of a limited field of normative behaviors, thoughts, and expressions through which “deviations” could be recognized.

Under Fascist auspices, nineteenth century criminological perspectives were utilized with culture in the service of preventative policing, and therefore vital to the production of Fascist subjectivities through enforced homogeneity and reified difference. In the Fascist project of Italian regeneration, policing was essential for preventing the spread of “social disease” in the form of criminality. Amid Italy’s pursuit of rapid modernization, culture had to be uplifted to prevent widespread pathologization. To further justify the “therapeutic” interventions of Fascism, Cassinelli’s work contends that criminality could be limited or destroyed through a stark expansion of punishment to supersede legal abstractions to include discursive transgressions beneath the threshold of acts. Cultural norms that expressed traditional values, such as paternalism, fostered the public as a family in order to police against the degeneration associated with capitalist modernity.⁷³ “Criminal anthropology” served these ends by creating a field of theory for preventative policing and developing tactics to profile populations for suspects. In this way, the regime sought to build an order generative of the “New Fascist man.”⁷⁴

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ See page 76 in Daniel Pick, “The Faces of Anarchy: Lombroso and the Politics of Criminal Science in Post-Unification Italy.”

In uplifting an ideal of Italian culture, in generating the normative expressions, behaviors, and signs to be performed and disseminated by actors, Fascism simultaneously posited culture as a way to identify subjects who recognized authority, while differentiating them from the degenerates. “The purpose of Italian criminal anthropology,” writes Daniel Pick, “can be found then, in the attempt to construct an ordered language for the containment of disorder and through that language, to formulate the definition of a political subject by elaborating ever more closely the criteria for political exclusion.”⁷⁵ The constituted “criminal subject” provided concrete insights into character assessment, registering and making individuals knowable as objects of knowledge. Further, the “immutable” differences expressed in the form of the “criminal subject” aided the regime in its construction of a “coherent” Italian subject.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ This sentence borrows concepts on identity formation from Judith Butler, “Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory, and Psychoanalytic Discourse,” *Feminism/Postmodernism*. Linda J. Nicholson, ed. (New York and London 1990): 324-340.

Chapter 5. Scarcity, Discipline, and the Limits of Fascist Subjectivity: the Case of Italy and the EUR

This chapter contends that Fascism attempted to dominate subjects both through a new ideology of “work” and through access to work. It shows that in spite of the repressive organization of material and psychological life under Fascism, attempts to instill “Fascist” values in workers and officials never fully materialized, much like the epic 1942 World’s Fair itself. In 1936 Mussolini’s Fascist regime undertook an ambitious plan to hold the 1942 World’s Fair (E 42) in a newly built city on the outskirts of Rome. Though the World’s Fair was eventually canceled due to mounting war losses, Italian workers nearly completed the city, which today constitutes the core of Rome’s EUR district. Between 1937 and 1941, an army of 5,000 workers labored to build the city from the ground up. Coupled with the “total” management of everyday life in the adjacent Worker’s Village, a new complex of dormitories that lodged 1,400 men from all over Italy, construction of the city was said to be generative of a new culture of labor, as Chapter 3 showed through a top-down approach. Scenes in state-sponsored documentaries exalted the worker who was the receiver of culture and the practitioner or “executioner” of Fascist ideology. Publicly, a new laboring subject was shown as fixed within a “natural” hierarchy of familial and honorific work relations rather than the class relation endemic to the modern division of labor. While construction of the city provided new opportunities for indicating Fascism’s transformative nature through this “new” Italian archetype, this chapter shows that Fascist aims regularly encountered limits when confronted by real workers and enforcers, as yielded by an examination of their responses to the regime’s mandates and the Fascist built environment.

The image of culturally genuine workers who “knew their place” did not draw upon real “tradition” in any deep cultural sense, but was itself carefully cultivated by the regime. As Fascists showed that the regime was instilling the profound spirit of ancient Rome in workers, they selected traditions that were also anti-democratic, anti-union, and profoundly paternalistic. Thus, as soon as this “authentic” Fascist laboring subject was generated, the regime attempted to control it through a variety of techniques, as this chapter aims to show. Access to wage labor for the working class was contingent upon expressed moral allegiance to the state as demonstrated through Fascist Party membership, a policy tightened with the initiation and acceleration of work on the World’s Fair site. This precondition was aggravated by material and employment scarcity as well as excess laboring capacity. Competition for limited jobs and the need for individuals to sell their labor power for a wage made constraining access to labor a highly repressive tool. With hiring regulated through a coercive mix of general scarcity and moral policing, access to work was configured as an instrument of normativity, inculcation, and domination beyond the inherent disciplining nature of wage labor. Although these conditions made even subtle resistance high-risk, potentially dangerous activity, the archive shows that acts of “everyday resistance” by workers, shepherds, and policemen were common in the final years before the war, and increased significantly during the war years to even include top officials in the regime.

In the assiduous construction of the campus for the 1942 Roman World’s Fair, members of the working class and vulnerable sub-proletariat labored en masse. In spite of appearances, the conditions for most workers who built the E 42 and lived in its environs were punishing.¹ Italian workers were tied to the demands of increasing productivity where technical advancements were

¹ See pages 156-157 in Frank M. Snowden, *The conquest of malaria: Italy, 1900-1962*. (New Haven 2006).

lacking. To truly demonstrate that Fascism had consummated an Italian labor practice laudable for method, speed, and discipline, the site of the Fair was to be completed in less than half the time as similar world's fairs in other countries. In reality, this quickening pace of labor resulted in even poorer labor conditions. Medical records and accident reports demonstrate the toll on the lives that were used and at times exhausted in the "brick by brick" construction of Fascist ideology.

If the aim of the regime's labor of cultural reproduction was to instill "traditional" hierarchy through paternal "moral care," it was a process of modern "production" that was supported by the policing of workers. Yet, as I will elaborate, domination also led to forms of manipulation and resistance that developed within the boundaries of specific modes of Fascist subjectivization. The conclusion provides a look at the changing roles of the EUR Security Guard Corps with Italy's entry into World War II and subsequent cancellation of the World's Fair, with final insights on the growing discontent among workers and officers in the period before and after the collapse of the Fascist state.

I. The Fascist Terrain of Domination

While highly idealized, representations of working bodies and labor hierarchy at the E 42, along with forms of resistance, were grounded in realities that the Fascist regime had helped to generate. Before turning to the limits of Fascist representations of the dutiful worker, this chapter first examines the Fascist "symbolic order" – used here to mean "the bounds of the thinkable," the signs and structures that generate those bounds, and acceptance of them. This symbolic order, generated by Fascist law and labor relations, was manifested in forms of resistance that were framed in relation to that order. In the relationship between labor

management and workers in Fascist Italy, management held decisive legal and structural advantages, especially after the Party's consolidation of power in 1925. General worker acquiescence was achieved through the scarcity of employment, the slashing of wages, the criminalization of poverty and joblessness, and the destruction of formal independent mechanisms for labor to contest its condition.² What is more, labor management, human resources, and police intelligence were systematically unified on a national scale under Fascist authority for the first time. In consequence, labor managers with the EUR Agency (*Ente Autonomo Esposizione Universale di Roma*) were able to exude greater influence in policy and control over workers in the name of Fascism.

The regime passed a series of measures between 1925 and 1927, effectively consigning organized labor to state control.³ The Syndical Law of 1926 banned the right of workers to unionize and strike.⁴ The law placed all worker representation in the hands of regime-approved Fascist syndicates, giving workplace authority to industrialists and labor managers. The Syndical

² See pages 10-13 and 152 in Robert O. Paxton *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York 2004); pages 116-130 in Stefano Fabei, *Fascismo d'acciaio: Maceo Carloni e il sindacalismo a Terni (1920-1944)* (Milan 2013); page 393 in Tobias Abse "Fascism and Working Class: Workers under Italian Fascism," *The Fascism Reader*. Aristotle Kallis, editor (London 2003); pages 13-17 and 63-76 in Doug Thompson, *State Control in Fascist Italy: Culture and Conformity, 1925-43* (Manchester 1991); pages 87 to 107 in Matteo Pasetti, "Neither Bluff nor Revolution: The Corporations and the Consolidation of the Fascist Regime (1925-1926)," *In the Society of Fascists: Acclamation, Acquiescence, and Agency in Mussolini's Italy*. Giulia Albanese and Roberta Perghier, editors (New York 2012); and page 131 in Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy*.

³ Doug Thompson neatly lists this series of anti-union measures as the "Vidoni Palaca Agreement of 2 October 1925, the creation of the Labor Courts, the legge Rocco, and the wholly cynical and legally meaningless Work Charter of 1927." See page 63 in *State Control in Fascist Italy: Culture and Conformity, 1925-43*.

⁴ See page 393 in Tobias Abse "Fascism and Working Class: Workers under Italian Fascism."

Law also made the state the legally bound arbitrator in disputes between a single state-approved syndicate and business sector in the name of “class collaboration and the preeminence of private initiative over state intervention in the economy.”⁵ Over the ensuing years, independent organized labor organizations in Italy were effectively dissolved. Workers experienced extreme wage reductions in 1927. Subsequent wage cuts in 1930 and 1934 showed that the Fascist syndicates in essence represented the interests of accumulating private and state wealth over the needs of workers.⁶ As the archives show, hundreds of private firms maintained very close ties to the EUR Agency, which often mediated the relationships between workers and the corporations.

With persistent unemployment rates of up to 50 percent in some of Italy’s provinces, Italian labor power was available on the cheap and in excess supply. Given the scarcity of jobs, workers literally lined up for opportunities offered by the regime or its subcontractors for the E 42.⁷ In the days following the public announcement of plans to build the EUR-city, distant municipalities were soon petitioning the EUR Agency in attempt to place unemployed workers in jobs at the E 42 construction site. On January 26, 1937, the prefect for the Municipality of Roccabianca (Parma) sought work for “at least 30” of the town’s 150 unemployed day laborers.

⁵ Law Number 563 was passed on April 3, 1926. See page 131 in Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy*. “The law ruled that only one association of workers and one of employers would be recognized for each branch of production (and these associations would be supervised and controlled by the state.”

⁶ See page 393 in Tobias Abse, “Fascism and Working Class: Workers under Italian Fascism.” See also page 152 in Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*. Paxton writes “Labor and management faced each other in separate organizations, and union representatives were banished from the shop floor. The form in which Mussolini’s much-vaunted ‘Corporate State’ developed henceforth amounted in effect, to the reinforcement under state authority of employers’ ‘private power.’”

⁷ Abse cites Corner on this figure. See page 394 in Tobias Abse “Fascism and Working Class: Workers under Italian Fascism.”

Roccabianca, with its population of 5,154, had one of the highest unemployment rates in the province, according to the prefect.⁸ Other cities, such as Florence and Siena, each seeking jobs for 500 construction workers, quoted Mussolini's speeches on the intense rate of construction at the E 42 to substantiate the hiring of their workers.⁹ The Prefecture of Naples wrote seeking work for some 9,000 unemployed day laborers. The situation was desperate, said the Neapolitan prefect, given the "serious economic poverty of skilled laborers bound to inactivity due to the 'stasis' of local industries, specially in construction."¹⁰ He added that in the work of "clearing the Pontine Marshes, the Neapolitan workers had given indisputable diligence, sobriety of life, and discipline." The Prefecture of Naples thus positions his workers as upholding the regime's own archetype of the virtuous Italian worker.¹¹ Many workers attempted to engage directly with a benefactor in the EUR Agency. This degree of scarcity made nepotism ever more important for securing employment, allowing well-connected workers to find employment at the E 42 through direct engagement, while those lacking personal contacts would be left out.¹²

⁸ *ACS, E42, Busta 318. Fascicolo 5108.* Roccabianca population statistics are available on page 8 of the following Istat.it census data from 1936. <http://lipari.istat.it/digibib/Santo/Censimento%20popolazione%20%201936/Fascicoli%20provinciali/pdf/Fasc%2040%20-%20Parma.pdf> <May 2, 2015>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid. The EUR Agency typically responded to these requests by claiming that hiring was the task of the Commission for Migration and Colonization, or it extended some other reason to redirect or reject these direct requests for labor placement.

¹² Numerous cases in the archive show that well-connected workers often found employment at the E 42 through direct engagement with a benefactor within the EUR Agency. See *ACS, E42, Busta 65, Fascicolo 378.*

The state attempted to further ensure “collaboration” through selective hiring practices. Inscription to and compliance with the National Fascist Party (PNF) was required for the right to work. Regulations demanding party affiliation directly coincided with the initiation and acceleration of work on the E 42, with the Fascist state seeking to ensure the compliance of labor on its great national project. As construction work began in March 1937, it was announced that each worker employed on public projects required a card demonstrating PNF inscription.¹³ After May 1938, the PNF card was required for employment everywhere in Italy.¹⁴ The PNF inscription requirement also meant that E 42 workers would hold a higher (at least nominal) degree of “pre-ordained” solidarity with Fascism, making formal ideological affiliation a matter of necessity. In order to achieve worker acquiescence, the regime thus maximized the exploitation of a fundamental component of life in modern society: the near-necessity for individuals to sell their labor as a commodity in exchange for a wage in order to survive.¹⁵ No formal party allegiance also meant no access to formal wage labor.

¹³ See page 81 in Doug Thompson, *State Control in Fascist Italy: Culture and Conformity. 1925-1943* (Manchester and New York 1991); The PNF was focused on keeping workers content, to ensure their loyalty “largely through the inculcation of a sense of gratitude in them.”

