

**URBAN SPACE IN FASCIST VERONA: CONTESTED GROUNDS FOR MASS
SPECTACLE, TOURISM, AND THE ARCHITECTURAL PAST**

by

Maria D'Anniballe Williams

BA, Università degli Studi di Udine, 1997

MA, Duquesne University, 1999

MA, University of Pittsburgh, 2004

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This dissertation was presented

by

Maria D'Anniballe Williams

It was defended on

November 16, 2010

and approved by

Christopher Drew Armstrong, Director of Architectural Studies and Assistant Professor,

History of Art and Architecture

Kai K. Gutschow, Associate Professor, School of Architecture, Carnegie Mellon

University

Dissertation Advisors:

Barbara McCloskey, Associate Professor, History of Art and Architecture

Kirk Savage, Professor and Chair, History of Art and Architecture

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Maria D'Anniballe Williams, PhD

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This dissertation focuses on the refashioning of Verona's urban space and identity during the Fascist regime. Traditionally, Fascist-sponsored restoration projects were interpreted as top-down undertakings decided and directly controlled by central state authority. Only recently have studies begun to test this thesis and show the involvement of local forces in the reshaping of Fascist Italy's urban spaces.

My research builds on this recent scholarship by showing the active role played by Verona's socio-political elites in the refashioning of the city's urban fabric. However, my study also extends the current literature on Fascist-sponsored restoration projects by discussing the contribution of international narratives to the debate surrounding the refashioning of Italy's built heritage. In this study I explore the ways in which these narratives—particularly those advanced by tourism and the Hollywood film industry—influenced local and national socio-political groups, forcing them to renegotiate their project of appropriation of the city's historic heritage within a broader framework of international assumptions about Verona's famous history. Far from being a top-down undertaking, the reshaping of the city's urban space emerges as a complex process of mediation between distinct groups, with different interests at stake, each trying to capitalize on Verona's world-wide reputation to further its own agenda. While preservation groups insisted on the importance of maintaining and restoring the city's multiple historical layers, the local socio-political elite pressed for an ideal—although sometimes

fictitious— recreation of Verona’s built heritage with the intent to foster tourism and support their myth of identity. The central government, on the other hand, fully supported local initiatives in order to build consensus for the regime as long as such projects could be reconciled with Fascism’s agenda of nation and empire building. The study of the refashioning of Verona’s architectural fabric shows that Mussolini appropriated the city’s cultural tradition but left ample freedom of action to local officials and the urban bourgeoisie in their urban renewal efforts.

Ultimately, this project contributes to a deeper understanding of Fascism’s relationship with the past and provides insight into the culturally constructed nature of urban spaces and identities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	IX
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES IN THE CONTEXT OF FASCISM’S PROJECTS OF NATION AND EMPIRE BUILDING..	2
1.2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	5
1.3 RATIONALE AND APPROACH.....	8
1.4 METHODOLOGY	12
1.5 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE.....	18
2.0 VERONA WITHIN THE NEW ITALIAN NATION STATE. DREAMING A FUTURE OF CULTURAL PRESTIGE AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY	25
2.1 “A BEAUTIFUL MANCHESTER”: VERONA’S UNFULFILLED HOPE FOR INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION.....	26
2.2 A CITY STRUGGLING WITH SOCIAL UNREST AND POLITICAL CONSERVATISM	32
2.3 VERONA IN THE WRITINGS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY TRAVELERS.....	34
2.4 VERONA POST WWI: ECONOMIC DOWNTURN AND SOCIAL TURMOIL.....	42

3.0	REMAKING OF A CITY: THE REFASHIONING OF VERONA’S URBAN SPACE, FROM ANNEXATION TO THE ITALIAN NATION TO THE ADVENT OF FASCISM	44
3.1	CAMILLO BOITO AND THE NINETEENTH CENTURY DEBATE SURROUNDING THE RESTORATION OF ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS.	44
3.2	HOUSING PROJECTS AND A NEW TRAIN STATION: VERONA’S URBAN EXPANSION IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY.....	56
3.3	FASCIST URBAN POLICIES IN THE 1920S: FROM BUILDING CAMPAIGNS AND RESTORATION OF HISTORIC MONUMENTS TO CLEARING OF THE CITY CENTER.....	58
4.0	VERONA AND THE MOVIE SET. REDEFINING THE CITY’S IDENTITY THROUGH THE LENS OF THE HOLLYWOOD FILM INDUSTRY.....	79
4.1	<i>ROMEO AND JULIET</i> BY MGM/THALBERG—CUKOR	81
4.2	THE MOVIE’S IMPACT ON VERONA’S URBAN SPACE AND IDENTITY	90
5.0	IL DUCE IN VERONA: MUSSOLINI’S STATE VISIT TO THE CITY OF CANGRANDE AND ITS DOCUMENTATION IN THE PRESS	100
5.1	STATE VISIT TO VERONA	101
5.2	FASCIST RITUAL AND MEDIA REPRESENTATION	113
6.0	THE LEGACY OF FASCIST-SPONSORED PROJECTS IN VERONA	120
6.1	VERONA’S URBAN SCENE IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD.....	122
6.2	JULIET’S HOUSE	127
6.3	JULIET’S TOMB.....	132

6.4	ROMEO’S HOUSE AND THE PROJECT OF A SHAKESPEAREAN MUSEUM.....	133
6.5	SHAKESPEAREAN FESTIVAL.....	139
6.6	JULIET’S CLUB.....	140
7.0	CONCLUSIONS	146
	APPENDIX A.....	154
	APPENDIX B.....	157
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	158

PREFACE

This dissertation grew out of my graduate studies at the University of Pittsburgh, where the Department of Art History and Architecture provided a friendly atmosphere and intellectually engaging environment. I owe a debt of gratitude to the whole faculty for their intellectual and moral support, to the administrative staff for their problem-solving attitude, and to my fellow graduate students for their friendship and willingness to share ideas.

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Finally I would like to thank you my family and close friends for your constant support and encouragement. Chrissy Jungers, Maurizio Carbone, and Filomena Colantonio all have been instrumental in my journey towards my PhD. My parents overcame their own sense of loss and separation to encourage me to pursue my education abroad. The everyday phone calls have given much emotional strength in spite of the physical distance. This accomplishment is as much theirs as it is mine. And a very special thanks to Brandon, my husband, for putting up with many years of long hours away from home and for spending endless hours reading my drafts. It is to him that this dissertation is dedicated.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The 1941 documentary “Verona” was part of a series of short films by the pro-government production company INCOM (Industrie Cortimetraggi) featuring places to visit in Italy. Such documentaries were designed to stimulate the viewer’s curiosity and encourage tourism by showcasing the scenic qualities of towns and cities across the peninsula.¹ The director, Antonio Dell’Anno, skillfully filmed Verona’s urban space in a fashion that idealized its past. The Roman remains of the Arena and Teatro Romano were filmed in the flickering sunset light and the medieval architecture of Castelvecchio, Palazzo del Podestà, and the church of San Zeno was rendered through dramatic angles and interesting contrasts of illumination and darkness. Meanwhile, flocks of birds animated the façade of Juliet’s House. The declamatory tone of the voice-over commentary and the soothing musical background underscored the historic nature and artistic qualities of the city. Verona was presented as having remained unaffected by the passing of time. Its monuments were featured as perfectly preserved and the city center, with its narrow streets and historic piazzas, appeared intact in its historic medieval state.

However, most of the seemingly pristine architectural structures featured in the documentary were still fresh with plaster in 1941. Castelvecchio, Palazzo del Podestà, and the House and Tomb of Juliet were all part of a highly controversial architectural makeover the city

¹ On the role of state-sponsored documentaries in promoting Italy’s historic and artistic sites see Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected. Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy* (University Park, Penn: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 207-208.

underwent during the twenty years of Fascist administration. As the following chapters will show, Verona's urban space and monuments were carefully edited in order to serve ideological, political, and economic aims. In the process, buildings were stripped of their historical layers while new "in style" architectural elements were superimposed on the existing structures in order to enhance their medieval and Renaissance appearance. A new historical narrative was created, which obliterated specific aspects of the city's past while emphasizing others.

My dissertation deals with the process of urban refashioning that Verona underwent during the Fascist administration. It analyzes how and to what extent the city's medieval and Renaissance fabric was reconfigured during the 1920s and 1930s. If history is "the politics of the past," as suggested by Jacques Le Goff, whose interests did the reconfigured urban sites embody?² And what can Verona tell us about Fascism's relationship with the past?

1.1 CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES IN THE CONTEXT OF FASCISM'S PROJECTS OF NATION AND EMPIRE BUILDING

The regime's interest in Roman antiquity has been largely documented. A number of studies have shown Fascism's efforts to excavate, restore, highlight and appropriate monuments of classical architecture.³ In Rome, where the celebration of imperial heritage was most pronounced, buildings were liberated of their centuries-old accretions, monumentalized through

² Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*. European perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 16.

³ Scholars have argued that Fascism's interest in classic architecture was conducive to Mussolini's imperialistic ambitions. See Giuseppe Cuccia, *Urbanistica, edilizia, infrastrutture di Roma capitale, 1870-1990* (Bari: Laterza 1991); Luisa Cardilli, *Gli anni del governatorato (1926-1944). Interventi urbanistici, scoperte archeologiche, arredo urbano, restauri* (Roma: Kappa, 1995); and Spiro Kostof, *The Third Rome. 1870-1950. Traffic and Glory*. Exhibition Catalog (Berkeley: University Art Museum, 1973).

the demolition of surrounding structures and integrated into the city's urban fabric through the creation of a system of wide, interconnected thoroughfares.⁴ The valorization and appropriation of classical antiquity was not exclusive to the Fascist regime. Attempts to restore Roman monuments and incorporate them into the city's urban fabric had been carried out since the Renaissance. In 1585 Pope Sixtus V charged architect Domenico Fontana with restructuring Rome's urban layout as a part of the Catholic Church's Counter-Reformation effort.⁵ In 1883, the city's first master plan sought to create a capital city worthy of the new nation through the demolition of overcrowded tenements and the creation of a system of axial roads connecting landmarks from Roman antiquity to Piazza Venezia, the designated site for the erection of a monument to King Victor Emanuel II.⁶ However, as noted by Spiro Kostof, the Fascist regime was the first government able to assemble the necessary resources and expertise to implement a systematic plan for the revival of Rome's architectural past.⁷

Once restored, monuments became the setting for Fascist celebrations. Triumphal arches, such as the Arch of Constantine, were used in military parades; the Coliseum provided the ideal setting for mass rallies; and the Markets of Trajan and the Basilica of Maxentius were stages for classical concerts.⁸ Fascist investment in Rome's imperial heritage was fueled by political and ideological motivations. As Mussolini's imperial ambitions increased in the 1930s, the excavation and appropriation of monuments provided visible proof of the commitment of the

⁴ Via dei Fori Imperiali, for example, cut through the ancient Roman forum providing a physical and symbolic link between the Coliseum, an icon of Roman antiquity, and Palazzo Venezia, the headquarters of Mussolini's government. See Kostof, *Third Rome*, 60-63.

⁵ On Domenico Fontana's scheme for the re-planning of Rome under Pope Sixtus V see: Giovanni Pietro Bellori and Hellmut Wohl, *The Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 139-156; and John T. Paoletti and Gary M. Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 534-547.

⁶ Kostof, *Third Rome*, 45.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Duce to restore the greatness of the ancient Roman Empire. The myth of *Romanità* became the political tool and ideological basis to justify the regime's invasion of Ethiopia as a first step in the process of reviving Rome's imperial ambitions and claim to the universal validity of its culture as an enduring origin of western civilization.

A main focus of scholarly discussion, the regime's interest in imperial antiquity has eclipsed the role of the medieval and Renaissance revival in Fascist aesthetics. Only recently have studies begun to show how outside Rome, where the remains of Roman architecture were less ubiquitous, the regime sponsored the restoration of medieval and Renaissance buildings, engaged in the revival of period festivals and traditions, and celebrated legendary medieval *condottieri* as examples of political and military leaders. As Medina Lasansky has shown, the regime's investment in the medieval and Renaissance past served a similar and complementary role to the celebration of ancient Rome.⁹ While the revival of classical antiquity justified Fascist imperialistic aims, the celebration of medieval heritage served to promote a feeling of a shared national identity, or *italianità*. The Middle Ages, interpreted as the period in history spanning the thirteenth to the early sixteenth century, was promoted as an age of political independence from foreign rule, characterized by the economic and cultural leadership of the independent city-states. The myth of a shared communal identity proved instrumental in the Fascist effort of nation building. Since the unification of Italy in 1861, governments had struggled to overcome the economic, social, and cultural divisions among Italians of different regions. When Mussolini came to power in 1922, Italy was still a land of divisions, yet to achieve a sense of national identity. The regime harnessed the myth of the Middle Ages—a conflated notion of shared communal past, indigenous culture, and freedom from foreign domination—to incorporate the

⁹ See Lasansky, *Renaissance Perfected*, 3-14.

various historical, artistic and particularistic traditions that made up the Italian peninsula into a single Fascist state. If *romanità* was crucial to the regime's imperial extension of colonial authority abroad, *medioevo* proved essential to the project of internal colonization Mussolini undertook when he rose to power.

The refashioning of Verona's medieval heritage was one of the many restoration projects carried out during the Fascist ventennio.¹⁰ What sets Verona apart from similar projects is the active role played by the local socio-political elites in the restoration efforts and the involvement of the Hollywood movie industry in the debate surrounding the redefinition of the city's urban fabric and identity.

1.2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Traditionally, Fascist-sponsored restoration projects have been interpreted as top-down undertakings decided, sponsored, and directly controlled by the central government. Recent studies test this thesis and have begun to show the involvement of local forces in the reshaping of urban spaces. Diane Ghirardo focuses on the role of local officials versus that of the central

¹⁰ The numerous restoration campaigns undertaken during the Fascist regime were documented in the National Exhibit of Restoration, held in Rome in 1938 and organized by Gustavo Giovannoni, Roberto Paribeni and Giulio Quirino Giglioli. Along with monuments from classical antiquity, the exhibit featured a conspicuous number of projects concerning medieval and Renaissance buildings including the consolidation of Cà d'Oro in Venice, the restoration of the Palazzo Ducale in Urbino, the Palazzo Pretorio in Prato, the Palazzo Comunale in Piacenza, the Palazzi del Podestà in Verona, Burano and Forlì, the reconstruction of the walls of Monteriggioni, and the restoration of the loggia and the tower of Ardinghelli in San Gimignano. See the catalogue of the exhibit, Gustavo Giovannoni, *Mostra del restauro dei monumenti dell'era fascista. Per iniziativa del centro di studi per la storia dell'architettura e della confederazione fascista professionisti e artisti. Sotto l'alto patronato di S.E. il Ministro dell'Educazione Nazionale* (Rome: Mercati Traianei, October 1938).

government in her study on the refashioning of Ferrara's urban space.¹¹ She argues that the restoration of the city's town hall in 1924 was essentially a local endeavor, sponsored and directed by the city's intellectual and social elites and independent of central government authority. In refashioning the medieval Palazzo del Corte, Ferrarese civic leaders manifested their intent to "bypass the period of cultural and economic decline under the papacy and return to the era of the city's greatest cultural prominence, the centuries of the Este dominion."¹² Medina Lasansky has studied the refashioning of Arezzo and San Gimignano's city centers by the Fascist administration.¹³ Although Lasansky argues for a preeminent role of the central state authority in sponsoring and managing urban renewal projects, she also acknowledges that initiatives were "shaped as much by local organizations as by those at the top" and that "a sense of Fascism was constructed from the bottom up."¹⁴

Several studies on the refashioning of Verona's urban fabric have focused on the picturesque, idealized nature of Fascist-sponsored restoration projects. Alberto Grimoldi has contrasted the critical and philological approach to restoration of historic monuments characterizing the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the romanticized, imaginative nature of Fascist interventions. He identifies in projects such as Castelvecchio and the House and Tomb of Juliet epitomes of a scenographic approach to architecture designed with the specific

¹¹ Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, "Città Fascista: Surveillance and Spectacle," in "The Aesthetics of Fascism," special issue, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 31, no. 2 (1996): 347-372; Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, "Inventing the Palazzo del Corte in Ferrara," in *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*, ed. Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005), 97-112.

¹² Idem, "Inventing the Palazzo del Corte," 98.

¹³ Medina Lasansky, "Urban Editing, Historic Preservation, and Political Rhetoric: The Fascist Redesign of San Gimignano," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 63, no. 3 (2004): 320-253 and *Renaissance Perfected*.

¹⁴ Lasansky, *Renaissance Perfected*, xxxiii.

intent to foster mass tourism.¹⁵ Giandomenico Romanelli interprets Verona's fascination with the Middle Ages as a reaction of the city against its recent history under Hapsburg rule and as an attempt to reach out to its most glorious history, when it stood powerful and independent under the leadership of the della Scala family.¹⁶ Arturo Sandrini has lamented how the fashion for the picturesque, which in Verona persisted through the 1940s (much later than in other cities in Italy), led to the destruction of artistically relevant sections of the city's built heritage. In analyzing the regime's urban policies, Sandrini claims that Fascist urban initiatives in Verona had the double purpose of serving Mussolini's propagandistic agenda while favoring the speculative interests of members of the upper and middle classes in charge of the projects.¹⁷ The demolition of the Jewish ghetto in particular was carried out, according to Sandrini, with the intent of improving the health and moral conditions of the city's center while serving the economic interests of the private groups entrusted with the demolition and reconstruction of the area. Sandrini also argues that the city's fierce attachment to its historic tradition prevented Fascist central authority from implementing more drastic urban policies such as the *sventramento* (literally disemboweling) of Verona's historic center, which affected other cities in Italy, including Brescia, Genoa, and Torino.¹⁸

¹⁵ Alberto Grimoldi, "Restauro a Verona: cultura e pubblico 1866-1940," in *L'architettura a Verona dal periodo napoleonico all'età contemporanea*, ed. Pierpaolo Brugnoli and Arturo Sandrini (Verona: Banca Popolare di Verona, 1994), 180-182.

¹⁶ Giandomenico Romanelli, "Il mito del medioevale: tra Ruskin e Boito," in *Verona 1900-1960. Architetture nella dissoluzione dell'aura*, ed. Arturo Sandrini and Francesco Amendolagine (Venezia: CLUVA, 1979), 17-20.

¹⁷ Arturo Sandrini, "Appunti per una storia urbana: Verona 1900-1945," in *Verona 1900-1960. Architetture nella dissoluzione dell'aura*, ed. Arturo Sandrini and Francesco Amendolagine (Venezia: CLUVA, 1979), 48.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

1.3 RATIONALE AND APPROACH

My study on the refashioning of Verona's architectural heritage builds on this foundational scholarship, in particular on the work of Ghirardo, by showing the active role played by Verona's socio-political elites in the refashioning of the city's urban fabric. However, my research also extends the current literature on Fascist-sponsored restoration projects by discussing the contribution of international narratives to the debate surrounding the refashioning of Italy's built heritage. I explore in the following chapters the ways in which these narratives influenced local and national socio-political groups, forcing them to renegotiate their project of appropriation of the city's historic heritage within a broader framework of international assumptions about Verona's famous history. Far from being a top-down undertaking, the reshaping of the city's urban space emerged as a complex process of mediation between distinct groups, with different interests at stake, each trying to capitalize on Verona's world-wide reputation to further their agenda. While preservation groups insisted on the importance of maintaining and restoring the city's multiple historical layers, the local socio-political elite pressed for an ideal—although sometimes fictitious—recreation of Verona's built heritage with the intent to foster tourism and support their myth of identity. The central government, on the other hand, fully supported local initiatives in order to build consensus for the regime as long as such projects could be reconciled with a Fascist nationalistic and imperialistic agenda. The study of the refashioning of Verona's architectural fabric shows that Mussolini appropriated the city's

cultural tradition but left ample freedom of action to local officials and the urban bourgeoisie in their urban renewal efforts.¹⁹

A city of Shakespearean memory, Verona's international reputation rose steadily in the nineteenth century thanks to the writings of famous travelers. John Ruskin, who visited Verona several times in his life, elected the city his "dearest place in Italy" for the nature of its monuments. In *The Stones of Venice* he praised the residences and tombs of the della Scala family as masterpieces of Italian architecture in the Middle Ages.²⁰ In his 1857 lecture *A Joy Forever*, Ruskin stated: "If I were asked to lay my finger, in a map of the world, on the spot of the world's surface which contained at this moment the most singular concentration of art-teaching and art-treasure I should lay it on the name of the town of Verona."²¹ Charles Dickens also spoke fondly of Verona. In *Pictures from Italy*, Dickens described the city:

[...] With its beautiful old palaces and charming country in the distance, seen from terrace walks, and stately ballustrated galleries. With its Roman gates, still spanning the fair street and casting on the sunlight of today the shade of fifteen hundred years ago. With its marble fitted churches, lofty towers, rich architecture, and quaint old quiet thoroughfares, where shouts of Montagues and Capulets once resounded...Pleasant Verona!²²

¹⁹ Recent scholarship has begun to question the degree of Mussolini's direct involvement in Fascist cultural policies, including urban and restoration projects. See by Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Mussolini* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) and *The Italian Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini's Fascism* (London: Arnold, 1998); see also Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum, ed., *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005).

²⁰ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (New York: John B. Alden, 1885), 73.

²¹ John Ruskin, "A Joy for Ever"; (*and Its Price in the Market*): *Being the Substance (with Additions) of Two Lectures on the Political Economy of Art, Delivered at Manchester, July 10th and 13th, 1857* (New York: Maynard, Merrill, & Co, 1894), 85.

²² Charles Dickens and David Paroissien, *Pictures from Italy* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1974), 38.

The German poet Heinrich Heine and the French author Antoine Claude Valéry also wrote extensively about Verona's artistic and architectural treasures and helped propagate the image of Verona as a relevant architectural site for an international audience.²³

By the time Mussolini took office in 1922, Verona's world-wide reputation was well established and was second only to Rome, Florence, and Venice. Verona's international tradition added a layer of complexity to the debate surrounding the refashioning of the city's urban environment, a complexity that calls for a highly differentiated model of interpretation. Indeed, the city's cultural prestige gave Mussolini a basis for both his nation-building efforts and imperialistic ambitions. It also provided Verona's socio-political elites with leverage over the central government in their efforts to get pending urban renewal projects approved and financed directly by the central state authority. Several restoration projects were already underway when Fascism came to power; many had been approved by the previous Liberal government but could not be carried out because of a lack of funds at the state level. Local forces, then, saw Fascism as an opportunity to realize their pending restoration efforts. The central government, on the other hand, was all too eager to claim a role in the restoration of the city's built environment as it helped to establish an ideal link between Fascism and Verona's glorious past.

In 1936, the Hollywood movie production *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by George Cukor and starring Norma Shearer in the role of Juliet and Leslie Howard in the role of Romeo, generated a renewed interest in Verona among international audiences. Although highly imaginative in its rendition of medieval Verona, Cukor's film contributed to the image of Verona as a charming medieval town, with a picturesque city center and pristine architectural monuments. The movie put the spotlight on sites traditionally associated with the Shakespearean

²³ Antoine-Claude Pasquin Valery, *Voyage historiques et littéraires en Italie, pendant les années 1826, 1827 et 1828, ou l'Indicateur Italien* (Bruxelles: Louis Hauman, 1835), 89-100.

drama of *Romeo and Juliet*. After centuries of neglect and lack of interest, the House and Tomb of Juliet underwent a swift and timely architectural makeover in order to meet mass audiences' expectations. The process, however, was not a smooth one as it pitted local officials against preservationists, each trying to impose their personal version of the past. While local officials pressed for an idealized and highly imaginative refashioning of the House and Tomb of Juliet, the preservationists opposed pseudo-restorations unconcerned with the buildings' multiple historical layers. In the heated debate that followed, the city's social elites and their political representatives were able to capitalize on the interest of the central government in their city in order to impose their vision of the past and neutralize the opposition of the preservation agency.

Thus, the conventional model that interprets restorations of historic buildings in Fascist Italy as state-sponsored projects cannot be applied to Verona as it is too simple and does not take into account the complex dynamic that unfolded around the refashioning of the city's urban space. As the following chapters will show, in Verona the forces directly involved in reshaping the city—namely the central government, city officials, and the Soprintendenza (the local institution in charge of the preservation of the city's architectural heritage)—were forced to negotiate their particular agenda with the world-wide expectations and assumptions about the city's identity and cultural meaning created by Cukor's movie.

For the central state authority this meant, among other things, reconciling the Fascist project of cultural universalism with Shakespeare's nationality. The regime, well aware of the need to address this impasse, chose to revive dubious theories claiming the Italian origin of the Bard. Studies arguing the possibility of an Italian Shakespeare had been circulating since 1925. Although diverging in details, these works argued that William Shakespeare's real name was Michele Agnolo Florio, and that he was born either in Valtellina (Lombardy) or Messina (Sicily)

to Giovanni Florio, a doctor, and Guglielma Crollalanza, a Sicilian noblewoman.²⁴ The family, known for its Calvinist sympathies, was forced to flee to London at the time of the Inquisition. There, the young Florio changed his name to William (the English equivalent of his mother's name, Guglielma) Shakespeare (the English translation for Crollalanza.) Although lacking concrete evidence, the theory was revived in the 1930s and divulged to the general public in a plethora of newspaper and magazine articles. *L'Arena* published several editorials on the topic. R. Begalli, for instance, wrote that claiming the Italian origin of Shakespeare was “a noble battle, one that cannot be opposed by intelligent people as it is not about stealing a glory from England but rather claiming a glory, which perhaps belongs to us.”²⁵

1.4 METHODOLOGY

My study on the refashioning of Verona's urban space is based on an interdisciplinary approach, which draws from various perspectives of architectural history, economic history, sociology, and urban geography. Essential to this investigation is the analysis of the relationship between the built environment, media, and memory. In the wide-ranging discussion concerning the nature of place, space, and memory, the work of urban geographers, particularly Robert Agnew and Karen Till, provides a useful model for my research. Drawing from the pioneering works of Maurice

²⁴ See Martino Iuvara, *Shakespeare era italiano* (Ispica: Associazione Trinacria, 2002).

²⁵ “Si tratta di vincere una nobile battaglia che non può trovare oppositori tra persone intelligenti, perchè non si tratta nemmeno di rubare una gloria all’Inghilterra, ma soltanto di rivendicare una gloria che, chissà, forse ci appartiene.” Quoted in Maurizio Zangarini, *Verona Fascista: miscellanea di studi su cultura e spirito pubblico fra le due guerre* (Verona: Cierre, 1993), 130, note 103.

Halbwachs on collective memory²⁶ and Pierre Nora on sites of memory,²⁷ Till focuses on the tension between social memory, official memory, and public memory concerning the meaning of places in the public arena. Till believes that social memory is spatially constituted. In her definition, “social (collective) memory is the process through which social groups map their myths (narratives) of self onto and through space and time.”²⁸ She stresses that collective memory is not the mere accumulation of individual memories; “rather it includes all activities that go into making a version of the past resonate with group members.”²⁹ Collective memory emerges then as a social narrative, distinct both from official memory (the leadership’s version of the past) and public memory (the ways in which narratives are understood and interpreted by a society.) In the public domain different groups or individuals may struggle to impose their version of the past on the built environment.³⁰ The process of negotiation and mediation to reconcile divergent social memories is what Till calls the “politics of memory.”³¹ Often “territorial struggles over the meaning of the built environment are reflective of larger social (and power) disputes about who has the authority to create, define, interpret and represent collective pasts through place.”³² Till’s study is pertinent to the dynamic of power that coalesced around the refashioning of Verona’s built heritage where different groups competed to impose their particular version of the past. During the twenty years of Fascist administration, the city’s urban

²⁶ According to Halbwachs, collective memory is not a given but rather a socially constructed notion: “while the collective memory endures and draws strengths from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember.” Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 22.

²⁷ Pierre Nora, *Lex Lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).

²⁸ Karen Till, “Places of Memory,” in *A Companion to Political Geography*, ed. John Agnew, Katharyne Mitchell, Henry Millon, and Toal Gerald (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 290.

²⁹ Karen Till, “Staging the Past: Landscape Design, Cultural Identity, and Erinnerungspolitik at Berlin’s Neue Wache” *Ecumene* 6, no. 3 (1999): 254.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 255.

³¹ *Idem*, “Places,” 290.

³² *Idem*, “Staging the Past,” 254. In her analysis of the debate surrounding the creation of a national memorial in Berlin (Neue Wache), Till illustrates how the built environment may become the site of negotiation of diverging social memories, competing with one another for supremacy.

space became the ground of contention between the local socio-political elite, the preservationists, and the central government, each trying to impose their personal version of the past. A process of mediation ensued, at the end of which the interests of the upper class and central government were reconciled so that their version of the past could prevail over the divergent interests of the preservationists.

The work of Robert Agnew, as well as that of David Atkinson and Denis Cosgrove on Rome under the Fascist regime also indicates that places of memory (which include museums, monuments, streets, historic preservation projects, as well as the rituals, images, and practices associated with them) can become highly contested grounds, sites of negotiation between official visions and local narratives.³³

In Verona, the major object of contention that pitted preservationists against local officials and central state authority had to do with the degree of accuracy of restoration projects. The built environment was arbitrarily reconfigured, reinvented, and simplified to match the idealized image of the city sought by the local social elite. Foucault argues that history provides a way to domesticate and control the past. History can be manipulated and rewritten according to the demands of the present.³⁴ Similarly, buildings and urban sites can be “edited” and reinterpreted to suit the agenda of the dominant group. As recent studies on German history have shown, monuments and architecture have always been constructed as a means of controlling the past for current political purposes.³⁵ In Fascist Italy, the regime often favored simplified

³³ See John Agnew, “The Impossible Capital: Monumental Rome under Liberal and Fascist Regimes, 1870-1943,” *Geografiska Annaler* 80B (1998): 229-40; and David Atkinson and Denis Cosgrove, “Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities: City, Nation, and Empire at the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument in Rome, 1870-1945,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, no. 1 (1998): 28-49.

³⁴ Michael Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 12.

³⁵ See Rudy Koshar, *Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth Century: German Transient Past* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

narratives about the past, and (re)creations in a neo-medieval style rather than faithful restorations of a building's multiple historical layers. Scholars have convincingly argued that the celebration of an idealized medieval heritage, devoid of complicating factors such as successive additions, along with the design of new, seemingly medieval architectural structures, had several goals including commemorating a historical era of military strength and political independence, promoting a feeling of shared national identity, and asserting Fascism as the legitimate heir of Italy's historic tradition. In addition, tourism played a key role in the controversial restoration projects carried out in Verona. As Owen Dwyer has shown, tourism economies and practices may result in simplified narratives about the past. In his analysis of civil rights monuments, Dwyer argues that since these places were created for a mass audience, the complexity of civil rights activism was simplified and presented in a straightforward manner.³⁶ Clearly, tourism economies influenced architectural decisions in Verona favoring an idealized and uncomplicated refashioning of the urban environment.

The arguments presented in this dissertation are based on the formal analysis of the architecture in situ. Close observation of the buildings' physical characteristics and their relation to the larger urban context have guided my thinking in terms of questions asked and conclusions drawn. The seemingly pristine medieval nature of the structures considered, the lack of references to their Fascist-era reconfiguration, and the broad-based appeal of the refurbished sites provided me with insights into the politicized and commercialized nature of Fascist-sponsored restoration projects in Verona.

In addition to the architecture itself, I have drawn upon extensive archival research. Sources vary widely: they include state documents, correspondence between central and local

³⁶ Owen Dwyer, "Interpreting the Civil Rights Movement: Place, Memory, and Conflict," *Professional Geographer* 52, no. 4 (2000): 660-671.

authorities, meeting minutes, committee reports, police reports, and newspaper accounts. The local archives in Verona (*Archivio di Stato* and *Archivio della Soprintendenza per i beni architettonici e per il paesaggio di Verona*) have proven essential in unraveling the antagonistic relation between city council representatives and the Soprintendenza. The National Archives in Rome (*Archivio Centrale di Stato*), with its extensive collection on the Fascist period, has been an invaluable resource for my research. In particular, the files of the correspondence between the Ministry of Public Education and Verona's officials have shed light on the degree of involvement of Fascist central authority in the process of refashioning Verona's urban space. I also researched the archives of the *Insituto Luce*, the regime's film institute, in order to collect information on the ways in which Verona's architectural heritage was promoted and advertised in documentaries and newsreels by the Fascist government. To complement my archival research in Italy, I have consulted the Margaret Herrick Library in Beverly Hills, California. That library's collections provide access to a wide range of unpublished material pertaining to the film *Romeo and Juliet*. Records include numerous script drafts and notes regarding the movie as well as photographs of interior and exterior sets. The research files of Cedric Gibbons, the film's artistic director, and photographs of the models of sets provided insights into the early stages of the film's physical form and its relation to Verona's actual urban fabric.

In addition, examination of contemporary publications provided an overview of the strategies adopted by the regime in the promotion of the restored medieval sites to a broad and diverse audience. Journals such as *Architettura e arti decorative. Rivista d'arte e di storia*; *Emporium*; and *Palladio* helped publicize government-sponsored restoration activities as an important component of Fascist architectural practice among professional audiences. These publications ran short reports on ongoing restorations as well as lengthy articles on recently

completed projects; they also included before-and-after photographs along with detailed architectural drawings. Of much broader appeal, magazines such as *La rivista illustrata del popolo d'Italia* and *L'illustrazione italiana*, reinforced in the general public the message of a collective historic heritage through informative, heavily illustrated articles. They often incorporated two-page spreads of buildings and monuments that elicited an interactive relationship between readers and the featured architecture while emphasizing the monumentality of the newly refurbished sites.

This dissertation benefited from secondary literature as well. I consulted research studies, journal articles, and dissertations from a variety of disciplines including art history, architectural studies, urban geography, cultural studies, and film studies. Authors whose writings were particularly influential to my thinking include Diane Ghirardo, Medina Lasansky, Robert Agnew, and Jeffrey Schnapp as well as James Hay and Philip Cannistraro.

For Italian sources, I relied heavily upon the work of Maurizio Zangarini (*Politica e società a Verona in epoca fascista: studi e ricerche* and *Verona fascista. Miscellanea di studi su cultura e spirito pubblico fra le due guerre*), which provides a thorough analysis of the city's economic, political, and social situation during the Fascist *ventennio*. The writings of art and architectural historians Alberto Grimoldi, Arturo Sandrini, and Paola Marini, among others, have also provided a solid basis for my research.

Additionally, I interviewed and corresponded with various individuals who are currently involved in Verona's cultural and civic life including the Director of the City Museums Paola Marini, Superintendent Maristella Vecchiato, and Giulio Tamassia, president of Juliet's Club. These interviews helped me further characterize the legacy of Fascist-sponsored restoration

projects and unravel how Verona's citizens have dealt with their Fascist past, particularly in relation to the sentimentalized nature of sites such as the House and Tomb of Juliet.

1.5 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

I have structured the dissertation into five chapters. The first chapter contextualizes the refashioning of Verona's urban space within the city's historic, artistic, and cultural tradition. Verona's built heritage spans centuries of Italian history and includes one of the best preserved Roman amphitheaters (the Arena), a Roman theater built on the slope of San Pietro's hill in the first century B.C., and numerous medieval and Renaissance palazzi. Verona is also rich in literary associations. Banished from Florence at the time of the battle between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines, Dante Alighieri found refuge in Verona at the court of Cangrande della Scala, the greatest member of the pro-imperial (Ghibelline) family that ruled Verona from 1277 to 1387. In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante celebrated Cangrande as the *Veltro* or Greyhound, the ruler whose kingdom was to bring peace and prosperity to Italy. Also, Shakespeare chose Verona as the setting of two world-famous plays: *Romeo and Juliet* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. In this chapter, I argue that the city's artistic and literary tradition well served Mussolini's nationalist and imperialist agenda and provided the local socio-political elite with a means to realize their vision for the city. Acutely aware of the relevance of Verona's cultural heritage to Mussolini's nation- and empire-building policies and to the Party's self-legitimizing efforts, the local elite was able to co-opt the regime's agenda to its own benefit. Immediately after Fascism came to power, the upper classes and their political representatives submitted a series of restoration projects for approval directly to the central government and in so doing they bypassed the

opposition of the preservation agency. The central government, eager to earn the approval of the city's elites and present itself as the legitimate heir of Verona's glorious past, promptly approved and financed—at least in part—the local restoration efforts.

The second part of this chapter is concerned with the economic, political and social conditions affecting the city in the early 1920s. Verona actively participated in the *Risorgimento*, the process leading to the unification of Italy in 1861. However, as many scholars have underlined, the existence of a political Italy (the Liberal state) did not translate into a real Italy (the nation). Rather, the unification exposed the existing divisions by language, culture, and regions characterizing the nation. Verona, like other cities in Italy, wrestled with the notion of a shared national identity and struggled to develop a bond between its civil society and the newly formed nation-state. In addition, the end of World War I led to a serious economic downturn as the city lost the revenue derived from the presence of military forces. A society dominated by agrarian nobility with a rather weak industrial basis and characterized by a strong commitment to Catholicism, Verona was a city trying to redefine its identity, boost its economy, and participate in the nation-building process. This chapter argues that the refashioning of the city's architectural heritage was instrumental in achieving these goals.

The second chapter focuses on key restoration and urban projects within the context of Verona's city planning. Castelvecchio, Palazzo del Podestà, the House and Tomb of Juliet were refashioned according to an ideal and highly imaginative form by stripping buildings of their historical layers and superimposing new and recycled architectural elements. In a similar fashion, the city's urban fabric was reconfigured and “simplified” through the demolition of the Jewish ghetto and the removal of the lower classes from the city's center to specially designated areas in the suburbs. Particular attention is given to the role of Antonio Avena, director of Verona's

museums and a key figure in the restoration of the city's architectural heritage. A member of the local middle class, Avena was part of a new category of officials that emerged in the first two decades of the twentieth century. They held key positions within the Fascist administration and were invested with executive power, which allowed them to cut through the chain of bureaucracy in order to implement their plans. Acting on behalf of the city council, Avena was able to carry out his often-controversial restoration projects against the opposition of the preservationists. A section of this chapter is devoted to the theories of preservation and restoration of the late nineteenth and twentieth century that influenced Fascist urban policies and restoration projects. On the one hand, there was the position of Camillo Boito, the leading Italian expert on restoration theory, who insisted on the importance of preserving buildings in their current state and limiting architectural restorations to secure structural stability. On the other hand, there were architects such as Giuseppe Castellucci and Ignazio Gavini who favored a more "creative" approach to restoration and recommended returning buildings to their supposedly original form by freeing them of all subsequent additions. Restoration in the work of Castellucci and Gavini became re-creation, often arbitrary and controversial. In the last section, the debate over the nature and goals of restoration practices is contextualized within the contemporary professionalization of architecture and urban planning. This chapter is concerned with questions relating to which sections of Verona's urban fabric were reconfigured, how they were reconfigured, by whom, and for whose benefit.

Chapter three focuses on George Cukor's film *Romeo and Juliet* and its impact on the refashioning of buildings of Shakespearean memory, which include the House and Tomb of Juliet. In the summer of 1935, a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer troupe went to Verona to document with pictures every corner of the city in preparation for Cukor's re-adaptation of the Shakespearean

drama. The Minister of Propaganda, Galeazzo Ciano, requested that full support and help be given to the MGM executives during their stay in Verona. Antonio Avena was assigned to assist the American producers in their work and in their visit to the city. In the end, MGM executive Louis Mayer decided to film the movie in the Hollywood studios, rejecting Cukor's wish to shoot the exteriors of *Romeo and Juliet* on location in Italy. Although highly imaginative in its rendition of medieval Verona, the movie sparked a renewed interest in the city among national and international audiences and forced local and state officials to reconceptualize their projects of appropriation of the city's architectural heritage in order to meet the audiences' expectations.

Scholars have underlined how fascism—both at the state and local level—used architecture as mass media, as a means to build consensus for the regime. This chapter argues that in Verona, mass media used and ultimately impacted architecture and urban projects. Indeed, Hollywood's imaginative rendition of medieval Verona asserted itself as a determining factor in the reshaping of Verona's urban fabric: it prompted city officials to meet the audience's expectations by offering them concrete—although fictitious—signs of Romeo and Juliet's story. It acted as a catalyst to projects that otherwise would probably never have been executed and it inspired Antonio Avena in his choreographed renderings of Juliet's house and tomb. These sites were stripped of their historical layers to provide audiences with an ideal and uncomplicated version of the past, reminiscent of Hollywood's adaptation. In particular, Avena's decision to build a crypt under the cloister of the church of San Francesco to house the alleged tomb of Juliet might have been directly inspired by Cukor's rendition of the death scene of the lovers.

It is important to point out that the power of the Hollywood narrative resided primarily in the fact that it could be easily molded to fit the image the central government and local authorities were trying to shape for Verona. Whereas the city's socio-political elites saw

Shakespearean sites as a means to lure and attract mass tourism, the regime looked at them as evidence of Italy's cultural prestige and as a justification for Mussolini's imperialistic claims.

Chapter four deals with the official state visit Mussolini made to Verona on September 26, 1938. Focusing on the architectural settings of mass rallies and military parades, I argue Mussolini's trip—along with its representation in newspapers and magazines—was carefully choreographed to include key monuments of the city's Roman and medieval architectural fabric. Sites such as the Arena, Castelvecchio, and Palazzo del Podestà were co-opted by the regime as visual propaganda demonstrating the continuity between Verona's historic traditions and Mussolini's government while providing a base for the regime's dual pursuit of nation and empire building.

The final chapter concerns the legacy of Fascist restoration projects in Verona. To the many tourists and visitors who crowd Verona's streets every year, the city appears untouched by time. Some of its most characteristic monuments, totally reconfigured during the Fascist administration, are deceptively presented as pristine historical landmarks. A plaque inserted into the entrance wall of Juliet's House identifies the structure as the Capulets' house but bears no references to the 1936 interventions. In a similar fashion, Juliet's Tomb lacks any inscriptions documenting Avena's work. Palazzo del Podestà is marked by several inscriptions, none of which mentions the 1920s restoration. Scholars have explained such a process of collective forgetting, common to other cities in Italy, as a strategy to avoid confrontation with the past and as an attempt to cut the regime off the path of national history. According to Ben-Ghiat the profound uneasiness Italians have felt over Mussolini's regime has prevented them from gaining

a self-reflective understanding of their national past.³⁷ Only recently have non-Italian scholars begun to explore and unveil the extent to which Italy's built heritage was manipulated and refashioned under the regime.³⁸ In this chapter I argue that the lack of markers identifying Fascist interventions as well as the scarcity of critical studies addressing the controversial remaking of Verona's city center is a complex issue, which can only partially be explained by the Italians' unwillingness to face their own past.

A 2002 symposium on the life and work of Antonio Avena gathered the contributions of local scholars in a series of essays addressing the role of Avena in the remaking of the city's urban fabric.³⁹ Highly favorable to Avena's work, the essays interpret his restoration projects as undertakings in tune with the restoration theories of the time and instrumental in reshaping the city's elite culture and making it accessible to a wider audience. In these studies, Avena is presented as a skillful, pragmatically political and cultural figure, who was able to navigate the political system in order to create for the city a historical narrative that has proven successful to this very day. The relationship of the City Museums Director with the regime is addressed but is never the focus of the discussion; rather it is contextualized within the broader debate on Avena's work for the Liberal governments that preceded and followed the Fascist regime. These essays show that local scholars have begun to assess their historical past and process the legacy of the Fascist regime. Yet, the lack of markers documenting Fascist-period restorations remains a

³⁷ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "Fascism, Writing and Memory: The Realist Aesthetic in Italy, 1930-1950," *Journal of Modern History* 67, no. 3 (1995): 627-665.

³⁸ See Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected* and "Towers and Tourists: The Cinematic City of San Gimignano," in *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*, ed. Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005), 113-132; Ghirardo, "Inventing the Palazzo del Corte," and "Città Fascista"; and Roger J. Crum, "Shaping the Fascist 'New Man': Donatello's St. George and Mussolini's appropriated Renaissance of the Italian Nation," in *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*, ed. Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005), 133-144.

³⁹ Paola Marini, ed., *Medioevo ideale e Medioevo reale nella cultura urbana: Antonio Avena e la Verona del primo Novecento* (Verona: Comune di Verona, Assessorato alla cultura, 2003).

persistent feature of Verona's urban landscape and the popular press still features the House and Tomb of Juliet as sites of artistic and cultural relevance. This chapter argues that the still relatively tepid interest scholars have shown in investigating years of collaboration between Verona's socio-political elite and Mussolini's dictatorship, as well as the proclivity of popular media to overlook Verona's Fascist past have their roots in the romanticized image of Verona created by the Hollywood movie industry. Indeed, the numerous cinematographic renditions of Romeo and Juliet's play have elevated Verona to the status of a mythic, a-historical place. Shielded in a fictional, timeless dimension, the city has managed to exonerate itself from a conscious and reflective assessment of its Fascist past while preserving its architectural fabric immune from close critical inquiry.

2.0 VERONA WITHIN THE NEW ITALIAN NATION STATE. DREAMING A FUTURE OF CULTURAL PRESTIGE AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

A World Heritage Site, the city of Verona is a tourist Mecca fed by claims to be one of the greatest heritage sites in the nation.⁴⁰ Its monuments spanning centuries of Italian history and its reputation as the city of Romeo and Juliet attract millions of visitors every year. Tourism plays a key role in the economy of a city with one of the highest per-capita income rates in the nation. Nevertheless, social and political contradictions agitate Verona's society from within rippling the smooth surface of its everyday life. Verona is one of the strongholds of the *Lega Nord*, or Northern League, the far-right, anti-immigration political party whose platform calls for the secession of the more prosperous North from the economically depressed South. Moreover, Verona's city council has distinguished itself through controversial initiatives such as the decision, following the election of 2008, to bulldoze a Muslim Mosque in the northern part of the city. These issues have roots in the geographical context and historical development of the city. In particular, they are linked to the process of redefinition of Verona's regional and national

⁴⁰ Verona was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2000. According to the organization's web site, "Verona has preserved a remarkable number of monuments from antiquity, the medieval and Renaissance periods, and represents an outstanding example of a military stronghold." The city was inscribed on the list on the basis of criteria ii and iv: "Criterion ii: In its urban structure and its architecture, Verona is an outstanding example of a town that has developed progressively and uninterruptedly over two thousand years, incorporating artistic elements of the highest quality from each succeeding period. Criterion iv: Verona represents in an exceptional way the concept of the fortified town at several seminal stages of European history." Available: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/797/>, 19 May 2010.

identity after its incorporation in the Kingdom of Italy in 1866 and following the advent of Fascism.

2.1 “A BEAUTIFUL MANCHESTER”: VERONA’S UNFULFILLED HOPE FOR INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

Italian troops entered Verona, one of the last Italian territories to be freed from the Austrians, on October 16, 1866. A few days later, a plebiscite of the city and province unanimously ratified Verona’s annexation to Italy with 88,864 votes in favor and only five against.⁴¹ However, following unification Verona was faced by a series of economic challenges that dwindled the enthusiasm for the Union and greatly undermined among the population the trust in the central authority.⁴²

A major trade and military outpost for much of its history, Verona derived from this status its identity as a frontier city and its economic strength.⁴³ With the withdrawal of the Austrian troops, Verona faced the economic problems deriving from the loss of its major source of income. A drop in customs revenues along with a loss of jobs and a surplus of vacant properties brought Verona’s economy to its knees. At the same time, the city witnessed a decline of its traditional economic industries. Wool, cotton, and silk production, for centuries a relatively steady aspect of the city’s economy, was curtailed by lack of investments, technological

⁴¹ Sergio Noto, “L’annessione all’Italia. Realtà e speranze (1866-1898),” in *Storia di Verona: caratteri, aspetti, momenti*, ed. Giovanni Zalin (Vicenza: N. Pozza, 2002), 300.

⁴² In 1880, the average daily wage for a bricklayer was £5 whereas a kilo of bread cost £50. See Licisco Magagnato, “La piena del 1882, la regolazione dell’Adige in città e le sue implicazioni urbanistiche,” in *Una città e il suo fiume*, ed. Giorgio Borelli (Verona: Banca Popolare di Verona, 1997).

⁴³ Richard Murphy, *Carlo Scarpa and the Castelvechio* (London: Butterworth Architecture, 1990), 4-5.

backwardness, and pebrine, the epidemic disease of silkworms that affected nineteenth century silk production world-wide.⁴⁴ The severity of the crisis was underscored by the recently sworn-in administration. In 1867, the mayor Marquis Alessandro Carlotti admitted in his speech to the city council, “The crisis we are facing demands economic rigorousness ... Do not expect from us monumental works, nor elaborate embellishments for our city. The time of prosperity shall come, one hopes, in the future.”⁴⁵ On September 15, 1882, the flood of the Adige River, caused by heavy and prolonged rainfall, exacerbated the already-difficult economic situation of the city. For five days, the water inundated Verona’s streets and neighborhoods destroying hundreds of houses, wiping out mills, and damaging bridges. Three thousand families were displaced, more than twenty people were killed, and the administration was left to face damages of more than £3,000,000.⁴⁶ A national lottery was organized to raise money for the affected population, troops were sent in to help with the reconstruction, and the King himself visited Verona on September 22 to express solidarity with the distressed population.⁴⁷

The worst flood in Verona’s history revealed the inadequacies of the city’s urban layout, with houses sitting directly on the river’s banks, unprotected from the water. However, the flood also provided the city with the opportunity to modernize itself and redefine its identity. On September 29, a few days after the disaster, the mayor Giulio Camuzzoni announced a competition for a project to prevent future floods. The plan was to be presented and carried out

⁴⁴ Paolo Moracchiello, “Dall’annessione a fine secolo,” in *Ritratto di Verona: lineamenti di una storia urbanistica*, ed. Lionello Puppi (Verona: Banca Popolare di Verona, 1978), 479; Noto, “L’annessione all’Italia,” 306.

⁴⁵ “Questo sconcerto economico in cui versiamo ci imporrà il dovere della più rigorosa economia... Non vi aspettate dunque da noi né monumentali lavori, né ricercati abbellimenti della nostra città. Verranno, come si spera, i tempi della prosperità.” “Resoconti delle sedute del consiglio comunale di Verona,” 22 March 1867. Quoted in Luigi Camerlengo, “Gli architetti veronesi e Antonio Avena,” in *Medioevo ideale e Medioevo reale nella cultura urbana: Antonio Avena e la Verona del primo Novecento*, ed. Paola Marini (Verona: Comune di Verona, Assessorato alla cultura, 2003), 223.

⁴⁶ Paolo Moracchiello, “Dall’annessione a fine secolo,” 485; Noto, “L’annessione all’Italia,” 311.

⁴⁷ Silvio Lanaro, “Dopo il ’66. Una regione in patria,” in *Il Veneto*, ed. Silvio Lanaro (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1984), 454.

with the highest priority and efficiency. Completed in 1895, the embankment of Verona's river cost £7,163,000, of which 4,500,000 was provided by the central government and the remaining 2,200,000 by the city.⁴⁸ The project secured Verona from later inundations and provided jobs to hundreds of people, relieving—at least temporarily—unemployment in the city. However the works for the canal also resulted in the demolition of medieval and Renaissance houses, some of great artistic value, including Palazzo Camerlenghi, whose salvaged door and window surrounds were later re-used by Antonio Avena in the refurbishing of Castelvecchio. The embankment also changed the relationship of Verona's citizens to the river as it wiped out livelihoods and activities depending on the Adige, such as those of fishermen, riverside merchants, and mill operators.

Closely linked to the work for the embankment of the Adige, was the project for the construction of the Camuzzoni industrial canal, the first step toward the development of a Veronese industrial economy.⁴⁹ Completed in 1885, the canal generated the motive power (3,000 horsepower) necessary to sustain the emerging industries.⁵⁰ Cotton textile manufacturers such as Crespi, Turati, and Festi Rasini, along with Galtarossa foundries and the railroad industries were among the first to benefit from the construction of the canal. Along with the Fredigoni paper mills, the Franchini cardboard factory, and the Consolaro mills, they became the backbone of

⁴⁸ Magagnato, "La piena del 1882," 827-830.

⁴⁹ On the Camuzzoni canal see Maurizio Zangarini, ed., *Il canale Camuzzoni: industria e società a Verona dall'unità al Novecento* (Verona: Consorzio canale industriale Giulio Camuzzoni, 1991); Ornella Selvafolta, "Verona Ottocento: i luoghi e le architetture dell'industria," in *L'architettura a Verona dal periodo napoleonico all'età contemporanea*, ed. Pierpaolo Brugnoli and Arturo Sandrini (Verona: Banca Popolare di Verona, 1994), 224-251; and Morachiello, "Dall'annessione," 482-502.

⁵⁰ The canal, 5.5 km long, was designed by Enrico Carli to connect with a straight linear flow the north-west and the south-east territories of Verona. It runs from the town of Chievo to the suburb of Tombetta, providing twenty-six cubic meters of water per second and generating 3,000 horsepower. See Noto, "L'annessione all'Italia," 310.

Verona's emerging industrial economy.⁵¹ The industries were concentrated in the area known as Basso Acquar, to the south of the city in close proximity to the industrial canal on which they depended for energy and the railroad, which guaranteed easy and cheap transportation of raw materials and finished products. In the intention of the mayor Camuzzoni, who gave the canal its name, the canalization of the Adige would attract industries from nearby regions to Verona and provide the platform for the redefinition of the city's identity from military outpost to industrial center. The local newspaper *L'Arena* echoed the hopes of the administration in an article that praised the city for its effort to modernize itself. The author underlined with pride how Verona had the potential to become "a beautiful Manchester" where "the smile of the sky, the generosity of the climate, and the splendor of the arts" would pair with "the advancement of trade and industry, which are synonyms of life and prosperity."⁵² However, the dream Camuzzoni had for the city would not materialize in that century: the motive power generated by the canal remained largely unused and only medium-size industries were built in the area of the Basso Acquar. For decades to come, Verona's economy would remain mostly agrarian.

Indeed, from its inception, the canal was conceived to be both an industrial and irrigation canal and thus to serve as a stimulus to industries as well as for ongoing agriculture. As Paolo Morachiello notes: "The objective was to create a new equilibrium in the redistribution of profits within the countryside (with higher profits for the settlers and higher rents for the owners)."⁵³ Such reconfiguration of profit margins was aimed at keeping laborers in the countryside,

⁵¹ Factory workers in the province of Verona numbered 8,658 in 1890. The number rose to 20,000 people in 1911. See Giovanni Priante, *L'Arena e Verona: 140 anni di storia* (Verona: Athesis, 2006), 41.

⁵² "Divenire una bellissima Manchester [abbinando] il sorriso di cielo, la bontà di clima, lo splendore d'arte [col] movimento di industrie e di commerci, che è quanto dire vita e prosperità." *L'Arena*, 17-18 November 1883. Quoted in Selvafolta, "Verona Ottocento," 241.

⁵³ "Scopo comune era realizzare, attraverso una conversione delle colture, un nuovo equilibrio distributivo degli utili nelle campagne (secondo lo schema: maggior margine di guadagno per i coloni, più alti prezzi d'affitto per i proprietari.)" Morachiello, "Dall'annessione," 487.

preventing their exodus to the city and their transformation into urban proletariat. In this manner, the city planned to contain the cost of salaries and preserve “the equilibrium of power among classes.”⁵⁴ Based on the final project, the canal would provide water for the irrigation of more than 8,000 hectares of land in the area north of the city; it would also provide enough water to feed an additional canal for the irrigation of fields west of the city. Whereas the former area would be reserved for pasture and mulberry trees, the latter would be devoted to the farming of cereals and rice.⁵⁵ At the same time, new technologies were introduced such as the use of chemical fertilizers, new machines for mowing and threshing, and mechanical mills. A reflection of all the efforts made for the development of agriculture was the institution of the *Fiera Internazionale Cavalli e dell’Agricoltura*, a horse and agriculture fair, which in the intention of its organizer Carlo Titta was to showcase the latest technology in farming and food trade. Inaugurated in 1898 by King Victor Emanuel III and Prince Umberto, the fair brought to Verona vendors and visitors from the north-eastern regions of Italy. Collateral activities, such as a horse show in the Arena and the staging of the opera *Andrea Chenier* at the Teatro Filarmonico guaranteed the success of the fair, which soon became an institution in the life of the city that has survived to this day. Through the years, knowledge accrued from the fair as well as water supplied by the canal allowed local farmers to advance their fruit and vegetable production making this area one of the most successful in Europe.⁵⁶ For the time being, however, agricultural production in Verona and its province remained rather limited, falling short of its full potential.⁵⁷ Locked in the traditional system of sharecropping, farming became in the early

⁵⁴ “L’equilibrio di potere tra le classi.” Ibid., 488.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 526.

⁵⁶ Noto, “L’anessione all’Italia,” 327.

⁵⁷ Arturo Sandrini, “Appunti,” 35.

twentieth century a source of social unrest and a battleground between landless farmers and landowners.

Along with industrial expansion and agricultural innovation, the major challenge city administrators had to face at the turn of the century was the housing problem. Indeed, the development of an industrial economy, although still in its infancy, resulted in profound changes within the city's urban fabric. The migration of people from the countryside to the city as well as their move from the center to the suburbs where the major industries were concentrated, determined in those areas an increasing need for affordable housing. The first complex of public housing was built in 1884 for railroad workers and their families in an area outside the city walls, about 2 km from the center, known as Campo Marzo.⁵⁸ In 1888, the first district entirely reserved for working class families, 16 Ottobre, was inaugurated. In 1909, the city approved a plan for the construction of three housing projects that would provide clean, affordable and decent housing to 435 working class families. Located in the peripheral neighborhoods of Tombetta, San Pancrazio, and Porta Palio, respectively to the south, south-east, and south-west of the city, these complexes averaged a distance of 3.1 km from the center of Verona.⁵⁹ The location of the housing projects clearly reveals the intention by the city's administration to concentrate low-income families in the outskirts of the city. Already in the aftermath of the 1882 flood, city officials had made clear their intention to remove low-income residents from the city's center and relocate them to the suburbs. Indeed, although the flood had mostly affected the poor, who lived in the closest proximity to the river, officials communicated that there would be little room along the newly reconstructed banks for "cheap dwellings" that could provide "affordable

⁵⁸ Morachiello, "Dall'annessione," 500.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 527, note 118.

housing for the working classes.”⁶⁰ Morachiello believes that in the mind of city administrators the embankment of the Adige as well as the construction of the industrial canal were part of a larger plan aimed at “a regeneration of the city’s urban fabric [which] inevitably led to the progressive marginalization of the people and the activities linked to the river.”⁶¹

2.2 A CITY STRUGGLING WITH SOCIAL UNREST AND POLITICAL CONSERVATISM

The economic transformations that the city experienced in the late nineteenth century were accompanied by profound social and political changes as the population of Verona increased and workers organized themselves into unions to demand better working and living conditions. In 1890, the first *Camera del Lavoro* was born. The prototype for all future union organizations, the *Camera del Lavoro* was articulated into various branches, each representative of the interests of a work category.⁶² Trying to mediate between workers and employers, the association was at first well received by city officials. However, a series of strikes in 1894 that the *Camera* was unable or unwilling to prevent led to its dissolution by the Prefect. In 1896, the Socialist Party began its activity in Verona. Among its members were Giacomo Levi, the founder of the socialist newspaper *Verona del Popolo* and Mario Todeschini, who in 1908 became the first socialist representative from Verona elected to the Parliament.⁶³ The Catholic Church played an important

⁶⁰ “Abitazioni ... a modico prezzo,” “conveniente alloggio ... alla classe operaia.” Ibid., 492.

⁶¹ “Ristrutturazione del patrimonio edilizio esistente lungo le rive; e ... ristrutturazione accompagnata, inevitabilmente, dalla progressiva emarginazione della gente e delle attività legate al fiume.” Ibid., 491.

⁶² The following categories were represented: bakers, tailors, printmakers, blacksmiths, carpenters, waiters, masons, and bricklayers. See Marco Girardi, *Verona tra Ottocento e Novecento* (Treviso: Canova, 2004), 72.

⁶³ Noto, “L’annessione all’Italia,” 335.

role in socio-political events that agitated Verona's society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After the publication of the *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, the Church actively promoted the formation of Catholic workers associations such as the *Società Operaia*.⁶⁴ Particularly successful was the creation of mutual savings banks, which represented the "first concrete attempt to solve the problem caused by low-income citizens' inability to get loans."⁶⁵

In spite of the social turmoil agitating Veronese society, the city's political landscape remained unchanged from the second half of the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. During those years, the agrarian nobility controlled both Verona's economic and political life. In the countryside, the agrarian elite maintained control over the land through the system of sharecropping, which tied tenants to the land through short-term contracts.⁶⁶ Members of the agrarian nobility also controlled Verona's political life by holding administrative positions at both the local and state level. Giulio Camuzzoni, a member of the city's agrarian elite, was elected senator in 1867 and mayor of Verona the following year. He held both positions until 1871, when he retired from the Senate to retain the role of mayor for the following eleven years. Like many other political leaders from the same social background, Camuzzoni tended to give priority to local interests and subordinate national issues to Verona's particular problems. According to Lanaro, Verona's political class remained an expression of the interests of agrarian

⁶⁴ An encyclical letter issued by Pope Leo XIII, the *Rerum Novarum* addressed the conditions of the working classes. The letter stated the position of the Roman Catholic Church on social justice, especially as it related to the problems resulting from the Industrial Revolution, and it stressed the right of the Church to make pronouncements on social issues. On the *Rerum Novarum* see George Weigel and Robert Royal, ed., *A Century of Catholic Social Thought: Essays on Rerum Novarum and Nine Other Key Documents* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1991) and Roger Aubert, *Catholic Social Teaching: An Historical Perspective* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 2003).

⁶⁵ "Vero e primo concreto tentativo di risolvere l'annoso problema del credito alle classi meno abbienti." By the end of the century there were eighty-four Catholic mutual saving banks, including the Banca Cattolica Veronese founded in 1895. See Noto, "L'annessione all'Italia," 332; Girardi, *Verona tra Ottocento e Novecento*, 74.

⁶⁶ Such contracts, according to Lanaro, were exploitative of the tenants, who were discouraged from long-term investments and therefore unable to improve their economic situation and emancipate themselves. See Silvio Lanaro, "Genealogia di un modello," in *Il Veneto*, ed. Silvio Lanaro (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1984), 42-43.

landowners until the early 1940s, when the coming to power of the Christian Democratic Party upset the equilibrium of the region's political system: "Before the advent of the Christian Democratic Party, in the Veneto region ... there is no such a thing as an urban political class coming from the professional and intellectual bourgeoisie. Liberal, clerical, democratic and radical members of the Parliament belong almost always to the agrarian nobility."⁶⁷ The preponderance of landowners in Verona's political life was responsible, according to Lanaro, for the region's industrial and economic delay. It was only in the 1930s, in conjunction with the crisis that hit agriculture, that a Veronese industrial economy finally took shape.⁶⁸

2.3 VERONA IN THE WRITINGS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY TRAVELERS

As discussed, industrialization and agricultural advancements were two major goals city administrators set for themselves in the years following unification in order to revamp the city's economy and transform Verona from a military base of the Hapsburg Empire into a modern city within the new Italian nation-state. Tourism was the other avenue officials pursued in their effort to create a modern and prosperous Verona.

The city was a popular destination among foreign travelers as early as the sixteenth century. Known for its Roman antiquities, Verona was often included in the itinerary of the Grand Tour. Originated in the seventeenth century for the education and the pleasure of British aristocrats, the Grand Tour consisted of a trip to continental Europe, through the Netherlands,

⁶⁷ "Prima dell'avvento della Democrazia Cristiana ... in Veneto non emerge praticamente mai un ceto politico urbano che provenga dalla borghesia intellettuale e delle professioni: i parlamentari liberali, clerico-moderati, democratici, radicali appartengono quasi sempre al notabilato agrario." Ibid., 62.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 83.

Germany, France, Switzerland, and Italy. Often accompanied by a tutor, young upper-class men would spend two or three years studying and visiting sites associated with classical culture. In Italy, often regarded as the ‘prize’ to be won by Grand Tourists struggling over the Alps, they would visit Turin, Florence, Rome, Naples, and Venice. Side trips would include cities such as Pisa, Bologna, Padua, and Verona.⁶⁹

Among the first to visit Verona and write about its monuments was Montaigne, who in his *Journal de Voyage* described Verona’s numerous churches—in particular San Zeno—and its Roman amphitheater, the *Arena*, which he regarded as the finest monument ever seen in his life.⁷⁰ Goethe devoted three days and ten pages to Verona in his *Italian Journey*. His description of the city starts with the Arena (“the great monument of the ancient world”) and continues with other Imperial monuments, in particular the Roman gate of Porta Palio (“the most beautiful of the city gates”). Later monuments did not awaken any particular interest in him. For instance, “the strange looking building” of Palazzo della Ragione caught his attention only for its inner courtyard which “seemed nothing more than an enormous well.”⁷¹ Joseph de Lalande’s *Voyage in Italy* provides a geographic and historical overview of the city and a detailed description of its architectural monuments. The Arena according to Lalande “is the most interesting monument in Verona”; “beautifully preserved... this magnificent amphitheater was built in the same style as

⁶⁹ Greg Richards, *Cultural Tourism in Europe* (Wallingford, UK: CAB International, 1996), 5-8 and 215-223. On Italy and the Grand Tour see also Jeremy Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Edward Chaney, *The Evolution of the Grand Tour: Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations Since the Renaissance*. (London: Frank Cass, 1998); and Clare Hornsby, ed., *The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond* (London: British School of Rome, London, 2000).

⁷⁰ Michael de Montaigne and W. G. Waters, *The Journal of Montaigne's Travels in Italy By Way of Switzerland and Germany in 1580 and 1581* (London: J. Murray, 1903), 1-6.

⁷¹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and W. H. Auden, *Italian Journey, 1786-1788* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962), 55.

the Coliseum in Rome.”⁷² Whereas the medieval churches of Verona “have nothing extremely remarkable,” the author praises the city’s ancient sites, in particular Porta Borsari and Porta Leoni (the two ancient Roman gates to the city), Arco dei Gavi (Gavi Arch), and the Roman Theater. Gilbert Burnet’s *Travel through France, Italy, Germany, and Switzerland* describes Verona as “a vast town, and much of it is well built.”⁷³ Like Lalande, Burnet considers the Arena the most remarkable monument of Verona, along with the Museum Calceolarium, which he recommends visiting for its collections of Roman antiquities and rarities.⁷⁴ Verona’s reputation remained tied to the Arena and its other ancient monuments throughout the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries. The city’s gothic churches and medieval palazzi were of little interest to travelers and tourists at this time and received little consideration in the literature of the Grand Tour. It was only in the late 1800s that tourists and travelers turned their attention to other aspects of Verona’s cultural and artistic tradition. Influenced by the writings of the critic John Ruskin, foreigners traveled to Verona to experience its gothic architecture and medieval monuments.

Ruskin, who visited Verona several times in the course of his life, elected the city his dearest place in Italy.⁷⁵ In *The Stones of Venice* he celebrated the residences and tombs of

⁷² Joseph Jérôme le Français de Lalande, *Voyage en Italie, contenant l’histoire & les anectodes les plus singulieres de l’Italie, & sa description ; les usages, le gouvènement, le commerce, la littérature, les arts, l’histoire naturelle, & les antiquités; avec des jugemens sur les ouvrages de peinture, sculpture & architecture, & les plans de toutes les grandes villes d’Italie* (Paris: Veuve Desaint, 1790), 163.

⁷³ Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet’s Travels Through France, Italy, Germany, and Switzerland: Describing Their Religion, Learning, Government, Customs, Natural History, Trade, &C., and Illustrated with Curious Observations on the Buildings, Paintings, Antiquities and Other Curiosities in Art and Nature. With a Detection of Frauds and Folly of Popery and Superstition in Some Flagrant Instances, Also Characters of Several Eminent Persons, and Many Other Memorable Things Worthy the Attention of the Curious* (Edinburgh: Sands, Murray, and Cochran, 1752), 98.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ruskin visited Verona in 1835 and later in 1841, 1845, 1849, 1852, 1869, and 1872-76.

Cangrande, Mastino and Consignoro della Scala as among the masterpieces of Italian medieval architecture.⁷⁶ In his 1857 lecture *A Joy Forever*, Ruskin stated:

[Verona] contains ... what Rome does not contain—perfect examples of the great twelfth-century Lombardic architecture, which was the root of all the medieval art of Italy, without which no Giotto, no Angelico, no Raphael would have been possible: it contains that architecture, not in rude forms, but in the most perfect and loveliest types it ever attained—contains those, not in ruins, nor in altered and hardly decipherable fragments, but in churches perfect from porch to apse, with all their carving fresh, their pillars firm, their joints unloosened. Besides these, it includes examples of the great thirteenth and fourteenth century Gothic of Italy, not merely perfect, but elsewhere unrivalled ... And Verona possess the loveliest, not defiled by luxury, but rising in fair fulfillment of domestic service, serenity of effortless grace, and modesty of home seclusion ... All this she possesses in the midst of natural scenery such as assuredly exists nowhere else in the habitable globe.⁷⁷

Ruskin's influential writings played a crucial role in reorienting the interest of Anglo-American audiences from classic to gothic architecture and turning Verona into a top travel destination for English-speaking travelers and tourists.

Verona's growing popularity among nineteenth-century travelers also reflected a shift in the nature of the Grand Tour.⁷⁸ Once a male preserve reserved to the aristocracy, the Grand Tour began to evolve in the later part of the nineteenth century. Improvements in roads and extension of the railroad system made the trip easier and more affordable, attracting new social groups, in particular members of the emerging bourgeoisie. Changes in the social profile of grand tourists resulted in a redefinition of the cultural aspects of the Tour as less educated travelers undertook the trip and fewer tutors accompanied their pupils. Nineteenth-century tourists no longer saw the Tour as an opportunity to educate themselves about classical culture, but rather as a source of

⁷⁶ Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, 72-76.

⁷⁷ Ruskin, "A Joy for Ever," 86-87.

⁷⁸ See Jill Steward, "Performing Abroad: British Tourists in Italy and their Practices, 1840-1914," in *Architecture and Tourism*, ed. Medina Lasansky and Brian McLaren (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2004), 54-55.

pleasure and entertainment. Thus, the spatial pattern of the tour was modified to reflect the needs of this new recreational tourism. The contemporary taste for sublime and romantic scenery led, for instance, to the inclusion of sites such as the Alps and the Rhineland castles. Interest in the medieval world attracted growing numbers of tourists to new destinations such as Padua, Pisa, Arezzo, and Verona.

Rerouted to Verona by John Ruskin's passionate defense of gothic architecture and by a taste for romantic landscapes, late-nineteenth-century tourists wandered the streets of the city no longer searching for its Roman antiquities. They were instead drawn by the more picturesque aspects of the city's urban landscape.

Travelers' accounts and guidebooks catered to and at the same time reinforced tourists' interest in romantic views. Théophile Gautier describes Verona as a picturesque city, whose name is closely intertwined with the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*.⁷⁹ The Arena is only briefly mentioned and the Roman antiquities that had intrigued earlier travelers are completely omitted in his description of the city.

Baedeker's *Handbook for Travelers* (1879) devotes to Verona ten pages.⁸⁰ After providing a historical and geographical introduction, it meticulously lists all of the city's major monuments recommending in particular the church of San Zeno, "the finest Romanesque church in Northern Italy"; the medieval tombs of the Scaligeri; St. Anastasia, "a fine gothic church"; St. Maria in Organo, "a very ancient church... altered by Sammicheli in 1481"; Porta Palio and Palazzo Pompei della Vittoria, both built by Sammicheli; Giardino Giusti, which provides "a fine view of Verona and its environs"; and the Arena. Although the Roman amphitheater is still regarded as one of the city's major monuments, the author devotes to the Arena approximately

⁷⁹ Théophile Gautier, *Voyage en Italie* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1884), 60.