¹⁴ As Michael Ebner shows, the Fascist state became increasingly a party-state during its 20-year reign, and “those who conformed to Fascism had expected to be exempt from political sanctions,” adding that even if superficial, “conformity could constitute real political and social capital.” See page 19 in Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini’s Italy* (New York 2011).

¹⁵ See page 125 in Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx’s Critical Theory*. In interpreting capitalism to be “a system of abstract, impersonal domination,” Postone’s reading of Marx shows how people in capitalist society are largely non-agentive. Through a system of “quasi-objective” constraints society obliges individuals to think and practice certain forms of being that appear as personal choice but are instead determined by the form of social relations in capitalist society.

The E 42 construction-site, and later the World's Fair as the previous chapter shows, were viewed as ideal spaces for the regime to calibrate its policing method, namely to maximize control while limiting the visible presence of police as well as associated cost-expenditures. To most economically achieve acquiescence, information was collected on each worker and distributed through national police data networks, allowing the EUR Agency to restrict employment based on ideological leanings or prior infractions.¹⁶ Beyond the initial screenings, these databases were frequently updated; the EUR Agency regularly provided the police with lists of names of newly terminated workers or "unjustified" absences.¹⁷ Workers who raised flags for "otherness," such as foreign-national status or past party affiliation, were doubly screened and required personal approval from the Rome police before working. One example is the case of Albanian worker Kobel Ramadani, resident in the Workers Village, who was questioned by the EUR Agency and thoroughly vetted by the police commissioner of Rome.¹⁸ In requests for information by the police commissioner, managers in the work zone write that Ramadani was considered a "diligent employee dedicated to his work and sympathetic to the Fascist regime."¹⁹ As the police evaluated Ramadani's file for signs of anti-Fascist affinities, a letter he had sent to Mussolini "in which he reaffirmed his sentiments of deference and devotion" was considered a

¹⁶ Michael R. Ebner's recent book describes a similar "totalitarian turn" in everyday policing methods in the period after 1936. See *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*.

¹⁷ See *ACS, E42, Busta 112, Fascicolo 621*.

¹⁸ See *ACS, E42, Busta 63, Fascicolo 343*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

strong marker of his allegiances.²⁰ The “unskilled” Albanian worker was allowed to continue working in the construction of the E 42, but not everyone was granted authorization.

One such example is presented by the case of notable opera singer Cesare Formichi, an Italian of Hungarian origins. When Formichi offered his entertainment planning services to the EUR Agency, managers sent a letter to Rome’s police commissioner for more information.²¹ During an initial investigation, the police discovered that Formichi did not actually reside at his stated address, which alerted the regime to further investigate the singer’s moral standing, work ethic, lifestyle, and reputation.²² A background check into previous employment found that “Formichi, once a baritone of certain notoriety,” had enjoyed little success in his recent endeavors, “often disappointing his clients.”²³ The police commissioner added that Formichi “is not in good standing with the Ministry of Popular Culture for this and other dubious activities.”²⁴ The report adds that the Reich’s “Ministry of Popular Culture” had also recently announced a ban on performances by Formichi in Germany. During its extensive investigation, the police found that Formichi was “a person who was absolutely not recommendable from a moral point of view, who furthermore cannot give necessary guarantees of professionalism.”²⁵ The case of

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ See *ACS, E42, Busta 1148, Fascicolo 11335*.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. Nothing more specific is said regarding Formichi’s “activities.”

²⁵ Ibid. The report also aims to show that Formichi was not in grave need of employment. “He enjoys a well-off life with an automobile, and I am not truly clear of his financial means.”

Formichi further illustrates the ways in which human resources and police work were comprehensively integrated into hiring practices.

Beyond the Fascist Party affiliation requirement and coercive policing techniques, worker compliance was also assured through a system of financial merits and demerits for particular behaviors. It is worth noting that this practice is not unique to Fascism, as within a fully monetized system, managers no longer integrate force directly into labor practices to extract compliance and maximum labor power expenditure, something Karl Marx took note of in *Capital*.²⁶ So sagacious is the capitalist that, rather than use direct and consequential force against his own purchased laboring capacity, he now profits from the violations of the “free” worker.²⁷ Instead of having to exert his might against you, the capitalist now earns income from those who deviate from his laws by levying fines. The capitalist prefers to pocket the worker’s money, not draw his blood. What is though unique to this Fascist financialization of individual practice is its calibration within the new institutional framework of corporatism, which provided the business class direct management powers over the economy through participation in the regime.

Along with the Fascist Party affiliation requirement and other coercive techniques, EUR Agency labor management engaged in “policing” functions of another sort through a system of

²⁶ In “Capital, Volume One,” Marx writes, “The place of the slave-driver’s lash is taken by the overlooker’s book of penalties. All punishments naturally resolve themselves into fines and deductions from wages, and the law-giving talent of the factory Lycurgus so arranges matters, that a violation of his laws is, if possible, more profitable to him than the keeping of them.” In ancient Greek mythology Lycurgus was the giver of laws. See page 410 in *The Marx-Engels Reader*.

²⁷ Ibid. Here we see a glimpse of the snarky Karl Marx, with Lycurgus, the giver of laws in ancient Greek mythology.

behavior-based financial merits and demerits. The Agency's own labor code elucidates the variety of infractions for which sanctions could be levied. Article 33 of the EUR Agency Labor Code for example shows that first offenses by workers could result in a fine equivalent to three hours of salary.²⁸ A second infraction could result in a suspension without pay for a period of up to three days. A third offense could lead to immediate termination, without just cause, without unemployment pay, and without the opportunity to grieve citations along the way. Some first time infractions could lead to an immediate termination in the workplace, without grievance hearings or other protocols typical of unionized, democratic labor forces. Article 34, on fines and suspensions, suggests that fines could be imposed on the worker for the most mundane activities, including leaving the workplace without proper justification, or damaging a tool through inattention. Petitioning or "passing around the hat" to fellow workers could result in punishment. Further, committing mistakes that discredit any protocol, or disturb the "morale," the "hygiene" of the workplace, or "the normal execution of work" was grounds for punitive damages.²⁹ Article 35 shows workers at fault for insubordination, creating a commotion in the workplace, or revealing labor secrets could all lead to being fired on the spot without unemployment pay. Backroom management decisions, such as disputes over wages and sackings, were made without worker representation or direct contestation of the Agency's labor management style.

EUR Agency labor managers regularly attempted to extend or exceed the already partial legal framework. Managers applied fines for employee misconduct with great frequency and

²⁸ *ACS, E42, Busta 2, Fascicolo 3, Subfascicolo 1.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

carried out such disciplinary pursuits with apparent enthusiasm.³⁰ In this Fascist system of micro-penalty, fines were given to workers with a stroke of nuance and subtlety that exceeded the labor code, as shown by the case of Giovanni Brocchi.³¹ On June 1, 1939 the EUR Agency reported internally that Brocchi was to suffer fiscal punishment for insubordination. The janitor suffered a 20 percent reduction of salary for the duration of five days for failing to exercise “the necessary courtesy” in his labor. It in effect reduced his pay by one day, but it formally issues a punishment of reduced pay over five days, making him in essence work surplus labor at no nominal wage percentage.³² It was also decided that for five days Brocchi was to lose his “family supplement,” a small bonus stipend given by the regime to families. Though the family supplement amounted to only 4 lira, punishment was directly connected to the shame of harming the durable and culturally important domain of the worker’s own private patriarchy.³³ In its decision, the Agency Disciplinary Commission³⁴ took into account mitigating factors, such as

³⁰ See *ACS, E42, Busta 2, Fascicolo 3, Subfascicolo 1*.

³¹ *ACS, E42, Busta 3, Fascicolo 3, Subfascicolo 1*. With regard to “micro-penalty Foucault writes, “What is specific to the disciplinary penalty is non-observance, that which does not measure up to the rule, that departs from it. The whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable.” See pages 178-179 in Michel Foucault *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York 1979).

³² *ACS, E42, Busta 5, Fascicolo 11*.

³³ According to Article 19 of the EUR Agency Labor code, the Family Supplement (up to 25 lira a month) was given to every worker-heads of family with children under age 15. The supplement was also given to female heads of household “under certain conditions of grace,” such as being widowed, legally separated, having a husband too disabled to work, or being abandoned by a husband. See *ACS, E42, Busta 2, Fascicolo 3, Subfascicolo 1*.

³⁴ The Commission was made up of president Oreste Bonomi, Carlo Pareschi, and Ezio Valentini. Bonomi was the Director of Tourism and the Minister of News and propaganda. Carlo Pareschi was director of the Italian Agriculture Federation and Secretary General of the EUR

Brocchi's clean record, his status as a disabled war veteran, and his father, who was also "a great fascist."³⁵ The Agency made note of its leniency in assessing penalty to Brocchi, warning however that he would be fired for a repeat offense. EUR Agency labor managers applied fines for employee misconduct with a frequency and zeal typically associated with sport.³⁶

Alternatively, monetary reward was given to workers for demonstrating a commitment to the regime's policy of family building and child rearing, what David Horn calls (in the language of Foucault) the regime's "positive" disciplinary statutes.³⁷ Horn writes that Fascist law awarded "cash prizes for marriages, births, and large families (the laws were also changed to allow earlier marriages), as well as new medical programs that focused on pregnant women and newborns."³⁸ The state granted financial merit at progressively higher sums for each successive child born. A worker was awarded 300 ITL for the first child and twice that amount for his fourth child.³⁹ As the archive shows, married women were also incentivized to birth many children, amounting to supplementary income for working class families, and a mark of cultural honor to management

Agency. Ezio Valentini was a manager at the Ministry of Finance and the EUR Agency chief of Administrative Services.

³⁵ The Commission was made up by president Oreste Bonomi, director of Tourism and the Minister of News and propaganda, Carlo Pareschi, director of the Italian Agriculture Federation and Secretary General of the EUR Agency, and Ezio Valentini, manager at the Ministry of Finance and EUR Agency chief of Administrative Services.

³⁶ See *ACS, E42, Busta 2, Fascicolo 3, Subfascicolo 1*.

³⁷ See pages 594-595 in David G. Horn (Aug., 1991). "Constructing the Sterile City: Pronatalism and Social Sciences in Interwar Italy," *American Ethnologist* 18 (3).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 585.

³⁹ *ACS, E42, Busta 1, Fascicolo 3, Subfascicoli 1-2*.

reviewing personal files on workers.⁴⁰ Families were incentivized to have wives in the home, laboring domestically. Women were responsible for reproducing the lives of their husbands, who with needs met, pressed out into the world for a wage. Women were also responsible for reproducing new Italian lives for the regime. Meanwhile, men who married were granted a pay bonus and exempted from paying the “celibacy tax.” Laws targeted bachelors, who were “identified as ‘deserters of paternity’ and subjected to a special progressive tax.”⁴¹ Under Fascism, workers were made to feel like they owed their labor to the state and to their own growing families under threat of joblessness, poverty or denunciation.

II. Fascist Labor Management and the Working Class without Consciousness

If one of the major images of the E 42 disseminated by the Fascist state was its use of a labor-form that harkened “back” to the time of compliant, dutiful workers, the EUR Agency’s labor management objective under Vittorio Cini had origins that were more modern: to squeeze as much value out of the workforce as possible. The EUR Agency’s antagonistic, hierarchical, austere approach to labor management, under the personal direction of wealthy business magnate Vittorio Cini, would raise the ire of many.⁴² While in theory Fascist corporatism allowed for the direct representation of working class interests within the state, in reality Fascist syndicates gave

⁴⁰ See for example general EUR Agency daily files, as can be found in *ACS, E42, Busta 1 to Busta 3*.

⁴¹ See Horn, “Constructing the Sterile City: Pronatalism and Social Sciences in Interwar Italy,” 584-585.

⁴² *ACS, E42, Busta 65, Fascicolo 378, Subfascicoli 1-22*.

little voice to workers in critical matters.⁴³ The Agency entered into disputes with the PNF over worker wages and later Cini's claim to special management powers to extend the workweek beyond the code of Fascist labor law. Tobias Abse argues that Fascist trade-union bureaucrats were placed in a competitive relationship with other Fascist agencies and had a stake in standing on the side of labor. In most instances however, the regime ruled against the unions, with the PNF sometimes negotiating with employers on behalf of business interests, bypassing union participation altogether.⁴⁴ In this case, the PNF fought against Cini over its dedication to Fascism, while other bodies contested the Agency over the best methods for calibrating profit from the exploitation of workers and mitigating opportunities for resistance. One "potentially volatile situation" soon required Mussolini's intervention, showing that resistance was growing and that the regime was attuned to ways to inhibit the growth of discontent.⁴⁵

Vittorio Cini, an experienced manager of labor in his diverse and numerous business enterprises, negotiated a contract that provided newly hired sub-contracted workers with a half-Lira per hour pay increase. In March 1938 the Commission for Migration and Colonization wrote to the Agency arguing that existing workers should also receive a pay increase because "workers will detect the wages paid to new workers just a few meters away."⁴⁶ A provision in the new labor contract, allowing existing contracts to run their course through October 31, would

⁴³ See "Labor Conditions in Fascist Italy," *U.S. Department of Labor Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 57, No. 5 (November 1943), 912.

⁴⁴ See page 393 in Tobias Abse, "Fascism and Working Class: Workers under Italian Fascism." Abse provides the example of "Turin, where Agnelli preferred to deal with the Fascist party rather than with the Fascist unions."

⁴⁵ *ACS, E42, Busta 65, Fascicolo 378, Subfascicoli 1-22.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

allow the EUR Agency to save a considerable sum of money at the expense of worker wages. On March 22 Commissioner Andrea Ippolito warned the EUR Agency to rectify the situation.