⁸⁰ Karl Baedeker (Firm), *Italy: Handbook for Travellers* (Leipzig: K. Baedeker, 1903).

one half of a page, less than he gives to San Zeno and as much space as he devotes to the little medieval church of St. Anastasia. The handbook also includes in its list of monuments the House and Tomb of Juliet. However, the author laments the condition of neglect and disrepair affecting the sites, in particular the Tomb of Juliet, “a rude sarcophagus in red Verona marble,” that he dismisses as “a prosaic and unattractive” scene. Baedeker’s impression of Shakespeare-inspired landmarks is shared by the majority of nineteenth-century travelers and guidebooks writers. Although they recommend, with various degrees of emphasis, a visit to the House and Tomb of Juliet, they are also left with a mixture of disillusionment and disappointment at the sight of the actual architecture. Drawn by a fascination with the story of the two lovers, nineteenth-century travelers stopped by Juliet’s house and grave only to realize how unlikely it was that those derelict sites had any relation to the story narrated by Shakespeare.

John Murray’s *Handbook for Travelers in Northern Italy* devotes to Verona twenty-five pages (only Milan, Bologna, and Venice are allocated more) and provides a thorough description of the city’s historic and artistic monuments.⁸¹ To the Arena, “the first [monument] to attract the attention of the traveler” and the Roman monuments the author dedicates two pages, reserving the rest of the narration for the city’s medieval and early-Renaissance monuments, which account for thirty-one of the thirty-seven must-see landmarks included in his list. The Church of San Zeno occupies a prominent position (three pages) for “its striking interior” and the bell-tower, “one of the most beautiful edifices of its kind, and one of the finest objects in the very varied landscape about Verona.”⁸² The author also mentions the House of Juliet “an inn for *vetturini* in Via Cappello,” and her Tomb, “a red Verona marble [sarcophagus] ... [which] before

⁸¹ John Murray (Firm), *Handbook for Travelers in Northern Italy: Comprising Piedmont, Liguria, Lombardy, Venetia, Parma, Modena, and Romagna* (London: J. Murray, 1863), 276-300.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 297.

it was promoted to its present honor was used as a washing-trough.”⁸³ The author references the popularity of the Tomb among illustrious travelers by noting that “Maria Louisa got a bit of [the tomb], which she caused to be divided in hearts and gems... and many sentimental young and elderly ladies have followed her Majesty’s example.”⁸⁴

Thomas Cook’s *Tourist Handbook for Northern Italy* recommends starting the tour of the city from Juliet’s Tomb. The author however deplores the condition of the tomb, which he describes with Howells’ words as a “sarcophagus that looked like ... a horse-trough roughly hewn out of stone.”⁸⁵ The House of the Capulets is also described as “a miserable inn, with the sign of a large Red Hat, the crest of the Capulet family.”

The shift of interest from Roman Verona to medieval/Shakespearean Verona is most clearly articulated in Hutton’s guidebook *Verona and Venetia*. The author introduces Verona as “the city of Juliet ... a city of romance, the home of two people who possibly never existed, but who are much more real to us, than most of those who cumber the world.”⁸⁶ In his description of the city, the author dutifully describes its ancient monuments; however he reserves his enthusiasm for the more picturesque medieval Verona: Piazza delle Erbe with its fruit and vegetable market, Piazza dei Signori “crowded with the ghosts of the Scaligers” and the Church of San Zeno, “one of the finest Romanesque buildings in Italy.”⁸⁷ As for Juliet’s House, the author comments how “a very interesting specimen of medieval mansion [is] now fallen to very humble use.”⁸⁸ The author who perhaps best epitomizes nineteenth-century feelings of skepticism over the authenticity of Verona’s Shakespeare-inspired landmarks is Charles Dickens.

⁸³ Ibid., 298.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Thomas Cook Ltd, *Cook's Tourist's Handbook for Northern Italy* (London: T Cook and Son, 1881), 107.

⁸⁶ Edward Hutton, *Venice and Venetia* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 285.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 303.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 297.

He dismissed Juliet's House as "a most miserable inn"⁸⁹ and after being shown by a local woman a "water trough" as "La tomba di Giulietta la sfortunata" he commented "With the best disposition in the world to believe, I could do no more than believe that the bright-eyed woman believed."⁹⁰ Similar feelings are echoed by George Edmund Street, who in his *Brick and Marble* remarked: "of course no one goes to Verona without thinking of Romeo and Juliet. I fear, however, that when I was shown the Casa de' Cappelletti, a small inn in a narrow street, and asked to connect it in any way for the future with the creation of Shakespeare's brain, my fancy refused to be sufficiently fancy to perform the required feat."⁹¹

Italian guidebooks of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century echo the interest in Verona's medieval architecture found in English travel books, including their curiosity about and subsequent disappointment with the House and Tomb of Juliet. Like the majority of English authors, Italian writers too lament the decay and lack of care affecting the sites. In *Le Tre Venezie*, Bertarelli lists the Arena, the Roman Theater and Porta Borsari among the monuments travelers shouldn't miss. Equally important are the medieval and Renaissance monuments of Verona, in particular Piazza Erbe, "the true center of the city, with its picturesque fruit and flower market, a favorite subject for many painters"⁹²; the "aristocratic" Piazza dei Signori and its medieval palazzi; the Tombs of the della Scala family; the Church of San Zeno, "perhaps the most beautiful and most typical Romanesque church in Northern Italy"; and Castelvecchio with

⁸⁹ Dickens and Paroissien, *Pictures from Italy*, 73.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁹¹ George Edmund Street, *Brick and Marble in the Middle Ages: Notes of Tours in the North of Italy* (London: J. Murray, 1855), 106.

⁹² "Il centro virtuale della città è la irregolare piazza delle Erbe, antico foro, alla quale i bianchi ombrelloni del mercato delle verdure e dei fiori danno un aspetto caratteristico, sì da servire di originalissimo soggetto a molti pittori." Luigi Vittorio Bertarelli, *Guida d'Italia del Touring Club Italiano*. [7] 2. *Le tre Venezie* (Milano: Touring Club italiano, 1925), 173.

its annexed bridge.⁹³ The castle, which at the time was undergoing a controversial renovation by Avena, is considered by Bertarelli “the most characteristic and imposing medieval building of the city.”⁹⁴ The author also recommends a visit to “the legendary sepulcher of Juliet Capulet. The place,” he continues “is highly suggestive; and a recent *erma di Shakespeare*, sculpted by Renato Cattani, remembers the author who celebrated such a symbol of eternal and tragic love.”⁹⁵

2.4 VERONA POST WWI: ECONOMIC DOWNTURN AND SOCIAL TURMOIL

The First World War heavily affected Verona and its population. The city, only thirty kilometers away from the frontline, found itself occupied by troops, refugees, evacuees, and members of humanitarian organizations who had come to Verona to help soldiers and their families. Rising cost of living and scarcity of food affected the entire population, with the administration unable to provide any solution. On November 14, 1915 Piazza delle Erbe, one of the major artistic sites in the city, was bombarded. Twenty-nine people were killed, forty-eight were wounded, and the monuments adjacent to the piazza were seriously damaged.⁹⁶ The frustration of the population towards the central government, accused of irresponsibility and ineptitude, found expression in the city’s council, which lamented how among all Italian cities “Verona is the one that has to bear the worst consequences [of the war] because of its proximity to the combat zone, which causes military forces to occupy its streets and buildings by night and day and because of the

⁹³ “Forse la più bella e la più tipica chiesa romanica dell’Italia settentrionale.” Ibid., 190.

⁹⁴ “Il Castelvecchio è la mole medievale più caratteristica e imponente della città.” Ibid., 184.

⁹⁵ “Il luogo è assai suggestivo; e l’erma di G. Shakespeare, scolpita by Renato Cattani (1910), ricorda colui che cantò questo simbolo dell’amore eterno e tragico. ” Ibid., 195. It is interesting to notice that the English version of the same guidebook gives the monument greater emphasis than the Italian version.

⁹⁶ Girardi, *Verona tra Ottocento e Novecento*, 120-128

frequent air raids.”⁹⁷ If the war had put a strain on the city, the post-war period hit Verona even harder as the economic and social problems the population had to face further compromised the delicate recovery process the city had been pursuing for the last fifty years.

Industrial production, which boomed between 1915 and 1918 in order to sustain the war effort, came to an abrupt end. The number of unemployed reached 25,000 by 1920.⁹⁸ In September of that year workers occupied the factories of the Basso Aquar demanding jobs and adequate salaries. Strikes and protests swept the city and often turned violent. The situation in the countryside was deteriorating as well. A couple of stretches of bad weather dramatically reduced crop yields, causing the price of food to skyrocket and further worsening inflation.⁹⁹ The crisis affected all sectors of the economy and society as the secretary of Verona’s Chamber of Commerce noted in 1920: “Neither agriculture nor industry nor commerce [have been spared]... and to this day they have yet to resume their normal production, in spite of the fact that people from all classes work for and have committed themselves to this goal.”¹⁰⁰

It was in this context of deep economic crisis and social unrest that Fascism came to power. Fascism provided Verona’s socio-political elite with the opportunity to realize their long-awaited dreams of a new Verona, whose strength resided in its cultural prestige and in a vibrant industrial and tourist economy.

⁹⁷ “Verona è quella che sopporta i danni maggiori sia per la immediata vicinanza al teatro delle operazioni, per cui il movimento e la concentrazione delle forze militari occupa giorno e notte edifici e strade ..., sia per le frequenti incursioni aeree nemiche.” ACVr, Seduta 11 Agosto 1916. Quoted in Leonardo D’Antoni, “Tra la crisi di fine Ottocento e la seconda guerra mondiale” in *Storia di Verona: caratteri, aspetti, momenti*, ed. Giovanni Zalin (Vicenza: N. Pozza, 2002), 356.

⁹⁸ Federico Bozzini, “L’occupazione delle fabbriche a Verona, settembre 1920,” *Rivista di Storia Contemporanea* 3 (1976): 465.

⁹⁹ From 1919 to 1922 the production of wheat went from 1,038,000 q. to 381,000 q.; the production of corn from 1,001,000 q. to 381,000 q. and the production of wine from 471,000 hl. to 349,000 hl.

¹⁰⁰ “Né l’agricoltura, né l’industria, né il commercio hanno sino ad oggi ripreso il loro andamento normale, contuttochè esso sia così vivamente desiderato e invocato da ogni gente e ogni classe.” *Industrie e traffici della provincial di Verona nel sessennio 1914-1916*, Report of the Chamber of Commerce of Verona, Verona, 1920, p. 5. Quoted in D’Antoni, “Tra la crisi di fine Ottocento,” 361.

3.0 REMAKING OF A CITY: THE REFASHIONING OF VERONA'S URBAN SPACE, FROM ANNEXATION TO THE ITALIAN NATION TO THE ADVENT OF FASCISM

The years between Verona's annexation to the Italian Kingdom and the advent of Fascism were crucial for the future urban development of the city. The debate surrounding the nature of restoration of the city's architectural monuments, the development of a legislation for the preservation and valorization of Italy's artistic heritage, and the construction in the outskirts of infrastructure to sustain the emerging industrial economy set the foundations for future Fascist urban policies. Fascism in Verona continued many of the projects discussed by the previous Liberal administration but set itself apart by the activism and dynamism of its urban policies.

3.1 CAMILLO BOITO AND THE NINETEENTH CENTURY DEBATE SURROUNDING THE RESTORATION OF ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS

The nineteenth century was a time of profound change in the history of Verona: annexation to the new Italian state; the dismantling of the Austrian military apparatus; the embankment of the Adige river; the construction of the industrial canal; the advent of the railroad; and the initiatives to jump-start industrialization marked a turning point in the city's history and deeply impacted its

urban and architectural fabric. As city administrators discussed strategies to facilitate the transition of Verona from a military stronghold to a new economic and cultural center, architecture became the concrete means to their goals and the visible form of their aspirations.

Historians agree that around the mid-nineteenth century and, more visibly, after 1866 the image of Verona shifted from a Roman city, known for its classical monuments, to a medieval town, celebrated for its well preserved twelfth- and thirteenth-century urban fabric.¹⁰¹ In no other area was the shift more pronounced than in the restoration and preservation of historic monuments. The interest and resources that, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, city administrators had devoted to classical and neoclassical architecture were redirected to the restoration of architectural monuments of the era of the Scaligeri. The list of monuments restored in the thirty-year period following the unification is long and includes the Domus Mercatorum (or Casa dei Mercanti, 1878-1884), Loggia di Fra Giocondo (1874), Palazzo del Comune (also known as Mercato Vecchio or Palazzo della Ragione, 1877 and 1894-1897), and Palazzo del Tribunale (or Palazzo di Consignoro or Palazzo del Capitano, 1882-1885), all located in the historical downtown and in close proximity to one another. Restoration works were also extended to medieval religious architecture, including the churches of St. Anastasia, St. Stefano, St. Maria Antiqua, the tower of St. Zeno, and St. Fermo.¹⁰²

Palazzo del Comune, an imposing three-story complex, articulated around an inner courtyard and dominated by the soaring profile of the Lamberti tower, is located between Piazza

¹⁰¹ For a discussion of Verona's valorization of its medieval heritage see Giorgio Forti "L'immagine di Verona attraverso i secoli," in *Medioevo ideale e Medioevo reale nella cultura urbana: Antonio Avena e la Verona del primo Novecento*, ed. Paola Marini (Verona: Comune di Verona, Assessorato alla cultura, 2003), 278-79; and Giandomenico Romanelli, "Il mito del medioevale: tra Ruskin e Boito," in *Verona 1900-1960. Architetture nella dissoluzione dell'aura* ed. Arturo Sandrini and Francesco Amendolagine (Venezia: CLUVA, 1979), 17-20.

¹⁰² On the nineteenth-century restoration of Verona's monuments see Grimoldi, "Restauro a Verona," 121-162; Giandomenico Romanelli, "La fine della Repubblica, Napoleone, gli Asburgo," in *Ritratto di Verona: lineamenti di una storia urbanistica*, ed. Lionello Puppi (Verona: Banca Popolare di Verona 1978), 397-470; and Morachiello, "Dall'annessione," 471-529.

delle Erbe and Piazza dei Signori, on the northeastern corner of the area originally occupied by the Roman Forum (today Piazza delle Erbe). Built in the twelfth century,¹⁰³ the complex underwent several transformations throughout its history. Partially destroyed by a fire in 1218, the palazzo was rebuilt in 1219. In 1447, under Venetian rule, a monumental staircase in red Veronese marble was built in a corner of the internal courtyard, immediately below the Lamberti tower, the first of a series of interventions that considerably altered the building's original appearance. At one point, the inner porticoes were closed off to make room for the numerous activities housed in the palazzo.¹⁰⁴ Damaged by fires again in 1541 and 1723, the structure underwent extensive consolidation and restoration works in 1810. Under the supervision of Giuseppe Barbieri (the architect responsible for a new layout of Piazza Bra, the city's main public square), the façades overlooking Piazza delle Erbe and Piazza dei Signori were re-pointed and covered with stucco. Neoclassical window surrounds, evenly spaced, replaced the irregular pattern of the original medieval openings. Barbieri's remodeling was short-lived. In 1871 the Palazzo became the seat of the Crown Court (*Corte d'Assise*). A new refurbishing project led to the removal of the 1810 neoclassical additions in an attempt to retrieve the building's original medieval appearance.

A key figure in the restoration of Palazzo del Comune was Camillo Boito. A designer, architect, teacher, and art and literary critic, Boito was present in virtually all of the most

¹⁰³ Historians do not agree as to the exact date the Palazzo was built. Two plaques, respectively on the façade overlooking Piazza dei Signori and the atrium leading to Via Cairoli, read discordant dates: 1138 and 1193. According to Lenotti "it might be possible that the exact date is a third one ...:1194, which marked the completion of works." Quoted in *Notiziario Banca Popolare Verona* 1 (1988). According to Fulvio Zuliani: "[the building] was begun under Podestà Guglielmo da Osa in 1193 or 1194 and then enlarged under Mastino della Scala in 1273." See Fulvio Zuliani, "La città comunale" in *Ritratto di Verona: lineamenti di una storia urbanistica*, ed. Lionello Puppi (Verona: Banca Popolare di Verona, 1978), 195.

¹⁰⁴ Under Venetian rule, the palazzo became the seat of the City Administration, the civil and penal courts, the prison, the College of Notary Publics (with its own Chapel, which still exists in the northeastern corner of the palazzo), the silk customs offices, the Fiscal Chamber, the public granaries, the salt deposits, the Office of Health and others. See *Notiziario Banca Popolare Verona* 1 (1988).

important architectural debates of the new Italian state: from the competition for the new façade of the Cathedral in Milan to the completion of the Duomo of Florence, from the building of the monument to Victor Emanuel II to the construction of the Justice Building in Rome.¹⁰⁵ In Verona, the scholar worked as a consultant for the Chamber of Commerce, the city, and the province in the restoration projects of their headquarters: respectively Domus Mercatorum, Palazzo del Comune, and Palazzo del Podestà (or della Provincia).¹⁰⁶ In the field of restoration, Boito tried to reconcile the opposing views of Ruskin and Viollet-le Duc, opening the way to a third, philological approach. From Ruskin, he derived his theory of conservation of monuments, based on the notion of authenticity. According to Boito, one should preserve not only the patina of ancient buildings but also the formal stratifications that successive epochs have built on them.¹⁰⁷ With Viollet-le-Duc, and in opposition to Ruskin, Boito maintained the legitimacy of restoration.¹⁰⁸ He proposed discrete interventions, able to secure the maintenance, consolidation, and in the most difficult cases repairs of the buildings. In order to preserve the authenticity of architectural structures, he considered it essential that interventions be clearly marked and recognizable. Under no circumstances were later additions to be mistaken for the original structure. In his *Conservare o Restaurare* (1883), Boito spelled out different strategies to make restored parts distinguishable from the original section of the building such as the use of different material and different colors, the placement of inscriptions on the restored parts, the insertion of epigraphs describing the works carried out on the building, the use of photographs to document the different stages of restoration, and the exhibition of the replaced parts in locales close to the

¹⁰⁵ *Encyclopedia of Italian Literary Studies*, s.v. “Boito, Camillo.”

¹⁰⁶ As a member of the *Commissione Permanente di Antichità e Belle Arti*, Boito was also involved in the relief effort following the 1882 flood. See Grimoldi, “Restauri a Verona,” 124.

¹⁰⁷ Camillo Boito, *Questioni pratiche di belle arti, per Camillo Boito. Restauri, concorsi, legislazione, professione, insegnamento* (Milano: U. Hoepli, 1893), 3-85. See also Françoise Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 109.

¹⁰⁸ Choay, *Invention*, 110.

restored site.¹⁰⁹ Finally, Boito suggested three different types of intervention, based on the style and age of the buildings. Boito's scientific approach to restoration laid the basis for modern legislation regarding historic buildings in Italy and other countries as well. However, the projects he supervised in Verona were only partially based on the rigorous restoration principles he helped formulate.

Palazzo del Comune's restoration (1877; 1894-97), in particular, appears as a compromise between Boito's theories and the needs and expectations of city administrators, who at this time aimed at a stylistically cohesive building and had not fully committed themselves to a philological approach to restoration.¹¹⁰ As noted by Grimoldi, "In 1882, the notion of 'preservation' of monuments is still alien to the public, even the educated one."¹¹¹ Faced with the issues of shape, number, and position of new windows for the mezzanine level of Palazzo del Comune, located immediately below the newly opened trilobite openings, Boito recommended six trilobite windows, which would replicate the building's original openings. He also uncovered the existence of eleven additional windows, without however being able to locate their exact position. Boito concluded this was not problematic, as the arrangement of the new windows should be determined by the needs and requirements of the modern users.¹¹² Indeed, in the final project, the new windows were placed according to a symmetrical pattern that satisfied more the modern sensibility for symmetry, order, and balance than it considered the original window placement.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 112.

¹¹⁰ On the restoration of the Palazzo del Comune see Grimoldi, "Restauro a Verona," 143-146 and Morachiello, "Dall'annessione," 504-509.

¹¹¹ "Ancora nel 1882, l'idea di 'conservazione' dei monumenti è ostica anche al pubblico colto." Grimoldi, "Restauro a Verona," 143.

¹¹² Morachiello, "Dall'annessione," 506.

¹¹³ Ibid., 507.

Palazzo del Tribunale, whose restoration was also supervised by Boito (1882-1885), presented greater challenges as the original medieval structure was more difficult to determine.¹¹⁴ The palace, located between Palazzo del Comune and Palazzo del Podestà has a structure similar to the neighboring buildings: a rectangular complex articulated around an inner courtyard, topped with corner towers. Built by Consignoro della Scala in 1363, the building underwent several transformations between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries that altered its original appearance. The palace was first restored in 1402, under the Visconti's rule. In 1476, a loggia was built around the internal courtyard. The Corinthian gate attributed to Sanmicheli framing the entrance on Piazza dei Signori dates to 1530. During the course of the fifteenth century, the building was provided with a new neoclassical façade, covered in marble. Finally, in 1687, the entrance to the inner courtyard was adorned with an elaborate baroque portal by Bernardino Miglioranzi. At the end of the seventeenth century, one of the rooms of the palace was transformed into a theater, the first indoor theater in the city open to the public. Following the annexation of Verona to the new Italian state, the Palazzo became the seat of the Criminal Court and the Court of the Common Pleas. A series of interventions were carried out in order to repair the building and reinstate its original medieval appearance. The project, coordinated by architect Giacomo Franco, called for the opening of new windows on the Palazzo's eastern façade (facing Via Indipendenza), which was refaced with red brick to better reflect its medieval origin. Highly controversial was Franco's choice to retain the baroque *Porta dei Bombardieri*, considered by many "an architectural oddity."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ On the restoration of the *Palazzo del Tribunale* see Daniela Zumiani, "I palazzi scaligeri della contrada di Santa Maria Antica," in *Suggestioni del Passato. Immagini di Verona scaligera* ed. Ruggero Boschi and Maristella Vecchiato (Verona: Edizioni La Grafica, 2001), 32-37 and C. Trucchi, "Verona nel secondo Ottocento. Problemi di recupero del patrimonio monumentale" (M.A. diss., Università di Venezia, 1978-1979), 131-134.

¹¹⁵ Zumiani, "I palazzi scaligeri," 34.

The Domus Mercatorum (Merchants' House) was built by Alberto I Della Scala in 1301-1304 to house the city's craft guilds. Facing Piazza delle Erbe, the building underwent heavy intervention that radically altered its original structure.¹¹⁶ In the seventeenth century, the two main facades were decorated with reliefs and the coat of arms of Venetian families. An elaborate balcony was built around the entire length of the main façade and part of the palazzo's side prospect. In 1605, a statue of the Virgin and Child by Girolamo Campagna was inserted into the façade facing Via Pellicciai. Additional intervention further transformed the building, until serious structural problems forced the city to undertake a thorough renovation of the palazzo between 1878 and 1884. The two façades were then liberated of their historical stratification in order to expose the red brick surface underneath, and the former straight roof profile was replaced by crenellations, to enhance the medieval character of the building. Boito praised the restoration, which was supervised by architect and engineer Enrico Carli. Commenting on Carli's decision to top the building with crenellations (supported by neither documentary nor visual evidence) Boito noted how he "was able to find the right proportions, the right measure of the ancient merlons."¹¹⁷

The restoration of the city's medieval heritage extended to religious architecture as well. Between 1878 and 1871, the church of St. Anastasia, visited by Ruskin and much praised by nineteenth-century travelers, was restored. Immediately after 1866 the churches of St. Stefano and St. Maria Antica were purged of their baroque additions. In 1870, the church of San Zeno,

¹¹⁶ On the history and restoration of the Domus Mercatorum see Trucchi, "Verona nel secondo Ottocento"; G. Sergio, "Casa dei Mercanti," in *Repertorio della presenze scaligere nell'area veronese : proposta per un catalogo storico dei documenti e delle immagini della Signoria nella città e nel territorio della diretta Amministrazione* ed. Riccardo Cecchini (Verona: Banca Popolare di Verona, 1988), 253-253; Sabina Ferrari, "La Piazza delle Erbe," in *Suggestioni del Passato. Immagini di Verona scaligera* ed. Ruggero Boschi and Maristella Vecchiato (Verona: Edizioni La Grafica, 2001), 83-85; and Grimoldi, "Restauro a Verona," 141-143.

¹¹⁷ "[Carli] ha saputo con molto garbo trovare la giusta grandezza, la giusta proporzione di quell'attico merlato." Quoted in Grimoldi, "Restauro a Verona," 143.

one of the best examples of Romanesque architecture in Italy, was refashioned based on a project that called for the removal of all baroque furnishings including the pulpit, the organ, and the central staircase connecting the nave to the altar. The goal was “to bestow upon such a prestigious monument its original character.”¹¹⁸ In order to realize the goal, side staircases were built and the crypt’s arcade, now visible from the nave, was reopened. In 1893, the church of San Lorenzo underwent extensive restoration works, which resulted in the removal of all baroque additions, the reopening of the *matroneum*, and the closing of the square side-aisle windows, which were replaced by arched windows more consistent with the church’s medieval origin.¹¹⁹ Between 1905 and 1909 the monastic complex of the Franciscan church of St. Fermo was repaired and restored. Outside, the cloister’s arcades were reopened, and the gothic apses, freed of later additions, were restored to their original condition. Inside, most of the baroque elements were removed in order to reveal the thirteenth-century surfaces.

The restoration effort was extensive. Between 1867 and 1896 more than twenty architectural complexes, including secular and religious architecture, were renovated.¹²⁰ The local endeavor to restore the city’s historic landmarks was all the more remarkable as it was met by serious challenges due to lack of coordination among the agencies in charge of the restoration of the city’s architectural heritage, the absence of systematic preservation laws, and limited funds. Projects were financed through a combination of local and state funds. The Ministry of Public Education, the primary agency responsible for the preservation and restoration of historic monuments, allocated a rather modest yearly budget to restoration projects. More substantial contributions were made by the Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs and by various

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 137-138.

¹¹⁹ *Notiziario Banca Popolare Verona* 2 (1994).

¹²⁰ Morachiello, “Dall’anessione,” 513.

ministries whose local branches were housed in historic buildings in need of repair. At the local level, the city and various agencies such as hospitals and religious congregations contributed to the preservation of the buildings they occupied. At this stage, state funding was almost entirely devoted to public architecture, including religious buildings which were part of the government property. No public money was allocated to the restoration of private historic monuments, whose care was left to private initiatives.

In the absence of a systematic legislation on the preservation of historic monuments which came into effect only in 1902, restoration projects were overseen by various agencies, whose functions often overlapped. The *Commissione Permanente di Antichità e Belle Arti* was instituted in 1881 by Minister Bacelli as a branch of the Ministry of Public Education.¹²¹ It was responsible for supervising and granting the final approval for all restoration projects throughout the peninsula. The *Commissione Consultiva Conservatrice di Belle Arti e di Antichità* (later *Commissione Conservatrice dei Monumenti*) was a preservation agency instituted by the central government in 1866. Limited to cities of great artistic value, it was divided into three sections: painting/sculpture, architecture, and archeology. Each division was directed by three members nominated by the Minister of Public Education, the city council, and the provincial council.¹²² Responsible for supervising the restoration of public monuments and to encourage their preservation, the commission was presided over by the Prefect and included among its members representatives of the city's aristocracy and upper bourgeoisie. According to Grimoldi: "From 1866 through the end of the century, the best names of Verona's aristocracy [sat in the Commission]: Count Gianbattista Giuliani, Count Antonio Pompei, Count Alessandro Perez, Count and Royal Inspector (*ispettore regio*) Carlo Cipolla, Count and Senator Aleardo

¹²¹ Grimoldi, "Restauro a Verona," 124.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 187, note 52.

Aleardi.”¹²³ Lazansky believes that the commission “provided an opportunity for the central state in Rome to involve provincial intellectuals and cultural figures in state-sponsored projects.”¹²⁴ For sure, the social component of the commission reflected the intrinsic nature of restoration and preservation of historic monuments, a field almost exclusively controlled by the local social and political elite. Grimoldi points out that Verona’s aristocracy took upon itself the task to restore and preserve the city’s architectural heritage and more than once directly financed the restoration of the city’s monuments. Because of its involvement in the preservation of the city’s architecture, Verona’s cultural elite looked with suspicion at external intervention and resented outside interference.¹²⁵ For example, local forces appear to have been suspicious of the real intention of the Prefect, Count Luigi Sormani Moretti (a non Verona native). In 1898, the Count presented a program aimed at coordinating the activities and contributions of the city, the Province, and private citizens to restoration projects. Labeled as an attempt to disempower the Commission over which he presided, Sormani Moretti’s proposal was rejected. On the other hand, the Prefect resented the role of the *Uffici Regionali per la Tutela dei Monumenti*—a regional preservation agency directed by Federico Berchet—a role he saw as antagonistic to his: “This new brand of government employee, paid with salaries whose amount further reduces the certainly not great sum the central government allocates to the preservation of monuments and artistic works.”¹²⁶ It is already possible to detect in these skirmishes a trend that would emerge more clearly in the following years: the major role of the social elites in the restoration of the city’s historic heritage

¹²³ “Dal 1866 alla fine del secolo, si susseguono nomi già scritti nei libri d’oro, e in primo luogo in quel libro d’oro immaginario dell’artistocrazia colta settecentesca ...: il canonico conte Gianbattista Giuliani, il conte Antonio Pompei, il conte Alessandro Perez, il conte Carlo Cipolla Regio Ispettore, il conte e Senatore Aleardo Aleardi.” Grimoldi, “Restauri a Verona,” 133.

¹²⁴ Lasansky, *Renaissance Perfected*, 45.

¹²⁵ Grimoldi, “Restauri a Verona,” 130-131.

¹²⁶ “Questi novelli quadri organici di impiegati governativi, retribuiti con assegni e stipendi il cui importo assottiglia la non certo grossa somma di contributo dello Stato alla spesa per conservare, risarcire, riordinare monumenti e opere d’arte.” As quoted in Grimoldi, “Restauri a Verona,” 132.

and the clash between the various groups involved in the preservation of Verona's urban fabric. The diatribe was to become more pronounced as the central government institutions clearly defined themselves in the following decades and took a more assertive role in the preservation of historic monuments.

The shift towards medieval architecture, which manifested (but did not exhaust) itself primarily in the restoration of monuments of the era of the Scaligeri, was driven by both ideological and practical intent. Historians agree that the restoration of the city's historic monuments was meant to provide an ideal link between Verona's greatest ruling family in history and the public offices of the new Italian state housed in the refurbished buildings. For Grimoldi, this allegorical link, while underlining the continuity with tradition, stressed "the aspirations to civil liberties and economic progress [of the new institutions]".¹²⁷ In addition, restorations had the specific intent to preserve social peace and the equilibrium of power among classes. As observed by Grimoldi, "restorations, not less than other public works, [were] essential to secure, through employment, social peace: in the spring of 1866, in the midst of the war, podestà De Betta planned not only paving works, tree planting, and road building but also the restoration of the tomb of Consignorio della Scala."¹²⁸ And while the city's historical landmarks were being restored, all of the factories were relocated from the city's center, where they had been concentrated in the area around the river, to the area outside the city walls. To this extent, the embankment of the Adige River, consequent to the 1882 flood, provided the pretext to redraw the city's social map. Indeed, historians have interpreted the new urban layout as an attempt to prevent the influx of lower classes into the city and to keep them outside Verona's

¹²⁷ "... le aspirazioni alle libertà civili e al progresso economico nella sicurezza della continuità." Ibid., 129.

¹²⁸ "I restauri, non meno degli altri lavori pubblici, servono ad assicurare l'occupazione e, attraverso di essa, la pace sociale: nell'aprile 1866, in piena guerra, il Podestà De Betta non solo ha programmato opere di selciatura, di piantagione d'alberi, di rettifilo, ma anche il restauro dell'arca di Consignorio." Ibid., 129.

historic center, which was then confirmed as the area of dominion of the upper classes.¹²⁹ From a socially conservative perspective it should also be noted that the city's traditional craftsmen, such as stone cutters, were retained inside the city's wall. According to Grimoldi, not only did they support the restoration effort but also provided refined accessories for the life of the upper classes.¹³⁰ Thus, restoration projects and relocation of factories to Verona's outskirts must be seen as complementary strategies of a conservative urban policy. As noted by Morachiello: "It is impossible not to associate the commitment to restoration to the parallel intent to retrieve, at least in part, the balanced and static equilibrium of power among classes, which ... the laws of the Scaligeri ... had imposed and maintained over the landed aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, and their countrymen."¹³¹ The socially conservative nature of Verona's urban choices in the second half of the nineteenth century was, according to Romanelli, perfectly functional with the goal of the ruling class, which aimed at converting itself from agrarian to industrial entrepreneurs "without renouncing the advantages, real or imaginary, of a social order based on old-fashioned (anachronistic) class relations."¹³²

As for the nature of nineteenth-century restoration projects, in spite of Boito's contribution to the debate surrounding the refashioning of the city's architectural heritage, the renovations carried out in Verona during the last thirty years of the century could hardly be considered scientific or philological in their approach. Like similar projects in Italy, the tendency

¹²⁹ Morachiello, "Dall'annessione," 516.

¹³⁰ Among the most prominent stonecutters were the members of the Pegrassi family. They created a variety of elaborate and sumptuous statues, mantels, and cornices, which were housed in many of the city's refurbished buildings. Some of their pieces were purchased by English travelers to Verona and found their way to London. See Grimoldi, "Restauro a Verona," 129.

¹³¹ "Non v'è chi non possa, allora, associare all'impegno del restauro la parallela volontà di recuperare, almeno in parte, l'assetto equilibrato e statico dei rapporti sociali che, nella storia, gli Statuti scaligeri e la 'pietà religiosa' imposero e mantennero tra aristocrazia fondiaria, borghesia e arti urbane, abitanti del contado." See Morachiello, "Dall'annessione," 516.

¹³² "... senza rinunciare alle certezze e ai vantaggi, veri o presunti, di un assetto sociale sostanzialmente bloccato su vecchi rapporti e ispirato a ottiche senza dubbio regressive." Romanelli, "Il mito del medioevale," 20.

was to liberate buildings of their historical stratifications in order to return them to an idealized original appearance.¹³³ Boito's presence put Verona on the map of the restoration debate in the years following the unification but did not prevent the city from carrying out controversial projects lacking scientific basis. Grimoldi underlines that "it would be unfair to forget to mention that in many cases the intention was not to return to an imaginary Middle Ages ... nor to give vent to a fierce hostility to late baroque architecture ... rather to remedy recent transformations, often brutal ones, carried out in the last hundred years."¹³⁴ Still, in 1878, Pietro Paolo Martinati stated that "the religion of tradition becomes superstition. One should not restore antiquity; one should recreate it."¹³⁵ A more rigorous approach would develop later with the new generation of architects, including Gustavo Giovannoni, who studied and were influenced by Boito's theoretical writings. However, the new philological approach would find practical application elsewhere, outside of Verona.

3.2 HOUSING PROJECTS AND A NEW TRAIN STATION: VERONA'S URBAN EXPANSION IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

As discussed, the period between the annexation of Verona to the Italian Kingdom and the end of the century was characterized by major public works such as the embankment of the Adige, the

¹³³ See Alberto Maria Racheli, *Restauro a Roma: 1870-1990: architettura e città* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1995), 93-128.

¹³⁴ "Non si darebbe la giusta misura del cambiamento, senza ricordare che in molti casi non si vuol ritornare ad un immaginario Medio Evo 'che può non essere mai esistito ad un momento dato', né sfogare l'ostilità al tardo barocco ..., quanto porre rimedio a trasformazioni utilitarie, spesso brutali, attuate non oltre cent'anni prima." Grimoldi, "Restauro a Verona," 152-153.

¹³⁵ "La religione (dell'antico) diventa superstizione, l'antico non si restaura si rifabbrica." Quoted in Nino Cenni, *Verona fra Ottocento e Novecento* (Milano: Rusconi immagini, 1981), 24. Cenni reports that the fervor to restore the city's architectural heritage swelled to the point that many suggested the restoration and completion of the missing parts of the Arena itself.

construction of the industrial canal, and the related attempts, only partially successful, to develop a modern industrial economy. In the city center, limited economic resources, zoning laws preventing buildings from being erected inside the city walls, and the desire of the local elite to preserve the conservative dynamic of social and economic relations resulted in urban policies favoring the restoration of what already existed as well as relatively simple (easy to finance) beautification projects such as the construction of public monuments and the creation of public parks and gardens.¹³⁶ Boito's contribution to the debate concerning the nature of restoration projects testifies to the city's interest in a philological approach, which however did not always translate into scientifically sound restoration projects (the interest in reviving the Middle Ages also got in the way). Such interest waned in subsequent years in favor of a greatly simplified, less sophisticated approach to restoration issues. In the outskirts, although the emerging industrial economy led to the construction of the first infrastructure and housing projects, building activity remained sparse through the end of WWI and unable to address growing housing needs. The years between 1900 and the end of WWI saw a further contraction of urban initiatives in the city center, where works were limited to the restoration of facades and the raising of buildings by one or two storeys.¹³⁷

The period following WWI was characterized by a revamping of urban activities. As underlined by Sandrini, the four years preceding the advent of Fascism saw a demographic increase and a more pronounced industrial development, which led to the development of new housing projects in the industrial area of the Basso Aquar.¹³⁸ Legislation passed by the central government in 1919 (*Testo Unico*) provided tax incentives to citizens to build or purchase a new

¹³⁶ Lia Camerlengo, "L'architettura civile," in *L'Ottocento a Verona*, ed. Sergio Marinelli (Cinisello Balsamo, Milano: Silvana, 2001), 242-243.

¹³⁷ Sandrini, "Appunti," 39.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

house. The law, issued in order to address the crisis faced by the construction industry during War World I, acted as a catalyst for the development of Verona's suburbs. As noted by Sandrini, the bourgeoisie, unable to create any significant change in the city's historic center, which was mostly dominated by the aristocracy, established itself in the outskirts neighborhoods of Valdonega and Borgo Trento, which would develop in the years to come on the model of the English garden city.¹³⁹ In the meantime, the building of the new train station of Porta Nuova, which replaced the old train station of Porta Vescovio built by the Austrians, represented a crucial event in the urban development of Verona as it reoriented the city's urban expansion from the east to the south.

3.3 FASCIST URBAN POLICIES IN THE 1920S: FROM BUILDING CAMPAIGNS AND RESTORATION OF HISTORIC MONUMENTS TO CLEARING OF THE CITY CENTER

Sandrini believes that the few years between the end of WWI and the advent of Fascism defined the guidelines of Verona's future urban expansion: "Fascism itself will develop its urban policies in the same spirit as the projects of requalification of the urban fabric and development of the street system of the Liberal regime and will be forced to take into account and often compromise itself with the legacy of those years."¹⁴⁰ Indeed, despite its claims of novelty and radical

¹³⁹ Under the Fascist administration, the new neighborhoods of Valdonega and Borgo Trento were provided with an efficient road system. Borgo Trento, in particular, was connected to the *centro storico* with the bridge Ponte della Vittoria, whose creation cost the city numerous demolitions along the right bank of the Adige river. Ibid., 42.

¹⁴⁰ "Lo stesso prosiegua fascista s'incontrerà sulle direttive di sviluppo e di riqualificazione del tessuto urbano e della maglia viaria innescato in questi anni, e dovrà tener conto della genesi di questa nuova *identitas urbis* con la quale il regime sarà sempre costretto a confrontarsi e talvolta a comprometersi." Sandrini, "Appunti," 40.

departure from the previous administration, the Fascist regime in Verona frequently resumed and carried out projects initiated or discussed by the previous Liberal administration: the refashioning of the medieval castle of Castelvecchio, the restoration of Palazzo del Podestà, the demolition of the Jewish Ghetto, and the building of the new Post Office were among the many projects discussed by city officials before 1922 and carried out under the Fascist administration. If Fascist urban policy, then, did not revolutionize the urban guidelines outlined by the previous administration, it did set itself apart for its unprecedented activism.

Verona nei quattro anni di amministrazione comunale Fascista, 1923-1927 is a 370-page publication which provides a detailed account of all urban initiatives planned or carried out in Verona during the first four years of the Fascist administration.¹⁴¹ The publication, while a perfect example of Fascist magniloquent rhetoric, offers insights into the nature and direction of Fascist urban policies.¹⁴² As underlined by Sandrini, Fascist urban initiatives had two major goals: “the restructuring of the historical downtown, based on the economic interests of the upper classes, and the development of suburban and rural settlements.”¹⁴³ In the city center, the restoration of the city’s architectural heritage and the construction of new public buildings were paralleled by a massive, highly controversial clearing of large sections of the urban fabric. These

¹⁴¹ The list includes infrastructure such as Ponte della Vittoria; numerous restoration projects, among which are Castelvecchio and Palazzo del Podestà; the *sventramento* (clearing) of the Jewish Ghetto; the construction of new public buildings, including the Post Office and Borsa di Commercio; and the upkeep of roads, gardens, and parks. See Marco Mulazzani, “Il Novecento da Sant’ Elia a Carlo Scarpa,” in *L’architettura a Verona dal periodo napoleonico all’età contemporanea*, ed. Pierpaolo Brugnoli and Arturo Sandrini (Verona: Banca Popolare di Verona, 1994), 364.

¹⁴² Blaming the previous Liberal administration for the economic crisis, Fascist leaders presented the building campaign as evidence of Fascism’s activism versus the laxity of the Liberal administration. The Fascist building campaign was funded by an ingenious maneuver. In 1927, ten municipalities were included within Verona’s city limits. Their revenue provided the regime with the funds necessary to launch a massive rebuilding program. See Francesco Amendolagine and Alberto Erseghe, “Dalla nostalgia del pittoresco all’arbitrarietà della tecnica,” in *Verona 1900-1960. Architetture nella dissoluzione dell’aura*, ed. Arturo Sandrini and Francesco Amendolagine (Venezia: CLUVA, 1979), 61-62.

¹⁴³ “Il fine è duplice: ristrutturazione del centro storico, riqualificato funzionalmente a fini speculativi, e sviluppo degli insediamenti suburbani e rurali.” Sandrini, “Appunti,” 48.

extremely contentious initiatives pitted the city council against the *Soprintendenza ai Monumenti*, the local government agency in charge of the preservation and restoration of the city's built heritage and artistic patrimony.

Founded in 1907,¹⁴⁴ the office of the Soprintendenza had in the early twentieth century a merely advisory function, devoid of decision-making power.¹⁴⁵ However, its role and area of influence expanded as the legislation on the preservation and restoration of artistic monuments came into effect.¹⁴⁶ Gradually, the Soprintendenza replaced the *Commissione Conservatrice*, the city agency formerly responsible for the care of artistic monuments—an expression of the local interests and equilibrium of power. Directed by a public official (typically an art historian) appointed by the central government, the Soprintendenza was a branch of the Ministry of Public Education. As such, it came to be regarded locally as “the local office of a strong central authority, perceived as foreign and hostile.”¹⁴⁷ In particular after the 1927 law, which instituted a national competition to fill executive positions within the Soprintendenza, the divide between the

¹⁴⁴ The Soprintendenza in Verona began its activity in 1909. However, it became fully operative only in 1912, with the appointment of Alessandro Da Lisca to the office of Superintendent. See Grimoldi, “Restauri a Verona,” 169; and Guido Zucconi, “La nuova figura del funzionario umanista in un’età di transizione,” in *Medioevo ideale e Medioevo reale nella cultura urbana: Antonio Avena e la Verona del primo Novecento*, ed. Paola Marini (Verona: Comune di Verona, Assessorato alla cultura, 2003), 74, note 6.

¹⁴⁵ Amendolagine, “Dalla nostalgia,” 55.

¹⁴⁶ The first systematic law for the preservation of monuments of artistic value was passed in 1902 (law 12/6/1902 n. 185); it was replaced by a law passed in 1909 (20/6/1909 n. 364) and modified in 1912 (23/6/1912 n. 688), which extended the notion of relevant historic and artistic value to objects and monuments of historical, literary, ethnographic, topographic interest. Two laws, passed respectively in 1912 (23/6/1912, n. 688) and 1922 (11/6/1922, n. 778) identified parks, gardens, and natural resources (*bellezze naturali*) as areas subject to the legislation and under the jurisdiction of the Soprintendenza. See Lauro D’Alberto, “La Soprintendenza: storia e ruolo,” in *Verona 1900-1960. Architetture nella dissoluzione dell’aura*, ed. Arturo Sandrini and Francesco Amendolagine (Venezia: CLUVA, 1979), 22; and Zucconi, “La nuova figura,” 66.

¹⁴⁷ “La Soprintendenza, a sua volta, è l’ufficio locale di una forte amministrazione centrale, un’entità che viene sempre più percepita come estranea ed ostile.” Grimoldi, “Restauri a Verona,” 169.

agency and the local forces became increasingly unbridgeable: “formerly a cultural authority known and appreciated locally, the Superintendent turned into a public official.”¹⁴⁸

The legislative changes in the field of the preservation of historic monuments took place in the background of a fluctuating social and cultural context. Starting from the second half of the nineteenth century and more visibly during the first decade of the twentieth century, the social component of the city’s cultural elite was broadened through the inclusion of middle-class and bourgeois representatives, including librarians, archivists, professors, and public officials. Once the preserve of clergy and aristocracy, the cultural and intellectual debate was now extended to members of the middle class. At the same time, the education of the cultural elite was transformed by new university programs emphasizing a scientific approach to humanities and the application of historic and philological methods to the disciplines of history and art history. The new public officials in charge of the preservation of historic monuments emerged from this novel pool of intellectual figures. They formed themselves at the post-graduate schools of Adolfo Venturi, the art historian who first included the discipline of art history in university curricula and insisted on the application of the positivist method.¹⁴⁹ Among them was Giuseppe Gerola (1877-1938), the first Superintendent of the Fascist era. Born in Trentino Alto Adige, Gerola served as Director of Verona’s Civic Museums from 1906 to 1910, when he was transferred to Ravenna (1911-1918). In the city of Ravenna, he worked as a Superintendent until he received his next assignment as Superintendent of Medieval and Modern Art for the provinces

¹⁴⁸ “La figura del Soprintendente come autorità culturale riconosciuta a livello locale, si trasforma in quella di funzionario.” Ibid., 170.

¹⁴⁹ Gian Maria Varanini, “I musei civici veneti nel primo Novecento e l’identità urbana,” in *Medioevo ideale e Medioevo reale nella cultura urbana: Antonio Avena e la Verona del primo Novecento*, ed. Paola Marini (Verona: Comune di Verona, Assessorato alla cultura, 2003), 86-89.

of Trento, Verona, and Vicenza (1919-1938).¹⁵⁰ Because of his intellectual and social background, Gerola was often perceived by the local cultural elite as an outsider, unable to understand the needs and specific characteristics of Verona's cultural heritage. In a letter sent to Mussolini on May 19, 1928, the local intellectual figure and painter Angelo dall'Oca Bianca expressed his concerns on Gerola's role as a Superintendent of the city's historic monuments: "It seems to me that such a man, a man capable of such ideas [Dall'Oca Bianca here refers to Gerola's proposal to transfer *Il martirio di San Giorgio* by Paolo Veronese to a concave support] should not be the custodian of our city, of our monuments, of our history as he would be better suited to be a cowherd on his mountains, in Tirolo."¹⁵¹

The hostilities between the Soprintendenza and the city council began with the demolition of the Jewish Ghetto in 1924.¹⁵² Located in close proximity to Piazza delle Erbe, in the area delimited by Via Mazzini and Via Pellicciai, the ghetto represented a social and sanitary problem that the previous Liberal administration had vainly attempted to solve. The Fascist plan for the urban renewal of this area of the city was based on a massive clearing of the existing architectural structures and a three-phase rebuilding process.¹⁵³ The demolition was presented as

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 90-92. It is important to notice that in 1923 the main office of the Soprintendenza was moved from Verona to the city of Trento, in the neighboring region of Trentino Alto Adige. Not until 1925 was the headquarters moved back to Verona; finally in 1927, after a separate office was created for the provinces of Trento and Bolzano, the Soprintendenza in Verona saw its area of jurisdiction restricted to two provinces: Verona and Mantua. See Grimoldi, "Restauro a Verona," 170.

¹⁵¹ Tirolo is a region in Italy known for its pastures. "A me pare che un simile uomo, capace di simili idee anzichè fare il tutore delle nostre città, dei nostri monumenti, della nostra storia sarebbe più adatto a fare il mandriano nel suo Tirolo, nelle sue montagne." Angelo Dall'Oca Bianca to Mussolini, May 19, 1928, AA.BB.AA., Divisione II, 1925-1928, b. 229.

¹⁵² Established in 1599 under the Venetian rule, the Ghetto was destroyed by a fire in 1786. In 1864, the Jewish community built the synagogue which is still in use today. In 1866, following the annexation of Verona to the Kingdom of Italy, Jews were emancipated. See Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 350.

¹⁵³ The restructuring of the area delimited by Via Portici, Via Pellicciai, and Vicolo Nuovo was entrusted to architect Ferdinando Fagioli; the refashioning of the area between Vicolo Nuovo, Vicolo Mondo, and Vicolo San Rocchetto and the remodeling of the area between Corte Spagnola and Corte Segantina were assigned to architect Francesco

a necessary measure for the improvement of the city center's sanitary conditions and the solving of the housing problem. As underlined by the author of *Verona nei quattro anni di amministrazione fascista*: "with the urban renewal, and the moral and hygienic healing of the neighborhood, it will be possible to derive a great economic advantage. Indeed, the building of new palazzi and the creation of a number of modern apartments will have a positive effect on the housing problem."¹⁵⁴ The project was fruitlessly opposed by Superintendent Gerola, who requested the intervention of Gustavo Giovannoni. In spite of Giovannoni's recommendation to preserve a selected number of historically relevant buildings, the podestà authorized their demolition.¹⁵⁵

A new confrontation between the city and Gerola erupted in 1925, at the time of the demolition of the former Convento delle Maddalene. The available documentation throws light on the dynamic of power that coalesced around the monument, with the Superintendent reaching for support to the central government (Ministry of Public Education) and the city council unresponsive to the warnings of the central authority. On January 28, 1926 after inspecting the site, Gerola wrote to the Direzione Generale Antichità e Belle Arti, lamenting how:

Demolition works although slowed down are still taking place. [I saw] some workers tearing down the loggia on the second floor while other workers were dismounting the roof of the palace's east wing ... Demolition appeared carried out in haste, as planned by the Honorable Gai [city council commissioner (*commissario straordinario del comune*)]. ... From a letter that I received today, it would appear that even the tomb of the nuns, which originally might have been a crypt, has been converted to a sewer ... The Minister should also know that

Banterle who built in this area Verona's first movie theater (the Superpalazzo or Supercinema, 1927-1930). See Mulazzani, "Il Novecento," 366.

¹⁵⁴ "Col miglioramento edilizio, con il risanamento morale ed igienico di tutto il rione si avrà altresì un vantaggio economico, perchè il sorgere di nuovi palazzi, la formazione di un buon numero di appartamenti moderni apporterà benefiche ripercussioni sulla crisi degli alloggi." Giuseppe Fassio, *Verona nei quattro anni di amministrazione comunale fascista, 1923-1927* (Verona: Officine Grafiche A. Mondadori, 1927). Quoted in Arturo Sandrini and Francesco Amendolagine, ed., *Verona 1900-1960. Architetture nella dissoluzione dell'aura* (Venezia: CLUVA, 1979), 104.

¹⁵⁵ Grimoldi, "Restauro a Verona," 170.

following the removal of portions of frescos from the walls of the convent, the architect Da Lisca wrote to the city council [owner of the complex] on June 8th of last year, warning that no works should be carried out without the Ministry's authorization.¹⁵⁶

Also in January, the *Commissione Centrale per le Antichità e Belle Arti* wrote to the city

Prefect:

Upon examining the issue concerning the demolition of the former Convent delle Maddalene in Verona and reviewing the report of the General Director for Antiquity and Works of Art [Direttore Generale per le Antichità e Belle Arti], this Commission highly deplores the useless barbarian act which has led to the demolition of the cloister within the former convent Delle Maddalene...; believes that the central government cannot allow such serious disablement of the Italian artistic patrimony, such an abnormal dispensation of the laws of our country; and mandates that work be immediately stopped.¹⁵⁷

In spite of the central authority's pronouncement, the former convent was demolished along with the nearby Collegio degli Artigianelli. In a letter to the Prefect, the mayor presented the demolition "not as a work of destruction but rather as healthy and wise work of reconstruction."¹⁵⁸ Occupied by low-income families (350 people) that the city was all too eager

¹⁵⁶ "Nel sopralluogo di ieri avevo riscontrato che i lavori sembravano un pò rallentati, ma tuttavia procedevano. Alcuni operai demolivano con il piccone il parapetto della loggia del piano superiore; parecchi altri smontavano il tetto principale dell'ala di fabbricato più orientale ... La demolizione appariva eseguita in gran fretta, come aveva desiderato l'Onorevole Gai. ... Da una lettera ricevuta oggi sembrerebbe che anche la tomba delle monache, la quale potrebbe essere stata una cripta sia stata convertita in fogna ... Sarà bene che codesto Ministero sappia pure come l'architetto Da Lisca ... avesse scritto sin dall'otto giugno dell'anno scorso al comune, proprietario dello stabile, avvertendo che nessun lavoro poteva essere eseguito senza l'autorizzazione ministeriale." Superintendent Giuseppe Gerola to Direzione Generale Antichità e Belle Arti, 28 January, 1926, AA.BB.AA., Divisione II, 1925-1928, b. 229.

¹⁵⁷ "La commissione, esaminata la questione della demolizione dell'ex Convento delle Maddalene in Verona; udita la relazione del Direttore Generale per le Antichità e Belle Arti; deplora vivissimamente la inutile barbarie con cui è stata iniziata la demolizione del chiostro delle Maddalene in Verona, interessante monumento nel mirabile ambiente della insigne città; e pensa che il Governo Nazionale non possa consentire così grande menomazione del patrimonio artistico italiano, così anormale deroga da ogni rispetto alle leggi del nostro paese; esprime il voto che i lavori vengano immediatamente sospesi." Commissione Centrale per le Antichità e Belle Arti to the Prefect, Letter of 26 or 29 January, 1926. AA.BB.AA., Divisione II, 1925-1928, b. 229.

¹⁵⁸ "... opera che non è di demolizione ma di sana e saggia ricostruzione." Letter from Verona's mayor to the Prefect, January 28, 1926. AA.BB.AA., Divisione II, 1925-1928, b. 229.

to expel, the two structures were replaced by new construction assigned to disabled ex-servicemen.¹⁵⁹

The clearing of the city center continued throughout the twenty years of Fascist administration. In 1932, the historic Convent of Santa Maria della Vergine was demolished. In 1935, the Quartiere Sant' Alessio, a working class neighborhood, disappeared under the action of the *piccone risanatore* (healing pick).¹⁶⁰ The Soprintendenza which continued to oppose demolition projects, often by appealing directly to the central government, found itself powerless and unable to impose any limit to the action of the city council. A frustrated Gerola commented to the Prefect:

The city council continues its actions undisturbed, without even responding to [our] complaints. This is no surprise. After what happened with the former Convent Delle Maddalene and with the Ghetto, the city council has learned that the *Soprintendenza* can be ignored and that preservation laws are made only for those stupid enough to obey them. The prestige and authority of the *Ufficio Belle Arti* is absolutely non existent.¹⁶¹

No less controversial were the numerous restoration projects carried out under the Fascist administration. At the heart and soul of Fascist-sponsored restoration activities in Verona was Antonio Avena (1882-1967), director of the city's Civic Museums. A brief introduction to Avena's cultural formation and multifaceted career is useful in order to better understand his

¹⁵⁹ Sandrini, "Appunti," 50.

¹⁶⁰ Fascist literature is full of references to *il piccone risanatore* (the healing pick), a tool which became the symbol of the regime's effort to modernize Italian cities through the demolition of old architectural structures and the clearing of overcrowded areas. Mussolini himself praised the healing qualities of *il piccone risanatore* and had himself photographed wielding his pick on the roof of condemned buildings. See Spiro Kostof, "His Majesty the Pick: The Aesthetics of Demolition," in *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space*, Zeynep Celi, Diane G. Favro, and Richard Ingersoll ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 9-22.

¹⁶¹ "E il municipio continua indisturbato il suo lavoro, senza neppure rispondere ulteriormente. Tutto ciò non meraviglia affatto. Dopo quanto è avvenuto alle Maddalene e al Ghetto, il Municipio ha imparato che la Soprintendenza si può saltare impunemente e che le leggi sulle Belle Arti sono fatte soltanto per coloro che hanno la dabbenaggine di osservarle. Il prestigio dell'Ufficio Belle Arti è assolutamente nullo." Giuseppe Gerola to Verona's Prefect, undated letter, AA.BB.AA., Divisione II, 1925-1928, b. 229.

approach to restoration issues.¹⁶² Avena was born in Verona, and in this city he spent his entire life. He graduated from the University of Padua with a thesis on the Italian medieval poet and writer Francesco Petrarca. His first job was as a teacher of Italian literature at the local high school. In 1906, Avena began work as a librarian at the Civic Library and Archives of Verona. Around 1910, his interest shifted to the history of art. He began writing for *Madonna Verona*, the bulletin of the city's Civic Museums, where he published several articles on the history of local private and public collections. At the outbreak of World War I, Avena was instrumental in organizing a series of initiatives for the protection and safeguard of the city's works of art. Indeed, these were moved to Florence and returned to Verona at the end of the War, in 1919. In 1915, Avena was appointed director to Verona's Civic Museums, a role he maintained until 1955. As Director he distinguished himself for a wide range of initiatives from special exhibits to art history publications to restoration projects. Although part of his career concentrated on Roman antiquity, in particular the creation of the Roman archeological museum in 1924 and the reconstruction of the Arco dei Gavi, Avena is better known for the restoration of the city's medieval and Renaissance monuments, which greatly impacted the city's urban image and identity. After World War II, Avena arranged an exhibition of the most representative paintings of the Veronese tradition (1947) and worked toward the reopening of Verona's museums, including Castelvecchio (1947) and Palazzo Forti (1953). During his long and versatile career Avena also served as artistic director of opera productions at the Arena. The majority of his restoration projects are characterized by a sense of choreographic rendering. His works are inspired recreations of neo-medieval style, successful in their blend of building and environment,

¹⁶² For a discussion of Avena's life and career see Marini, *Medioevo ideale*; and Giuseppe Conforti, Alba di Lieto and Paolo Rigoli, "Schede," in *L'architettura a Verona dal periodo napoleonico all'età contemporanea*, ed. Pierpaolo Brugnoli and Arturo Sandrini (Verona: Banca Popolare di Verona, 1994), 394-397.

though often lacking historical basis. The restoration of the medieval castle of Castelvecchio, one of the first projects undertaken by Avena, is a perfect example of his neo-medieval, highly controversial style.¹⁶³

Erected between 1354 and 1357 on the perimeter of the city's medieval walls, and overlooking the Adige River, Castelvecchio and its annexed bridge were originally designed as a home for the della Scala family and as a military stronghold against outside invaders and local rebellions. Articulated in two halves—a western Reggia around an inner courtyard and an eastern military zone, known as the Great Court—the castle underwent numerous interventions throughout the centuries. The last refashioning in 1799, under the French rule, transformed the castle through the elevation of the existing walls, the lowering of the corner towers and the elimination of the crenellations. At that time, the Great Court was altered with the construction of a wall along the river, while an L-shaped barrack was built along the north and east side of the court. After the annexation of Verona to the Kingdom of Italy in 1866, Castelvecchio became the property of the central government which used it mainly as barracks. The restoration of the entire complex, discussed by the city's administration as early as 1910, was put on hold for lack of funds at the state level. With the ascendancy of Fascism restoration efforts resumed as the new regime seemed to provide favorable conditions for the remaking of the castle. In 1923 a plan for the refashioning of Castelvecchio, drawn up by architect Ferdinando Forlati under the supervision of Antonio Avena, was enthusiastically approved by prominent citizens as well as local authorities who petitioned the central government to give the barracks to the city. At the

¹⁶³ On the refashioning of Castelvecchio under the Fascist administration see Lino Vittorio Bozzetto, "Indagini preliminari di studio sul restauro Forlati-Avena di Castelvecchio," in *Medioevo ideale e Medioevo reale nella cultura urbana: Antonio Avena e la Verona del primo Novecento*, ed. Paola Marini (Verona: Comune di Verona, Assessorato alla cultura, 2003), 133-154; and Cesare Benciolini, "I lavori di Castelvecchio," *Bollettino del collegio di ingegneri e architetti di Verona*, marzo 1925, II, n. 1.

state level, the request received the backing of one of the most important citizens of Verona, Alberto De Stefani, minister of Finance under Mussolini.¹⁶⁴ With the condition that “Castelvecchio become a museum and that all restoration works are paid by the city and the project is carried out under the supervision of the administration responsible for the preservation of Antiquities and Works of Art”¹⁶⁵ the central government transferred the ownership of the castle to the city in the fall of 1923.

Restoration began in 1924 and was completed in just two years under the direction of Avena, assisted by a specially appointed executive committee of respected local figures.¹⁶⁶ The project, financed by multiple sources, relied heavily on the support of noble and upper-middle-class families.¹⁶⁷ They not only provided cash to refurbish the castle but also donated pieces from their private collections to the museum, an act that testifies to their commitment to the project and that would deeply impact Avena’s exhibition criteria.

Under the direction of Avena and Forlati, Castelvecchio was transformed into an ideal medieval castle. Outside, Avena elevated the corner towers, fabricated crenellations and battlements and totally reshaped the Napoleonic block. In the courtyard delicate gothic window surrounds were salvaged from demolished sites and inserted in the reconstructed façades. A

¹⁶⁴ Fassio, *Verona nei quattro anni*, 105-115; see also Gian Paolo Marchi, “Per un ritratto di un protagonista della cultura veronese nel Novecento” in *Medioevo ideale e Medioevo reale nella cultura urbana: Antonio Avena e la Verona del primo Novecento*, ed. Paola Marini (Verona: Comune di Verona, Assessorato alla cultura, 2003), 36-38.

¹⁶⁵ “La suddetta cessione in uso perpetuo viene fatta a condizione che il Castelvecchio sia esclusivamente adibito a Museo e che tutti i lavori di restauro e manutenzione siano co[m]piuti a spese esclusive del Comune di Verona e sotto la vigilanza della competente Amministrazione delle Antichità e Belle Arti.” “Atto di cessione in uso perpetuo al Comune di Verona dello stabile di Castelvecchio,” 23 February 1928, ASBAPVr, f. 91/67.

¹⁶⁶ The Committee included architect Ettore Fagioli, Count Saladini de Moreschi, and town councilor Sandro Baganzini. See Paola Marini, “Il primo allestimento museale di Castelvecchio,” in *Medioevo ideale e Medioevo reale nella cultura urbana: Antonio Avena e la Verona del primo Novecento*, ed. Paola Marini (Verona: Comune di Verona, Assessorato alla cultura, 2003), 156.

¹⁶⁷ Funding for the project was provided by the Ministry of Public Education, the province, the city, the local bank Cassa di Risparmio, and prominent local citizens. Noble and upper-middle-class families, along with the local bank, played a major role in the project. In fact, Cassa di Risparmio contributed 254,657 Lira; the “best families of Verona” (le migliori famiglie di Verona) contributed 236,614 Lira. See Amendolagine, *Verona 1900-1960*, 156.

three-arched loggia placed centrally in the north façade became the main entrance. The Great Court, formerly a military parade ground, was remodeled into a formal garden divided approximately into quadrants connecting the main entrance tower and the central loggia entrance. Inside, Avena replaced the existing vaults with coffered ceilings, installed new floors, and had the walls decorated with frescoes inspired by Renaissance and Baroque motifs. He furnished the rooms of the museum with pieces of different periods, mixed and matched according to his personal taste. Paintings were forced into new frames to become decorative ovals in the ceilings. New altar pieces were created by combining together canvases of different periods and authors. Capitals and other architectural elements were distributed throughout the museum to function as decorative elements, sometimes to support flower pots. Avena admitted that his intention was not to isolate objects but rather present them as integral furnishings of intimate and suitable interiors.

Castelvecchio's restoration was criticized by the Soprintendenza for the lack of documentary evidence supporting Avena's architectural decisions. Aware of the controversial nature of his restoration, Avena decided not to consult the preservation agency, as required by the law, preferring to deal directly with the central government. The architect must have felt that by bypassing the preservationists at the local level, he would speed up the process and avoid potential objections to his project. Left powerless, the Inspector and Assistant to the Superintendent, Alessandro Da Lisca, boycotted the construction site in protest. The dispute between Avena and the Soprintendenza reignited in 1926, when Avena proceeded to the restoration of the bridge of Castelvecchio, once again without consulting with the Soprintendenza. A letter sent on July 20, 1926 by Filippo Nereo Vignola, Secretary to the city

council, to Superintendent Gerola reveals the acrimony the two parties had been harboring for years, and the distance between them:

I know Da Lisca does not approve the restoration of Castelvecchio's bridge. But I wonder if you can call restoration the remaking of a window frame ...; if you can call restoration the mortaring of a few broken bricks at the top of the crenellations ... I am not sure if in order to do these simple things that we have had the common sense to assign not to the Technical Office, which repaves streets, but rather to the Director of the museum and to a special Committee, the city of Verona should write half a ton of paper and consult with Da Lisca who was seen so very little during the restoration of the castle ... You say that we ignore the Soprintendenza. This is not true. Instead, we might say that the Soprintendenza and his employees have more than once ignored the needs of our monuments and the [conditions of the] bridge are a clear example of that.¹⁶⁸

The last episode in the saga of Castelvecchio took place in 1928, when an impatient Podestà wrote to the Ministry of Public Education soliciting the approval of the construction of a tower by the bridge's entrance. The Minister consulted with the Superintendent, who replied that no authorization would be issued without the city submitting the appropriate documentation and that his office was by and large "totally contrary to the recreation of vanished monuments ... especially considering the criteria followed in Castelvecchio."¹⁶⁹ However, in the end, Avena had it his way. A seemingly resigned Gerola wrote to the Direzione Generale, advising the

¹⁶⁸ "So che il Da Lisca non approva quelli che egli chiama restauri del ponte di Castelvecchio. Da mia parte non so se si possa chiamare restauro il rifacimento di un bancaletto ad una finestra di un torrione dove mancavano alcuni mattoni tolti da monelli, con pericolo che qualcuno cadesse nel fiume; se sia un restauro quello di rimettere a posto una lastra di pietra tolta dal cammino di ronda e gettata sulla strada da ignoti vandali; se infine si possa dire restauro la saldatura di qualche mattone smosso o spezzato al sommo dei merli malamente restaurato da Francesco I d'Austria. Non so se per fare queste semplici cose, che abbiamo avuto la previdenza di affidare non all'ufficio tecnico che riatta il piano stradale ma alla Direzione del Museo che col comitato ha in consegna il ponte, il Comune di Verona dovesse scrivere mezzo quintale di carta e chiamare il Da Lisca che fu visto così poco durante il restauro del Castello ... Tu dici che noi ignoriamo la Soprintendenza. Ciò non è vero ... Noi invece potremmo dire che la Soprintendenza o gli affini dipendenti hanno più di una volta ignorato i bisogni dei nostri monumenti e proprio il ponte Scaligero ce ne ha dato un esempio." Filippo Nereo Vignola to Giuseppe Gerola, 20 July 1926, ASBAPVr, f. 91/67.

¹⁶⁹ "...Decisamente contrario alla rifabbrica di monumenti scomparsi ... tenuti presenti i criteri che si sono seguiti a Castelvecchio." Giuseppe Gerola to the Direzione Generale Antichità e Belle Arti, 12 September 1928, ASBAPVr, f. 91/67.

authorization of the project “considering the persistence of the town council and the Prefecture.”¹⁷⁰

Criticized by the preservationists, Avena’s restoration of Castelvecchio met with the approval of the regime as well as the support of Verona’s aristocracy and upper middle class. Indeed, not only was the central government present at the inauguration of the museum in 1926 in the person of King Victor Emanuel, but the Ministry of Public Education explicitly praised Avena’s restoration by pointing to Castelvecchio and Verona as examples for other Italian cities.¹⁷¹

Studies have shown that in many medieval towns across the peninsula, Fascism often favored simplified narratives about the past, and (re)creations in a neo-medieval style rather than faithful restitutions of a building’s multiple historical layers.¹⁷² The celebration of an idealized medieval heritage, devoid of complicating factors such as later additions, had several goals including commemorating a historical era of military strength and political independence, promoting a feeling of shared national identity, and asserting Fascism as the legitimate heir of that tradition. In Verona, the regime did not oppose—and in many cases, such as Castelvecchio, openly favored—local initiatives aimed at recreating simplified versions of the built environment. Buildings were stripped of any additions that post-dated the Renaissance and redesigned based on an idealized notion of history. Such selective and fictitious recreation of the past perfectly suited Mussolini’s agenda of promoting an ideal and immediate association between the Fascist present and Verona’s historic tradition. Indeed the Middle Ages, Verona’s most glorious period, and Cangrande, the legendary warrior-ruler who led the city to the apex of

¹⁷⁰ “... in considerazione anche dell’insistenza con cui il municipio e la prefettura chiedono l’autorizzazione.” Giuseppe Gerola to the Direzione Generale Antichità e Belle Arti, 12 September 1928, ASBAPVr f. 91/67.

¹⁷¹ Letter from Filippo Nereo Vignola to Giuseppe Gerola, July 20, 1926, ASBAPVr, f. 91/67.

¹⁷² See footnote 38.

its political and military power, became the filters through which Fascism in Verona attempted to provide itself with historical legitimacy.

Avena's refashioning of Castelvecchio was also well received by the city's social elite. As discussed, Verona's upper- and middle-class families financed most of the project and donated works of art to furbish the museum's rooms. Avena repaid them by creating a narrative that stressed the role of the upper classes as identity makers. Indeed, Avena's restoration transformed what originally was a fortified castle into a refined residence with an elegant internal courtyard embellished by two delicate, symmetrical façades modeled after gothic and Renaissance examples and enlivened by a formal garden. The remodeling was meant in Forlati's words to create "a simple and tranquil architecture." The intent, however, was not merely aesthetic. It introduced elements that purposefully mitigated the defensive nature of the complex, originally built as a result of the progressive deterioration in the relationship between the Scaligeri and the city. Indeed, in Castelvecchio as in other restoration projects supervised by Avena, the complex social relations characterizing the era of the Scaligeri remained unaddressed. Moreover, the museographic criteria implemented inside, meant to recreate the interiors of noble households, and the dedication of each room to a specific noble family created a narrative which emphasized the role of the social elites in the making of Verona's identity. The history, beliefs, and self-image of the upper classes became by extension the history of the entire community. In Avena's museum the noble families of Verona controlled and owned the city's historic tradition. In addition, the display privileging context over objects, purposely showing artistic items unlabeled and unprotected, while facilitating a direct, unmediated approach to the recreated interiors, also promoted an emotional, uncritical relation with the history narrated and helped

naturalize the narrative of the social elites as a universal narrative, shared by all members of Verona's society.

With the backing of the city's social elite and the approval of the central government, Avena was able to carry out his controversial restoration projects on behalf of the city council and in spite of the preservationists' opposition. As such, Castelvecchio is emblematic of the process of mediation among distinct, often contrasting forces that unfolded around the restoration of historic monuments in Verona: the central government, the Soprintendenza, and the social elites whose representatives occupied key positions within the city council. Castelvecchio's restoration shows the leading role of the Veronese social elites in shaping the city's urban space and their ability to capitalize on the interest of the central government in Verona in order to impose their personal agenda of attracting tourism, boosting a stagnant economy, and confirming their myth of identity.