“Given that discontent will inevitably grow due to the difference in treatment, I maintain that it is opportune that you Senator Cini become aware of this.”⁴⁷ In a meeting with Cini on March 31, Benito Mussolini addressed the issue of wages in the context of growing discontent among the workers. The dictator then proceeded to sign a decree to increase worker pay, eliminating “differential treatment of workers [...], the cause of vigorous discontent among the skilled workers.”⁴⁸

In November 1937, the PNF under Fascist hardliner Achille Starace took exception to the EUR Agency’s lack of compliance with regulations over the length of the workweek. Its arguments centered on labor during the “*Sabato Fascista*” or “Fascist Saturday,” a nationally instituted period in which state offices closed for compulsory instruction and recreation of all Fascist Party members.⁴⁹ By targeting the *Sabato Fascista* the PNF contested the Agency’s allegiances: business or Fascism? The PNF in its letter to Cini asks, “Are these worksites exonerated from the observance of the *Sabato Fascista*?”⁵⁰ Cini responded a month later saying

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See page 51 in Jonathan Dunnage, *Mussolini’s Policemen: Behavior, Ideology and Institutional Culture in Representation and Practice* (Manchester and New York 2012). The *Sabato Fascista*, established in June 1935, would take effect at 1 PM each Saturday, forcing state offices to close.

⁵⁰ The case of window washer Pierino Di Tata demonstrates the importance of time off for workers on Saturdays and Sundays. Di Tata was obliged to work on Sunday, and every other day of the week as well. Di Tata was tasked with washing windows throughout the E 42 construction site. On Sundays Di Tata was made to wash the windows of transportation vehicles because it was the only day in which they were out of operation. The Agency was proactive in

that the construction companies working in the E 42 “have always respected the *Sabato Fascista*, and have always paid overtime owed to the workers.”⁵¹ There was however one caveat with which Cini would contest the *Sabato Fascista* restriction in place. According to Cini, only the Serafini Company had worked the *Sabato Fascista*, “in cases of absolute necessity, and it has not paid overtime under rule 195 by the Provincial Fascist Union of Industrial Workers, which permits the workweek to reach 60 hours in the months of June, July, August, and September, considering the fewer number of working hours to be performed in other months.”⁵² Through secondary mention of the Serafini Company at work during the occasional *Sabato Fascista*, and by citing that this was in accord with local Fascist syndicate regulations, Cini effectively asserted a challenge to the PNF.

For Vittorio Cini, the answer to the abovementioned hypothetical, “business or Fascism?” would have surely been, “both.” Cini, born into Venetian aristocracy, built upon the successes of his father in transitioning traditional sources of power and “old money” into management, heavy industry, and capital investment. After Mussolini consolidated rule in 1925, Cini grew ever closer to the regime and by 1926 was himself a PNF Member. Thereafter Cini’s business holdings only grew. With state funded projects and guarantees on investment, Cini consolidated monopolies in shipping, construction, and other industrial sectors, leading the Venetian to nearly

finding an austere solution: drivers would wash their own vehicle windows at the beginning of each Monday shift, and Di Tata would get Sundays off. See *ACS, E42, Busta 75, Fascicolo 412, Subfascicolo 22*.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

triple his wealth in the 15 years after the conclusion of World War I.⁵³ As discussed in earlier chapters, when the E 42 was first announced in 1936, the regime boasted that the World's Fair site would be built in record time. World's fairs in Barcelona and Seville, for example, took 16 years to complete, while fairs at Brussels '35 and Paris '37 took a decade to plan and complete. The rate of labor for the E 42 was thus to be stupendous and would require all the energies of the state – “all of the Italian” resources.⁵⁴ Nowhere is the increased rate of building the E 42 said to come through the use of newer construction methods, improved technology, or a quicker rate of productivity than in other world's fairs, such as Paris '37 or New York '39. The rapidity of construction would result from the use of a large army of “Fascist” workers engaging in long hours of manual labor rather than the use of newer construction methods, improved technology, or a quicker rate of productivity. In fact, because of the regime's policy of autarky, rhetoric on E 42 labor and technology often romanticized the experience of lesser technical mediations with nature.⁵⁵ From Cini's perspective, the question of the workweek was therefore critical.

Cini had been working behind the scenes for some time to challenge Fascist labor statutes, which for him did not go far enough to strip workers of rights. Earlier in 1937, Cini

⁵³ Between 1919 and 1934, Cini had increased his personal wealth from 43 million ITL to 121 million ITL (roughly equivalent to 175 million USD in 2015). See Maurizio Reberschak in the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* on “Cini, Vittorio.” <28 Oct. 2014>. http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/vittorio-cini_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/.

⁵⁴ See Vittorio Cini, “Revision of the ‘Programma di Massima’ from 1937,” December 1940, published in *E 42: L'Esposizione Universale di Roma; Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Tullio Gregory and Achille Tartaro, editors (Venezia 1987). pp 166-170.

⁵⁵ *ACS, E42, Busta 1170, Fascicolo 11852*. The regime, bolstered by Italian manufacturing efforts, claimed to be developing motorized technologies that did not depend upon imports such as fossil fuels, exemplified by one manufacturer's pitch to produce a charcoal-powered bus for the Agency. The “Gassogeno” (or “gas producing”) bus featured the word “Autarky” on its large, external coal powered generator.

wrote a letter to the Secretary of State seeking special powers to extend the workweek to include “Fascist Saturdays.” In the letter, Cini cites a 1935 law allowing work to be extended to Saturdays under “special” circumstances, which he contends, applies to the emergency nature of labor in the E 42 worksite. “This Autonomous Agency, for the special exigencies of its services, has the necessity of departing from [labor] regulations, and therefore asks that authorization is granted.” Cini thus justified his “emergency” powers by referencing Mussolini’s rhetoric on the record speed in which the site of the World’s Fair was being built.

In January 1938, the EUR Agency’s Carlo Pareschi wrote to the Minister of Corporations seeking an extension of the workweek. In the letter Pareschi maximizes use of Mussolini’s discourse:

Given the sheer amount of work involved in the project, to be completed in such a limited period of time, ordinary methods are not adequate, especially for the projects of a fixed nature, such as the streets and areas of service under construction. As a result, it is therefore necessary to impose a strongly accelerated rhythm to the labor, and maximize periods of time for work in accordance with the climate and the season, especially in the present winter months with available time reduced to a notable extent. We thus ask of you, honorable Minister, to authorize all of the employed companies, now and going forward, to be able to work on Saturday afternoons and Sundays, surpassing the limits of the 40-hour work week to a maximum of 60 hours.⁵⁶

Pareschi here gives a full account on behalf of the Agency that exploits the rhetoric of fervent execution of labor at the E 42. He argues that the Agency will continually have to request workweek extensions and that its discretion should be made permanent. Pareschi further states an increased rhythm will have to be “imposed” as well. The Minister of Corporations responded by saying that it would “retain the right to examine the individual requests made by each company

⁵⁶ *ACS, E42, Busta 65, Fascicolo 378, Subfascicoli 1-22.*

for extension of the work week on a case by case basis,” adding that the work week could be extended, but under no circumstances was it to surpass 54 hours per week.⁵⁷

Like the issue of wages, Mussolini was forced to intervene on the question of workweek extensions. “To assure that the labor of the Universal Exposition be conducted with the necessary promptness, given its sheer volume,” says Mussolini, “[the EUR Agency] asked to exceed the 40 hour workweek up to a maximum of 60 hours.” Mussolini confirmed the Ministry of Corporations decision, arguing that it can “hold the Agency accountable to explain the motives that lie at the basis of its requests,” and adding that the Ministry reserves the right to “decide on a case by case basis [...] and always under the condition that the normal hours do not surpass 54 hours.”⁵⁸ Though Mussolini had once more sided against the EUR Agency, he had also left some ambiguity around the second question of extending the workweek. In ruling on this matter however, Mussolini gave Cini a window through which he could challenge the Ministry. “The Agency is permitted to insist on its original request, as the nature of much of the work does not allow for urgency by simply augmenting the number of workers, given that the type of labor frequently does not permit the deployment of skilled laborers above a certain limit.” Mussolini’s final word on the matter was that Cini could petition for an extension of the workweek, but “only in the cases of strict necessity.”⁵⁹ Cini took hold of this opportunity to pursue further dialogue with the Ministry of Corporations. On June 1 Cini petitioned the Ministry for a general workweek extension that would apply to *all* cases, citing again “the total special nature of the work,” and the hope of preventing “the inevitable loss of time created by the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

case-by-case review process for expanding the workweek.”⁶⁰ Cini makes the apocryphal claim that Mussolini had been open to general workweek extensions in the March meeting.⁶¹ On August 10, after more than two months had passed without a response from the Ministry, Cini wrote again asking for a response to his June 1 letter. In September, Minister Lantini finally responded, reiterating his commitment to Mussolini’s ruling.⁶² Cini and the EUR Agency had to request workweek increases on a case-by-case basis on behalf of the companies contracted for work in the construction site. In the end, the archive shows that every individual request for workweek extension was granted anyway. The Agency was soon after granted “special” power to extend the workweek to include the *Sabato Facista*.⁶³

Disputes over the application of legal code is yet another illustration of “Institutional Darwinism” between Fascist government agencies.⁶⁴ The EUR Agency, under the directive to achieve distinct objectives, tried to maximize its ability to expand the workweek. It framed the pursuit of distinct Agency-interests under the auspices of fulfilling Mussolini’s stated goals for rapid construction of the World’s Fair site. The EUR Agency, under Vittorio Cini, aggressively pursued its ends in ways that made the National Fascist Party and corporatist labor syndicates grow circumspect. Fascist leadership meanwhile wanted a quick resolution to the wage dispute in

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid. Cini’s statement does not correspond to the content of the Mussolini signed document.

⁶² Ibid. Minister Ferruccio Lantini is the signatory.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Robert O. Paxton describes this style of government as a “Polyocracy or rule by multiple relatively autonomous power centers, in unending rivalry and tension with each other.” See page 127 in Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*. For more on Snowden’s work on this concept, see page 173 in, *The conquest of malaria: Italy, 1900-1962*.

order to prevent the possibility of a worker mutiny. The PNF responded because of reports that workers were increasingly cynical and whispering discontent to one another “in the trenches.” The intervention of the regime suggests an attempt to resolve the disagreement by limiting the growth of discontent. Without the democratic levers that free labor relies upon in capitalist modernity, Cini found no reason to not pursue the (state coordinated) market logic to its rational ends.⁶⁵ Workers on the other hand were not allowed the opportunity to pursue their logical ends. While Mussolini and other major figures within the Fascist regime negotiated on behalf of labor, worker voice was relegated to hearsay and spy reports. Labor was never a party at the table. Backroom management decisions were made without worker representation or direct contestation of Cini’s labor management style.

III. Scarcity Policing

The order generated by Fascism made practicing organized forms of resistance extremely difficult, even dangerous. Throughout Italy, the Fascist regime worked aggressively to stamp out resistance, working closely with different Italian police and intelligence agencies to track political rebels and potential troublemakers. Italian police placed such individuals under heavy surveillance, and many ended up in the vast Fascist prison system or were unable to secure employment as a result of police records of such activities.⁶⁶ While the regime did not fully master discontent, it certainly strived to co-opt resistance, as shown by the ongoing disagreement between Cini and the PNF above. Together, the sum of the regime’s positive and negative

⁶⁵ Cini of course received substantial benefits from the Fascist legal framework.

⁶⁶ Michael Ebner also shows that punishment of political dissidents and “moral” deviants grew in the period covered in this project, after 1935. See Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini’s Italy*.

techniques for structuring subjectivity would help to define the forms of deviancy developed by resisting workers. In the construction of the E 42, everyday reports from guards and police officers show occurrences of minor deviance to be somewhat frequent. The forms of crimes reported changed with the times: the degree of stored and easily removable wealth maintained in the work zone, combined with changing social conditions outside the fence, influenced the types of infractions reported on site. Later, during the dying days of the Mussolini's reign of power over the Italian state, theft, sabotage, and vandalism grew more frequent.

Only a year before the EUR Agency developed plans to form an elite, surreptitious strike force for the World's Fair, as shown in the previous chapter, the entire region destined for the E 42 was without a regular police force. In 1936 the Italian Fascist regime selected the vast plain near Tre Fontane as site for the E 42 fairgrounds. Peasants and shepherds (like Jacopo Comin's fictional Angelo) populated much of the land in thatched huts or other rudimentary structures. On January 14th of 1937, the Italian Fascist regime passed a law that allowed it to supersede existing laws and rapidly expropriate the terrain and its environs, amounting to over 1,200 acres in all.⁶⁷ The state had decided that on this site, the 1942 World's Fair would rise to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Black Shirts' March on Rome. Mussolini selected the terrain south of Rome's center as part of his vision for returning "Rome to the sea." Financially, the regime decided that the land could be expropriated cheaply, having to pay little in the way of

⁶⁷ Through the land expropriation and subsequent sale of office space and living quarters, Cini generated a windfall business deal for the regime. The regime paid out the less than 4 ITL per m² for expropriated land, the regime would turn around and sell spaces at an equivalent rate of 400 lira per m². See Maurizio Reberschak in the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, entry on "Cini, Vittorio," <28 Oct. 2014>. http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/vittorio-cini_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/.

indemnities.⁶⁸ Though a sparsely populated place with few public services, the “state of nature” discourse that appears in documents describing the zone destined for expropriation was grossly overstated. In this instance, the “state of nature” appears to be a place in which the Fascist state did not exist in any of its concrete, determinate forms, the remedy for which was Fascist “reclamation” [*bonifica*].