The dynamic of power unleashed at Castelvecchio was to repeat itself in the following years. The restoration of Palazzo del Podestà, the next major project tackled by the Fascist administration, was the most ideologically charged.¹⁷³ Built between 1308 and 1311 by Cangrande della Scala¹⁷⁴ as the residence of Verona's ruling family, the building served as the center of political power under the Venetians (1405-1797), the French government (1797-1814), and Hapsburg rule (1814-1866) before being annexed to the Kingdom of Italy in 1866. Under the

¹⁷³ On the restoration of the Palazzo del Podestà (also known as Palazzo della Provincia or Palazzo del Governo) see Antonio Avena, "Il ripristino del Palazzo. Rilievi e criteri artistici dei lavori," in *Il Palazzo della Provincia di Verona: il primo ostello di Dante* (Verona: Tipografia Veronese, 1931); Pierpaolo Brugnoli, *Il Palazzo della Provincia già dimora di Cangrande a Verona* (Verona: Edizioni Golden Time Communication, 2001) and "Il restauro del Palazzo della Provincia," in *Medioevo ideale e Medioevo reale nella cultura urbana: Antonio Avena e la Verona del primo Novecento*, ed. Paola Marini (Verona: Comune di Verona, Assessorato alla cultura, 2003), 183-193; Maristella Vecchiato, "Le fabbriche del dominio scaligero e le loro trasformazioni novecentesche," in *Suggerimenti del Passato. Immagini di Verona scaligera*, ed. Ruggero Boschi and Maristella Vecchiato (Verona: Edizioni La Grafica, 2001), 153-170.

¹⁷⁴ Originally dated to 1272, Giulio Sancassini and Pierpaolo Brugnoli have convincingly argued for a later dating, under the rule of Cangrande della Scala (1311-1329). See Brugnoli, *Il Palazzo della Provincia*, 32-45.

new Italian state, the Palazzo continued its importance as the official residence of the Prefect for the province of Verona. With the advent of Fascism, the former residence of Cangrande was chosen by the regime as its local headquarters to signify continuity with tradition and highlight the role of Fascism as the agent able to revive Verona's glorious past. Like Castelvechio's refashioning, the restoration of *Palazzo del Podestà* had been discussed by the previous Liberal administration. In 1888, in the wake of the revived interest in medieval Verona, the Commissione Conservatrice required Boito's opinion on the refashioning of the building. By that time the palazzo had undergone several alterations that had deeply compromised its original structure. Under Venetian rule (1405-1797), a loggia was opened on the ground floor of the façade adjoining Piazza del Signori and a monumental portal was introduced in 1533 by Podestà Giovanni Dolfin. Flanked by double ionic columns and surmounted by the symbolic Venetian griffon, the portal was the creation of the famous architect Michele Sanmicheli, who chose this solution to celebrate Venetian domination without causing dramatic alterations to the façade. In 1810, under French rule, Palazzo del Podestà was restored by architect Antonio Smancini, who transformed it into a rather incongruous neoclassical building. Smancini covered the facade with stucco and crowned it with a simple molded cornice, which caused the crenellations to disappear. The arched windows of the first and second floor were closed and replaced by rectangular windows. Finally, the loggia of the ground floor was closed off and reduced in amplitude.

Boito suggested a rather cautious and conservative approach. He recommended the removal of the stucco from the façade, the reopening of the loggia on the first floor, and the restoration of two windows on the second and three on the third floor.¹⁷⁵ He appeared skeptical of the possibility of providing the building with crenellations, as there was no evidence of their

¹⁷⁵ Grimoldi, "Restauro a Verona," 146-150.

original size and measure. Boito warned the administration not to attempt a more extensive restoration project that would be aesthetically pleasing but not historically based. The project was not carried out. The Palazzo preserved a neoclassical appearance until 1928, when the Fascist administration undertook the restoration of the building.

Antonio Avena was entrusted by the city council with the project of restoring the former residence of the Scaligeri to its original splendor. In theory, Avena's restoration was a mere integration of visible or well-documented remains. In the documents available at the Soprintendenza, Avena underlines his intention to limit the restoration to the consolidation of the original structures.¹⁷⁶ In reality, Palazzo del Podestà underwent a much more radical treatment, known as *sventramento* (disemboweling). Work began in 1928 and proceeded fairly quickly to completion in 1930. First, the tower at the corner between Via Cavalletto and the church of Santa Maria Antica was restored. New walls were built and crenellations were added. The façade of the building facing the Church of Santa Maria Antica (formerly the main entrance) was also restored with new crenellation and a new entrance. The most controversial part of the project was the restoration of the façade in front of Piazza dei Signori. Avena disregarded Boito's warnings for a cautious approach and virtually reinvented a façade: the stucco was removed to reveal the natural surface of the brick, the loggia on the ground level was reopened and repaired, arched windows were opened on the second and third floors; and the molded cornice crowning the building was removed and replaced with crenellations. The Venetian lion, removed by Smancini in 1810, was reintroduced on the arched doorway. Inside, the original walls were covered with stucco and decorated with medieval motifs. Pictures of before and after and the report of Piero Giacobbi (the

¹⁷⁶ The archives of the *Soprintendenza per i beni architettonici e per il paesaggio di Verona* preserves several letters sent by Avena to the Superintendent Armando Venè. In them Avena states his intention to be "respectful of the history and true nature of Palazzo del Podestà." ASBAPVr, f. 91/142.

engineer for the restoration) confirm that Avena did not hesitate to use pieces purchased or simply removed from other historical sites in Verona to achieve choreographic effects and confer unity to an extremely fragmentary structure.

The restoration, approved by the *Commissione Provinciale per i Monumenti*, was begun apparently without the knowledge of the Soprintendenza. On June 6, 1927 an irritated Superintendent wrote to the Province (the owner of the building) lamenting, “In the courtyard of the Palazzo are currently being executed works whose extent are unknown to this office and for which no project was submitted to the Soprintendenza. Since the request [to stop work] submitted to the Engineer [Attilio Ferrari] has had no result, I ask you to stop all work immediately and to submit to this office all relative projects and estimates as peremptorily provided by the law.”¹⁷⁷ The diatribe subsided when the Ministry of Public Education intervened directly on the issue and, after consulting with the *Consiglio Superiore per le Antichità e Belle Arti*, cautiously approved the project: “...[this ministry] approves the restoration of the three arches between the portal and the [Cavalletto] alley. [The reopening of the arches] should provide guidance for future interventions. However, it is believed that the consideration for the artistic elements of the project should not be split from the evaluation of the technical difficulties that the reopening of the above-mentioned arches would entail.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ “Nel cortile di codesta R. Prefettura si eseguono lavori dei quali questo ufficio non conosce l’entità e per i quali non fu presentato a questa Soprintendenza il progetto. Poichè la preghiera oralmente rivolta al chiar.mo signor Ingegnere Capo della Provincia non ha sortito il desiderato effetto, prego di voler sospendere qualsiasi lavoro nel cortile stesso e di inviarmi in esame i preventivi e i progetti come tassativamente è previsto dalla legge.” Letter of 12 June 1927 from Giuseppe Gerola to Amministrazione Provinciale, ASBAPVr, f. 91/142.

¹⁷⁸ “Il Consiglio Superiore per le Antichità e Belle Arti ... ha espresso il seguente parere: ‘che si possano intanto consentire i lavori di ripristino delle tre arcate fra il portale sanmicheliano di Piazza dei Signori e il Vicolo Cavalletto, per trarne esperienza nei lavori successivi, crede tuttavia di dover segnalare la opportunità che lo studio degli elementi storico-artistici non sia scompagnato dall’esame delle difficoltà storiche che presenta la riapertura degli archi predetti.’” Letter of 27 June 1928 from Francesco Pellati, Adviser to the Minister of Public Education, to Giuseppe Gerola, AA.BB.AA, Divisione II, 1925-1928, b. 229.

As discussed, Avena's refashioning of the Palazzo went well beyond the reopening of the three arches on the facade. In this as in later restorations, Avena would often arbitrarily extend the central government's authorization to undisclosed aspects of his projects. Although in the case of Palazzo del Podestà the Soprintendenza managed to be included in the restoration debate, more often the preservation agency would be bypassed by the city council.¹⁷⁹ Fearing the opposition of the preservation agency, the city often submitted its projects directly to the central authority (the Ministry of Public Education) where it could rely on powerful connections to have its various projects approved. This was the case in the rebuilding of Gavi's Arch. Built by the Romans in the first century B.C.E. on the main Roman road into the city (Via Cavour), the arch had been dismantled by Napoleonic troops in 1806 and its pieces had been in storage since then. After a long debate on where to rebuild the arch, the city was able to obtain the authorization and the funds necessary to rebuild the monument through the intermediation of the undersecretary of Public Education, Verona native Basilio Maspes.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, documents reveal how more than once the city council played the Soprintendenza and the central government against each other to its own advantage. In 1925, when the city began the restoration of Palazzo Pompei, Gerola sent a telegram to the Minister: "I have been informed that the Ministry directly authorized the renovation of Palazzo Pompei, against the decision of this office. Please provide clarifications."¹⁸¹ The Ministry replied: "I never authorized the work at Palazzo Pompei."¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Indeed, the Archives of the Soprintendenza has no documentation (or very limited documentation) on several projects carried out during the Fascist period.

¹⁸⁰ Funds and authorization were obtained in 1920. The reassembling of the arch, however, was delayed to 1932 due to the fact that it was not possible to reach an agreement at the local level on where to rebuild the arch. See Ruggero Boschi, "Una vita fatata: Antonio Avena tra restauro e ricostruzione," in *Medioevo ideale e Medioevo reale nella cultura urbana: Antonio Avena e la Verona del primo Novecento*, ed. Paola Marini (Verona: Comune di Verona, Assessorato alla cultura, 2003), 110.

¹⁸¹ "Vengo informato codesto Ministero avrebbe direttamente autorizzato alzamento Palazzo Pompei Verona contro divieto questo ufficio. Prego informazioni telegrafiche." Undated telegram (1926) from Giuseppe Gerola to Pietro Fedele, Minister of Public Education, AA.BB.AA., Divisione II, 1925-1928, b. 229.

The projects discussed so far highlight the primary role of the city council in promoting and carrying out the restoration of Verona's architectural heritage. Far from being top-down undertakings, the restoration projects executed during the first decade of Fascist administration emerge as projects initiated at the local level, often carried out in open conflict with the Soprintendenza, with the support of Verona natives occupying key positions within the central government. The Soprintendenza, on the other hand, appears to have been largely unable to withstand the pressure of local officials. Gerola, Verona's first Superintendent, engaged in a fierce but vain resistance to the city council's controversial projects. The fact that he operated from Trento and was therefore perceived as an outsider did not help smooth the relationship. The dialogue between the city and the preservation agency improved when Gerola was succeeded by Armando Venè. A native of Verona, he adopted a much more conciliatory position and often collaborated with the city in the realization of various projects. Hostilities erupted again when the Marquis Alessandro Da Lisca was nominated Superintendent and relations remained tense throughout the 1930s. At this time a new player entered the already crowded arena of the restoration of artistic monuments: Hollywood.

¹⁸² "Non ho affatto autorizzato sopraelevazione palazzo Pompei Verona." AA.BB.AA., Divisione II, 1925-1928, b. 229.

4.0 VERONA AND THE MOVIE SET. REDEFINING THE CITY'S IDENTITY THROUGH THE LENS OF THE HOLLYWOOD FILM INDUSTRY

Verona's love affair with the film industry began on May 15, 1897, when citizens were invited to celebrate the new media of cinematography and the phonograph with a special evening at the Ristori theater. The event, advertised on *L'Arena's* front page with the futuristic name of *Cinematofotologodrammofonura* showcased a program including romantic arias and military fanfares as well as *Quadri di vita Veronese*, short films featuring the citizens of Verona caught in episodes of everyday life: strolling in Piazza Bra; on their way out of the Church of Santa Anastasia; arguing during the 1897 electoral debates.¹⁸³ Filmed in Verona in the early spring of 1897, *Quadri di vita Veronese* was one of the many documentaries the Parisian photographer Eugene Pirou filmed and screened in various localities across Europe. Widely successful because of audiences' ability to recognize themselves on the screen, the 1897 short films would be followed by similar productions featuring Verona and its picturesque outskirts: from the documentary titled *Verona* produced by the Rome-based Cines Studio in 1906 and distributed in France in 1914 to *La piena dell'Adige a Verona (The flood of the Adige River in Verona)* in 1908, and *Lago di Garda (The Garda Lake)* distributed in Italy (1909), Austria (1919) and Great

¹⁸³ Giancarlo Beltrame, "Dieci storie di cinema a Verona," in *Luci sulla città*, ed. Paolo Romano and Giancarlo Beltrame (Venezia: Marsilio, 2000), 14-15.

Britain (1920).¹⁸⁴ Numerous feature films also emphasized Verona at the center of their action: from *Alboino e Rosmunda* (1909)¹⁸⁵ to *Attila to Nerone e Agrippina* (1913).

By the time Fascism ascended to power in 1922, countless film productions had been centered on Verona. Either imaginatively staged or materially filmed in Verona, the productions ranged from short documentaries on the city's monuments and urban fabric to elaborate historical reenactments, many unfolding inside the Arena. The story of Romeo and Juliet occupies an important part of this early cinematographic production, which significantly contributed to Verona's popularity among national and international movie audiences. First transposed in film in 1900 by the French Clement Maurice, the Shakespearean play saw dozens of renditions through the years, including an *Indian Romeo and Juliet* (USA 1912) set among Native American tribes.¹⁸⁶ However, it was a 1936 traditional rendition of the story of Romeo and Juliet by movie director George Cukor that would have the greatest impact on Verona's history. Starring Norma Shearer and Leslie Howard in the role of the protagonists, the 1936 MGM feature film *Romeo and Juliet* was the first major international production centered in Verona.¹⁸⁷ The movie generated a new interest in the city among international audiences while redefining citizens' and visitors' image of the city.

This chapter analyzes the unexplored relationship between Cukor's film and the refashioning of Verona's urban space under the Fascist administration. I focus in particular on the impact the movie had on the renovation of sites of Shakespearean memory, including the House and Tomb of Juliet. I argue that the Hollywood movie industry impacted the city's urban

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 16-17.

¹⁸⁵ The movie was distributed in Germany (*Albuin*) and in the United States (*Alboino and Rosmunda*). Ibid., 17.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. On the cinematographic renditions of *Romeo and Juliet*'s play see also Russell Jackson, *Shakespeare Films in the Making: Vision, Production and Reception* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 127-221.

¹⁸⁷ For a discussion of Cukor's version of the Shakespearean *Romeo and Juliet* see Irving G. Thalberg, George Cukor, Talbot Jennings, and William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet: A Motion Picture Edition, Illustrated with Photographs* (New York: Random House, 1936).

landscape in a profound and multifaceted way: it changed the image Verona's citizens and administrators had of their city, encouraged the refashioning of buildings traditionally associated with the Shakespearean play, attracted mass tourism, and created a new source of income for future urban projects. Verona is the only case in Italy where the international movie industry acted as a concrete shaping force of the built environment by forcing the Fascist regime to negotiate its project of appropriations of the city's architectural heritage within a broader framework of international assumptions about and identification with Verona's illustrious history.

4.1 ROMEO AND JULIET BY MGM/THALBERG—CUKOR

For five years Irvin Thalberg, MGM founder and Hollywood's fabled boy wonder, had contemplated a Romeo and Juliet production.¹⁸⁸ His aim was to enhance his studio's prestige with a stylish and faithful rendition of the Shakespearean classic and achieve cultural respectability for himself. Louis Mayer, MGM co-founder and executive, opposed Thalberg's idea not only because of his anti-culture bias and his conviction that the masses were not ready for a Shakespearean film but also because of the Great Depression, which caused all Hollywood studios to cut costs and avoid risky productions.¹⁸⁹ In 1935, however, timing was ripe: when Warner Bros announced its plan to make a film of Max Reinhardt's stage production *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Mayer, who did not want to be outdone by his competitors, gave in

¹⁸⁸ On Irving Thalberg's life and career see Roland Flamini, *Thalberg. The Last Tycoon and the World of M-G-M* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2004); and Bob Thomas, *Thalberg. Life and Legend* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969).

¹⁸⁹ Douglas Brode, *Shakespeare in the Movies: From the Silent Era to Shakespeare in Love* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 43.

to Thalberg's idea. Thalberg entrusted Talbot Jennings, credited as one of Hollywood's most intelligent screenwriters, with the task of transposing the Shakespearean drama into a screen play. Jennings, who had already worked with Thalberg in the award-nominee screen adaptation of the Charles Nordhoff and Norman Hall novel *Mutiny on the Bounty*,¹⁹⁰ completed the assignment in only three weeks.¹⁹¹ To direct his movie, Thalberg chose George Cukor, one of Hollywood's brightest talents.¹⁹²

Born to Hungarian Jewish immigrants in New York on July 7, 1899, Cukor distinguished himself early on in his career as a stage director on Broadway, where he worked with stars such as Ethel Barrymore, Jeanne Eagels, and Laurette Taylor. In 1929, Cukor moved to California to become one of Hollywood's most respected directors. In his fifty-year-long career, Cukor directed more than sixty movies, won one academy award (for *My Fair Lady*, 1964), received twelve additional awards, including one Golden Globe and one Emmy, and was nominated for eighteen more, including the Venice film festival. Known for his ability to bring out the best in his female stars, in Hollywood Cukor worked with high-caliber artists including Bette Davis, Katharine Hepburn, Marilyn Monroe, and Sophia Loren.

With the enthusiasm and energy he was widely known for, Cukor embraced the challenge to create a convincing cinematographic rendition of the Shakespearean play, although initially he raised skepticism about the casting of thirty-four-year-old Norma Shearer and forty-two-year-old Leslie Howard in the role of the two teenaged lovers. Shearer, an accomplished movie actress, had married Thalberg in 1927 and after having two children and facing a long absence from the

¹⁹⁰ Obituary, *Variety* (New York), 12 June 1985.

¹⁹¹ Thomas, *Thalberg. Life and Legend*, 298.

¹⁹² For a discussion of George Cukor's life and career see Patrick McGilligan, *George Cukor: A Double Life: A Biography of the Gentleman Director* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991); Emanuel Levy, *George Cukor: Master of Elegance: Hollywood's Legendary Director and His Stars* (New York: Morrow, 1994); Gene D. Phillips, *George Cukor* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982); and Gavin Lambert and Robert Trachtenberg, *On Cukor* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 2000).

screen, was now eager to make a comeback.¹⁹³ Thalberg thought of *Romeo and Juliet* as the movie that would re-launch his wife's career and earn her an Academy award in her maturity, after the one she had received years earlier for her role in *The Divorcee* in 1930.¹⁹⁴ To help his wife, who had never played a Shakespearean role, cope with the challenges that *Juliet* presented, Thalberg hired Constance Collier, a veteran British stage actress, as her acting coach.¹⁹⁵ In addition, he fully supported Cukor's decision to let actors play long scenes in sequence rather than the bits and pieces of an ordinary production in order to make their acting more spontaneous, despite the added cost of prolonged shooting.¹⁹⁶

In order to ensure accuracy to the play, two Shakespearean scholars, Prof. William Strunk of Cornell and Prof. John Tucker Murray of Harvard were flown to Hollywood and given the assignment to criticize any inaccuracy.¹⁹⁷ Oliver Messel, a famous British artist, was hired to design the sets and costumes. Messel believed that it was his extensive knowledge of Italian art that got him the job "...Cukor wanted a fresh outlook on Hollywood. That was why I was invited. Another reason was perhaps, the fact that I had been brought up on Italian art and traveled to Italy over several years."¹⁹⁸

For a while Thalberg toyed with the idea of shooting *Romeo and Juliet* on location in Verona. Mayer, however, firmly rejected the idea, warning Thalberg about the increased expenses the production would incur, drawing his attention to the political tension in Europe, and reminding him of MGM's "successful policy of bringing the world and its policy to

¹⁹³ On Norma Shearer's life and career see Lawrence J. Quirk, *Norma: The Story of Norma Shearer* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988) and Gavin Lambert, *Norma Shearer: A Life* (New York: Knopf, 1990).

¹⁹⁴ Thomas, *Thalberg. Life and Legend*, 298

¹⁹⁵ Flamini, *Thalberg*, 244.

¹⁹⁶ Thomas, *Thalberg. Life and Legend*, 299.

¹⁹⁷ Brode, *Shakespeare in the Movies*, 44.

¹⁹⁸ Charles Castle, *Oliver Messel: A Biography* (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 101.

Hollywood.”¹⁹⁹ In the end, Thalberg gave in and under Cukor’s suggestion, sent Oliver Messel with a camera crew to Verona in the summer of 1935.²⁰⁰ Messel, who spent several weeks in Verona, personally researched in the local public library in order to find the coats of arms of the two families on which the Shakespearean play is based, while the camera crew took 2,769 pictures to document every corner of the medieval city.²⁰¹ Based on the information gathered, Messel designed fifty-four scale models of the sets to study and refine architectural details before the completion of the final drawings.²⁰² Carpenters went to work and in three months they were able to recreate an imaginary medieval Verona on the eight-acre MGM back lot.²⁰³

Shooting stretched to six months and was completed on May 7, 1936, while the total cost of the movie escalated to 2 million dollars, twice the estimated budget, which made *Romeo and Juliet* the most expensive movie ever produced by MGM at that time.²⁰⁴ *Romeo and Juliet* premiered in New York on August 20, 1936 with much fanfare and great optimism by MGM executives.

After the opening credits showing the actors in cameo frames, the movie opens with a bird’s-eye view of Verona, gradually narrowing the focus of the action to the cathedral square. Dominated by the profile of a church reminiscent of medieval San Zeno, the square is surrounded by residential and commercial buildings fronted by loggias and crowned by crenellations. The space, bursting with excitement for the arrival of the two rival families of the Montagues and Capulets on their way to the cathedral, sets the tone for the scenes to come: monumental, authoritative, and highly fictionalized with no direct relation to any urban settings

¹⁹⁹ Flamini, *Thalberg*, 245.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 245.

²⁰¹ Castle, *Oliver Messel*, 100; Flamini, *Thalberg*, 245.

²⁰² Kenneth Rothwell, *A History of Shakespeare on Screen: A Century of Film and Television* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 40.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 40; Brode, *Shakespeare in the Movies*, 44.

²⁰⁴ Brode, *Shakespeare in the Movies*, 44.

in Verona. The references to Palazzo della Ragione, Palazzo Scannagatti, and the Tombs of the Scaligeri that historians have identified in the architecture of the buildings framing the movie's square did not in fact dictate the space's overall configuration and appearance.²⁰⁵ The square's design was determined, as stated by Cedric Gibbons, by cinematographic considerations. In particular, the openness of the space and the contrast between vertical and horizontal forms were created to showcase the fight unfolding between the Capulets and the Montagues.²⁰⁶

The ballroom scene was designed to showcase the luxury, majesty, and glory of the Renaissance.²⁰⁷ Gibbons explained how the ballroom's classicized forms, delicate colors, and rich interiors were intended to make this part of the house look as if it was newly created in the period of the events, while the rest of the palace was made to appear to be from an earlier period.²⁰⁸ In his view, the architectural proportions of the ballroom and its lavish materials were the signs that the palace's severe medieval architecture had been either demolished or altered to fit the new, more material and less spiritual approach to life that characterized the Renaissance, and that resulted in the period's quest and appreciation for luxury and display.²⁰⁹ Unanimously acclaimed as the setting for one of the most beautifully staged sequences in the film, the ballroom was imaginatively executed with no specific reference to any historical palazzo in Verona. As in the opening scene, Messel was interested more in creating an environment conducive to the unfolding of the action than designing a replica of an existing structure.

²⁰⁵ Stefano Lodi, "L'immagine monumentale di Verona nel cinema tra finzione e realtà," in *Luci sulla città*, ed. Paolo Romano and Giancarlo Beltrame (Venezia: Marsilio, 2000), 57.

²⁰⁶ Cedric Gibbons, "Notes on the Design of Motion Picture Settings for *Romeo and Juliet*," in *Romeo and Juliet: A Motion Picture Edition, Illustrated with Photographs*, ed. William Shakespeare et al. (New York: Random House, 1936), 255.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 256.

²⁰⁸ Christina Kathleen Wilson, "Cedric Gibbons and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer: The Art of Motion Picture Set Design," (PhD Thesis, University of Virginia, 1998), 180.

²⁰⁹ Gibbons, "Notes," 256.

The balcony scene, one of the most demanding for the technical resources required, was filmed in a garden which occupied MGM's largest stage. Thirty lamps were required to light the set.²¹⁰ The architecture showcases a combination of elements from several periods. The balcony is a faithful reproduction of the exterior pulpit of the Cathedral in Prato, built by Michelozzo da Forlì and decorated by Donatello between 1428 and 1438.²¹¹ The Renaissance pulpit is supported by a single column and consists of white marble panels decorated with bas-relief motifs representing cherubs in a lively dance. Hollywood designers appropriated the Renaissance structure, adding thin columns to support the canopy and replacing the simple molded capital of the Prato pulpit with a more elaborate and visually complex composite capital, meant to suggest the wealth of the Capulet family.²¹² Other architectural elements included corbelled arches, freestanding columns, and arched windows all from different periods. The eclecticism of the architectural elements is echoed in the landscaping, which goes beyond the historically plausible internal courtyard to showcase a variety of plants and flowers merging English and Italian styles. Twisted vines cover the walls, blossoms support the balcony, cypresses and fruit trees punctuate the cross-axial plan. The most striking features of this multileveled garden are two unmatched pools, one lined with cypresses and the other flanked by vases with lemon trees. Inspired by the

²¹⁰ Castle, *Oliver Messel*, 102.

²¹¹ Juan Antonio Ramírez, *Architecture for the Screen: A Critical Study of Set Design in Hollywood's Golden Age* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004), 145.

²¹² The appropriation in a movie of an architectural structure traditionally used for funeral orations, the preaching of pilgrims, and the exhibition of relics, appeared slightly blasphemous to one commentator at the time who wrote "Love from a pulpit, eroticism on holy ground—it is a vision deserving of the divine comedy—and of Hollywood which has sublimely risen to the occasion." See A. M. Frankfurter, "Love from a Pulpit or the Renaissance in the Movies" *The Art News* 35, no. 8 (1936): 15. Quoted in Ramírez, *Architecture*, 145.

peschiera (fish ponds) of Villa d'Este in Tivoli, the pools expanded the garden's space while adding to the complexity and intricacy of its plan.²¹³

The landscaping was designed by Florence Yoch, whose knowledge of Italian sources extended to other elements of the garden such as the deeply incised pavement modeled on the court of Villa Pia behind the Vatican and the cypress-lined pool inspired by Villa Falconieri.²¹⁴ All the elements are combined to create an ideal garden, suggesting longevity (cypress) and young love (blossoms) in a setting that goes beyond historical accuracy, and yet had its sources in the Mediterranean landscape.²¹⁵ Garden and architecture fittingly complemented each other, underscoring the status and power of Juliet's family. Critics recognized the value of this jewel setting: "the balcony scene, no longer confined to a miniature window and painted garden, has a lush midnight beauty of physical things which merge graciously with the spoken rapture of the lovers' line."²¹⁶

The movie comes to an end in the Capulet tomb, a dark, cavernous setting where Romeo searches gaspingly for Juliet among the sarcophagi of the dead Capulets. He finds her in a tomb with a low, vaulted ceiling, modeled after the Chapel of St. Giacomo in Vicovaro (Rome).²¹⁷ The strong verticals represented by the candlesticks and Romeo's figure are softened by the round arches, creating a suitable setting for the play's dramatic conclusion.²¹⁸

The movie received generally positive reviews. Frank Nugent of the *New York Times* described the film as "a handsome production, one which is truly cinematic, lavishly costumed,

²¹³ James Yoch, "Garden for a Director," in *Ah Mediterranean! Twentieth Century Classicism in America*, ed. Charles Moore and Wayne Attoe (Austin: Center for the Study of American Architecture, School of Architecture, University of Texas at Austin, 1985), 61.

²¹⁴ James Yoch, *Landscaping the American Dream. The Gardens and Film Sets of Florence Yoch, 1890-1972* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1989), 100.

²¹⁵ Yoch, "Garden for a Director," 61.

²¹⁶ *New York Times*, 21 August 1936, 12.

²¹⁷ *L'Arena* (Verona), 5 March 1937, 4.

²¹⁸ Wilson, *Cedric Gibbons*, 184.

opulently framed, performed by a company which, considered en masse, is little short of brilliant.”²¹⁹ Critics commented on the quality of the elaborate setting in which “the deep beauty of ... romance glows and sparkles and gleams with breathless radiance.”²²⁰ They also underlined the realism of the staging. James Thrasher emphatically stated: “realism is perfect... For two hours and a quarter one lives in the ancient Italian city. One moves through the streets with Romeo and Benvolio ... one runs across the ancient cobblestones at the sounds of clashing swords to find Mercutio and Tybalt in their fatal quarrel.”²²¹ Critics remarked on how the movie had liberated the Shakespearean play of the constrictions associated with a stage production: “In scene and motion, the screen has gloriously released the play from the limitations of the stage. The brawl in the Cathedral Square of Verona splashes over a few acres; the masque at the Capulets’ home is brilliantly colorful.”²²² The opulent costuming and calibrated direction won Cukor’s film four Academy award nominations: for best picture, best art direction, best actress in a leading role and best actor in a supporting role.

To Thalberg’s disappointment, the movie failed to win any awards, however, and struggled to connect with the largest audience. Viewers complained *Romeo and Juliet* was too long, while the search for “literary prestige” hampered the sense of intimacy expected from a love story. As Otis Ferguson of the *New Republic* noted, the Thalberg—Cukor *Romeo and Juliet* “must be accepted... as the framing of an old picture rather than the execution of a new one.”²²³ Years later, in comparing his film to Zeffirelli’s *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), Cukor himself admitted: “maybe we made [the film] too stately... maybe our lovers were too stodgy...neither

²¹⁹ *New York Times*, 30 August 1936, 3 (X).

²²⁰ *New York Times*, 21 August 1936, 12.

²²¹ James Thrasher, “Film Industry Reaches New Heights with *Romeo and Juliet*,” *Indianapolis Times*, 20 January 1937, p. 11.

²²² *New York Times*, 21 August 1936, 12.

²²³ Robert Frank Willson, *Shakespeare in Hollywood, 1929-1956* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000), 67.

[Norma Shearer] nor Leslie Howard were really passionate actors...it's one picture that if I had to do over again, I'd know how. I'd get the garlic and the Mediterranean into it."²²⁴ In the end, the movie failed to recover its \$2,066,000 cost, closing with a deficit of \$922,000.²²⁵ Mayer's concerns proved to be right: the public was not interested in a Shakespearean film. Stress and disappointment took a toll on Thalberg's already weakened health. He died of pneumonia just a month after the release of the movie on September 14, at the age of thirty-seven.²²⁶

It fell on Louis Mayer and MGM executives to preside over the release of the movie in Europe. In order to promote successfully the film to European audiences, MGM announced a contest for the most beautiful love story. The competition, organized in collaboration with the newspaper *L'Arena*, awarded fourteen couples with a much sought-after prize: a trip to and one-week-long stay in the city of Romeo and Juliet.²²⁷ In Italy, *Romeo and Juliet* was premiered in Verona on March 5, 1937. On March 6, *L'Arena* wrote with pride and gratitude about the successful premier: "the city of Verona had every right to be the first to host the two lovers returning home and is profoundly grateful to MGM executives for having acknowledged its wish and made it come true."²²⁸ Attended by a "selected and extremely attentive audience," the movie premiere saw the participation of local officials and public authorities, including the Podestà Donella, the general consul Bellabio, and the MGM chief executive officer for Italy.

²²⁴ Lambert, *On Cukor*, 102-104.

²²⁵ Thomas, *Thalberg*, 303.

²²⁶ Flamini, *Thalberg*, 271.

²²⁷ *L'Arena* (Verona), 27 February 1937, 3.

²²⁸ "Verona aveva ben diritto di ospitare per prima gli amanti che tornano, ma non è perciò meno grata ai dirigenti americani e italiani della più grande casa cinematografica del mondo per aver riconosciuto questo diritto e soddisfatto questo desiderio." *L'Arena* (Verona), 27 February 1937, 3.

4.2 THE MOVIE'S IMPACT ON VERONA'S URBAN SPACE AND IDENTITY

Cukor's film popularized Verona as the city of Romeo and Juliet, forever changing visitors' and citizens' image of the city and their relation to its urban fabric. Aware of the expectations the movie had created in national and international audiences, *L'Arena* wrote: "... Verona has become the messenger of Italian beauties among the multitude of movie theaters across the world ... foreigners are coming to Verona to find traces of the idyll that has moved so many on the screen."²²⁹

City officials were eager to conform to the fictionalized identity Cukor's movie had created for Verona. On March 7, 1937, just two days after the *Romeo and Juliet* premiere, a special exhibition opened in the recently refurbished spaces of medieval Castelvecchio. The exhibit, organized by the director of Verona's museums, Antonio Avena, showcased materials pertaining to the production of the movie including photographs of Italian artworks used as sources of inspiration in the creation of the MGM sets, a selection of the roughly 2,600 photographs taken in Verona by the Hollywood crew in the summer of 1935, photographs of the models used to design the movie sets, and pictures of actors and movie personnel on the set. Among the most admired items were the costumes designed by Oliver Messel, in particular Juliet's white dress with hand-painted flowers, worn by Shearer in the ball scene.²³⁰ Besides its advertising function and documentary value ("from this rather small exhibit the public will be able to get only a faint idea of what goes into creating a film; yet, there are sufficient elements in

²²⁹ "Verona è messaggera di bellezze italiane presso le moltitudini di migliaia di sale ... e comitive di stranieri [illegible] per ritrovarvi tracce dell'idillio che avrà commosso le folle rinascendo sullo schermo." *L'Arena* (Verona), 27 February 1937, 3.

²³⁰ *L'Arena* (Verona), 5 March 1937, 4.

this exhibit to pique the interest and satisfy the curiosity of expert and layman alike,”²³¹) the exhibit points to Avena’s attempt to appropriate the movie’s success for his own agenda. Indeed, it was the museum director’s intention to move the exhibit from Castelvecchio and display its material in the permanent premises of Juliet’s House, which he was in the process of refurbishing amidst heated controversies. The display of the costumes worn by the Hollywood actors in the house where the Shakespearean lovers first met and declared their love for one another would lend credibility to the refurbished buildings in a subtle conflation of fiction and reality. In the end, MGM refused Avena’s request and withdrew the movie material, forcing city administrators to rely on other initiatives to nourish the myth of Verona as the city of Romeo and Juliet.²³²

Crucial for the successful portrayal of Verona as the city of love and romance was the restoration of the House and Tomb of Juliet, a destination of literary and romantic pilgrimage since the eighteenth century. After centuries of neglect and apathy by local and state administrators, these sites underwent a quick and radical makeover. The process, however, was not a smooth one as it pitted the local socio-political elites against the preservationists, each trying to impose their personal version of the past. While the former pressed for an idealized and highly imaginative refashioning of the House and Tomb of Juliet in order to lure and attract mass tourism, the latter opposed pseudo-restorations unconcerned with the buildings’ multiple historical layers. In the heated debate that followed, the city’s social elites and their political representatives were able to capitalize on the interest of the central government in their city to impose their vision of the past and neutralize the opposition of the preservation agency.

²³¹ “Da quanto si è detto è facile arguire che da questa piccola mostra il pubblico riuscirà ad avere appena una pallida idea di ciò che significhi costruire un film. Tuttavia ci sono qui sufficienti elementi di curiosità per i profani e di giudizio per i competenti in materia storica.” Ibid.

²³² Lodi, “L’immagine monumentale,” 57.

Juliet's House, strategically located on via Cappello 23, one of the city's busiest streets, is a three-storey L-shaped structure facing on the short side via Cappello and on the long side an internal courtyard, which is flanked on the two remaining sides by twentieth-century premises built on the remains of fifteenth-century structures.²³³ The house, dating back to the thirteenth century, was owned for a long period by the Dal Cappello family, whose coat of arms is carved into the keystone of the courtyard inner archway. There are no records linking this house to Juliet's family, the Capulets. However, the similarity between the two family names—Dal Cappello and Capuleti—initiated the popular belief that this was the house of the famous Shakespearean heroine. The legend was enhanced in the nineteenth century by a long list of famous visitors including the German poet Heinrich Heine in 1828 and Charles Dickens in 1844. As discussed in the previous chapter, travelers wrote about the profound awe that captured them at the sight of Juliet's resting place but also expressed dismay over the lack of care affecting the site, "a most miserable little inn" according to Goethe.