During the initial stages of construction, the E 42 site was policed by sporadic patrols. The plain on which the World’s Fair was destined to take place was four kilometers from the nearest state police station in the Basilica di San Paolo neighborhood of Rome, and separated by sparsely populated terrain and poor infrastructure. Between June of 1937 and June of 1938, the Agency used guards in civilian clothes that worked alongside the State Police to fulfill the work of limited general surveillance. The security guard unit was informal and made up by a small number of guards hired per diem, numbering roughly 18 men.⁶⁹ These patrols of men in plainclothes were considered adequate to the early tasks in the EUR zone: namely expropriating land from zone's original residents and overseeing the labor of flattening the hilly Roman terrain. Soon, policing duties would also focus on Agency offices and the areas surrounding early

⁶⁸ Though some of the “pesky” landowners would file suit against the state for expropriating their holdings and for its payment of indemnities that were highly favorable to the state in at least three ways. Firstly, the state’s value estimate for the land appears based in relation to their price at the moment in which the firms and individuals acquired the land, as agricultural land, and did not consider the value added to the land in the intervening period by those firms and individuals themselves. Secondly, the land was valued as agricultural land and not as land destined to be part of a new urban core, where property value would obviously soar. Lastly, some of the landowners were concerned that the watermain crossed other properties and were not to be properly compensated by indemnities based upon the determined value of their plots alone. See *ACS, E42, Busta 107, Fascicolo 581, Subfascicolo 13*.

⁶⁹ *ACS, E42, Busta 276, Fascicolo 4568*.

construction projects. As work zone projects expanded to include more valuable construction supplies maintained on site, it was deemed necessary to provide further security.⁷⁰

By the spring of 1938, there was a strong sense that activities had quickly outgrown the state's capacity to police the work zone. Both employed and unemployed laborers were drawn to the worksite in growing numbers, and the State Police was notably concerned about workers congregating in groups. "To prevent incidents, such as the type that occur when a great number of workers mills around in front of the placement office of the Ministry of Internal Migration, it would be wise to place two State Police agents there in uniform."⁷¹ The inadequacy of the official security force became more evident when workers began to cut holes in the perimeter fence to bypass a new system of strict gate entry checkpoints for entry to work zone. Because guards did not yet have uniforms or bear the marks or signs of office, they did not they have the appearance of vested authority to force workers to repair the damage. As a solution to the inability of plainclothes security guards to enforce the law and to further broadcast the prohibition, "permission to put up a sign" asked one guard.⁷²

The E 42 was viewed by the regime as a clean security slate, which meant that the EUR Agency could impose measures of control and enforcement exclusive of Italy's preexisting conditions. One case in particular shows that despite idealizations of utopian security, the world outside the Fairgrounds regularly imposed itself on police objectives in the form of cultural aberrations and deviations from Fascist norms. In the mid-afternoon of May 29th, 1938, guard

⁷⁰ Foucault describes this phenomeon taking shape during the Industrial Revolution. See pages 168 and 169 in *Discipline and Punish*.

⁷¹ *ACS, E42, Busta 276, Fascicolo 4568.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

Giampetruzzi was sent to investigate the Eucalyptus Woods adjacent to the Fairgrounds, where a festival celebration with more than 500 people, described as vagabond-like gypsies, was underway. “The woods was suddenly invaded by excursionists, who go there to eat their meals according to old customs,” states the chief guard report.⁷³ The guard, who “though on-duty, did not have any way to document his authority, nor was he armed,” tried his best to convey that passage in the woods had been prohibited and that the land belonged to the Agency. Within two hours, the presence of these “excursionists” continued to grow. A critical mass had suddenly formed right outside of the EUR perimeter fence. “By 5 PM, the turnout of the population began to multiply and the haze of wine began to cloud the minds of the excursionists, making the presence of the security guard workers senseless,” states a police report. The crowd of people, enjoying the festivities, “began protests and rebellions, incidents which made the guard seek backup from his colleagues Tozzi, Eramo, and Pistoni. The operation conducted by these four together had the same result: in the end, it was useless.”⁷⁴ The four guards went to a state police sergeant, seeking advisement on the situation and possible reinforcements. “The noncommissioned officer advised [the four guards] to avoid all disagreeable situations and to let the infraction persist, because of the agitated mood of the excursionists, and because their tradition demanded this.” Curiously, the state police officer advises the Agency’s security guards to look the other way, to allow the “excursionists” to practice their cultural tradition, and to avoid provocation with the crowd because of its superior numbers.

⁷³ *ACS, E42, Busta 1169, Fascicolo 11782.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

A week after this incident, Manager of Security Services Musco wrote that people using the Eucalyptus Woods were local residents “who go to walk around or rest there on the weekend,” not gypsies.⁷⁵ Whether Musco had given an honest revision of the incident account is unclear, but he did use it to justify having the Guards take on the appearance of a formal police unit. Musco adds that although there had been attempts for some time to regularly prohibit access to the woods, “it is still not possible to obtain observance of this restriction. It will be necessary that the population grows accustomed little by little to it, and that we have recourse to the rigor of the law, if necessary.” Thus, Musco suggests that the people in the woods were not rebellious “others,” but regular people who simply did not understand that a prohibition was in place because guards lacked the proper markers of Fascist authority. Part of the problem he stated was that the security guards used by the Agency did not adorn signs of authority. They lacked uniforms, badges, and weapons. To patrol and facilitate enforcement of the ban on entry into the Eucalyptus Woods, Musco requested the help of state police agencies, Carabinieri or other agents in uniform.⁷⁶ In the meantime he recommends “calm and prudence so as to prevent regrettable incidents that could lead to acts of open rebellion and violence upon the guards.”⁷⁷ To this effect, Rome police noted in June 1938 that presence of the closest authorities had become

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Similarly, Jonathan Dunnage writes that “Police actions sometimes reflected the notion that negotiation and concession would do more than repressive measures to solve problems. Their strategies were also determined by the availability of resources on the ground.” See page 87 in *Mussolini’s Policemen: Behavior, Ideology and Institutional Culture in Representation and Practice*.

inadequate to meet the growing need “for an assiduous and uninterrupted surveillance in the zone.”⁷⁸

The EUR Agency created a full-time Security Guard Corps to police the construction-site in July of 1938.⁷⁹ The E 42 security guard detail was constituted by a rag-tag group of mostly middle-aged men from the ranks of unskilled laborers, and some aging veterans of the First World War who were no longer fit to serve in the Fascist militias or for the regular police. The security guard detail had its own uniforms, its own hierarchical structure, conducted internal and external investigations, and produced paperwork that existed independent of the Fascist police state. It worked closely with the state police in Rome on information gathering and criminal prosecution. The state’s information apparatus and background checks maximized the effect of power wielded by the Security Guard Corps, allowing it to limit political dissonance and ensure discipline from a position of limited capability. The use of security guards instead of police regulars was part of a larger plan to roll over many guards from the construction site to the World’s Fair in 1942. Security guards were favored over police for the E 42 as part of the EUR Agency’s mission to limit the appearance of a police presence for fear of how this would be perceived among millions of foreign visitors, as examined in Chapter 4.

One of the original tasks of the Security Guard Corps was forcibly evicting the residents of Tre Fontane who refused to leave. “The Security Guard Corps worked in agreement with the government of Rome to see to the evictions of squatters in the zone, to the closure, capture and handover of the premises and continued surveillance. By December 31st 1938, around 180 people

⁷⁸ *ACS, E42, Busta 1169, Fascicolo 11782.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

were evicted.”⁸⁰ Once construction began, the security dealt regularly with such deviations as worker theft, trespassers, and photo-seekers (taking pictures of the rising city without written consent from the Agency was strictly prohibited). To better keep a watchful eye on the workforce, the Security Guard Corps was headquartered in a small villa near the center of the E 42 worksite. Guards were also engaged in efforts to prevent individual workers from congregating in groups and to apprehend day laborers drifting about the zone in search of employment.⁸¹

A mix of controls was put in place to keep individuals without special permission from entering the work zone. The Agency determined that the best way to prevent trespassing, sabotage, theft, and vandalism by lurking criminals, local residents, and transient workers was to institute tight surveillance around a 12 km long E 42 perimeter fence. The fence was constructed with access to the site granted through one of seven guarded checkpoints.⁸² One of the more essential tasks of the Security Guard Corps was to control these seven entry-points into the construction zone, coupled with tight security of the perimeter fence to prevent illicit entry. With the professionalization of the Security Guard Corps in July 1938, an identification card system

⁸⁰ See *ACS, E42, Busta 63, Fascicolo 343*.

⁸¹ There is an astounding number of crime reports ranging from petty theft in the Agency offices to workers caught stealing dynamite detonators in November 1939 (the worker said he found them in the street). Those apprehended for more serious crimes were reported to the State Police, such as a worker caught stealing 17 KG of copper in October of 1939. See *ACS, E42, Busta 56, Fascicolo 269*.

⁸² Given that the area to police was around 750 acres, the number of security guards patrolling early on was seemingly low. On top of the guards placed at each of the entry gates, five pairs of guards patrolled the 750 acres inside the perimeter fence: three pairs patrolled from 6 am until 2 PM and two from 2 PM to 10 PM. These guards were tasked with “patrolling the inside of the gated territory by bicycle, checking people that pass them, giving tickets to offenders, and warning drivers about excessive speed.” *ACS, E42, Busta 72, Fascicolo 412*.

was instituted to better regulate workers entering and leaving the work site in order to prevent workers from drifting about, and to control commerce and supplies entering and exiting the zone. Checkpoints were established at the work zone entry gates, where guards were ordered to “stop all workers and make them show their ID cards,” “turn away those without identification,” and “direct those in search of work to the Workers Village.”⁸³ Identification cards were given to Agency personnel, to managers and workers of the firms, and the suppliers of the numerous private companies contracted to build the site. Corporations would issue their own identification cards to any employee with employment in the work zone. The identification card system would later become a cause for distress between Guards and workers.⁸⁴ The entry cards distributed to the workers resulted in an increase of incidents, because when the firms “fire workers, they almost always forget to ask for the return of the cards, and it happens often enough that we catch laborers in the zone without work. The companies have been cautioned.”⁸⁵ By establishing strict checkpoints and controls at only seven entry gates around the 12 km perimeter fence, it seemed logical that the control of space would be maximized while the number of guards needed for patrol would be limited.

In response to these strict checkpoint regulations, and in spite of the fact that security guards were by then outfitted with the symbols of authority, workers regularly cut holes in the

⁸³ *ACS, E42, Busta 56, Fascicolo 271.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

barbed wire perimeter fence, allowing them to more easily access the worksite.⁸⁶ Workers found it more convenient to cut holes in the barbed wire and elude authorities than pass into the work-zone through one of the seven regulated entry-points or walk great distances to a regulated entry point. The continual damage to the fence could not be deterred.⁸⁷ It continued with such great frequency that guards would often detain and write-up workers caught gaining illicit entry through the perimeter fence, but would not charge them.⁸⁸ The tight measures instituted to control the entry points combined with the reality of limited perimeter fence security allowed potential unknowns to enter the work zone with frequency, and essentially undermined the premature strategy of containment.

After fully institutionalizing and professionalizing the Security Guard Corps in July of 1938, the Agency created an official height minimum of 1.65 meters (5 foot 5) and a maximum age of 45.⁸⁹ The number of guards was immediately reduced from 18 to 11 “which created several inconveniences.”⁹⁰ After passing these height and age restrictions, a number of security guards were also laid off. One guard was discovered to be nine centimeters under the regulation.

⁸⁶ Ibid. Surveillance along the outside of the perimeter fence “*should* be in collaboration with metropolitan [police] agents,” notes one internal document, “but in reality only the Security Guard Corps fulfills this task.”

⁸⁷ *ACS, E42, Busta 1166, Fascicolo 11775.*

⁸⁸ Ibid. As happened to workers from the Serafina Firm.

⁸⁹ *ACS, E42, Busta 56, Fascicolo 270.* It’s interesting to note here that Jacopo Comin’s screenplay was incorrect on the age of Vincenzo, 50 years old, would have been disqualified from working at the E 42.

⁹⁰ *ACS, E42, Busta 276, Fascicolo 4568.*

While his identity card listed him at 165 cm, his military file listed him at 156 cm.⁹¹ With the height restriction in place on a roster of guards largely made up of Italy's working poor, the effect was steep, but the dip was only temporary.⁹² As construction proceeded, more officers were soon required. The EUR Agency hired 20 new guards in September 1938 and 15 more in December, creating a total force of 45 guards by the end of 1938.⁹³ Six months after the full-institutionalization of the Security Guard Corps, the Agency considered the discipline of its 45 guards to be "generally good," though it started to voice concerns about some of its guards. "The men hired are ex-workers or unskilled laborers, and that the average level of education of the guards is the 4th grade," noted one internal memo.⁹⁴ Fascist projections about the Italian people, particularly poor people from the provinces, and the actual physical condition in which so many workers arrived to the EUR once more reveals the gap between state aims and realities.