Records indicate that, in the sixteenth century, the house was turned first into a hostel and then a stable. The structure was passed from one owner to another until it was put up for auction in 1905. The event caused a stir in the press: the local newspaper *L'Arena* urged the city to purchase and rescue the building from centuries of neglect and abandon in order to "gratify British ladies, who visit the site with respect and reverence, and support and encourage the tourist industry."²³⁴ A Rome newspaper claimed that Queen Margherita of Italy was interested in buying the property, and the French paper *Le Figaro* reported the news of the auction, expressing

²³³ On the origins of Juliet's House see Maria Grazia Martelletto, "Sulle tracce del mito Shakespeariano," in *Suggerimenti del Passato. Immagini di Verona scaligera* ed. Ruggero Boschi and Maristella Vecchiato (Verona: Edizioni La Grafica, 2001), 135-137; Vecchiato, "Le fabbriche," 433-438; and Grimoldi, "Restauro a Verona," 182-184.

²³⁴ "Per la più grande soddisfazione delle signore e signorine anglosassoni che riverenti e commosse lo visitano e a maggior incremento di quell'industria del forestiero che è non piccola parte di lucro per il nostro paese." ASBAPVr, f. 91/163.

concern about the prospect of the house remaining in private hands.²³⁵ In 1905, pressed by public opinion, the city purchased the house for the sum of 7,500 Lira.

The renovation of the building, solicited by the local press from the time of its acquisition, was delayed for years. Finally, in 1936, in conjunction with the release of Cukor's movie, the city commissioned Antonio Avena to restore the house and its courtyard. The restoration, of which very little documentation has survived, proceeded in stages. First, in 1936 the city council submitted to the Soprintendenza a project aimed at stabilizing the building and repairing the façade overlooking the courtyard. The Soprintendenza forwarded the project to the *Direzione Generale delle Antichità e Belle Arti*, recommending its approval "since works will have a merely stabilizing function and will not alter the architectural nature of the building."²³⁶ The Minister approved the project but urged the Superintendent to oversee the renovation "so that the planned works may not modify the building's architecture."²³⁷ No further interventions are documented from 1937 to 1940, when Juliet's House was drastically reconfigured. Indeed, taking advantage of the absence of Superintendent Niccoli, Avena totally reinvented the building, both its interior and its exterior. His restoration dealt mainly with the aspect facing the internal courtyard, a three-story structure with balconies on the upper two floors, possibly dating back to the end of the 1700s.²³⁸ Although Avena did not alter the number of openings in the facade, he modified the profile of entrance and windows with arched and trilobed surrounds

²³⁵ Vecchiato, "Le fabbriche," 434.

²³⁶ "Poichè le opere progettate sono di puro consolidamento e non alterano minimamente le linee architettoniche, si prega codesto On. Ministero di consentire l'esecuzione." Alfredo Barbacci to *Direzione Generale delle Antichità e Belle Arti*. Letter of 5 March 1936. ASBAPVr, f. 91/163.

²³⁷ "Approvo l'esecuzione dei lavori di consolidamento alla casa di Giulietta ... e incarico V.S. di vigilare affinché le opere progettate non ne alterino le linee architettoniche." Giuseppe Bottai, Minister of National Education, to Alfredo Barbacci. Letter of 24 March 1937. ASBAPVr, f. 91/163.

²³⁸ A 1780 plan shows that at the time, the structure was used as a barn. See Daniela Zumiani, "Giulietta e Verona: spazi e immagini del mito," in *Medioevo ideale e Medioevo reale nella cultura urbana: Antonio Avena e la Verona del primo Novecento*, ed. Paola Marini (Verona: Comune di Verona, Assessorato alla cultura, 2003), 212.

made of stones recycled from demolished medieval buildings. In addition, Avena removed the exterior banister from the second floor in order to provide room for the famed balcony of Juliet. One of Avena's most imaginative solutions, the balcony that adorns the House in Via Cappello is a medieval sarcophagus formerly housed in the nearby museum of Castelvecchio. Modified to serve the new function, the structure was attached to the first floor of the newly restored façade to match the Shakespearean text.²³⁹

The interior of the house was decorated with paintings and frescos reproducing medieval motifs, furnishings from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and Renaissance ceramics from Verona. The refashioning of the second-floor main hall was inspired by the popular painting by Francesco Hayez "The Last Kiss of Romeo and Juliet" showing the two lovers kissing as they say their last goodbye. Avena faithfully reproduced the interior arcade on double columns lit by the profile of the trilobite windows, which frames the lovers' last kiss. In a bitter letter sent to the Podestà—the city mayor—the Superintendent criticized the renovation, denouncing "the use of wall decorations and ceilings in imitation of the past; the arbitrary application of architectural elements to a structure that is not the one for which they were originally designed; the whole jumble of elements that might please the uneducated tourist, but surely will not please those visitors who appreciate genuine remains."²⁴⁰

A similar dynamic—with the city council strongly committed to an idealized reconfiguration of the buildings' appearance, preservationists vainly trying to prevent arbitrary

²³⁹ Ibid., 215.

²⁴⁰ "Grande uso di decorazioni parietali e di soffitti ad imitazione dell'antico; collocazione di elementi architettonici che più o meno imitano le forme antiche; peggio ancora elementi originali di antichi edifici arbitrariamente inseriti in una struttura—pure antica—che non è quella per cui essi erano stati creati. Tutto l'affastellamento di forme originali, imitate ma fuori posto che si nota nella casa potrà piacere al turista incolto ma certo non sarà di gradimento per quei visitatori che amano le vestigia genuine." Quoted in Maristella Vecchiato, "Antonio Avena 'ricostruttore' e la Regia Soprintendenza ai Monumenti di Verona," in *Medioevo ideale e Medioevo reale nella cultura urbana: Antonio Avena e la Verona del primo Novecento*, ed. Paola Marini (Verona: Comune di Verona, Assessorato alla cultura, 2003), 115.

interventions, and the Ministry of National Education siding with the Soprintendenza without being able to enforce the legislation—characterized the restoration of Juliet’s Tomb as well.

The tomb, consisting of a rather plain red marble sarcophagus, was originally housed in the cloister of the former medieval convent of San Francesco al Corso.²⁴¹ Identified by various sources as the burial place of Juliet as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, the site quickly became one of Verona’s favorite destinations for illustrious foreign visitors such as George Byron, Madame de Stael, Empress Maria Luisa of Austria, and Charles Dickens who, as discussed, narrated his dismay over the conditions of neglect and disrepair affecting the site in his *Pictures from Italy*. Indeed, by the mid-nineteenth century, the structural stability of the entire complex appeared to be seriously compromised. The first partial attempt to stop the decay of the tomb occurred in 1868, when the sarcophagus was moved under a portico, along with the ruins of the ancient cloister. A new, more serious intervention took place in 1910, when the city authorized works to secure the exterior walls of the convent.

Nevertheless, as noted by Superintendent Armando Venè in 1933, more extensive repairs were needed in order to secure the site and make it accessible to the general public. They were delayed until 1937, when Podestà Alberto Donella approved a budget of 29,000 Lira to refurbish the access to the Convent where the tomb was housed.²⁴² Acting on behalf of the city administration, Avena presented the Soprintendenza with a project to redesign the access to the convent. After obtaining the necessary authorization, Avena refurbished Via delle Franceschine, the street leading up to the church, with stone benches, fountains, and trees. On April 20 1938, the city council approved a more generous budget of 109,000 Lira for additional works at the

²⁴¹ On Juliet’s Tomb see Maria Grazia Martelletto, “Sulle tracce del mito Shakespeariano,” in *Suggestioni del Passato. Immagini di Verona scaligera* ed. Ruggero Boschi and Maristella Vecchiato (Verona: Edizioni La Grafica, 2001), 137-139; Vecchiato, “Le fabbriche,” 441-444; and Grimoldi, “Restauro a Verona,” 182-184.

²⁴² Estratto di deliberazione podestarile, 15 July 1937. ASBAPVr, f. 91/163.

tomb. These included the restoration of the only surviving chapel in the church of San Francesco, the repair of the annexed cloister, and the renovation of the basement of the complex as well as the construction of stairs to access the basement.²⁴³ No mention was made in the document of moving Juliet's grave from its existing location. Avena carried out all the works listed by the Podestà. In addition, he also moved the red marble sarcophagus from the cloister to a brand new crypt created for the occasion out of two underground rooms in the refurbished basement. The Soprintendenza, which had not been notified of the second round of works at the tomb, was highly irritated. Protesting the *modus operandi* of the city council, Superintendent Barbacci wrote to the Prefect, the official representative of central state authority. The exchange between the two reveals the mixed feelings of frustration and resignation of the Preservation Agency faced with the unyielding determination of the city council. In a letter sent on June 18, 1938 the Superintendent lamented:

Works for the transformation of Juliet's Tomb have been completed since July of last year. They have been performed unknown to this Soprintendenza. Instead, they should have been authorized by the Ministry of National Education. On the aesthetic value of the intervention, this Soprintendenza wishes to withhold judgment all the more since it would be of no use now. ... This being said, this Soprintendenza asks the Prefect to remind Verona's city council of the need to obtain a statutory written authorization before undertaking any works on buildings subject to preservation laws.²⁴⁴

After the Podestà, to whom Barbacci's letter had been forwarded, denied any wrongdoing, the Superintendent raised the tone of the confrontation. In a letter sent to the Prefect

²⁴³ Estratto di deliberazione podestarile, 20 April 1938. ASBAPVr, f. 91/163.

²⁴⁴ "I lavori di trasformazione alla tomba di Giulietta sono stati terminati sino dal luglio dello stesso anno. Essi sono stati compiuti all'insaputa di questa Soprintendenza mentre, a norma delle leggi sulle Antichità e Belle Arti, avrebbero dovuto essere autorizzati dal Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale. Sul valore estetico della nuova sistemazione, questa Soprintendenza preferisce non esprimere il proprio parere, tanto più che esso non avrebbe oggi a cose fatte, alcuna pratica utilità. ... Ciò premesso questa Soprintendenza prega codesta On. Prefettura di voler rammentare al comune di Verona la necessità di chiedere la dovuta autorizzazione ogni volta che intende eseguire lavori su edifici soggetti alle leggi sulle Antichità e Belle Arti." Alfredo Barbacci to Marcello Vaccari. Letter of 18 June 1938. ASBAPVr, f. 91/93.

on October 27, 1938 Barbacci accused the city council of being purposely deceitful by tricking the Soprintendenza into approving a project for the refurbishing of the access to the convent that made no mention of the construction of an underground crypt to which the alleged Juliet's sarcophagus was then moved. The crypt, Barbacci continued, was "a ridiculous fake, made necessary to give historic credibility to a place that any cultured visitor would disapprove."²⁴⁵ In the end, however, Barbacci conceded:

One has to admit that if a mistake was made an even greater one would be made if the tomb were to be returned to its previous location. Therefore, it is believed necessary to accept the current situation, reminding nevertheless the city council of the future need to consult with the Soprintendenza even when it might not appear clear that it is dealing with structures subject to preservation laws.²⁴⁶

As in the restoration of Juliet's House, Avena was once again successful in his attempt to bypass the Soprintendenza and recreate a fictitious site, which while pleasing the city's social elite and their political representatives, profoundly irritated the preservationists.

As for the Ministry of National Education, it appears to have remained indifferent to the fate of the House and Tomb of Juliet as late as 1933, well after the two sites had been declared of artistic interest and therefore subject to preservation laws. On April 24, 1933 Roberto Paribeni, director of the *Ufficio delle Antichità e Belle Arti*, received an alarming letter from Giulio Barella, managing editor of the daily *Popolo d'Italia*: "It is my duty to inform you about the painful feelings I experienced in witnessing the conditions of neglect affecting Romeo and

²⁴⁵ "... goffa falsificazione che si rese necessaria per dare verosimiglianza storica al nuovo ambiente ... che i visitatori dotati di buon gusto e di cultura non possono approvare." Alfredo Barbacci to Marcello Vaccari. Letter of 27 October 1938. ASBAPVr, f. 91/93.

²⁴⁶ "Ciò premesso per la verità e perchè sia ben chiara la parte avuta dalla Soprintendenza nell'esecuzione dell'opera, si osserva che se fu compiuto un errore, un altro maggiore, e questa volta d'indole psicologica, se ne compirebbe riportando la tomba nel luogo precedentemente occupato. Per cui si crede che convenga ormai accettare il fatto compiuto, facendo però presente al Comune la necessità di accordarsi con la Soprintendenza anche in quei casi in cui non gli appaia evidente che l'opera sua debba essere disciplinata dalle leggi sulle Antichità e Belle Arti. Alfredo Barbacci to Marcello Vaccari. Letter of 27 October 1938. ASBAPVr, f. 91/93.

Juliet's Tomb. Truly, it appears to have been abandoned!" Unmoved, a handwritten note on the margin of the letter, presumably by Paribeni himself, reads: "Oh... If this was the case, it would be well done!"²⁴⁷

As local efforts to restore Juliet's House and Tomb intensified, the Ministry sided with the Superintendent but like him would find it nearly impossible to enforce legislation and hold local figures accountable for their actions. Verona's political forces were able to resist pressure from both local and central preservation agencies to a degree that is quite unexpected in a dictatorial government and points to the ability of the city's elite to capitalize on the interest of the executive branch of central state authority in their city.²⁴⁸ In a few instances local officials did not hesitate to seek the support of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, held by Mussolini himself, who responded by granting approval to controversial restoration projects.²⁴⁹ Also, on the eve of Oliver Messel's trip to Verona in the summer of 1935, the Minister of Press and Propaganda Galeazzo Ciano felt compelled to write to the city's police commissioner requesting that full support be given to the MGM troupe during their stay in Verona.²⁵⁰ The dramatic refashioning of monuments associated with the Shakespearean drama could be pursued by the city council with relative ease because such endeavors could further Italy's claim of cultural supremacy and in turn justify Mussolini's universalistic ambitions. At the same time, the restoration of Verona's historic buildings reinforced the regime's agenda of promoting an ideal and immediate association between the Fascist present and Verona's historic tradition. Indeed, the Middle Ages,

²⁴⁷ "Cara Eccellenza, credo mio dovere comunicarle la penosa impressione che ho provato giorni sono, passando da Verona, nel constatare lo stato di abbandono in cui si trova la tomba di Giulietta e Romeo. Sembra abbandonata!"; "Oh! Se così fosse ... avrebbero fatto bene!". Giulio Barella to Roberto Paribeni. Letter of 24 April 1933. AA.BB.AA., Divisione II, 1934-1940, b. 352.

²⁴⁸ For a similar case study see Ghirardo, "Inventing the Palazzo del Corte," 112.

²⁴⁹ Mussolini served as Minister of Internal Affairs ad interim from November 1926 to July 1943.

²⁵⁰ Upon receiving Ciano's request, Verona's police commissioner sent a letter to Avena soliciting the Museum Director to support and assist MGM's research (August 26, 1935). See Marchi, "Per un ritratto," 42.

Verona's most glorious time in history and Cangrande, the legendary warrior-ruler who led the city to the apex of its political and military power, became the filters through which Fascism in Verona attempted to provide itself with historical legitimacy. The idealized medieval narrative of the social elite, then, gained strength as it received the backing of official visions.

5.0 IL DUCE IN VERONA: MUSSOLINI'S STATE VISIT TO THE CITY OF CANGRANDE AND ITS DOCUMENTATION IN THE PRESS

Mussolini stated his fondness for the city of Verona on several occasions, both public and private. In a note to the head of the Veronese Fascist Party, the Duce commented “you know that I adore Verona” and in an article for the daily *L'Audacia* he wrote: “Looking at Verona from above—sweet and proud—thoughts of greatness and devotion whirl in the spirit. History and nature; life and art; past and future; immortality of lineage of which Fascism represents the bursting spring.”²⁵¹ Records indicate that between 1905 and 1938, Mussolini made ten trips to Verona. The majority were brief stops at the train station, where a cheering crowd had gathered to greet the Duce on his way to Germany. In 1937, he stopped in Verona twice, on his way to and from Berlin to meet the Führer. The first visit lasted ten minutes, the time to receive the tribute of local authorities and address the crowd gathered outside the train station. On his return trip, Mussolini was greeted by an assembly of 150,000 people and signs reading “Duce! Grant the desire of Verona's Black Shirts who have awaited you for sixteen years in their land.”²⁵² Indeed, the Duce's last official visit to Verona dated back to May 13 1921, when on the eve of Italy's general political elections Mussolini flew a plane to Verona to support Fascist candidates

²⁵¹ “Guardando Verona dall'alto—dolce e fiera—pensieri di grandezza e di devozione turbinano nello spirito. Storia e natura; vita e arte; il passato e l'avvenire; immortalità della stirpe di cui il Fascismo rappresenta la prorompente primavera.” Carlo Manzini, *Il Duce a Verona (dal 1905 al 1938)* (Verona: C.E. Albarelli-Marchesetti, 1938), 49.

²⁵² “Duce! Accogli il desiderio delle camicie nere Veronesi che da sedici anni ti attendono nella loro terra.” *Ibid.*, 64.

and galvanize the party's base. During his 1937 visit, the Duce pledged to come back for an official visit the following year, when he would spend an entire day in the city. Mussolini kept his promise returning to Verona on September 26, 1938.

This chapter deals with this historic trip Mussolini made to the city of Cangrande, a pivotal event in the history of the local Party and central government. I focus in particular on the monuments and historic buildings that provided the architectural frame for the events that unfolded that day. I argue that Mussolini's trip to Verona—along with its illustration in newspapers and magazines—was carefully planned to include key monuments as the backdrop for mass demonstrations and military parades. Sites such as the Arena, Castelvecchio, and Palazzo del Podestà were co-opted by the regime as visual propaganda demonstrating the continuity between Verona's historic traditions and Mussolini's government while providing a base for the regime's nationalistic and imperialistic agenda. I begin by discussing the itinerary followed by the Duce and the events scheduled during his one-day stay; the second part of the chapter deals with the photographic representation of the visit in magazines, newspapers and commemorative publications.

5.1 STATE VISIT TO VERONA

Preparations for Mussolini's state visit to Verona lasted months. Streets were repaired, buildings were decorated, and flags, banners and swags were placed throughout the city. Temporary installations were erected at important transition points within the urban fabric. The itinerary of the Duce's motorcade was carefully planned to travel down the main streets of Verona, allowing him to view the city's landmarks while reviewing the troops and saluting the crowd.

Accompanied by Achille Starace, the head of the National Fascist Party, and Dino Alfieri, the Minister of Popular Culture, Mussolini arrived in Verona the evening of September 25, the last stop of a trip to the regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia and Veneto that had taken him to Gorizia, Udine, Treviso, Belluno, and Vicenza. Mussolini's visit throughout various parts of Italy constituted an important component of the Fascist liturgy. As Emilio Gentile has argued, these trips, often announced years in advance, fed into the mystical aura surrounding Mussolini and further propagated the cult of the Duce among the masses.²⁵³ Upon his arrival at the Palazzo del Podestà, the Duce was greeted by the local authorities, including the Prefect Marcello Vaccari and the federal secretary Alessandro Bonamici. No celebrations were scheduled for the evening likely to allow Mussolini to recover from the intense schedule of the previous days.

Carlo Manzini, the Veronese Fascist party secretary who wrote a detailed account of Mussolini's visit to Verona, stressed the symbolic relevance of Mussolini's decision to spend the night at the Palazzo del Podestà, the residence of the Lords of Verona, the Della Scala, and the seat of the city's political and military power since the Middle Ages. By choosing the Palazzo del Podestà as his official residence, Mussolini established a powerful symbolic link between Verona's noble past and his regime, which was picked up by Manzini and other commentators reporting on the event.

The following morning at 9:30 Mussolini descended the stairs of the Palazzo to the neighboring Piazza dei Signori, where cars were already stationed to escort him to the beginning of the parade route. The Piazza was decorated with flags and banners, and Mussolini's appearance was greeted by cannon shots and the clamoring of bells, while fourteen heraldic

²⁵³ Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1996), 148.

trumpeters in historic costume played *l'annuncio*.²⁵⁴ The motorcade quickly proceeded to Piazzale Porta Palio, the starting point of Mussolini's itinerary through the city. A gigantic Roman eagle dominated the square. At its side representatives of various Fascist groups and three heralds in period costume greeted the Duce with the Roman salute. Twenty-five thousand members of the Fascist youth organization Balilla lined up in ranks along the road linking Porta Palio to Porta Nuova (Circonvallazione esterna). As the Duce's convertible drove along, they stood "still, mute, pale, rigid as toy soldiers, waiting for their commandant to order the salute to the Duce."²⁵⁵ After passing through the gate of Porta Nuova, the motorcade drove down Corso Vittorio Emanuele, one of the city's widest and longest avenues. Flags and banners were positioned along the street, where two columns of twenty-five thousand Black Shirts stood in perfect formation. As the motorcade drove by, they greeted the Duce with their arm raised in the Fascist salute. At the end of Corso Vittorio Emanuele, Portoni della Bra marked the entrance to Piazza Bra, Verona's largest public square. Mussolini reached the podium built between two stone archways and looking back at the route he had just traveled witnessed the members of the Fascist Youth organization flowing in an orderly fashion into the street, filling the corridor between the two columns of Black Shirts. Cesco Tomaselli, reporter for the *Corriere della Sera*, commented on the perfectly executed steps of the young men now gathered below Mussolini's podium and the silence that fell upon the vast assembly as the Party Secretary presented the Duce with Verona's Fascist forces: "Duce. I introduce you to the forces of Fascist Verona: 2,490 party officials, 22,747 G.I.L members (Fascist Youth Organization), 251 officers, 19,922 Black Shirts,

²⁵⁴ The hymn, composed for the occasion by the Director of the Music Academy, was based on fourteenth century scores and was likely meant to underline the relationship between Il Duce and the great Veronese condottiere Cangrande. *L'Arena* (Verona), 27 September 1938, 2.

²⁵⁵ "Fermi, muti, pallidi, irrigiditi come soldatini, gli avanguardisti attendono che il loro comandante ordini il 'Saluto al Duce.'" Manzini, *Il Duce a Verona*, 72.

1,453 members of military associations (*associazioni d'arma*) for a total of 46,863 men.”²⁵⁶ As Mussolini raised his arm in salute, the assembly burst into an ovation while cheering and throwing their hats in the air. Clearly impressed by the perfectly organized display of Fascist forces and their flawlessly executed military formation, Tomaselli commented: “In all our trips following the Duce, we have never witnessed a similar sight. ... Fascist Verona has succeeded in presenting to the Duce a new and great thing.”²⁵⁷

As Mussolini descended the podium to reach the neighboring Piazza Bra, the view changed dramatically. A crowd of 200,000 people awaited him there. The piazza, delimited by historic buildings and dominated by the profile of the Roman Arena appeared to barely contain the vast crowd gathered to greet the Duce. The structured, highly regimented display of military forces Mussolini had just experienced gave way to the unsettling spectacle of a vast, unrestrained crowd. As Tomaselli noticed: “if until this moment [Mussolini] has seen bourgeois marching in military formations, disciplined and silent as militaries, here He [sic] faces the people; thousands of them, an oceanic mass that fluctuates threateningly, that has the voice of thunder, that can give vent to all its passion and faith as it likes and wants.”²⁵⁸ The Duce’s climb to the podium appeared almost like an epiphany to the people below, who erupted in “a thunder of applause five, ten, twenty minutes long.”²⁵⁹ In front of this crowd, Mussolini delivered his official speech. Given during the most critical hours of the Czechoslovakian crises, the speech outlined the future

²⁵⁶ “Duce, Vi presento la forza di Verona fascista: 2.490 gerarchi, 22.747 elementi della G.I.L., 251 ufficiali, 19.922 delle formazioni nere, 1.453 rappresentanti delle formazioni d’arma: totale 46.863 uomini.” Ibid., 77.

²⁵⁷ “Nei nostri viaggi al seguito del Duce non ci è mai capitato di assistere ad una simile scena. ... Verona Fascista è riuscita a presentare al Duce una cosa grande e nuova.” Ibid.

²⁵⁸ “Se fino ad allora ha visto dei borghesi inquadrati militarmente, e come militari perfetti nella disciplina e nel silenzio, qui Egli si trova di fronte al popolo, ad una massa oceanica che ondeggia paurosamente, che ha una voce di tuono, che può dare sfogo, come vuole e come crede, a tutta la sua passione ed a tutta la sua fede.” Ibid.

²⁵⁹ “Per cinque, dieci, venti minuti l’uragano di applause sale al cielo ...” Ibid.

of Italy as an aggressor nation and set the regime's international agenda.²⁶⁰ He began by addressing the crowd with words that underlined Fascism's rootedness in Verona's historic tradition: "Black shirts of Verona, of my Verona, of this Roman Verona, militaristic, Fascist in spirit until the end of the vigil."²⁶¹ Mussolini then commented on his trip, which he linked to WWI episodes and imbued with a sacred, almost religious significance:

With this majestic rally of people, accompanied by a superb marshaling of forces, comes to an end my trip among the people of Veneto and my pilgrimage on the sacred fields of our glorious battles ... The multitudes that have responded in a single way to my questions demonstrate to all, and I say to all, that there has never been as there is now such total, intimate, profound communion between Fascism and Italian people. (*The multitude shouts "yes, yes," and acclaims the Duce for a long time.*) And this Italian people is not disorganized and without spirit, as many other peoples; it is powerfully organized, spiritually armed, and ready to be materially armed as well. (*The people respond again in a single shout: "Yes, yes."*)²⁶²

After commenting on the tense diplomatic relations between Germany and Czechoslovakia over the Sudeten territories, Mussolini warned that although he still had hopes for a peaceful resolution, events might unfold quickly and ultimately escalate into a conflict:

Events may develop according to this scenario: there are still a few days left for a peaceful solution. If this is not found, then it will require a superhuman effort to avoid a conflict. If there is a conflict (*the crowd shouts "we are ready, we are ready"*), this might be localized at first ... There is however, a third possibility: one in which the nature of the war will be such that it will involve us directly. In

²⁶⁰ Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1997), 192.

²⁶¹ "Camice nere di Verona, di questa mia un poco, molto Verona, di questa Verona romana, bersagliera, fascista nell'anima fin dalla vigilia." Manzini, *Il Duce a Verona*, 78.

²⁶² "Con questa maestosa adunata di popolo, accompagnata da uno schieramento superbo di forze, si chiude il mio viaggio tra le genti del Veneto e il mio pellegrinaggio sui campi sacri delle nostre gloriose battaglie. ... Queste moltitudini che hanno risposto in modo univoco alle mie domande dimostrano a tutti, dico a tutti, che mai come in questo momento fu totale, intima, profonda la comunione tra Fascismo e Popolo italiano. E questo popolo italiano non è disorganizzato e senza anima come molti altri popoli; è potentemente inquadrato, armato spiritualmente e pronto ad esserlo anche materialmente (*il popolo risponde ancora con un urlo: 'Si, si'*)." Ibid.

this case, we will not have and we will not allow any hesitation. (*The crowd cheers for a long time.*)²⁶³

He concluded:

Comrades! It is useless for diplomats to tire themselves to save Versailles. The Europe that was constructed at Versailles, often with a gigantic ignorance of history and geography, is now in its death throes. Its destiny will be decided this week. It is in this week that the new Europe can rise: the Europe of justice for all and reconciliation among people. (*Strong acclamations.*) Black shirts! We of the Littorio are for this new Europe.²⁶⁴

The Duce's call for readiness was permeated with a universalistic vision of Fascist Italy's historic mission. The architectural setting framing the event, monumental in scale, classical in design, and historical in nature gave substance to Mussolini's universalistic claims and aspirations. As the crowd continued to cheer, the Duce promptly descended the podium and walked to the car awaiting him in Via Roma. The motorcade drove down Via Roma and Via Cavour to the next stop: Piazza Erbe. Occupying the site of the Roman forum and surrounded by medieval and Renaissance buildings, the square had long been known for its fruit and vegetable market. There Mussolini was welcomed by a group of vendors, who presented him with early produce, "an episode of kindness, exquisitely popular in nature."²⁶⁵ From Piazza Erbe the motorcade proceeded down Via Mazzini, where the celebratory and festive mood gave way to a somber and silent atmosphere. The street was transformed into a shrine for the fallen soldiers of WWI and the martyrs of the Fascist revolution by means of "black flames," triangular black

²⁶³ Lo sviluppo degli avvenimenti può svolgersi secondo queste linee: ci sono ancora alcuni giorni di tempo per trovare una soluzione pacifica. Se questa non si trova, è quasi sforzo sovrumano poter impedire un conflitto. Se questo scoppia (*la folla grida "siamo pronti, siamo pronti"*) in un primo tempo può essere localizzato ... Vi e tuttavia da prevedere il terzo tempo: quello nel quale il carattere del conflitto sarà tale che ci impegnerà direttamente." Ibid., 82.

²⁶⁴ "Camerati! È inutile che i diplomatici si affatichino ancora per salvare Versaglia. L'Europa che fu costruita a Versaglia, spesso con una piramidale ignoranza della geografia e della storia, agonizza. La sua sorte si decide in questa settimana. È in questa settimana che può sorgere la nuova Europa: l'Europa della giustizia per tutti e della riconciliazione fra i Popoli. (*Acclamazioni altissime*). Camice nere! Noi del Littorio siamo per questa nuova Europa." Ibid.

²⁶⁵ "... un episodio di gentilezza squisitamente popolare." Ibid.

pennants hanging from either sides of the street. Names of fallen soldiers and key dates in recent Italian history were inscribed in red ink on each pennant. At the end of the street, the signs “DUCE, DUCE, DUCE” and “We shall go forward”²⁶⁶ closed the series of commemorative banners and celebrated Mussolini as the savior who would lead the nation forward. Tomaselli stressed the gravity of the moment:

There is in the air a solemn silence, just as if in a shrine or the most severe temples ... The street is deserted; only at the entrance of side streets and at the windows there are groups of people. They too are pale just like the Duce, their arm raised in the roman salute, and a lump in their throat.²⁶⁷

The cult of the fallen soldiers was an important component of Fascist ideology and the political rituals of the regime. Those who had died for the nation in World War I were venerated like heroes and shrines and exhibitions were dedicated to their memory. In Fascist ideology, they were assimilated to those who had sacrificed their life for the movement and the regime. Indeed, the activists who had perished in the cause of the Party were buried in cemeteries for the war dead and Mussolini came to describe dead Fascist members as “the latest to fall in the Great War.”²⁶⁸ The obliteration of the differences between the two groups meant that the cult of the fallen soldier was turned into the cult of the fallen Fascist. In Verona’s ceremonies the two groups were assimilated by withdrawing specific references to where and when each had died and by subsuming both military and political deaths under the commemorative display of Fascist insignia. Across the nation, the regime developed a highly symbolic ritual to commemorate the heroic dead. Shrines were erected in all the major local Party headquarters and monuments were

²⁶⁶ “Noi tireremo diritto.”

²⁶⁷ “C’è nell’aria un silenzio grave, come appunto nei Sacrali o nei templi più severi ... La via è deserta in tutta la sua lunghezza; solo agli imbocchi delle strade che confluiscono con Via Nuova, e alle finestre, sono dei gruppi di persone, anch’esse mute, anch’esse commosse, anch’esse sbianchite come il Duce e come noi nei volti, il braccio teso romanamente, e un nodo di pianto strozzato nella gola.” Manzini, *Il Duce a Verona*, 82.

²⁶⁸ Mark Neocleous, *The Monstrous and the Dead: Burke, Marx, Fascism* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 93.

dedicated to their memory. The 1932 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Fascist rule in Italy featured a “Martyrs Sanctuary” as the focal point of the exhibition. Gentile believes that the cult of the fallen was a key element of Fascist civic religion. Centered on the sacred nature of the nation, Fascist secular religion aimed at the consolidation of Italy’s political and moral unity through a series of elaborate and complex rituals which included the Roman salute, the swearing in of the squads, the veneration of symbols of war and nation, the blessing of pennants, the glorification of Fascist martyrs, and mass meetings.²⁶⁹ Mussolini’s visit to Verona included most of these rituals in a moment of growing international tension, with the nation on the brink of war. The honoring of the war dead and Fascist martyrs along with Mussolini’s reviewing of military forces and the display of mass gatherings were meant to fuel the nationalistic fervor of the people participating in the events while galvanizing their faith in the Duce as the specter of an international conflict approached.

From Via Mazzini the motorcade returned to Piazza Bra, where Mussolini once again appeared to the crowd that had just listened to his speech. As the masses cheered and applauded, the Duce proceeded towards the Arena for one of the most highly charged moments of his visit. The Roman amphitheater was chosen as the venue of Mussolini’s political performance in order to wed the spectacle of the fascist state to the memory of the Roman past. Inside, Mussolini found a “unique and rare spectacle: within the frame of the roman theater ... are gathered 36,000 souls: 8,000 fascist women, 8,000 housewives and laborers, 20,000 members of the GIL [fascist youth organization]”²⁷⁰ They were arranged on the tiered seats in such formation as to spell the word Dux. At the center, in sharp contrast, stood an unregimented crowd. The secretary of the

²⁶⁹ Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, 22.

²⁷⁰ “Lo spettacolo, anche qui, è più unico che raro. Nella cornice del romano, bimillenario monumento, sono accolte 36.000 anime: 8.000 donne fasciste, 8.000 massaie rurali e operaie, 20.000 iscritti alla G.I.L.: figli della lupa, balilla, piccole italiane, giovani italiane, giovani fasciste.” Manzini, *Il Duce a Verona*, 86.

Party introduced Mussolini by saying: “Fascist women, housewives, workers, youth of the Littorio, salute the Duce, the founder of the Empire.”²⁷¹ Each group replied with the Fascist chant “to us” followed by “Du-ce, du-ce” and “speak, speak” while in the background trumpeters started playing on the notes of *Giovinezza* followed by *Almo sol*. The Duce, visibly impressed by “the delirious enthusiasm” of the crowd, emphatically proclaimed: “I want to tell you that I will never forget the spectacle of faith and joy that you have offered me in this grand and sacred vestige of Rome.”²⁷²

As the enthusiasm of the crowd reached its peak, Mussolini saluted one last time the people gathered in the Arena and headed back to the car. The motorcade drove down Via Oberdan and Corso Cavour on its way to Castelvechio, where the Duce was awaited by local officials. In the period rooms designed by Avena in 1925, Mussolini received the homage of civil, military and religious authorities. After slowly traversing the museum’s rooms, he climbed to the *Reggia*, the historic residence of the Scaligeri. From there Mussolini could gaze out over the city with its historic monuments, among which stood out, as remarked by Manzini, the bell tower of medieval San Zeno.

Leaving Castelvechio by the Ponte Scaligero, the entourage traveled along Lungadige Campagnola, Lungadige del Littorio, and Lungadige Re Teodorico en route to Casa Littoria (the city’s Fascist Party headquarters.) In the courtyard, the Duce reviewed a group of paramilitary forces belonging to Verona’s *Comando Federale*. Once inside he visited the *Sacrario dei Caduti*, the shrine dedicated to those who died in battle during the revolution, World War I, the Spanish Civil War, and the Fascist campaign in Africa. After laying a laurel wreath and observing a

²⁷¹ “Donne fasciste, massaie rurali, operaie, giovani del Littorio, salutate nel Duce il Fondatore dell’Impero.” Ibid.

²⁷² “Voglio dirvi soltanto che non dimenticherò mai lo spettacolo di fede e di gioia che mi avete offerto in questa grande e sacra vestigia di Roma.” Ibid.

minute of silence, Mussolini walked to the main office where representatives of Fascist group organizations were gathered to greet him. They presented the Duce with a gift of 4,000,000 Lira for the construction of a new Casa Littoria. He praised the offer as an expression of the spiritual and moral solidarity of Fascist Verona and after exchanging a few words with local party members, left the building to return to Piazza Dante for the last event of the morning.