Though most of the guards were themselves unskilled workers prior to being hired by the Agency to serve in the Corps, records show frequent antagonistic interactions between guards and labor, resulting in numerous instances of outright disobedience. Worker frustration over increasingly tight surveillance measures, particularly around the perimeter fence and checkpoints, did lead to tense interactions with security guards. In August of 1939, security guards Poggiaroni and Schiavetta were driving in the worksite when they stopped the car of Romeo Basilici, driver for the Giovannetti Construction Firm. Poggiaroni, a guard and devoted Fascist that we will revisit shortly, reported that Basilici had failed to give him the Roman salute.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² By and large, these were the effects of widespread malnutrition.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ *ACS, E42, Busta 72, Fascicolo 412.*

The guards demanded that the driver and his passenger “obey fascist salute regulations.” The worker in the passenger seat, Salvatore Ricciardi, reportedly turned to the guards and said, “fuck off, we are our own bosses, you are too picky!”⁹⁵ Ricciardi would be denounced to the state police. Given that a denunciation could lead to strict economic sanctions against an individual and his family, the regime would make sure that Ricciardi would come to regret his moment of defiance.⁹⁶

As discontent between guards and workers grew, and as daily life became more difficult, disorder and malcontent also flourished among the Agency’s Guard Corps. An October 1939 dispatch written to the EUR Agency by one of the large construction firms constructing the Fair shows that perhaps discipline was beginning to unravel directly within the Security Guard Corps. The Fratelli Sgaravatti Piante Company of Padua wrote the EUR Agency to grieve the continual “disorder and unrest” in the Worker’s Village.⁹⁷ “A series of thefts has occurred, each more serious than the prior one,” writes the company. “They are inconceivable thefts if one considers that every dormitory has a stationed guard that should be responsible for what workers leave in custody during work, aggravated by the fact that generally these thefts occur with padlock pickers taken to the armoires in full daylight.”⁹⁸ The Company suggests that the thefts in the Workers Village were either directly carried out by Agency guards or facilitated by their “willful” ignorance. These thefts, writes the Company, have “repercussions contrary to the measures being pursued [more broadly] in the construction of the Village, such as hygienic

⁹⁵ Ibid. Ricciardi allegedly said “*Vaffanculo.*”

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

measures, theft prevention, and public security.” In other words, the continuous thefts, conducted by or with security guard knowledge, runs counter to the regime’s own rhetoric on the Worker’s Village and the constitution of the Fascist morality.

The company requests the “institution of a guard fully under our trust, responsible in [the duties] we entrust to him.”⁹⁹ The EUR Agency responded by saying that the presence of 1,200 workers placed limits on the quality of surveillance exercised by security personnel. In response to the company’s request to have their own guard posted in the dormitory, the Agency replied, “it doesn’t seem opportune to concede to this request, with the rationale that we must avoid internal divisions.”¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, allowing a guard who is not employed by the Agency would lead to the “annulment of responsibility on the part of that guard.” Despite the Company showing that the Security Guard Corps guards were likely utilizing their “color of law” to obtain individual advantages, the Agency argues that private guards would not be widely accountable to anyone other than their immediate employer, creating a lapse in the dispensing of justice.

In reports on interactions between guard and laborers, the often-subtle nature of everyday resistance becomes apparent. In 1939, the worker Ennio Gazza went to the Security Guard barracks seeking to notify Dr. Ciccolini about a gravely ill worker.”¹⁰¹ There, security guard Ugo Vigneri allegedly ridiculed the doctor in front of Gazza and Bocchi, also a worker. When the workers later met with Doctor Ciccolini, they relayed details of Vigneri badmouthing him.

⁹⁹ See *ACS, E42 Busta 197, Fascicolo 2569, Subfascicolo 7*. “We advise you furthermore that enormous bureaucratic difficulty is regularly presented to us by the competent offices every so often it is necessary to hire new personnel with consequential damage to the organization of the works in progress to the bill of the E42, and with no fewer grave consequences for the economy of our activity.”

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ See *ACS, E42, Busta 1186, Fascicolo 12184*.

Doctor Ciccolini, the extremely respected regime medical official discussed in greater depth below, then reported Vigneri for his alleged comments to officials outside of the work zone. This ultimately led to an exchange between the Department of Homeland Affairs and the EUR Agency Security Guard Corps over the actions of its guard Ugo Vigneri. According to the Security Corps chief guard writing to the Department of Homeland Affairs, two other guards had “absolutely excluded” the possibility that Vigneri said anything offensive. In defense of Vigneri, it wrote that the worker was “either an imbecile or liar,” and claimed that Gazza and Bocchi held “suspicious attitudes.” It would appear that the affair ended there, as Vigneri was promoted to the position of chief guard within three weeks of Dr. Ciccolini’s formal complaint.¹⁰² The EUR Agency’s troubles with Vigneri, however, were only beginning.

Late in 1939, the EUR Agency had to confront a serious breach of security guard code, a “pay for promotion” scandal involving several of its security guards. Vigneri was the master of the operation. The EUR Agency completed a lengthy investigation into the affair, providing us with details about Vigneri, a guard who seemed to best match the regime’s physical archetype, and Poggiaroni, a guard who had been a “died in the wool” Fascist from the movement’s earliest days. Truth in the affair remains difficult to ascertain in the files. According to the findings of a second investigation, the entire affair suffered from the “obstruction of a malevolent spirit, an *omertà* existing between the guards questioned in the investigation.”¹⁰³ Even with the conspiracy

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid. In using the word *omertà*, the investigator directly linked the “blue wall of silence” established between the security guards, which hindered the possibility of ascertaining the truth, and the criminal code of silence utilized by the mafia. Sankar Sen writes that this scenario is quite common among police worldwide. “The institutional culture of the police in many countries prompts police officers to close ranks against investigations.” See Sankar Sen, *Enforcing Police Accountability Through Civilian Oversight* (New Delhi 2010).

of silence between the guards, at least this much is known: Ugo Vigneri the recently promoted chief guard of the EUR Agency Security Guard corps, approached his subordinates for “loans” in exchange for promotions and other perks, such as more favorable scheduling. In some instances, Vigneri is said to have requested upwards of 300 ITL, or nearly half of a security guard’s monthly paycheck.¹⁰⁴ When Security Guard Bernardino Poggiaroni reported Vigneri, (the same Poggiaroni who reported the workers at the gate for failing to give the Roman salute), individuals working within the EUR Agency vowed to get to the bottom of the affair and maximize discipline against those involved for misconduct.¹⁰⁵

Eight different security guards confirmed in depositions that Vigneri was the only guard to take money from subordinates in return for favors. In one deposition, Guard Miranda expressed a sense of general “discontent among the guards, as some are favored [by Vigneri], while others are damaged. Vigneri controls the time schedule.”¹⁰⁶ In another deposition, it was said that Poggiaroni, a subordinate guard, had stopped giving Vigneri the Roman salute. In response, Vigneri stopped relieving Poggiaroni from his shifts. Other depositions reference a fight that had taken place between two guards, Stupazzoni and Ferreri.¹⁰⁷ Guard Domenico

¹⁰⁴ See See *ACS, E42, Busta 5, Fascicolo 11*.

¹⁰⁵ Fascist commanders were reluctant to report misconduct, writes Dunnage. “It was not easy to impose internal discipline when the Fascist regime failed to discourage factional rivalries and the system of favors (*raccomandazioni*) continued to be culturally acceptable.” What is more, Dunnage discovered that nepotism and patronage were rampant, “particularly among those organs of the police which occupied a relatively low status within the machinery of control and repression.” See pages 111 and 118 in *Mussolini’s Policemen: Behavior, Ideology and Institutional Culture in Representation and Practice*.

¹⁰⁶ See *ACS, E42, Busta 1186, Fascicolo 12184*.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Feligiotti said that he had originally learned from guards that Stupazzoni was injured in a fall from his bicycle, but Poggiaroni had told him that Stupazzoni was injured in a brawl that had ensued over the collection of interest on a loan.¹⁰⁸

Investigative documents and other sources show Ugo Vigneri to be one of the more highly considered guards in the rank, an apparent prototype for the World's Fair in terms of education and physical appearance.¹⁰⁹ Vigneri was the second security guard ever hired by the EUR Agency. He was five inches taller than the average guard, and had three more years of formal education. The internal proposal for Vigneri's promotion, written only three weeks after the Department of Homeland Services cleared up the Doctor Ciccolini Affair, paints a glowing picture of the Sicilian.¹¹⁰ At five-foot-ten and a half, Vigneri is said by a superior to be of

handsome physical and military presence. He attended school through his fourth year at the technical institute [14 years old] and possesses a high level of general culture. In the fulfillment of his duties he reveals optimum intuition, intelligence, and zeal. Very disciplined and authoritative, he possesses good organizing qualities and has the spirit of initiative. He was one of my most *profitable* collaborators.¹¹¹

Given the relative strength of Vigneri's vital details and the Agency's dedicated search to assemble a model-corps of ideal guards, he was earmarked from early on to be a lead presence on the team of security guards. Guards like Vigneri, who would be used to police the Fair and present Fascism in a good light to millions of visitors, were in short supply. Vigneri received the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ See *ACS, E42, Busta 5, Fascicolo 11*.

¹¹⁰ See *ACS, E42, Busta 5, Fascicolo 10*.

¹¹¹ Ibid. [*proficuo*, literally "one who bears profit." Emphasis mine]

promotion for which the aforementioned report was written, earning him a slight raise to 750 ITL per month.

By the time that Security Guard Bernardino Poggiaroni formally complained of the Vigneri loan scheme, he had acquired a lifetime of experience as a credentialed Fascist, allowing him to make the charge against Vigneri with confidence. Poggiaroni was a member of the Fascist Party before the 1922 March on Rome and was a Fascist combatant before it was beneficial to be one. He was stationed in Nice for three years under the direction of Prince Ruffo of Calabria, and later went on to Paris to build relations with Italian Fascist combatants living in the French capital. From France, Poggiaroni went directly to volunteer for combat in Italian East Africa where he took part in the military campaign for the “Conquest of the Empire.”¹¹² Nevertheless, Poggiaroni was set to be fired for his role in the dispute, along with Vigneri. Investigators believed that Poggiaroni had bought into the “pay for promotion” scheme, and “aided by sentiments of vendetta” only reported Vigneri when it was clear that he would not be promoted. Furthermore, it was believed that he called his superiors cowards.¹¹³ Vigneri on the other hand was also to be terminated for the “pay for promotion” scheme and for allowing guards to hawk tailored clothes during work hours. “The fact that such commercial activity was carried out in the zone of the Exposition, in the hours of service, bears witness to the scarce surveillance exercised on guards by their immediate superiors,” states one internal report.¹¹⁴

¹¹² See *ACS, E42, Busta 72, Fascicolo 412*.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Ultimately, the EUR Agency decided to punish guards with brief suspensions and loss of the (not insignificant) annual “13th month” Christmas bonus for 1940.¹¹⁵ Given that investigators had initially sought the termination of those involved in the loan scheme, punishment was relatively mild, with officials treating Poggiaroni the whistleblower as harshly as Vigneri, the mastermind of the “pay for promotion” scheme. In spite of his resume of service to Fascism, Poggiaroni was punished while upholding core Fascist tenets such as order and obedience to statute in reporting Vigneri. The Agency’s thorough investigation and then protection of policing reputation, its choice of preservation, provides insight into the limits of Fascist ideology’s claim to being total, nationalized (territorially), nationalist, “new man,” etc.

Soon, Vigneri would return home to Sicily once again. A little more than a month after the Vigneri scandal was completed and punishment meted out, Vigneri – like Ferreri before him – suffered a “bike accident” that put him out of work indefinitely. Vigneri suffered injuries in the alleged fall. One year later a doctor estimated he had suffered a 35 percent reduction in his ability to work.¹¹⁶ A year later, as his 12 months of injury leave was drawing to its conclusion, Vigneri wrote a letter to the state from his native Catania in Sicily claiming that he was in dire financial straits and asking to be placed on long-term injured leave.¹¹⁷ Did Vigneri really fall from his bicycle as the guard claims, or was he involved in a fight, like that which was said to take place between Ferreri and Stupazzoni, perhaps the “fallout” from the ongoing dispute with

¹¹⁵ This system of demerits and micro-penalty, as worked through in Chapter 3, also was used against EUR Agency security guards. For more, see *ACS, E42, Busta 197, Fascicolo 2569, Subfascicolo 7*.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Poggiaroni? Regardless, the breakdown in discipline among guards, made evident by the Vigneri Scandal, would soon lead the State Police to take over security duties at the fairgrounds.

IV. Dr. Ciccolini's Medical Sociology

For a regime that aimed to create a virile “new Fascist man,” the practical functions of Dr. Giovanni Ciccolini were vital for ensuring that Italian labor was a most effective symbol of national redemption.¹¹⁸ However, even his best efforts showed the limits of such Fascist reclamations. Ciccolini, physician and medical officer of the Governor, performed medical visits on tens of thousands of EUR workers and residents of the Worker’s Village.¹¹⁹ Ciccolini began to provide medical care to the E 42 workers in 1937 and continued throughout the duration of the project.¹²⁰ And despite Italy’s entry into the war in June 1940, the esteemed doctor’s medical services were plied at a more accelerated rate during that year.¹²¹ As Chapter 3 shows, conditions for workers in the E 42 and Workers Village were made public, showing Italy’s advance toward the creation of a new type of worker. Healthy bodies were part of the Fascist project of a virile,

¹¹⁸ Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 134.

¹¹⁹ ACS, *E42, Busta 1144, Fascicolo 11311*.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ ACS, *E42, Busta 2, Fascicolo 3, Subfascicolo 1*. Article 4 of the EUR Agency Worker Regulations states that “the worker will be placed under medical visit by a doctor under the trust of the Agency.” Workers at the E 42 were obligatorily insured by INFAIL (*Istituto Nazionale Fascista Assicurazioni Infortuni Lavoro*), a national worker insurance and injury compensation fund administered by the state.

anti-industrial urban renewal.¹²² Labor conditions and worker health had to be transformed to make the most effective public symbol of national redemption.

For a regime that had claimed to be creating a “new Fascist man,” Ciccolini was thus doing important work. Improving the condition of workers, particularly ones that would be frequently utilized for political messaging and public spectacle, became a critical endeavor in the construction of the World’s Fair. While Nazi doctors “were essential to the regime’s smooth functioning” through their work toward biological purity of the German “race,” Paxton writes, “Italian culture was quite different on this front.” Rather than being used to purify the “race” as in Nazi eugenics, Ciccolini was instead employed in efforts to “reclaim” the essence of the Italian worker through the practical functions of the benevolent caregiver.¹²³

Ciccolini submitted annual reports on the health of workers, extensive medical sociology documents with significant quantitative detail, but also a qualitative element that provides a better sense of the lives of workers of the E 42, and the dangers of their everyday toil.¹²⁴ The doctor’s detailed accounts also allowed the regime to gain important insight into the population of workers at the E 42, some of them menial laborers from rural Italy, places the state had not yet fully penetrated. In 1936, Guido Salvini, professor of medicine and Fascist official for disease prevention in Milan, wrote that “the ubiquitous doctor” was necessary “from a social medical

¹²² See page 594 in Horn, “Constructing the Sterile City: Pronatalism and Social Sciences in Interwar Italy.”

¹²³ See page 134 in Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*.

¹²⁴ In his work for the regime, Dr. Ciccolini left behind a vast array of detailed medical records, the likes of which have hardly been examined by historians of Fascism.

standpoint.”¹²⁵ For Salvini, workers and working class dwellings “could not be left to themselves” and in turn had to be subjected to “normalizing” interventions through continual “function of investigation, of safeguarding, of correction.”¹²⁶ As David Horn writes, “the duty of surveillance and normalization fell to the physician, to the practitioner of preventive medicine able to detect ‘the slightest, almost unnoticed oscillation of well-being.’” In these Fascist “practical interventions” into the daily lives of workers and worker families, doctors worked closely with anthropologists and sociologists as “agents of practical intervention.” In a similar manner, Dr. Ciccolini’s paternal care for the workers, bound into the rhetoric of treatment, also made the workers into objects of Fascist knowledge.

Much of the regime’s efforts to improve the conditions of the workforce came in the way of focused malaria prevention. Snowden points to the use of surveillance under the guise of medical prophylaxis as a way in which the regime accomplished more sinister directives, like restricting freedom, and establishing totalitarian authority over the working classes.¹²⁷ With the Fascist “seizure of power in 1922,” writes Frank Snowden, “malaria again became a highly publicized national priority (most famously through the draining and settling of the Pontine

¹²⁵ See Horn, “Constructing the Sterile City: Pronatalism and Social Sciences in Interwar Italy.” These Fascist organizations, “conducted detailed surveys and offered advice on scientific management of the household, hygiene, diet, pregnancy, and the raising of children.” This, Horn writes, was carried out by the regime as part of its growing “attempts to know and manage the newly constituted domain of the ‘social.’”

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 594.

¹²⁷ Malaria, Snowden shows, was a matter of deep national political concern in Italy dating back to the 1890s. See pages 5 and 6 in Snowden, *The conquest of malaria: Italy, 1900-1962*.

Marshes).”¹²⁸ During the regime’s enormous effort to drain the Pontine Marshes, workers were held in military barrack style camps surrounded by barbed wire. Medical care for workers was scarce. Conditions for the more than 100,000 workers engaged in labor at the peak of construction were meager, due to poor sanitation and hygiene. Malaria rates were exceptionally high, with a great numbers of workers infected.¹²⁹ Newly resettled residents of the “reclaimed” marshlands contracted malaria at the astronomical rate of 82.04 cases per 100 inhabitants in 1932, with 11,628 individual cases of malaria for 14,106 residents. This statistic, as Snowden writes, does not even begin to take into account the 97,400 workers who resided in prison camp like conditions while laboring in the marshes during 1932, as no such statistics were maintained. By 1939 however, the Fascist state officially declared “victory over malaria” in the Pontine Marshes, where a scanty 33 new cases were reported among a population of 45,000, or .07 percent of the total population. In contrast to the regime’s approach to earlier mass projects, largely invisible to the outside world, E 42 workers in their day-to-day functions formed an essential part of the regime’s international showcase. Dr. Ciccolini would play a direct role in the regime’s “reclamation” projects, which was also to include the Italian worker.

To more effectively wage the ongoing medical struggle to “reclaim” the Italian worker from the impoverished conditions in the E 42 work zone, more effective, mass-scale pursuit of preventative treatment was undertaken. Four nurses collected blood samples from all of the E 42 workers with the goal of identifying parasites, furtively placing each worker into the machine of the state. From these findings Ciccolini discovered that while malaria was not as persistent as it

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

had been earlier in the Pontine Marshes, about 25 km to the south of the EUR-city, of the total 10,523 unique workers who plied their trade in the E 42 during 1939, 130 were treated for malaria, representing 1.2 percent of the working population.¹³⁰ In 1940, the number of unique individuals who labored in the work zone increased to an estimated 14,375, the exact number, Ciccolini acknowledges, is difficult to assess due to the “nomadism and continual renewal of the worker population.” Ciccolini tended to 268 workers for malaria infections that year, with the malaria rate increasing to 1.9 percent per 100 workers. “The fight against malaria was waged with the maximum care, in accordance to the directive of the Office of Hygiene of the Rome Government,” writes Ciccolini in his annual medical report to the EUR Agency.¹³¹ The main difficulty with fully eradicating malaria in the E 42 construction site was the “semi-permanent character of a great mass of migrant workers, many of whom originate from highly-malaric regions.” A second major issue was, in the words of Ciccolini, “the formation of dangerous anopheline breeding grounds, owing to the variable conditions of the terrain.”¹³² While the first matter was outside of the hands of Ciccolini, the second one he attempted to tackle directly and personally. “Since February/March, all of the stagnant waters were attentively removed,” writes the doctor, adding that surveillance was exercised throughout the zone to abolish remaining standing water pools. The doctor also invoked the companies directly, compelling them to ensure that all standing pools of water were eliminated. “These actions of surveillance and minor

¹³⁰ *ACS, E42, Busta 1144, Fascicolo 11311.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

reclamation, conducted by a team of 6 disinfectors, was intensified during the summer and until December.”¹³³

Given the number of workers and the extreme conditions in which they arrived for work in the E 42, the doctor’s labor of “reclamation” was itself burdensome. E 42 workers showered Ciccolini with medical visits. Throughout 1940, the doctor averaged 50 patient visits per day.¹³⁴ “Care has been continuous, sustaining an around-the-clock character; it was conducted in residences whenever medical intervention was requested and at the clinic in Montagnola from 8 am to 12 pm every day, and in the Worker’s Village from 5 pm to 9 pm in a separate, dedicated clinic,” reports the doctor.¹³⁵ Meanwhile, E 42 workers were forced to clamor for the services of a single overextended physician, placing an added burden on the worker, and giving them a reason to avoid needed medical care. “Complaint on the part of the workers and the managers are not lacking at this time,” writes the doctor.

Through analysis of worker illness over a number of years, Ciccolini arrived at a general explanation for the rate of affliction. “The number of feverish (active cases) correlates with the scale and intensity of labor.” Ciccolini added that the general health of the labor force worsened “with the turnover of working masses in dormitory conditions with minimal hygiene,” a

¹³³ See pages 5 and 6 in Snowden, *The conquest of malaria: Italy, 1900-1962*. Snowden argues that the effort to combat malaria, particularly in the Pontine Marshes, should hold a central place in the understanding and interpretation of Fascism.

¹³⁴ *ACS, E42, Busta 1144, Fascicolo 11311*.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* Adds Ciccolini, “To give workers access to the most sought after care, especially with regard to anti-malaria efforts, another clinic functioned from 6 to 8 pm on holidays and weekends in September and October in a location that the Calderai Corporation allowed us to use.”

description of the Worker's Village that directly counters the regime's.¹³⁶ Beyond medical solutions, Dr. Ciccolini – the consummate paternal caregiver – called for the institution of “moral care” to “reclaim” the essence of the Italian worker, noting that he encountered many “deficiencies” in the area of worker morality, which he indelibly tied to the impoverished conditions from which the vast majority originated. In this sense, Dr. Ciccolini's mission involved moral care and interventions beyond the domain of medicine.¹³⁷

Sometimes, the impoverished work conditions coupled with the intrinsic dangers of construction work led workers to reach the hands of Dr. Ciccolini beyond hope of “reclamation.” This happened in January 1938, when two workers were killed in a landslide and a third was severely injured. One of the workers, Emidio Esposito was the father of four. The other, Domenico Di Giorgio, was unmarried. Meanwhile, the injured worker, Augusto Vinzani, had 6 children.¹³⁸ The wives and families of the deceased workers received a subsidy of 500 ITL, and the EUR Agency paid for their funerals. On December 21, 1939, a landslide killed Domenico Bernardino, a 60-year-old unskilled manual laborer from Rome working on the new building for the Italian Science exhibit. In the same incident, Giovanni Nigro of Naples, 31, was transported

¹³⁶ Ibid. Though Ciccolini is eager to point out, “Vigilance of hygiene hasn't been neglected either: they have been frequent inspections pursued and checks at various dorms, dispensaries, worksites, etc., and the various deficiencies are eventually reported.”

¹³⁷ David Horn has described the phenomenon “of visits, investigations, and interventions by a wide variety of experts.” Doctors, social workers, nurses, and members of Fascist organizations focused attention on “the working-class home,” making it a domain of knowledge and education. See Horn, “Constructing the Sterile City: Pronatalism and Social Sciences in Interwar Italy.”

¹³⁸ *ACS, E42, Busta 87, Fascicolo 412.*

to the hospital with extremely serious injuries.¹³⁹ That same month, worker Amedeo Ceccarelli fractured his skull on the job. On February 26, 1940, Carmelo Foscarini, a 31-year-old crane operator was crushed to death by his own crane, which fell from the heights of Foschini's massive Catholic Church "for causes unknown."¹⁴⁰ For his special attention to the E 42 workforce, as documented in his report, the Fascist regime awarded Ciccolini a 1,000 ITL bonus.¹⁴¹

V. Conclusion: The "Novus Ordo"

With Italy entering World War II in June 1940, labor in the construction of the E 42 continued to press ahead, though in a slightly scaled back form.¹⁴² While maintaining hope for an early peace so that the World's Fair could take place, EUR Agency President Vittorio Cini admits in a June 30, 1941 document to Mussolini that the war had undoubtedly affected plans. "Due to the aggravated situation," namely the Axis powers' invasion of the USSR, Cini writes, the Exposition "can not take place in a climate so far from that anticipated," at least in the way it was conceptualized, that is, for large international participation."¹⁴³ For these reasons, Cini

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ *ACS, E42, Busta 1144, Fascicolo 11311.*

¹⁴² See *ACS, E42, Busta 1169, Fascicolo 11782.* A note was allegedly presented to Mussolini in a meeting on November 6, 1941 that read, "demobilize personnel of the Agency, due to the postponement of the EUR to an unknown date, however far away."

¹⁴³ Cini reaches this grim conclusion "not simply because the conflict threatens to extend itself to the entire world and will prolong beyond any previous predictions, but especially because the violence that characterizes it is intensifying, relentlessly more and more." In further alarming comments, he writes, "Some talk in fact of a war without boundaries [...] one that will

suggests that even if the war ended in 1942, “a period of at least 4 to 5 years is necessary to assure that the Exposition would have an international character.”¹⁴⁴ After offering various hypotheses such as making the E 42 a continental or even national vision of the “*Novus Ordo*,” Cini offered another possibility, what he called “the extreme possibility of canceling the Exposition.”¹⁴⁵ Such a move, Cini believes, would have negative political consequences domestically and abroad. “The hypothesis to cancel the Exposition is proposed, but not recommended.”¹⁴⁶ In the event of the E 42’s cancellation, Cini highlights the positive by saying that at least a great new quarter of Rome was constructed, one that would leave “the characters of Fascist civilization [...] fixed for the centuries.”¹⁴⁷ Cini holds out hope for some form of the originally planned E 42 to take place, although he states that “it is certain that no exposition has ever taken place under such abnormal conditions.”¹⁴⁸ Cini concludes by saying that a final decision could wait until 1942. Cini, who would become vocal in criticizing the regime as the war turned disastrous for Italy in 1943, already appears in this document to have tapered much of the boisterous zeal evident in his earlier writings.

involve destruction of every kind, inflicted on more than just combatants but on civilian populations.” Vittorio Cini’s “Pro-Memoria per il Duce,” *E 42: L’Esposizione Universale di Roma; Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Tullio Gregory and Achille Tartaro, editors. (Venice 1987): 171-173.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 4. If this option were considered, the state according to Cini should “issue an appropriate law to annul [the EUR Agency], founded on 26 December 1936” followed by its “liquidation.”