Here, standing at the center of the piazza by Dante's monument, Mussolini watched the *Passo Romano*, performed by the Fascist Black Shirts.²⁷³ Brigades of local Fascist notables witnessed the perfectly executed steps. Along with the Duce, they too sang *Giovinezza* as the ceremony came to an end. *L'Arena* commented on the event as a central moment of the day: "not just a pause into the Fascist old guard, but a meeting, almost a return to the past ... a demonstration of Fascist life and a chant of traditional faith, tenaciously preserved and proudly proclaimed."²⁷⁴ Indeed, the event in Piazza Dante was among the most militarily significant. By reviewing the Roman step and singing the Fascist anthem, Mussolini reasserted himself as "the founder of Fascism, the Head of the Revolution."²⁷⁵

With the conclusion of the morning activities Mussolini retired to the Palazzo del Podestà for lunch while a galvanized crowd cried out "DU-CE, DU-CE" outside. In the afternoon, Mussolini reemerged on the balcony of the Palazzo to salute the assembly below before the motorcade escorted him to Piazzale Diaz for the inauguration of the headquarters of *Gruppo Rionale Cesare Battisti*, a local fascist organization. Outside he met with a group of Fascist women and rural housewives and one of them presented him with her tenth child. In the

²⁷³ *Passo Romano* (Roman Step) was the Italian version of the German goose step.

²⁷⁴ "Non una sosta del Duce tra la Vecchia Guardia del Fascio Terzogenito, ma davvero un incontro, quasi un ritorno...una dimostrazione di vita fascista e non soltanto un canto di antica fede tenacemente serbata, superbamente orgogliosa e orgogliosamente proclamata." *L'Arena* (Verona), 27 September 1938, 3.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

courtyard, a group of Black Shirts in full uniform saluted the Duce as he entered the building. After the official inauguration ceremony, Mussolini visited the different rooms and inquired about their decoration, expressing satisfaction with their welcoming feel. Just a few minutes long, marked by one-on-one exchanges with people, Mussolini's visit to the headquarters of *Gruppo Rionale* contrasted sharply with the official, very regimented and highly charged nature of the morning activities when the figure of the Duce remained distant, unreachable to the huge crowd gathered in Piazza Bra and the Arena. Gentile believes that these private meetings were part of the Fascist liturgy aimed at reinforcing the cult of Mussolini among ordinary people: "such visits lacked the solemnity of major assemblies, but perhaps for that very reason they were even more successful in fostering the cult of the Duce."²⁷⁶

The rest of the afternoon's activities reflected the same more intimate, informal character of the visit to the *Gruppo Rionale*, with Mussolini visiting a local hospital and meeting with families leaving for Libya. The group of one thousand settlers, made up of men, women, young children, and elderly people awaited Mussolini in front of Castelvecchio. A sign above them emphatically stated their mission of agrarian and cultural reclamation: "We, Fascist laborers, swear on our honor, Duce, that in Your name and in the name of our Fatherland's greater glory we will be able to reclaim every clod, develop every land, take everywhere the signs of Your genius, the creator of imperial and Fascist Rome."²⁷⁷ After greeting the settlers with the Roman salute, the Duce "stopped for a few moments, was with them, all for them."²⁷⁸ The motorcade then drove away en route to the construction site of Verona's new hospital, a modern structure

²⁷⁶ Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, 148.

²⁷⁷ "Sul nostro onore di contadini fascisti, giuriamo, Duce, che nel Tuo nome e per la maggiore grandezza della nostra Patria noi sapremo bonificare ogni terra, portare ovunque i segni del Tuo genio creatore di Roma imperiale e fascista." Manzini, *Il Duce a Verona*, 98.

²⁷⁸ "Il Duce sostò pochi istanti, fu con loro, tutto per loro." Ibid.

built by the Fascist administration to replace the old sanatorium, “totally inadequate to the modern needs of modern hospital technology.”²⁷⁹ After exchanging a few words with the Prefect who had shown him a model of the new hospital, Mussolini returned to the car and headed to Chievo, a small town outside Verona, the last stop of his visit. Greeted by people along the way, the motorcade drove down the road built by the Fascist administration to connect Verona to the Brennero state highway, an important artery joining northern Italy to the Austrian border, the main route for tourist and commercial traffic to and from northern Europe. In Chievo Mussolini inaugurated the new sanatorium, also built by the Fascist government. The Duce was received by the President of the Institution who briefed him on the services provided by the hospital as well as the “most modern and rational treatments adopted and their benefits.”²⁸⁰

Meant to highlight the technology and progress made possible by the Fascist administration, the second half of Mussolini’s visit to Verona contrasted with and complemented the historic and militaristic nature of the gatherings in Piazza Bra, the Arena, Castelvecchio, and the Palazzo del Podestà. If the Duce’s review of military forces and his speech to the crowd were carefully staged in the background of historic monuments in order to showcase the regime’s rootedness in the city’s historic and cultural tradition, the visit to Verona and Chievo’s new hospitals down the recently completed road linking Verona to the rest of Europe highlighted the regime’s modernizing and progressive effort. Historic traditions and modernity converged in Mussolini’s visit to Verona just as they did in Fascist aesthetics and ideology. Following his visit to Chievo’s sanatorium, Mussolini made his way back to Verona, passing through the historic center of the city one last time. The crowd enthusiastically greeted him as his motorcade headed

²⁷⁹ “... assolutamente inadeguato anche alle più moderne esigenze della moderna tecnica ospitaliera.” Ibid.

²⁸⁰ “... Il Direttore del Sanatorio Gli ha esposto quanto praticamente viene conseguito con i più moderni e razionali sistemi di cura adottati ed i benefici che se ne conseguono.” Ibid., 100.

to the train station. There Mussolini was awaited by a large gathering of people who shouted “Du-ce, Du-ce” as he made his way to the train between two rows of Black Shirts. Among Fascist chants, salutes, and acclamations (“Come back, come back”) the train left the station and the Duce’s visit came to an end. Mussolini’s departure did not conclude the festivities, however. Black Shirts and Fascist officials followed the Prefect and the Party Secretary back to the Palazzo del Podestà. There they joined the crowd still gathered in Piazza dei Signori and in a burst of excitement sang *Giovinazza* and called the Duce’s name. By this time night had fallen. The entire city was illuminated. Flaming letters spelled out the letter “M” along the banks of the Adige River.

5.2 FASCIST RITUAL AND MEDIA REPRESENTATION

Mussolini’s visit to Verona was fully chronicled and publicized. The local newspaper *L’Arena* and a series of national journals including *Corriere della Sera*, *Il Messaggero* and *La Stampa* covered the event in great detail. Reporters from the Fascist Radio Company EIAR (Ente Italiano per le Audizioni Radiofoniche) and camera crews from the LUCE Institute documented Mussolini’s speeches in Piazza Bra and the Arena. In addition to the moving footage, LUCE was hired to shoot still images, which were then featured in newspapers and magazines as well as commemorative publications. The photographic representation of Mussolini’s visit to Verona in newspapers and magazines was a crucial component of the event. It perpetuated and amplified the memory of the visit long after Mussolini left the city and provided those who were not in Verona a visual summary of the historic day. It also allowed individuals throughout the country

to become familiar with the city's monumental buildings, historic architecture and urban sites as seen through the eyes of the Duce.

Images and photographs documenting the Duce's state visit to Verona in magazines and newspapers can be divided into three groups. The first group is represented by images featuring monuments and architectural sites decorated with flags and banners in honor of Mussolini's visit. This type of image was mostly limited to local newspapers and appealed to an audience familiar with the featured sites. A second group was represented by photographs of mass gatherings and rallies held in the Arena or Verona's main squares in which the city's historic monuments provided the architectural frame for the rallies. A third group of photographs featured Mussolini in front of a background of iconic monuments, including the Arena, Castelvecchio, and the statue of Cangrande. These last two groups of images, which associated Verona's monuments and architectural sites directly with Mussolini, were the most ubiquitous and ideologically charged. Photographs of mass gatherings with Verona's monuments and architecture in the background flooded magazines and newspapers and soon became part of the iconography of power often associated with Fascism. The crowd portrayed in these images appears to be split between the two categories first identified by Jeffrey Schnapp: emblematic and oceanic.²⁸¹ Emblematic representations portray the crowd as human bodies arranged in geometric shapes that give form to living portraits of Mussolini or create Fascist signs and emblems. The photographs of Mussolini addressing the crowd in the Arena, among the most impressive displays of Fascist might, belong to this category. They were taken with a wide-angle lens to capture the impressive sight of 36,000 participants seated according to the color of their uniform to create a human halo effect and to form the word DUX in alternating colors. Oceanic representations of the crowd

²⁸¹ Jeffrey Schnapp, "The Mass Panorama" *Modernism/Modernity* 9, no. 2 (2002): 245.

portray physical massing of bodies. Free and unruly, these images are characterized by an apparent absence of artifice. The representation of the crowd awaiting Mussolini in Piazza Bra exemplifies this type of image. The crowd fills every corner of the represented space and the square has been opened and splayed so as to create the illusion of a larger architectural setting and a vast, undifferentiated human mass.

Schnapp points out that although formally different, both emblematic and oceanic representations should be explained in terms of allegories of crowd control. In fact, he explains, “they serve as dialectical counterparts of one another, the first emphasizing the moment of transcendence when the one emerges out of the many; and the second emphasizing the moment of immanence in which the one taps into the tidal power of the multitudes.”²⁸² The fact that in both types of image the crowd is framed within Verona’s key monuments and sites introduces a dimension of temporality which strengthens the allegory of crowd control theorized by Schnapp. The Roman Arena, the medieval Castelvecchio and Palazzo del Podestà, and the Renaissance and Baroque palazzos framing Piazza Erbe reminded the readers that the crowd portrait was “a national crowd, shaped by a national sense of place, race, and tradition.”²⁸³ Moreover, in celebration of Mussolini’s visit, Verona’s historic architecture was updated and brought into the present by means of banners, flags, and posters celebrating the Fascist spirit. In the same year, when Hitler and Mussolini visited Naples, Piazza Plebiscito, the major square in the city, was turned in a Fascist phantasmagoria by means of garlands, banners, and other ephemeral decorations. The use of Fascist insignia emerges as a strategy to claim the historic past embodied by the architecture and reasserts the link between present and past.

²⁸² Ibid., 253.

²⁸³ Ibid., 263.

The historicity of the Fascist crowd appears all the more striking when we compare Fascist mass panoramas to representations of Soviet crowds. As Schnapp underlines, the socialist crowd is portrayed as placeless and therefore timeless; adhering to the values of Communist Internationalism, socialist images of mass rallies “emphasize abstract representation of the crowd... while de-emphasizing place names, architectural settings, and images featuring regional or historical particulars.”²⁸⁴ Schnapp argues that by contextualizing the crowd, historical monuments and historical settings also secure their control. The potential danger, intrinsic to the notion of the masses, is neutralized by relating the masses to history and having them interact with the image of the leader. Architectural settings, according to Schnapp’s explanation, can be interpreted as “strategies of contextualization,” which secure that the masses in question will be recognized as “potential agents of national redemption rather than as a lawless destructive horde.”²⁸⁵ Published in days of escalating international tension, the images of Mussolini addressing Verona’s crowd sent the nation a message of strength, cohesiveness and readiness under the guidance of the Duce, the new Augustus Caesar. The oceanic crowd of Piazza Bra and the emblematic gathering inside the Arena reassured Italians about the leadership qualities of Mussolini, whom the architectural settings symbolically linked to the leaders of Roman antiquity and the *condottieri* of medieval times.

Another significant group of photographs is represented by images featuring *Il Duce* surrounded by Verona’s historic monuments and buildings. Manzini’s commemorative publication contained a few such images showing Mussolini in the Arena, gazing out from the podium, and on the balcony of the Palazzo del Podestà. These photographs, in which Mussolini shares the stage with other party officials and government representatives, capture impromptu

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 273.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

situations with the Duce caught in the immediacy of the action. Like photographs featuring portraits of Mussolini posed against a background of the city's monuments and memorials, these images underlined the continuity between Mussolini's government and Verona's historic traditions.

The relationship between space and political theory has been discussed and analyzed by several theorists, including Michael Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Jacques Derrida.²⁸⁶ Margaret Farrar, in particular, has underlined the importance of the built environment in shaping and sustaining political practice.²⁸⁷ According to Farrar, identities—both individual and collective identities—are shaped not only “through complexes of meanings [and] networks of interpretations but also within specific spatial arrangements.”²⁸⁸ In addition, the French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs believes that monuments, historical buildings, and architectural settings are constitutive elements of the “social memory,” the ongoing process through which social groups map their myths onto and through a place and time. For Halbwachs, personal memory is not “stored” in the unconscious, as Sigmund Freud suggested, but is always constructed and located in the social environment of the present. The material and symbolic qualities of monuments and architectural settings help individuals to articulate narratives about their world and construct notions of identity. Besides sending a message of crowd control and underlining the link between the Fascist regime and Verona's historic traditions, the photographic representation of Mussolini's visit to Verona exemplifies the politics of memory through which the regime attempted to construct a sense of collective national identity rooted in

²⁸⁶ For a discussion on the relationship between political theory and space see Margaret E. Farrar, “Health and Beauty of the Body Politic: Subjectivity and Urban Space,” *Polity* 33, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 1-23.

²⁸⁷ Although Farrar does not refer specifically to buildings and architectural settings in her discussion, her definition of the built environment “the material environment that human beings have organized for the purpose of leisure, commerce, and politics” is broad enough to be considered inclusive of architectural settings and monumental sites.

²⁸⁸ Farrar, “Health and Beauty,” 4-5.

a common historical past and projected through the figure of the Duce in the future. The architectural settings framing the crowd functioned, thus, as cultural and historical bridges that made “the connection between present and past seem permanent and tangible.”²⁸⁹

As for the historical periods featured, the photographs documenting Mussolini’s visit to Verona appear to be rather inclusive, spanning from the Roman Arena to the medieval Castelvecchio and Palazzo del Podestà to the Renaissance-style buildings framing Piazza Erbe. Indeed, the regime exhibited a high degree of flexibility in the selection of historical periods and associated itself with a variety of styles. As shown by Lasansky, buildings of different periods and styles served different agendas: while the cult of antiquity helped to legitimate the imperialistic ambitions of the regime, the celebration of the Middle Ages and Renaissance proved to be an important tool in building a sense of common national identity.²⁹⁰ Mussolini and high-rank Fascist officials clearly expressed their interest in various architectural styles. In 1926, Mussolini reminded Italians that “when Italy was still divided, its unity was manifested by the Renaissance in the arts.”²⁹¹ In 1938, Giuseppe Bottai, the Minister of National Education, emphatically noticed how “we are all aware of the present needs, based on the glory of the past. The awareness of the importance of the present historical moment, urges us to seek in our glorious tradition the civic virtues of the Latin genius. Those virtues incite us to embrace the great battle that the Duce is fighting for the civilization of the world.”²⁹²

²⁸⁹ Karen E. Till, “Places of Memory,” in *A Companion to Political Geography*, ed. John Agnew, Katharyne Mitchell, and Gerard Toal (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 290.

²⁹⁰ Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected*, 11.

²⁹¹ Quoted in Henry Millon, “The Role of History of Architecture in Fascist Italy,” *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 24, no. 1 (March 1965): 57.

²⁹² “Noi tutti siamo consapevoli dell’esigenza attuale che la grandezza passata ci addita. È la piena coscienza dell’importanza storica dell’ora presente che ci spinge all’indagine delle origini prime della nostra tradizione, alla ricerca delle fonti di quelle virtù civili della stirpe latina, che oggi ci allineano sul primo fronte della grande battaglia che Il Duce combatte per la civiltà del mondo.” Quoted in Millon, “The Role of History of Architecture,” 57, note 19.

The variety of historical periods with which the regime associated itself testifies how diversified and inclusive the regime's vision of the past was, especially as it relates to other totalitarian regimes. Whereas the Soviet model chose not to associate itself with a specific time, in order to emphasize the universality of class struggle, and whereas the Nazi regime associated itself with a carefully selected version of the past, emphasizing classical monumentality, Fascism resourced the whole repertoire of national monuments and architecture in order to enforce its political agendas. As the photographic representation of the Duce's visit to Verona clearly shows, classical antiquity, and the medieval and Renaissance past were all co-opted by the regime in order to reinforce national identity, promote support for the regime, and provide political legitimacy to the Fascist universalizing project.

6.0 THE LEGACY OF FASCIST-SPONSORED PROJECTS IN VERONA

To the modern, unaware visitor walking down the narrow *Via Cappello*, Juliet's House appears as a seemingly pristine medieval house, with its tower-like appearance, cobbled courtyard, and ivy climbing the brick walls. The house's modern neighbors—an Armani outlet, gift stores, and pastry and ice-cream shops—contribute to the business of the street and contrast with the house's historic appearance. If the number of tourists taking pictures of themselves and rubbing the right bosom of Juliet's statue in the courtyard were not enough,²⁹³ two inscriptions, respectively on the internal and external façade, leave no doubt that this is indeed the house of the Shakespearean heroine. The former quotes the very famous Shakespearean verse “But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun...” and the latter unequivocally states “These were the houses of the Capulets, whence came that Juliet for whom gentle hearts cried so much and poets sang.”²⁹⁴ However, neither inscription documents the 1936 restoration work by Antonio Avena. In a similar fashion, Juliet's Tomb lacks any reference to Avena's dramatic reconfiguration. Indeed, through the years city administrations have painstakingly worked to disguise the modern nature of these complexes and reinforce the association between them and the Shakespearean myth. In so doing, Verona's political elite have implicitly legitimized Avena's approach to restoration and embraced the legacy of Fascist period projects.

²⁹³ According to popular belief, rubbing the statue's right breast will bring one luck in love.

²⁹⁴ “Queste furono le case dei Capuleti donde uscì la Giulietta per cui tanto piansero i cuori gentili e i poeti cantarono.”

This chapter analyzes the legacy of Fascist-sponsored restorations in Verona. It argues that the success of these initiatives is complex and nuanced in nature. Some of the sites refashioned during the Fascist rule have evolved into cultural destinations, in which the reference to the Shakespearean myth has become the catalyst for further cultural events. Although they derive their main attraction from their association with the story of Romeo and Juliet, these sites also have been transformed into art galleries and installation spaces and therefore have acquired new artistic and cultural meaning. Scholars have often argued that Fascist sites are subject to a process of historical forgetting. They claim Italians have been unwilling to confront the past due to the uneasiness they feel towards Mussolini's regime. Ben-Ghiat has suggested that the traumas of the war years have prevented Italians from coming to terms with the legacy of the Fascist past. She claims that "by the time the war ended, a propitious climate had been created for the appearance of explanatory frameworks for Fascism that shifted culpability away from ordinary Italians, facilitating the nation's collective self-absolution."²⁹⁵ I argue that while a politicized form of national forgetting might have prevented a critical assessment of the legacy of Fascism in many Italian cities, the case of Verona is distinctive. Through the years, the movie industry has elevated Verona to the realm of myth by highlighting the association between the city and the story of Romeo and Juliet. The countless cinematographic renditions of Shakespeare's play have impressed in movie-going audiences a fictional and idealized image of Verona, far removed from the realities of the twenty-first century city. Shielded in a fictional, timeless space the city has exonerated itself from a conscious and reflective assessment of its Fascist past.

²⁹⁵ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "Liberation: Italian cinema and the Fascist Past, 1945-1950," in *Italian Fascism: History, Memory, and Representation*, ed. Richard J. B. Bosworth and Patrizia Dogliani (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 88.

6.1 VERONA'S URBAN SCENE IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD

Many historians have argued that with the important exception of Carlo Scarpa's designs for Castelvechio and the Banca Popolare in Piazza Nogara, since the post-war period Verona's architectural scene has been dominated by the persistence of traditional practices and a sense of continuity with its Fascist past.²⁹⁶ At the end of the war Verona faced the daunting task of reconstruction. More than 45% of the city had been destroyed and 16,500 people had been left homeless. An unprecedented opportunity to study new urban models for the future development of the city and adopt scientific criteria for the restoration of historic monuments was presented to city administrators. In the hastened rebuilding process, however, they chose to perpetuate old models indefinitely delaying a critical assessment of the legacy of Fascism.²⁹⁷ The reconstruction of key buildings such as the municipal palace (Palazzo della Gran Guardia) and the opera theater (Teatro Filarmonico) did not elicit any original solutions. In all of the twenty-nine projects presented for the reconstruction and expansion of the nineteenth-century Palazzo della Gran Guardia "there prevailed a tiresome repetition of the old language of the 'picturesque' ... while the difficult topic of the relation with the past, especially the most recent one remained unaddressed."²⁹⁸ The 1947 national competition for the reconstruction of the Teatro Filarmonico called for a structure that contained a lapidary museum and a modern 1500-seat theater. None of the twelve projects submitted was awarded first place but five entrants were asked to submit revised versions of their design. In the end, the reconstruction was awarded to Vittorio Filippini who produced a traditional structure based on baroque theater designs inside and dominated

²⁹⁶ Mulazzani, "Il Novecento," 375-376.

²⁹⁷ D'Alberto, "La Soprintendenza: storia e ruolo," 29.

²⁹⁸ "Tra gli altri progetti segnalati prevale una stanca ripetizione dei moduli linguistici del 'pittresco' Comunque eluso nei vari progetti [è] il difficile nodo del confronto con il passato, specie con quello più prossimo." Mulazzani, "Il Novecento," 375-376.

outside by a neo-classical-inspired façade, quite in tune with the architectural tradition that had dominated Verona in the prewar period.²⁹⁹ Finally, the plan for the reconstruction of the city, along with the task of revising the 1939 city planning, was assigned to Plinio Marconi, a former entrant to the 1932 city planning competition and a follower of Marcello Piacentini.³⁰⁰ Marconi's solution called for an 'organic' development of the city's new sections and the demolition of parts of the historic city center to create airy new streets echoed earlier Fascist urban policies. For this, he was harshly criticized by the younger generation of architects gathered around the periodical *Architetti Verona*.³⁰¹

Founded in 1959, *Architetti Verona* quickly became the most relevant and influential forum for the discussion of the problems affecting the city's urban development. The periodical was particularly critical of the city council, accusing it of being unable to manage Verona's urban expansion and to prevent the demolition of important elements of the city's artistic and architectural heritage. Harshly criticized also was the city council's practice of assigning projects to contractors without a formal public competition. In an editorial published in December 1961, Guido Trojani called together the most progressive forces of Verona's cultural landscape, promising the support of the magazine to "all those who intend to contribute to the solution of the countless problems that might arise from the discussion of urban issues."³⁰² In spite of the enthusiasm and commitment of the group, the magazine ceased publication in 1963. The last issue was dedicated to the future of Verona. Arguing that the progress of the city lay in the

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 376-377.

³⁰⁰ Arturo Cucciolla, *Vecchie città / città nuove: Concezio Petrucci, 1926-1946*. Architettura e città, 13 (Bari: Dedalo, 2006), 54-59.

³⁰¹ Mulazzani, "Il Novecento," 378-379.

³⁰² "A tutti coloro che vorranno portare un contributo alla risoluzione degli innumerevoli problemi che possono interessare un un discorso urbanistico nel senso più largo e concreto della parola." Quoted in Mulazzani, "Il Novecento," 380.

tourist industry, the magazine underlined the need to plan its development and encourage its expansion.

The continuity between Fascist and post-war urban policies is also shown by the protagonists of Verona's architectural scene in the Twenties and Thirties who were not removed from their positions of power at the end of the war and continued to work long after the fall of Fascism. Avena himself remained a leading figure of the city's urban scene until his retirement in 1955. As the Director of the Civic Museums housed in Castelvecchio, he was the city's obvious choice to preside over the reconstruction of the castle's east wing destroyed by the 1945 German bombing.³⁰³ Financed by the newly elected administration for the Veneto region with a contribution from the central agency of the Ministry of National Education, the new wing was a replica of the structure refashioned by Avena in 1926. The project, drawn up by Alberto Avesani and Giancarlo Bosella, recreated the destroyed façade with the two symmetrical portals framing a central window and surmounted by a series of six recessed single-light windows on the upper level. Inside, the two architects took special care in recreating Avena's original layout and design.³⁰⁴ The Hall of Music (*Salone della Musica* or *Salone dei Concerti*), where the 1944 trial resulting in the execution of five members of the Fascist Grand Council took place, was restored based on Avena's directions: the balustrade running the entire length of the counter-façade and the coffered ceiling matched those destroyed by the bombing while a fresco decoration by Pino Casarini on the subject of Music replaced the destroyed original frescoes.

With undisguised civic pride Sandro Bevilaqua wrote in *L'Arena* shortly after the completion of the restoration "Following the terrible conflagration that transformed it in a

³⁰³ Vecchiato, "Antonio Avena," 115, 119 note 36. On the reconstruction of Castelvecchio see also Vecchiato, "Le fabbriche," 207-211; and Paola Marini, "Castelvecchio," in *Suggestioni del Passato. Immagini di Verona scaligera*, ed. Ruggero Boschi and Maristella Vecchiato (Verona: Edizioni La Grafica, 2001), 41.

³⁰⁴ Vecchiato "Le fabbriche," 210.

gigantic fire, Castelvechio comes back to life.... Many of its rooms had collapsed... its precious ceilings decorated with carvings and stucco... have been completely and faithfully restored... all of the walls have been repainted.”³⁰⁵ Thus, what could have been an occasion to rethink the controversial 1926 restoration became instead a reason for the city, the region and the state to come together and rebuild an architecture perceived (by that time) as representative of Verona’s identity.

In 1954 Avena curated one of the most popular exhibits ever held in Castelvechio: *Tavole Imbandite* (Table Settings.) Most of the material on display was provided by prominent aristocratic and upper-middle-class families of Verona and nearby cities of Vicenza and Mantova.³⁰⁶ The documentation available, mostly limited to photographs, shows long tables dressed with white linens and supporting twelve-piece settings of tableware including china, crystal, and silver, each dedicated to a different family. The table dedicated to the Miniscalchi family was decorated with two peacocks facing each other from either end of the table across a large plate of fruit. Standing by the table is a black, short-haired figure dressed in a light-colored blouse and matching pants and a voluminous dark cape with embroidered borders. While it is impossible to determine with certainty the identity and function of such a figure, it appears to be an integral part of the display positioned within the same space as the table, delimited and separated from the viewer’s space by a rope clearly visible in the foreground. Along with the peacocks, the figure seems to introduce an element of exoticism that enhances the distinctiveness of the display and the family associated with it.

³⁰⁵ Dopo il fragore tremendo delle bombe che lo trasformarono in un rogo gigantesco... Castelvechio rivive... Moltissime delle sale erano crollate... I soffitti ricchi di intagli e di stucchi... sono stati completamente e fedelmente restaurati.” Ibid., 209.

³⁰⁶ Marini, “Il primo allestimento museale di Castelvechio,” 172, note 1.

Thus, as late as 1954, Castelvecchio perpetuated in its architecture and exhibits the narrative of the privileged elites: the same narrative that Avena first articulated in 1926 and that survived the fall of Fascism because it was largely independent from it. In 1958, Carlo Scarpa would largely reject Avena's vision for Castelvecchio by creating an architecture that renounced the Museum Director's historicist and picturesque approach to architecture and using instead "the latest ideas on museum design."³⁰⁷ Entrusted by Licisco Magagnato, the Director of Verona's Civic Museums, with the commission to renovate the building, over the course of six years Scarpa sought to reveal the four distinct periods of the complex: the Commune wall (twelfth century); the Scaligeri fortress (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries); the nineteenth-century Napoleonic block; and, lastly, the 1920s work by Avena.

Inside, Scarpa rejected Avena's decoration as totally bogus and replaced it with bare, unadorned interiors, made with modern materials and techniques. In Scarpa's museum design, works of art dictate the space and describe the proportions of the architecture: niches, cantilevered viewing platforms, and windows are designed to best showcase the uniqueness of the objects displayed and invite visitors to engage in acts of discovery and movement around the works. The viewer then becomes a participant in the museum: "the antithesis of the mute observer of the pre-war era."³⁰⁸

Externally, the removal of Avena's additions appeared more complicated. Unable physically to eliminate the medieval-looking façade, Scarpa was nevertheless determined to reveal its fake nature. As he noted: "At Castelvecchio everything [meaning the entire façade] was fake... I decided to adopt certain vertical values to break up the unnatural symmetry."³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ Murphy, *Carlo Scarpa and the Castelvecchio*, 4.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

Therefore, the architect introduced elements that left the structure almost unaltered but radically changed the way visitors perceived it: the end bay was demolished, the entrance was moved from the center bay to the side, and an interpenetration between inside and outside was created by elements such as entrance screens and paving. Scarpa went on to redefine the entire complex's architecture in an attempt to expose the various layers of historical stratifications by a process of selective excavation and creative demolition.³¹⁰ Thus, Scarpa largely rejected Avena's historicist vision for Castelvecchio in favor of a more complex solution, characterized by the coexistence of overlaying elements of construction. However, as noted by Mulazzani, Carlo Scarpa's solution for Castelvecchio remained an exception in Verona's urban scene and his critical approach to Avena's neo-medieval style would not extend to the rest of the city.³¹¹ Indeed, the House and Tomb of Juliet, Avena's most controversial projects, were repaired from the damage of the war and were used by city officials in the promotion of Verona's image as an artistic, picturesque, and romantic town.

6.2 JULIET'S HOUSE

In 1968, the blockbuster movie *Romeo and Juliet* by Franco Zeffirelli sparked in international audiences a renewed interest in Shakespeare's play and the city of Verona. As result, the sites linked to the memory of Romeo and Juliet underwent a thorough restoration process. Juliet's House was refurbished and redecorated. Under the direction of Avena's successor, Licisco Magagnato, the house's interiors were partially redesigned, including the pavings and the

³¹⁰ Ibid., 4.

³¹¹ Mulazzani, "Il Novecento," 380.

stairway leading to the second floor.³¹² A bronze statue of Juliet was placed in the courtyard, beneath the balcony, across from the arched entrance. Realized by Nereo Costantini, the statue was donated by the Lions Club to the city in 1969 and since 1972 has become an integral component of the Juliet's House complex.³¹³ Inspired by the famous Madonna Verona, a Roman statue with head and arms dating to the Scaligeri,³¹⁴ Juliet's statue is a tourist must-see (and touch!) and one of the most photographed monuments in Verona. According to local historian Daniela Zumiani, "such work, regardless of its aesthetic value, embodies for the people of Verona their own historical identity, while substantiating a myth in which the city identifies itself and by which it is identified from the outside."³¹⁵

The complex underwent a new restoration in the mid 1990s. Financed by the city and carried out by the Department of Public Works in collaboration with the Civici Musei d'Arte,³¹⁶ work involved structural and cosmetic repairs on the outside as well as the inside. The balcony was reinforced while the woodwork, the stonework and the façade were cleaned and repaired. Inside, the interiors were redecorated with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century furnishings along with a number of pictorial works including medieval and Renaissance frescoes and nineteenth-century paintings related to the story of Romeo and Juliet.³¹⁷ In 2002, the City Museums sponsored a permanent exhibit that would have pleased Antonio Avena. Curated by architect

³¹² Flavia Pesci, *Romeo and Juliet in the Verona of the Shakespearian Legend* (Milan: Electa, 1999), 17.

³¹³ Zumiani, "Giulietta e Verona," 221.

³¹⁴ The statue was placed over a fountain in Piazza Erbe, erected in 1368 by Consignore della Scala. Since early on, Madonna Verona became one of the city's most popular historical statuary and came to embody, metaphorically, the city itself. See Adrian W. B. Randolph, *Engaging Symbols: Gender, Politics, and Public Art in Fifteenth-Century Florence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 51.

³¹⁵ "Una siffatta opera, indipendentemente dal giudizio estetico che possiamo formulare, riesce a dare forma alla percezione dei veronesi della propria identità storica, e nel contempo concretizza un mito in la città si riconosce ed è, dall'esterno, riconosciuta." Zumiani, "Giulietta e Verona," 217.

³¹⁶ Civici Musei d'Arte (City Museums) is the umbrella organization of all art museums in Verona including Castelvechio (the major museum, coordinating the functions and activities of all other museums), the Fresco Museum (Museo degli Affreschi Giovan Battista Cavalcaselle), Museo Lapidario Maffeiano, the archeological museum (Museo Archeologico al Teatro Romano), and Juliet's House.

³¹⁷ Pesci, *Romeo and Juliet*, 17.

Alberto Erseghe, the installation featured items from Zeffirelli's movie set for *Romeo and Juliet*. Among the exhibited items were two costumes worn by the Romeo and Juliet characters and six movie scene sketches (*bozzetti*) signed by the director and dated 1967. The showpiece of the installation was the bed designed by Renzo Mongiardino for Juliet's room in the movie, which was exhibited in an upstairs bedroom along with photos from the movie set.³¹⁸ With this permanent exhibit, the director of Verona's museums fulfilled Avena's original intent to house in Juliet's House material pertaining to the cinematographic rendition of the Shakespearean play. In 1936, Avena had vainly tried to secure from MGM costumes and pictures of Cukor's movie set to exhibit in the house of Via Cappello. As discussed, his request was denied and the items temporarily exhibited in Castelvechio had to be returned to the Hollywood motion picture studio. The 2002 exhibit, fed by the expectations of hundreds of tourists visiting Juliet's House on a daily basis, showed the success of Avena's vision and the enduring legacy of Fascist-sponsored projects in Verona.

In recent years, Avena's popularity has grown not only among city administrators eager to cash in on his tourist-oriented solutions but also among Verona's cultural elite. Since Licisco Magagnato, one of Verona's most valued cultural figures, took on the restoration of Juliet's House, an increasing number of historians and scholars appear to have been rethinking the role of Avena and the significance of his legacy. In an interview released to the *Corriere della Sera* in 2003 Paola Marini, the current director of the city museums, stated: "In the past, people used to think of museums like this (*musei d'ambientazione*) as the absolute rearguard. Today we are more inclined to accept that the mix of true and false may entice collective dreams and help the

³¹⁸ *L'Arena* (Verona), 12 September 2002.

larger audience to become familiar with cultural events.”³¹⁹ In tune with this position, Juliet’s House has become in recent years the venue for an array of cultural events, from poetry readings to classical music concerts and special exhibits. Shows have ranged from the most obvious—the story of Romeo and Juliet as illustrated in old prints—to more original ones, such as Marc Quinn’s exhibition *The Myth*, a collateral event at the 53rd International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale (2009). Moreover, since 2002, Juliet’s House has become a space for art installations, which have been cosponsored by the leadership of Verona’s Art Museums and *Abitare il Tempo* (Living in Time), the International Exhibition of furniture, furnishing and interior design held in Verona each year in October.

The variety of cultural events hosted in the House in Via Cappello shows how part, if not all, of Verona’s cultural elite have come to accept Avena’s work and learned how to exploit the popularity of places such as Juliet’s House to attract large audiences to cultural events and programs. Juliet’s House has become a venue of multilayered identities: a medieval house, the fictitious residence of the Shakespearean heroine, an exhibition space, and the object of artistic investigation. Indeed, the 2004 installation *Racconto per Giulietta* by artist Peter Bottazzi conceptualized the house not just as a container for the work exhibited inside, but rather as part of the installation itself. As the artist explains: “the exterior of the house [was] supposed to take the shape of a scrunched piece of paper, sucked in by the interior, through the windows. The

³¹⁹ “In passato si pensava che i musei d’ambientazione come questo fossero di assoluta retroguardia. Oggi siamo più disposti ad accettare che la mescolanza di vero e falso possa dar forma a sogni collettivi e consentire a un pubblico molto ampio di farsi contagiare da un evento culturale.” *Corriere della Sera* (Milan), 29 July 2003, 25.

famous balcony [was] invested with projected words, intended to enhance a sense of movement and vortex embroiling the visitor.”³²⁰

In 2005, the house became the object of a highly controversial initiative. That year, after a long debate and amidst some criticism, the city, claiming conservatory measures, decided to remove the scribbles and love notes that for years tourists had written or stuck with bubblegum on the courtyard walls of Juliet’s House. White plasterboards were erected along the passageway leading up to the courtyard to compensate for the disappearance of scribbling surface and acquiesce to the protests of those lamenting the disruption of a consolidated tradition in Verona. The city had also considered the possibility of putting up a giant screen in the House’s courtyard to allow lovers to post digital statements via cellphone text messages. Instead, a letter box was made available inside the house for people to drop their letters to the Shakespearean heroine. More recently, Juliet’s Desk, a permanent installation by the Italian sculptor and designer Pucci de Rossi, has been mounted on the third floor of the house to provide information on the historical and literary background of Romeo and Juliet’s love story. The desk and the touch screen monitors, which also allow visitors to send messages to Juliet, have become one of the House’s most popular attractions. The fascination Juliet’s house has exerted on millions of tourists through the years along with the various installations, exhibitions and cultural events held there have turned the building into one of Verona’s most iconic landmarks and the second most visited site in the city after the Arena.