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 6.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 8

By the time the Fair was postponed, many workers and security guards had already been called to military service in the expanding war. Among the remaining guards, general morale appears to have been considerably low. Reports complain of guards abandoning their shifts early or not showing up for their shifts at all. Crimes in the work zone appear to have increased with both the inadequate security and the growing shortages of provisions in the wartime economy. Hundreds of police reports reference looting and theft in the work-zone. Meanwhile brazen shepherds in growing numbers guided their flocks of sheep to the still lush green and manicured grasslands and planted beds in the zone. Some of the thousands of trees planted in parks and along the avenues were cut down for firewood.¹⁴⁹ Workers lacking proper documentation peddled goods in and around the Worker's Village and cafeteria. In response to the growing informal economy around the worksite, the Agency complained directly to the State Police. "More than harming the interests of the authorized sellers," writes the Agency, "it breaks the agreement of regulations set forth by the Agency to guarantee the prevention of this type of disorder."¹⁵⁰ Scarcity, which the regime and labor managers readily used to great advantage over the workforce, was now threatening the preservation of the regime. Records show that wartime conditions of scarcity generated an increase in disorder and unrest, as the ranks of the desperate people surged until the collapse of the regime in July 1943.

Within a month of cancellation of the Fair, the state seized the policing powers over the site, and the state police assumed control of the Security Guard Corps. It is hard to ascertain exactly how the state perceived the Security Guards Corps. It is certain that after the proceedings

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ See *ACS, E42, Busta 3, Fascicolo 7*.

in the Vigneri Scandal, the Agency had learned more about its guard corps, which increased concerns. Throughout 1940, the EUR Agency grew more worried about the quality of its Security Guard Corps. In August 1940, one memo complained “not all guards carry out their duties with sufficient scrupulousness.” It was revealed just after the 1940 death of Arturo Bocchini (powerful chief of Fascist Italy's police-state and close confidant of Mussolini), that he had been in the process of turning police powers in the EUR zone over to a state police entity, even before the Fair was cancelled.¹⁵¹ In July 1941, it was suggested that with “demobilization” of public services directed by the EUR Agency that policing duties be turned over to the police through the direction of the Interior Minister.¹⁵² On July 15, 1941, the State Police assumed policing duties in the EUR. The core justification for use of the guards instead of police was giving a positive public appearance to the regime. As soon as the Fair was cancelled, all duties were placed under the Police.¹⁵³

In September of 1941, the EUR Agency Security Guard Corps was liquidated, its barracks in the eucalyptus forest handed over to the Fascist Party. The State Police assumed all security service, and a new police station would be constructed in the heart of the Workers Village to better police the 1,300 workers residing there. In the aftermath of the decision, better anti-aircraft posts were constructed and the “continual surveillance of the Workers Village” was ordered, “above all, for how the contracted firms treated workers in the barracks and refectory.” Police officials intervened to reexamine food prices in the general store and exercised daily security on the restaurant and bar operations that served Agency personnel. “Since some of the

¹⁵¹ *ACS, E42, Busta 1169, Fascicolo 11782.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

firms that have labor contracts in the zone have been known to supply [meal] tickets to employees and strangers, the Security Guard Corps was needed to impart stringent rules on this matter.”¹⁵⁴

The major concern was, in no uncertain terms, to avoid incidents between workers and police, especially considering the extent to which officers were outnumbered even then, with around 2,000 workers to fewer than 50 policemen. The police planned to use a building further away from the Trinca Company kitchen, so that “officers would not have to cross the Worker’s Village, but could take an avenue, avoiding tensions with high number of workers.”¹⁵⁵ By September of 1941, the State Police had created a new police barracks in the EUR quarter, solidifying its permanent security roll there.¹⁵⁶ The police quickly instituted a special first responder’s corps, and a telephone number for night services. In October, State Police Captain Balmas created a plan for better police services. He said it was necessary to increase the number of officers in the station from 34 to 45 men. He also recommended increasing the capacity of the barracks to station more officers and a motorcycle with a sidecar kept on premises for rapid and determined response.¹⁵⁷

By the time that the State Police took over security duties in the E 42 work zone, war attrition had begun to take its toll. Throughout Italy unrest had grown during 1940, especially

¹⁵⁴ *ACS, E42, Busta 1166, Fascicolo 11775.*

¹⁵⁵ *ACS, E42, Busta 56, Fascicolo 271.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *ACS, E42, Busta 1168, Fascicolo 11782.*

after wages had been ruled frozen for the duration of the war.¹⁵⁸ This policy was implemented even with Italy's already low wages, among Europe's lowest for years, and the increase in cost of living by nearly 20 percent in the two years leading up to the start of the war.¹⁵⁹ Back in the Worker's Village, the end of 1940 saw an official food "ration book" instituted. Then, in the first trimester of 1941, an office inside the Worker's Village began to issue rationing books with soup vouchers to lodged workers. Restaurants in the E 42 were also forced to accept the vouchers.¹⁶⁰ In November 1941 the rationing of foodstuffs was progressively tightened, with bread rationed at 200 grams a day per worker.¹⁶¹ Once strict food rationing had begun, the *Dopolavoro* began to participate in the cultivation of potatoes and grain on newly designated lands within the work zone.¹⁶²

With the stringent food restrictions, workers were monitored more closely than ever for mood and affect. One police report from 1941 shows guards closely monitoring workers' reactions to the 50 percent reduction in bread rations. And what better place to observe public opinion on the stringent new food rations than right in the Workers Village mess hall! According to Police station commander Alfredo Chiti, in a document stamped "strictly confidential," the

¹⁵⁸ See "Labor Conditions in Fascist Italy," 911.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *ACS, E42, Busta 1170, Fascicolo 11821.*

¹⁶¹ See page 393 and 396 in Tobias Abse "Fascism and Working Class: Workers under Italian Fascism," *The Fascism Reader*. Food rationing began in May 1939 with limits on coffee in bars. Pasta rationing began in the autumn of 1940 with more restrictions put in place during 1941. Bread was also rationed beginning in Fall 1941, with a limit of 200 grams per day. This restriction on bread created mass discontent, with the regime making a concession to raise bread quantities for certain workers to 500 grams per day. By January 1943, according to Abse, the food ration of wool workers amounted to under 1000 calories per day.

¹⁶² *ACS, E42, Busta 300, Fascicolo 4839.*

rationing of bread by half “was received by the workers in the Village with a sense of ill-concealed consternation. In fact, some of them expressed a desire to return home to their villages, while others commented on the coincidence that types of soup restricted on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday could have easily been supplemented with additional bread, but the new rules exclude this in the most categorical fashion.”¹⁶³ The officer continues: “Keeping in mind that the greater quantity of bread would be given to workers in heavy industry, it is the general sentiment that even this augmented quantity would be clearly insufficient to the diet since up to now it constitutes the base essential and substantial food of these workers.” The police were said to be investigating and seeking out the agitators who were provoking the workers in the mess hall to proclaim things like, “Now they want us to claw and scratch at the earth for food.” Less than two weeks later, Commander Chiti wrote a follow-up memo to the Department of Public Security. “Following from the preceding communication,” wrote Chiti. “I communicate that in this Worker’s Village, the rationing of bread has created a sense of slight unease that is becoming habit-forming.”¹⁶⁴ Workers, the accompanying report notes, submerge their spoons into their soup bowls and play with the broth “as if to make a statement about the quantity of liquid and the reduction of pasta in the soup, with an expression of sad irony.” He went on to raise a warning about the rising price of food in the mess hall. “Raising the price of soups from 75 cents to 90 was received by the majority with absolute indifference. The turnout to the mess hall is slightly decreased. The next eventual augmentation in price however would not pass with such inobservance.” The officers were tasked with closely observing workers in the dining hall,

¹⁶³ *ACS, E42, Busta 1166, Fascicolo 11775.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

recording minute changes in affect and emotional ground tone. “Some of them, in good or bad faith, comment favorably on the quantity of provisions,” states the officer report, unable to decipher whether the workers were subliminally criticizing the quantity of food, or actually trying to remain cheerful. Others abstain from any discussion, “bearing an estrangement typical of immigrant workers. Assiduous vigilance will be maintained.”

As the war dragged on, hungry bellies were filled with religion. To meet the growing needs for “moral care,” priests regularly worked the mess hall during meals to directly engross 1,400 workers in the art of forgetting about their empty stomachs.¹⁶⁵ Priests regularly called on workers to remember “the needs of their own families, in spite of distances, and to strongly heed the regime’s laws.” One priest reported on the successes of his proselytizing activities to EUR Agency officials in February 1941. “The workers take the activity to heart. Many feel it necessary to return to god and the needs of their own family, and two have returned to their families after years of estrangement,” he writes.¹⁶⁶ The Priest, whose main activities included proselytizing in the Worker’s Village, said “The workers participate in the holy mass with devotion, listening with heartfelt attention to the word of the priest: it is touching to hear one mass of workers elevate their hearts and minds to god with religious songs!”¹⁶⁷ Workers were increasingly used in religious ceremonies, reconstituting the regime’s pageantry and worker morality at the same time. A strong nucleus of workers participated in the Day of the Dead commemoration, and the inauguration of a chapel in the Workers Village in October 1940. As the war moved on, and rations grew tighter, the role of religion continued to expand. On October 24, 1942, the Worker’s

¹⁶⁵ *ACS, E42, Busta 1170, Fascicolo 11821.*

¹⁶⁶ *ACS, E42, Busta 1170, Fascicolo 11820.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Village received its own patron saint. Meanwhile, each worker dormitory within the Worker's Village had already been given a unique patron saint, with a crucifix painted onto the wall above the door.¹⁶⁸ The father's elixir of spirituality in a time of grave discontent was aimed at bringing workers back into the fold of tradition in the form of the church, the hearth, and the family. For Italians, the father had once more arrived, and not for the first time, he came wearing a Roman collar.

Insubordinate members of the poor and working classes did not represent the only threat to the Fascist state. In 1942 a group of "bourgeois" Fascist Party officials secretly approached the United States and England for a separate peace, without permission from the Fascist regime.¹⁶⁹ Former EUR Agency President Cini was among this elite group of mutineers. When these attempts failed, Cini is said to have attempted to work from within the regime to compel Italy's withdrawal from the alliance pact signed with Germany.¹⁷⁰ "The extremely grave situation forces us to reexamine, with logic, our alliance with Germany," wrote Cini in 1943.¹⁷¹ Here it is worth noting that he did not openly question the Fascist alliance with the Nazis on moral or ideological grounds in prior years, but only in 1943 as a pragmatist scrambling for a life raft while aboard a rapidly sinking ship. At the June 19, 1943 Council of Ministers, Cini openly criticized the war and the regime's handling of it. He would resign from the regime five days

¹⁶⁸ *ACS, E42, Busta 1143, Fascicolo 11304, Subfascicolo 4.*

¹⁶⁹ Refer to Giorgio Bocca, *Storia d'Italia nella Guerra Fascista: 1940-1943* (Milano 1996).

¹⁷⁰ See "Cini, Vittorio," in the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*.

¹⁷¹ Bocca, *Storia d'Italia nella Guerra Fascista: 1940-1943*.

later.¹⁷² Cini's open criticism and sudden resignation led to his arrest at the hands of the German S.S. in Rome on September 23. He was subsequently sent to the concentration camp at Dachau where he spent "long months in segregation."¹⁷³ In a lifesaving move, Cini was then transferred to a clinic near Friedrichroda in central Germany.¹⁷⁴ Cini's son is said to have freed his father from Friedrichroda in June 1944, bringing him to Italy via airplane where he remained in hiding until the war's end. Though one of Mussolini's top figures, creating a link between the Fascist state and the private interests of the powerful industry monopolies controlled by the "Venetian Group," Cini was absolved from criminal prosecution by a postwar tribunal in 1946.¹⁷⁵

Back at the EUR, neither Fascist doctrine nor Catholic liturgy nor aerial bombs impeded an unknown or unknowns from looting Agency property as everyone took sanctuary in a bomb shelter during an Allied bombing raid in July 1943.¹⁷⁶ After Italy surrendered to the Allied command on July 25, 1943 and the Nazi army overran and occupied the Italian peninsula, the structures of the E 42 were utilized for an alternate purpose. The structures, built of concrete, travertine, and marble, and designed to last millennia, provided superb protection against

¹⁷² See, "Cini, Vittorio," in the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*. For numerous critical letters from Cini published in their entirety, refer to Gianfranco Bianchi, *Perche e Come Cadde il Fascismo, 25 luglio 1943: Crollo di un Regime* (Milan 1963).

¹⁷³ See Ramona Canosa, *Storia dell'Epurazione in Italia: Le Sanzioni Contro il Fascismo 1943-1948* (Milan 1999).

¹⁷⁴ Prominent German officials and businessmen who had come to know Cini through his years as a Fascist dignitary, some of whom he surely entertained in his role as EUR Agency President, seemed to have valued his life to the extent that they facilitated his transfer from Dachau. See, "Cini, Vittorio," *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* A postwar tribunal absolved Cini of any wrongdoing in 1946 for having taken a "clean position against the directives of the regime" and "lively patriotism and violent aversion to fascism and to the invading Germans."

¹⁷⁶ *ACS, E42, Busta 1170, Fascicolo 11821.*

artillery and aerial bombings, first for the Nazis and later the Allied forces. Retreating Nazi grenadiers tried to set the EUR-city ablaze, to destroy the structures rather than allow them to become the new defensive positions of the Allied forces. The EUR-city did suffer notable damage as a theater of combat, but the materials used in the construction of the “permanent” E 42 fortresses were largely impervious to fire as a method of destruction.

Meanwhile, the tasks of the hitherto foreboding Fascist police in the EUR were relegated to the passive monitoring of these occupying foreign soldiers from afar. One report from June 1944 tells of transgressions by American and British soldiers in the work-zone. “Allied forces have started to loot the abandoned E 42 buildings,” says one report.¹⁷⁷ Another says that “today at around 3 PM, American soldiers carried away 42 1.4 meter-long slabs of marble.”¹⁷⁸ Instead of housing the spectacle that was to be the World's Fair, the zone built for the *Esposizione Universale di Roma* soon became, against all intentions, a place to experience a total breakdown in the Fascist *Novus Ordo*.

¹⁷⁷ ACS, E42, Busta 1168, Fascicolo 11782.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the Fascist state mobilized and leveraged Italian difference for its vision of political advance both domestically and internationally. Perhaps nowhere was this to be revealed more plainly in between the wars than at the 1942 Universal Exposition of Rome. The Italy of corporatism, autarky, and empire was to achieve spatial representation for an estimated 20 million visitors at the E 42, providing the regime with a remarkable opportunity to communicate Fascism's alternative ethos before a global audience. With Fascism pitched as a revolt against a capitalism in crisis, the ever-expanding globalism on display at previous world's fairs was seen as wholly inadequate for the E 42. Instead, in plans for and construction of the 1942 Roman World's Fair, Italy's most venerated intellectuals collaborated with the Fascist state to articulate an Italian model of international contemporaneity, representing a distinct Italian cultural identity. Through a nuanced examination of extensive plans for Rome '42, this study has recovered Fascism's assertion of a break with not only past universal exhibitions, but also the very milieu those earlier exhibitions sought to recreate. Fascism set out to exorcise the demons of globalism through what I have called in this study "culturalist anti-materialism," which is the mobilization of the category of culture in response to the growing materialism in modernity, and with it the associative monetization, abstraction, and homogeneity of individuals, labor, and time. Through this sense of a "break" with the dominant universal form, Fascism it was claimed was giving rise to a new universal order emanating once more from the "Eternal City."

By way of contrast with prior world's fairs, this study has shown that Fascist thinkers were keen on holding an exhibition that disseminated carefully selected representations of Italian cultural difference in order to bolster a sense of "rupture" with these negative, homogenizing

tendencies of modern industrial society. Reaching into the “pre-modern” world, Fascist thinkers appropriated ancient and rural-essentialist symbols of Italian cultural difference and refashioned them to communicate a break with a rapidly advancing modernity. The E 42 was thus configured to show Fascism’s distinctive break with a “flat-earth” view of ongoing historical transformation. In this fashion, the E 42 was a medium through which Italian culture was shown as “identity-resistant” to the homogenizing effects of modern society. This discourse of rupture with capitalist modernity, expressed in the form of a “corporatist” World’s Fair, allowed the regime to advance a vision of alternate universality in which fascism’s global dissemination would entail that each nation adopt traditional authority based upon their own “essential” culture: a world of difference. After all, culturalist anti-materialism, as a form of thought that expresses both the universal nature of culture *and* the (sub) universal distinctions between disparate cultures, already presumes “universality” as a category. In this sense the E 42 would also be a Fascist amusement or theme park, a “mini-world” of differences.

To provide fresh insight into Fascist subjectivization during the period 1936 to 1943, this project moved “top-down” from calibrated syntheses of productivism and anti-modernism at the World’s Fair to the “everyday” practices of workers and security guards within the space of the E 42. All of this runs through the World’s Fair as one of the Fascist era’s most ideologically and materially ambitious projects. This dissertation first examined Fascist articulations of otherness, which were articulated through exhibits, in mass architectural projects, and in a new worker subjectivity constituted through and objectified in the EUR city. The first chapter shows that Italian exhibits at the E 42 were planned to hybridize pre-modern “heroic-folkish” and ancient Roman traditions with a modern productivism in order to indicate corporatism as the true expression of authentic Italianness—and a break with homogeneity and valorization. This vision

of Italians was geared toward generating a new form of universality that would overcome the breakdown of traditional social relations occurring with global modernization. Chapter 2 demonstrates that the EUR-city literally “concretized” Italian cultural difference in hybrid architectural forms. It further shows that Fascism’s aesthetic resistance to cultural homogeneity was also an expression of corporatism, and more specifically autarky, with the need to stimulate domestic production of distinct Italian commodities within the “self-sufficient” national market. This chapter also advances a notion of the EUR architecture as “*past-modernist*.” I argue that although the Fascist version shares with postmodernist aesthetic productions many of the same critiques of modernism, there was one critical difference. I show that while Fascists had claimed to accelerate toward the modern while “genuflecting” before the qualitative and concrete pre-modern world facing extinction,¹ the postmodernist response to the shift from Fordism to neoliberalism was to engulf oneself in valorization through the fetish of an “intoxicating” current of commodities.

In Chapter 3, the regime’s articulation of Italian cultural difference is examined in the form of its so-called “Fascist” labor practices, which were said to be constitutive of the “new Fascist man,” in essence a new “interiority” of Italian Being. This new Fascist labor subjectivity, with its alleged pre-modern cultural origins, provided the regime with a “break” from abstraction in the critical realm of labor power, an “historic” development that was displayed for world leaders as a sign of Fascist transformation. This subject was publicly shown as fixed within a “natural” hierarchy of familial and honorific bonds instead of the antagonistic relations between managers, enforcers, and workers, which was illustrative of corporatism as a system that fused

¹ For example, see Ugo Ojetti, “La Settima Triennale,” *Corriere della Sera*. 3 Aprile

the interests of various “classes” together to the state. The following chapter, which examines two distinctive representations of policing at the 1942 World’s Fair, further reveals the purely ideological functions of the above-mentioned mobilizations of difference. This chapter contends that the Fascist dictatorship, which regularly policed Italians through a hybrid form of pre-modern violence and modern disciplinary techniques, was confronted with a significant challenge at the Fair. How could the regime rely upon its routine “hybrid” policing methods under the scrutiny of a world public? In the context of policing, I maintain, the categorical mobilization of “past-modern” forms had to be eliminated from the E 42. This chapter shows that Italian differences of a “contra-modern” nature were not remnants of Italy’s evolutionary backwardness, but rather that World’s Fair planners carefully regulated the use of the “pre-modern,” and one might say, the category of the “modern” as well.

In the next and final chapter, I employ a “history from below” to create a dialogue with the state’s own public self-representation to show both the realizations and limits of Fascist aims. To achieve this dialogue, I examine the same areas addressed in previous chapters: Fascist state officials, labor management, and workers.² I show that while a variety of actors readily deployed the state’s categories of modernity and difference, Italy was actually a rather poor country, where labor powerful was plentiful, and where work and resources were scarce. Furthermore, scarcity was used as a tool by the regime to achieve the formal acquiescence of workers. While “everyday” forms of resistance were commonplace in the E 42 site, Fascist tactics were successful in confining these oppositions to the realm of often “uncivil” disobedience, acts of individual frustration that finally seep or pour out after prolonged repression. Thus, while

² See page 368 in Sheila Fitzpatrick (Oct. 1986). “New Perspectives on Stalinism,” *Russian Review* 45 (4).

subjectivization was never quite achieved in the way that Fascists declared, so that workers and officials did not fully embody the New Man, the regime's discourses grounded cultural norms and generated a framework for domination. This last chapter also provides a sense that there was nothing truly liberatory about sustaining culture as resistance to the vicissitudes of the global economy, at least not for the great number of Italians, a point I would like to now take up again in reference to my earlier discussion on *past-modernism*.

Actors in different modern historical contexts have attempted to generate ruptures with the supposed "root causes" of anxiety and insecurity in capitalism, from Luddism's attack on early machinery during the epochal shift toward industrialization and a new social form,³ to the reincarnation of the xenophobic white nationalist labor party in North America amid the economic crisis of the twenty-first century.⁴ In Chapter 2 on Fascist aesthetics, I engaged in a theorization of what I call Fascist 'past-modernism,' (i.e., culturalist anti-materialism in architecture). I compare this with postmodernism, as both develop very similar contra-modernist aesthetic content. I ultimately argue that while postmodernism (i.e., as the aesthetic expression of Fordism's demise and the shift to neoliberalism) involved setting oneself adrift into the

³ For more on Luddism, see pages 554 and 555 in Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1. Translated by Ben Fowkes (London 1990). Marx describes a number of rebellions dating back to the seventeenth century in which workers targeted new machines of production. The English Luddites of the nineteenth century engaged in a widespread assault on the power loom being employed in manufacturing. Marx writes that, "It took both time and experience before the workers learnt to distinguish between machinery and its employment by capital, and therefore to transfer their attacks from the material instruments of production to the form of society which utilizes those instruments."

⁴ For more on the resurgence of the white nationalist labor movement in the United States, see "Why white nationalists hear a political ally in Donald Trump," PBS NewsHour, 26 October 2016. <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/white-nationalists-find-political-ally-donald-trump/>. <26 October 2016>.

“fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is,” riding the wave of commodification and value through its fetishized forms,⁵ ‘past-modernism’ responded to the crisis of capitalism by looking backward over its shoulder while walking forward. Another way to explain this phenomenon is by holding to Marx’s analysis of the commodity as two-sided, that is, as constituting both a use-value and a value, the former being the transhistorical qualitative dimension of any object that might be useful, the latter a product of abstract modern industrial labor.⁶ In a world overdetermined by expansion and quickening, in which value (M-C-M¹) increasingly consumes forms of local culture and tradition, I would like to suggest that the Fascist culturalist reaction to dynamic movement within the global system involved a return back toward use-values (C-M-C) as a way to further generate value in highly controlled forms.

Based on my examination of Fascist materials conducted in this work, it is my claim here that Fascism in Italy represented another such backward looking, non-progressive attempt to overcome a world increasingly “lost” to abstraction. Through hybrid articulations of difference, I argue, Fascists attempted to represent a new moral economy based upon interpersonal, deferential, pre-capitalist modes of sociality that expressed a logic in which the contradictions of modernity were resolved, if not overcome. In this way, the representation of a Fascist corporatist

⁵ See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 44.

⁶ For a more complete development of the value and use-value dimensions of the commodity, see pages 330 to 336 in Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, R. Tucker, ed. (New York 1979). Marx writes that C-M-C (Commodity-Money-Commodity) represents the consumption of some determinate useful commodity (or use-value). Use-value is the transhistorical dimension of the commodity in modernity, which implies that before capitalism, it was the only form of object being and therefore was not knowable as such. Value on the other hand “is the active factor in a process” of expansion into M-C-M¹-M²-M³-etc, with each additional M-prime representing “interminable” valorization. The latter movement (M-C-M¹) represents the circulation of capital in modernity only, which Marx writes becomes “endowed with a motion of its own.”

“third way” (between capitalism and bolshevism) in “virtuous” hybrid forms at the World’s Fair only appeared to recuperate some kind of direct and authentic form of social relations. While Fascists were successful in generating a discourse that addressed the loss of forms of objective and subjective immediacy amid the continuing transformations of industrial capitalism, they also mobilized an ideology fully aligned with autarkic productivism, it too geared toward increasing value. The Fascist trope of “ontological difference under siege” by an ever expanding outside world, when used to achieve competitive levels of productivist growth, proved a safeguard of a vastly unequal society and economic order. Italy’s cultural difference is thus shown to have only appeared to comprise a realm of freedom from alleged sources of domination. Though this fetishization of difference might have given some actors a sense of a Fascist resistance to particular symptoms of alienation, the sources of crisis remained unscathed.

Ultimately, the *Esposizione Universale di Roma* would never take place. Construction was progressively abandoned after Italy entered in the war, and on the twentieth anniversary of the Fascist “March on Rome” in October of 1942, the EUR site was only partially complete, as it would remain for some years after the war. The EUR-city would eventually be completed, although not according to its original vision. The EUR Agency was liquidated late in 1944 but would return in a new form just after the war to manage and complete the site. In 1951, a new government agency was formed to finish the abandoned site. New architectural additions to the EUR took the form of the “internationalist” style of the postwar period, with steel-framed buildings adorned in metal and glass. These postwar structures, when viewed in isolation from their surroundings, appear no different from modern office buildings located elsewhere in the world. Rather than demonstrations of resistance to the dominant norm through markers of

cultural difference, the new buildings of the EUR more strongly adhere to international standards. From the end of the war until the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome (located in and around the EUR-city), the Workers Village was repurposed as a displaced persons camp for “ethnic Italians” escaping communism in the newly formed Yugoslavia. Rather than *turisti* and *dopolavoristi*, the “Workers Village,” renamed “*Villaggio Giuliano*,” would lodge a generation of Dalmatians as they tried to make their way in Rome.⁷

Further facilities were built at the EUR for the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome, including an “Olympic Village” for participating athletes and several sports complexes such as the “Olympic Velodrome” and “*Palazzo dello Sport*.” The EUR quarter of Rome today is home to some of Italy’s major corporations, “congresses, government ministries, private business headquarters and ‘parastatal’ (joint public/private) industrial organizations.” In what is perhaps an irony of “history,” the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato*, the central state archive, is today housed in the very building intended for the massive “Exhibition of Autarky, Corporatism, and Social Welfare” at the 1942 Exposition. The EUR thus stands today as the partial substantiation and conflation of several distinct periods of modern Italian history. Today, thousands of riders take the metro from the center of Rome to the EUR district everyday, on a line originally laid by Mussolini’s planners and Italian workmen for the World’s Fair. As the train approaches the first of three EUR metro stops, the “Square Coliseum” appears over the tree line and becomes visible from the car’s window, providing an eerie, quotidian reminder of the contra-modern corporatist third way and the universal order Mussolini had sought to fashion.⁸

⁷ ACS, E42, Busta 775, Fascicolo 7058. For more on the *Villaggio Giuliano*, see ACS, E42, Busta 305, Fascicolo 4916.

⁸ See pages 84 and 85 in John Agnew *Rome* (New York 1995).

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