³²⁰ “L’esterno doveva assumere la forma di una pagina stropicciata e come risucchiata dall’interno delle finestre della casa. Il famoso balcone di Giulietta era investito da proiezioni ad aumentare il senso di movimento e vortice in cui lo spettatore veniva coinvolto.” Available: <http://www.peterbottazzi.com/cassetto.swf>, 20 July 2010.

6.3 JULIET'S TOMB

Juliet's Tomb, the equally controversial project carried out by Avena during the Fascist administration, underwent a similar evolution. The complex, comprising the fourteenth-century church of *San Francesco al Corso* and the annexed former monastery, was heavily damaged by the 1944-45 bombings. Lack of funds delayed restoration work for years and in 1959 the sixteenth-century bell tower, already affected by the wartime bombing, collapsed. Protests over the conditions of neglect and disrepair affecting the site came from multiple sources.³²¹ However, the situation remained unchanged until 1967, when Licisco Magagnato took on the task of rebuilding the complex.³²² The west wing of the former monastery, which had been totally destroyed by bombs, was rebuilt anew to become an exhibition space for the city's frescoes. The Museo degli Affreschi opened to the public in 1970 and was officially inaugurated in 1973.³²³ Dedicated to Giovan Battista Cavalcaselle, Verona's most prominent art critic, the museum provides a sympathetic setting for detached frescoes from various periods. The collection includes thirteenth-century frescoes from the Chapel of San Nazzaro and Celso, among the oldest pictorial artifacts in the city; sixteenth-century frescoes by Paolo Farinati, previously in the Palazzo Guarienti; and several interesting examples of nineteenth-century sculpture with works by Innocenzo Fraccaroli (1805-1882) and Torquato della Torre (1827-1855).³²⁴

³²¹ Commenting on the status of Juliet's Tomb, a local newspaper noticed that "wherever one looks one sees ugly things, indecency and filth... [such things] blemish not just Verona and the people of Verona but also local authorities that are paid to intervene and not to sit idle." See Vecchiato, "Le fabbriche," 444.

³²² Denise Modonesi, "Il complesso museale nell'area delle Franceschine," in *Proposte e restauri: i musei d'arte negli anni ottanta*, ed. Sergio Marinelli (Verona: Museo di Castelvecchio, 1987), 24.

³²³ Pesci, *Romeo and Juliet*, 28.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

Magagnato presided over the restoration of the church of San Francesco al Corso as well. The medieval portion of the church dating from 1230 was isolated and separated from the 1625 central plan addition. In 1987, the church became a permanent art gallery (*Pinacoteca Civica*) to display large canvases from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists from Verona. More recently a series of interventions have further transformed the complex. A laboratory for art restoration is now housed in one of the wings of the former monastery while the underground space has been adapted to a storage area for first-century B.C.E. Roman artifacts. Thus, what originally was only known as Juliet's Tomb has been transformed into a multipurpose complex, where cultural events take place next to more mundane ones (in the cloister of the monastery movies are shown during the summer and a beautifully decorated hall of the museum is available for the celebration of civil unions, romantically referred to as "Juliet's promises.")

The tomb Avena created remains the main attraction for most visitors who journey to this relatively secluded part of Verona outside the city wall, but visitors are encouraged to expand their visit to the annexed fresco museum and art gallery.³²⁵ Like Juliet's House, her Tomb built by Avena in the wake of Cukor's movie success for tourist enticement purposes has evolved into a cultural destination for the people of Verona and tourists alike.

6.4 ROMEO'S HOUSE AND THE PROJECT OF A SHAKESPEAREAN MUSEUM

Avena's legacy also survives in a project the Museum Director never saw fulfilled: the institution of a Shakespearean museum in a medieval house at Via Arche Scaligere 2. Although the project

³²⁵ The ticket to the Tomb includes admission to the Fresco Museum and Art Gallery.

was never realized, the city has kept it alive through the years and to this day it is periodically brought up for discussion. The idea of creating a museum dedicated to the author of *Romeo and Juliet* was first vented in 1910, when a bust of Shakespeare was unveiled in the Church of San Francesco al Corso in the presence of the British ambassador and the Italian Foreign Minister.³²⁶ The idea was revived in 1922 and then again in 1932 but in spite of the “ample and enthusiastic echo both in the Italian and foreign press... for various reasons the project was not carried out.”³²⁷ The idea of a Shakespearean museum took concrete shape in 1936. That year, in the aftermath of Cukor’s movie success, the city submitted a formal proposal for the institution of a Shakespearean museum to the Minister of National Education, Cesare Maria De Vecchi. The Minister manifested interest in the project but “the African war and the rising international difficulties put a stop to the project once again.”³²⁸ Unfettered, in 1938, Podestà Alberto Donnella submitted the proposal to the new Minister of National Education, Giuseppe Bottai. As Donnella explained in his missive:

Now times are ripe for the realization of the project. The museum shall collect and preserve all which in the fields of art and literature relates to the legendary story of Romeo and Juliet ...: books and pamphlets, prints, photographs, paintings, musical scores, documents and memorabilia from various centuries. The museum, which would also house a library and Art Gallery, shall promote cultural and artistic events, which undoubtedly will generate the greatest interest in the intellectual, artistic, and touristic field.³²⁹

³²⁶ See letter of 28 April 1938 from Alberto Donnella to Giuseppe Bottai. AA.BB.AA. Divisione III, 1929-1960, b. 30.

³²⁷ “L’ iniziativa ebbe larghissima ed entusiastica eco nella stampa italiana e straniera e particolarmente nei paesi anglo-sassoni ... per circostanze di varia natura l’ iniziativa non ebbe seguito.” Ibid.

³²⁸ “Ma la guerra d’ Africa e le sopraggiunte difficoltà internazionali costrinsero ancora una volta a una battuta di attesa.” Ibid.

³²⁹ “Ora i tempi sembrano consentire la realizzazione dell’ iniziativa. Il Museo dovrebbe raccogliere e conservare quanto nel campo delle lettere e dell’ arte per opere di autori italiani e stranieri ha avuto ed ha riferimento con la vicenda leggendaria di Giulietta e Romeo ... : quindi libri ed opuscoli, originali facsimili, stampe, fotografie, quadri, spartiti musicali, cimeli e documenti di vari secoli. Il Museo, che sarebbe così anche Biblioteca e Pinacoteca, potrebbe poi farsi iniziatore di manifestazioni artistiche e culturali che non mancherebbero di destare il più vivo interesse nel mondo intellettuale artistico e turistico.” Ibid.

Donnella indicated the medieval house on Via Arche Scaligere, known as “Stallo delle Arche,” as the ideal location for the museum. Originally owned by the Nogarola family but traditionally identified as “Romeo’s House,” the building had the necessary features to evoke historic and literary associations. Just a few blocks away from Juliet’s House, facing the historic Piazza dei Signori, the building showcased a red brick façade crowned by original battlements and an internal courtyard adorned with porticoes and a handsome stone staircase. In his letter Donnella requested a financial contribution for the acquisition of the house. As a further enticement, Donnella suggested to the Minister that the Soprintendenza, which was housed in “unsuitable and undignified” rental spaces be moved to the new building post renovation. In return, the city would ask for “a contribution towards the purchase of the building.” The director of the preservation agency, intrigued by the cultural nature of the project and perhaps enticed by the prospect of moving into a historic building that was “more central, close to the train station, and very dignified,”³³⁰ expressed a favorable opinion on the proposal. In his letter addressed to Bottai, Superintendent Alfredo Barbacci—the same Superintendent who would harshly criticize Avena’s interventions on Juliet’s House and Tomb—listed the economic, sentimental, and scientific reasons that would justify the institution of a museum dedicated to the Bard:

First, the museum would attract a greater number of tourists, especially Anglo-Saxon. It must be noticed that Juliet’s Tomb is the most visited monument in the city. Second, the institution of such a museum would tie Verona more closely to the legend, which as we know, is common to other cities, including Bologna and Siena From a scientific standpoint, a Shakespearean museum could create an interesting field of literary, historic, and artistic studies. It could also establish useful links with similar British institutions, generating important relations between Italian and English intellectuals.³³¹

³³⁰ “Trasferendosi nello ‘Stallo delle Arche’, l’Ufficio sarebbe più centrale, prossimo alla filovia della stazione e assai decoroso.” Alfredo Barbacci to Giuseppe Bottai. Letter of 2 June 1938. ASBAPVr, f. 91/170.

³³¹ “Il primo consisterebbe nell’attrazione di maggiori correnti turistiche, specie anglosassoni. Si noti che la tomba di Giulietta è il monumento più visitato della città. Il secondo consisterebbe nel legare con maggiore forza a Verona l’antica leggenda, che come è noto ... è comune anche a altre città, come Bologna e Siena ... Nei riguardi scientifici

The Minister did not appear to be impressed by the proposal. Advised against it by the Direttore Generale Lazzari,³³² Bottai replied requesting an estimated budget and specific information on the documentary and artistic material to be exhibited in the museum. The Minister also made clear that “such a museum shall not be limited to the love story of Romeo and Juliet. Indeed, its main focus should not be the characters of this drama but rather the work and life of Shakespeare.”³³³ Clearly, city and central government parted ways on the reasons to restore Romeo’s House and institute a Shakespearean museum: whereas the former aimed at supporting the Shakespearean myth and reinforcing the image of Verona as the city of Romeo and Juliet, the latter showed little interest in the narrative the local political elites were weaving and denied financial and moral support for their project. However, because of the pressure exercised by local forces, the Minister finally gave in and agreed on a financial contribution for the restoration on the house.

In 1939, the building was declared to have artistic interest and therefore was subject to preservation laws.³³⁴ Immediately thereafter, works were carried out to restore part of the complex. They were limited to the courtyard, where the porticoes and staircase were cleaned up

il museo potrebbe creare, ... un interessante campo di studi letterari, storici, ed anche artistici. Potrebbe stabilire, inoltre, utili collegamenti con istituti britannici affini, determinando fra intellettuali italiani ed inglesi simpatico relazioni, che anche politicamente avrebbero la loro modesta utilità.” Alfredo Barbacci to Giuseppe Bottai. Letter of 2 June 1938. ASBAPVr, f. 91/170.

³³² In a note to the Minister (Giuseppe Bottai), Lazzari noticed that besides the fact there is no reason to give historical substance to a literary tradition, “Italy is so rich in true historic memories that there is little need to create fictitious ones, not even for touristic reasons, which being based on uncertain or false data, would soon or later end up frustrated.” “Appunto per S.E. il Ministro.” AA.BB.AA., Divisione III, 1929-1960, b. 30.

³³³ “Rimane però escluso fin da ora anche il museo possa e debba limitare il suo interesse alle sole vicende degli amori di Giulietta e Romeo perchè l’interesse principale di questo ... dovrà accentrarsi non su personaggi da tragedia, ma sulla figura stessa e sull’arte di Shakespeare.” Giuseppe Bottai to Marcello Vaccari. Letter of 1 July 1938. AA.BB.AA., Divisione III, 1929-1960, b. 30.

³³⁴ Daniela Zumiani, *Armi, di commercio, di nobili dimore*. Verona i segni della storia. (Verona: Euronobel, 1991), 156.

and refurbished.³³⁵ In celebrating the long-awaited restoration, the local press praised the city council for its commitment to the project: “the Podestà, who knows how to take care of Verona’s great artistic, historic, and literary tradition, is bringing back to life Romeo’s House, which will be soon visible in its original, beautiful appearance.”³³⁶ However, work soon came to a halt and the project of a museum dedicated to the Bard had ultimately to be set aside. Although the sources are silent as to why the project failed, it is likely that budgetary cuts due to the war prevented the central government from funding the initiative and the city, already wrestling with the restoration of Juliet’s House and Tomb, was forced to postpone the project indefinitely.

The idea of a Shakespearean museum as formulated by Avena and supported by the Soprintendenza would not be abandoned, however. Already in 1948 Verona’s Literary Society (*Società Letteraria*) took on the project again and although the Society was unsuccessful in its attempt, the effort clearly points to the intention of reinforcing the link between Verona and the Shakespearean myth pursued by Avena. Again in 1970, as the House and Tomb of Juliet were being renovated, the old project of restoring the house on Via Arche Scaligere resurfaced, this time no longer to house a museum dedicated to Shakespeare but rather to transform it into a tourist and cultural center (*casa del forestiero*). The author of a lengthy article in the local newspaper *Il Gazzettino* lamented how “Romeo’s House, which could be used for a ‘romantic pilgrimage’ along with the House in Via Cappello and Juliet’s Tomb ... remains out of the reach of tourists and practically unknown to the people of Verona.”³³⁷ Complaining about the fact that

³³⁵ See Arnaldo Fraccaroli, “La casa di Romeo,” *Corriere della Sera* (Milan), 22 August 1939, 3.

³³⁶ “La Podestaria, che sa curare con geloso appassionato fervore ogni gloria di Verona (e la gloria è tanta con formidabile dotazione d’arte, di storia e di poesia) sta riattando questa ‘casa di Romeo’ per farla riapparire nel primitivo suo aspetto bellissimo.” Ibid.

³³⁷ “La casa di Romeo—che si potrebbe utilizzare per il ‘pellegrinaggio romantico’ assieme a quella di Via Cappello (dove abitò Giulietta) ... e alla Tomba di Giulietta in via del Pontiere—continua quindi a rimanere fuori dal tiro turistico e praticamente sconosciuta agli stessi Veronesi.” “La casa di Romeo rimane ancora preclusa alle visite turistiche,” *Il Gazzettino* (Mestre), 23 January 1970.

after years of negotiations the house was still in private hands, the reporter suggested: “If one could gain the ownership of the house one could transform it into a refined tourist and cultural center, which is missing in Verona. Moreover, between the palazzo and the courtyard one could create a restaurant ... as a meeting point, an oasis at the center of the city.”³³⁸ The project failed once again but a sign identifying the medieval building as “Romeo’s House” was placed next to the entrance to supplement a plaque with the English and Italian inscription “Tut, I have lost myself; I am not here; This is not Romeo, he’s some other where. (Romeo and Juliet – Act 1, Scene 1, William Shakespeare).”

In 1972, the city was able to purchase part of the ground floor and a six-room apartment located on the second and third floor of the complex.³³⁹ The acquisition did not change the residential designation of the building as the majority of the complex remained in private hands, and the city could claim limited authority on its overall use. The city council of Verona, however, would continue to pursue its goal of a museum dedicated to Shakespeare and its attempt to complete the narrative created by Avena in the 1930s by adding Romeo’s House to the romantic itinerary of Juliet’s House and Tomb. As recently as 2008 the civic association *Progetto Verona*, whose main goal is the political, economic, and cultural advancement of the city, listed among its goals the creation of a museum dedicated to the Bard claiming that “Verona has two cards to play: the great myth of Romeo and Juliet, which attracts thousands of visitors to the famous balcony and the summer opera festival at the Arena ... The city should make the most of both of them with a Shakespearean museum and a museum dedicated to past opera

³³⁸ “Se si riuscisse finalmente a ottenere la proprietà del palazzo se ne potrebbe ottenere una signorile, magnifico circolo del forestiero che a Verona manca. Non solo, ma tra palazzo e cortile si potrebbe ricavare un ristorante in posizione invidiabile, come punto di ritrovo, oasi al centro della città, e anche come punto di incontro.” Ibid.

³³⁹ Zumiani, *Città d’armi*, 156.

staging.”³⁴⁰ Clearly, the city of Verona identifies itself very closely with the Shakespearean myth, and the fact that the project has refused to die testifies to the vitality of the narrative created by Avena during the Fascist period.

6.5 SHAKESPEAREAN FESTIVAL

A project Avena did see fulfilled was the institution of a festival dedicated to Shakespeare’s works. Although instituted in 1948, the idea of a Shakespearean festival first took shape in the 1930s as a direct result of Avena’s work on Juliet’s House and Tomb and should therefore be considered part of the legacy of Fascist-sponsored cultural policies in Verona. Staged in the Roman Theater, Verona’s first-century B.C.E. amphitheater restored by Avena amidst the usual controversies with the Soprintendenza, the festival was quite predictably inaugurated by a production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Co-directed by Renato Simoni, a local drama critic and playwright, and Giorgio Strehler, a promising young stage director, the production availed itself of the Italian script by Salvatore Quasimodo and sets by painter Pino Casarini.³⁴¹ Casarini, who had already collaborated with Avena on the decoration of Juliet’s House and on the restoration of the *Sala della Musica* in Castelvechio, created an illusory architecture of red brick buildings crowned by crenellations and pierced by porticoes surrounding a central open space reminiscent of the square in Cukor’s movie opening scene. The extraordinary success of the opening night,

³⁴⁰ “Verona ha due assi da giocare su questo tavolo: il grande mito di Romeo e Giulietta, che attrae a Verona decine di migliaia di visitatori del famoso balcone, e il notevole richiamo del festival lirico all’Arena ... Sarebbero da valorizzare magari con un museo Shakespereano e un museo degli allestimenti di opere all’Arena durante quasi un secolo di storia gloriosa.” *Progetto Verona*, 3. Available: <http://www.progetto-verona.org/associazione/convocazioni%20assemblee/maggio2008.pdf>, 20 July 2010.

³⁴¹ Pesci, *Romeo and Juliet*, 41.

attended by cultural and political personalities, including the recently elected President Luigi Einaudi, was repeated for all the four shows in the program. The groundwork was laid to expand the festival in the years to come with events ranging from plays to ballets and concerts. In 2008 the festival celebrated its sixtieth anniversary becoming one of the most successful and best regarded cultural events in Verona and in Italy. From the Royal Shakespeare Company to the Berliner Ensemble, from Peter Brook to Vanessa Redgrave, from Jerome Savary to Claus Peymann, some of the most prestigious names from the world of European theatre have performed on the stage of the Teatro Romano contributing to the ideal bond between Shakespeare and Verona.

6.6 JULIET'S CLUB

Also part of the legacy of Fascist-sponsored initiatives is the popular tradition of writing letters to Juliet seeking advice in matters of love. The practice of writing to the Shakespearean heroine first began at the turn of the last century with notes and messages left at the grave and exploded in 1937, shortly after George Cukor's movie *Romeo and Juliet* was released. At the time, Ettore Solimani, the custodian of Juliet's Tomb, took on the role of "Juliet's secretary" and started answering the letters, while promoting a series of initiatives that contributed to keeping the myth alive through the years: from planting rose bushes and a willow tree by the grave, to training two dozen turtledoves to fly around the cloister and to land on the shoulders of female visitors, to inventing stories about the place.³⁴² After Solimani's retirement in 1958, the task of answering

³⁴² Ibid. See also Dinitia Smith, "Dear Juliet: Seeking Succor from a Veteran of Love," *New York Times*, 27 May 2006, sec. E, p. 1.

Juliet's mail fell on Gino Beltramini, a local poet and journalist, and eventually on Juliet's Club (*Il Club di Giulietta*).

Founded in 1972, in a climate of general revival of the Shakespearean myth and valorization of the sites associated with it, the club's main purpose is the promotion of events and activities linked to Verona's heroine. They include the annual medieval fair commemorating Juliet's birthday, 16 September 1284. Held in the historic Piazza delle Erbe and featuring flag-wavers, dancers, and musicians performing authentic pieces from the Middle Ages, the fair has become a popular attraction for locals and tourists alike and has played into the theme of Verona as a picturesque medieval town. The club also sponsors literary prizes: *Writing for Love*, awarded every year to the author of the best love novel; and *Dear Juliet*, assigned on Valentine's Day to the sender of the most romantic love letter. The award ceremonies, held at Juliet's House, have attracted through the years numerous Italian and international stars such as ballerina Carla Fracci, film director Franco Zeffirelli, actress Giulietta Masina and celebrated tenor Andrea Bocelli. The club does not shy away from more intellectually engaging activities such as symposia, classical and jazz music concerts, and art exhibits.

Staffed by local volunteers and funded in part by the city, which pays for stationary and postage, the club has become a phenomenon in its own right. It has been featured in local and international newspapers as well as TV and radio programs, all trying to explore the reasons that would motivate the most disparate people to write to a literary character.³⁴³ The club and the love letters have become the subject of a 2006 book, *Letters to Juliet*, which details the story of the team of nine volunteers who make up the club and who through the years have been providing

³⁴³ The Club and its activities have been featured on nearly 1500 news sources around the world including *Corriere della Sera*, *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the BBC, National Geographic Channel, etc.

advice in the name of Juliet to writers all over the world, sometimes with the help of improvised translators, such as Chinese restaurant owners, and a Turkish NATO commander.³⁴⁴

The book has recently become the inspiration for a Hollywood movie production, *Letters to Juliet*. A light romance filmed in Verona and Siena, the movie details the story of a young woman who discovers a letter left many years before by a lover in the same courtyard recreated by Avena in the 1930s. The movie camera leads the viewer through Verona, with its red brick historic buildings and paved narrow streets to Juliet's courtyard, which with its letters and notes covering the walls is at the very core of the movie.

Thus, the architectural space that Avena and the city created as a response to the 1936 Cukor film has become the subject of a film production as the house of the Shakespearean heroine but perhaps even more as the site of a "love pilgrimage" relevant in itself. And similarly to a religious pilgrimage site, Avena's architecture has acquired new meaning through the years due to the number of visitors. Indeed, what makes Juliet's House and Tomb worthy of study is not the historic nature of the buildings or the likelihood that Juliet Capulet might have lived and died there but rather the constructed nature of their architecture and the traditions associated with them. As noted by Richard Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, invented traditions—traditions that appear to be old when instead they were invented—are often cultivated to create a sense of collective identity.³⁴⁵ In addition, in their attempt "to establish continuity with a suitable historic past," invented traditions tend to perpetrate reactionary social models.³⁴⁶

Although Hobsbawm and Ranger's study was not specifically directed to the built environment, the general premises of their work could easily be applied to Fascist urban policies

³⁴⁴ *Financial Times*, 9 February 2002, 3.

³⁴⁵ Eric J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 9.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

in Verona. In this city the myth of Romeo and Juliet, rediscovered in the nineteenth century and propelled by George Cukor's movie, resulted in the creation of a tradition that has not only reinforced the city's collective identity but also supported the tourist industry and shaped Verona's urban and social fabric in diverse and multifaceted ways. It might also have favored the development of a rather rigid and closed society: Verona, one of the wealthiest cities in Italy is also one of the most staunchly conservative. In recent years, its population has been voting en masse for the Northern League party, a political entity at the center of controversy due to its racist and xenophobic initiatives. The built environment has become the arena where tensions have unfolded most vividly. In 2008, the city council bulldozed the only mosque in Verona with the intention to replace it with a public square named after Italian writer Oriana Fallaci.³⁴⁷ Fallaci, who died in 2006, was the author of *The Rage and the Pride*, a controversial work that promoted a bitter campaign against Islam. Tensions have been building in the periphery of the city, where the majority of immigrants live. By contrast, the city center, with its elegant streets, seemingly pristine architectural fabric and cultural flair has managed to preserve an image of social, historical and cultural stability.

Thus, the movie industry has played a key role in Verona's modern history. It has helped shape the city's collective identity, refashion its built environment, and support the tourist industry. In addition, Hollywood appears to have played an equally central role in shielding the city's urban fabric from close critical scrutiny and indefinitely postponing a critical assessment of the legacy of Fascist-sponsored restoration projects. By creating and constantly reinforcing the myth of Verona as a city of love and romance, the movie industry has preserved Verona in a timeless mythic space removed from history and therefore innocent of the sins perpetrated by the

³⁴⁷ *Repubblica* (Rome), 18 May 2008, 4.

Fascist regime. Verona has been co-opted by the Hollywood movie industry, which, as remarked by anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker in 1951, is engaged in the mass production of daydreams.³⁴⁸ Although a real city, Verona has been turned into a fantasy for the hopes and aspirations of the public.

Recent studies on Fascist-sponsored restoration projects have addressed the issue of “historical forgetting” that appears to affect Italy’s relation with its Fascist past and the rationale behind it. Lasansky, who has focused on the refashioning of Arezzo and San Gimignano during the Fascist *ventennio*, believes that unlike other cities in Italy, Tuscan towns have been exempt from close critical scrutiny that could expose the falsely historical nature of their architecture. She attributes the lack of studies on Fascist-sponsored restoration projects in Tuscany to Italian scholars’ uneasiness towards Italy’s recent past and their unwillingness to question the authenticity of well established medieval and Renaissance art historical canons.³⁴⁹ Ghirardo, who has studied the refashioning of Ferrara’s town hall (Palazzo del Corte) under the Fascist administration, does not address directly the reasons for the relatively scarce number of critical studies on Fascist sponsored projects in Ferrara but stresses the role played by local pride and aspirations in the idealized and historically inaccurate refashioning of the city’s architectural heritage.³⁵⁰ Still, Verona sets itself apart from other cities in Italy, including Arezzo and Ferrara. Not only can Verona claim a literary notoriety like no other place in Italy, but its reputation as the city of romantic love has been confirmed and enhanced through the years by the many movies inspired by the Shakespearean play. Film and literary fiction have granted Verona a

³⁴⁸ Hortense Powdermaker, *Hollywood, the Dream Factory. An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie-Makers* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1950), 39.

³⁴⁹ Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected*, 264-267.

³⁵⁰ Ghirardo, “Inventing the Palazzo del Corte,” 111-112.

mythic aura that has impacted the city's urban and social identity and insulated Verona from the difficult memory of its own past.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The 2009 UNESCO report on cultural tourism for the city of Verona ranks Juliet's House and Tomb respectively second and fourth among the most visited sites in the city, immediately after the Arena and Castelvecchio.³⁵¹ The two sites criticized by the preservationists in 1939 as “ridiculous fakes, made necessary to give historic credibility to [places] that any cultured visitor would disapprove”³⁵² have thus become an integral part of Verona's heritage tourism, driving forces of the local economy, and identity landmarks in its collective imaginary.

This research has explored the process of the refashioning of Verona's urban space and identity, which took place during the Fascist regime following Cukor's movie *Romeo and Juliet*. I have argued that the Hollywood movie industry played a crucial role in the refashioning of Verona's urban space and identity. The disputes between preservationists and city officials over the restoration and valorization of the city's built heritage, already evident in the 1924 restoration of Castelvecchio, peaked in the aftermath of Cukor's movie release. The Hollywood narrative interjected itself as a powerful new player in the redefinition of Verona's urban space and identity by creating expectations in movie audiences that local and central authorities were forced to address. As a direct result of the publicity brought to the city by the film, city officials

³⁵¹ World Heritage Committee Documentation, 797rev.pdf. Available: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/797/documents/>, 12 July 2010.

³⁵² “Una goffa falsificazione che si rese necessaria per dare verosimiglianza storica al nuovo ambiente ... che i visitatori dotati di buon gusto e di cultura non possono approvare.” Alfredo Barbacci to Marcello Vaccari. Letter of 27 October 1938. ASBAPVr, f. 91/93.

sponsored a dramatic and controversial refashioning of the alleged House and Tomb of Juliet and drew up plans for the restoration of Romeo's House. With the plaster still fresh and the scaffolding having only just been removed, the House and Tomb of Juliet were featured in the 1941 state-sponsored documentary by Antonio Dell'Anno, *Verona*, along with Roman monuments and the architecture of the Scaligeris. With no reference to their recent reconfiguration, the short film introduces the two sites as pristine medieval structures, integral parts of Verona's built heritage.

Subject to direct government control, documentaries were, along with newsreels, powerful propaganda vehicles. They represented the most effective form of mass media, being able to reach very diverse audiences, educated and illiterate, urban and rural. Indeed, where movie theaters were not available, trucks equipped with mounted projectors showed newsreels and documentaries in piazzas and open fields throughout the peninsula.³⁵³ Documentaries featuring cities as protagonists were used by the regime to stimulate a patriotic interest in Italy's artistic sites.³⁵⁴

With a focus evenly divided between Roman architecture, medieval heritage, and Shakespeare-inspired landmarks, the 1941 documentary clearly reveals how central state authority appropriated the city's multilayered historic and literary tradition as a means to its political agenda. Indeed, while Verona's classical architecture was harnessed by the regime to support Mussolini's imperialist ambitions abroad, the city's medieval tradition proved essential in fostering a sense of national collective identity. Additionally, Shakespearean sites, dramatically refashioned and publicized after Cukor's movie, provided the regime with a

³⁵³ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945*. Studies on the history of society and culture, 42 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 71.

³⁵⁴ Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected*, 207-208.

particular version of medievalism, which could be used for both internal and international colonizing efforts. In fact, the story of Romeo and Juliet was harnessed by the regime to engender in Italians a sense of national pride as well as to support Fascism's claim of Italy's cultural and intellectual superiority. The challenge posed by the British origin of Shakespeare to Italy's alleged cultural primacy was addressed by the regime by claiming the Italian origin of the Bard.

The role played by *Romeo and Juliet* in the redefinition of Verona's urban space and identity highlights the complex nature of Fascist cultural policies, which although aimed at creating an autarchic national culture, purged of all foreign influences, did not hesitate to rely on the Hollywood narrative in the urban reconfiguration of one of Italy's most treasured cultural centers. Indeed, the film and the debate surrounding the refashioning of Verona's built environment unfolded at a crucial time in the history of the Fascist state, in the aftermath of the Ethiopian war, which marked the apex of the Fascist myth of national regeneration.³⁵⁵ Following the takeover of the African State, Mussolini launched a campaign of cultural reclamation (*bonifica culturale*) meant to emancipate Italians from foreign cultural influences and develop a peculiarly Italian and Fascist culture, worthy of Italy's imperial destiny.

Cinema played a crucial role in Fascist reclamation policies. In an attempt to boost the national film industry and limit the number of foreign films, the government engaged in a series of important cultural initiatives, which included the expansion of the Venice Film Festival in 1934, the institution of a national film school in 1935 (Centro Sperimentale per la Cinematografia), and the construction of Cinecittà, Europe's most modern and largest production

³⁵⁵ Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 143.

facility, in 1937.³⁵⁶ The final act of Fascist strategy to protect the Italian film industry from foreign competition was the passage of the Alfieri law in 1938. The new legislation increased government subsidies for domestic films from 10 to 12 percent and granted the state absolute monopoly over the purchase and distribution of foreign films in Italy.³⁵⁷ The resulting taxes imposed on non-Italian movies caused the Hollywood Studios (MGM, Warner Bros, Twentieth Century Fox, and Paramount) to close their distribution offices in Italy.

Although these measures did not eliminate—and actually increased—Hollywood’s appeal among the masses, they clearly show the regime’s effort to emancipate Italian cinema and popular culture from the Hollywood movie industry. Still, in the case of Verona, the regime appeared all too eager to cooperate with MGM on the successful realization of *Romeo and Juliet* and to assist the Hollywood studio in the promotion of the movie after its release. Already in 1935, Galeazzo Ciano, Mussolini’s son-in-law and then Head of the Ministry of Press and Propaganda sent a letter to Verona’s chief of police requesting full assistance be given to the MGM troupe visiting Verona to collect material for the realization of the movie. The Italian premiere of *Romeo and Juliet*, held in Verona in 1937, received ample local and national press coverage and was attended by high-ranking officials, including Ciano and his entourage.³⁵⁸ Finally, great effort was devoted to the promotion of the film to the largest possible audience. Glowing movie reviews were published in newspapers and popular magazines. Along with articles on the life and career of Norma Shearer, Leslie Howard, and John Barrymore, they contributed effectively to marketing the movie to the general public.

³⁵⁶ Steven Ricci, *Cinema and Fascism: Italian Film and Society, 1922-1943* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 68.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ Among the attendees were Podestà Alberto Donnella, Consul General Ballabio, Attilio Fontana, director of the International Institute of Educational Cinematography (Istituto Internazionale della Cinematografia Educativa), and the Director of MGM Italy. See Mario Tommasoli, “Giulietta e Romeo,” *L’Arena* (Verona), 6 March 1937, 2.

Clearly, the regime saw no contradiction between the campaign of cultural reclamation and the support given to a foreign production such as *Romeo and Juliet*. In fact, although entirely produced abroad and featuring a fictional Verona, the movie proved useful to the regime's agenda of fostering a sense of national pride in Italians while underlining the cultural debt America owed to a place as steeped in history and tradition as Italy. Commenting on the movie's premiere, *L'Arena* wrote: "From the country that Christopher Columbus discovered and donated to civilization comes a story, magisterially recounted by the most modern of the arts, which at the time of the great navigator was already legendary. But love does not know time nor space; and space and time are nothing but 'love that moves the sun and the other stars'.³⁵⁹ America is, then, identified as a gift of the Italian explorer to the rest of the world and the love story the movie is based on as long predating the discovery of the continent. The quote from Dante's *Paradiso* is another reminder of the richness of Italian cultural tradition.

If at the national level the refashioning of Verona's urban fabric coincided with a phase of rampant militarism helping to support Fascist claims of Italy's cultural universalism, at the local level it reflected a new equilibrium of power among the city's social classes. As noted by Zangarini, "While between 1929 and 1932 the power skirmishes were restricted to nobility and the upper middle class between 1932 and 1939 a new chapter unfolds, which sees the middle class gaining power and the nobility losing it almost in mirror fashion."³⁶⁰ The decline of the noble class continued throughout 1939, when the middle class and upper middle class controlled

³⁵⁹ "Dal Paese che Colombo scoprì e donò alla civiltà, ci giunge magistralmente rievocata dalla più moderna delle arti, una storia tutta nostra che all'epoca del grande navigatore già era leggenda. Ma l'amore non conosce nè spazio nè tempo; e spazio e tempo non sono che amore 'che move il sole l'altre stelle.'" Ibid.

³⁶⁰ "Dal 1929 al 1932 ... le schermaglie per il potere si riducono alle due classi 'superiori'; alle due 'inferiori' spettano solo i posti di rincalzo. Dal 1932 al 1939, invece, si apre un nuovo capitolo che vede la media borghesia potenziarsi notevolmente e la nobiltà decrescere altrettanto rapidamente, quasi in un gioco speculare." Maurizio Zangarini, "La composizione sociale della classe dirigente nel regime Fascista. Il caso di Verona," *Italia Contemporanea* 132 (1978): 31.

respectively 43 percent and 37.5 percent of the positions of power within the city government against the 5.5 percent of the nobility and the 14 percent of the lower middle class.³⁶¹ Thus, the dramatic reconfiguration of Verona's Shakespearean sites that took shape between 1936 and 1942 reflected the concerns and aspirations of the rising middle class and upper middle class. As such, those projects contrasted in nature and purpose from restoration works carried out in the early years of the Fascist administration.

In 1923, when the restoration of Castelvecchio was finally approved, the composition of Verona's political class differed very little from those who ruled the city in the pre-Fascist period: the nobility controlled 29 percent of the city's government whereas 34 percent was controlled by the upper middle class, 21 percent by the middle class and 16 percent by the lower middle class.³⁶² Indeed, the restoration of Castelvecchio was the expression of the interests and world view of the city's aristocracy, which founded the project along with other sources.³⁶³ As discussed, the noble and elegant architecture along with the rich interiors dedicated to Verona's noble families were meant to suggest an image of medieval Verona as a conflict-free, harmonious society marked by peace and prosperity and dominated by the cultural and moral authority of the aristocracy.

The restoration of the Shakespearean sites, on the other hand, unfolded under the political and economic leadership of the upper and middle class in response to the expectations of mass tourism. While the reasons that led to their refashioning are complex, economic and having to do with cultural prestige primarily, they don't seem to include the glorification of Verona's

³⁶¹ Ibid., 32.

³⁶² Ibid., 31.

³⁶³ Besides the city's noble families the project was founded by the Ministry of Public Education, the province, the city, and the local bank. See Arturo Sandrini and Francesco Amendolagine, ed., *Verona 1900-1960. Architetture nella dissoluzione dell'aura* (Venezia: CLUVA, 1979), 155-157.

aristocracy. Although similar to Castelvechio in their disregard for historical accuracy, neither the House of Juliet nor her Tomb showcase the pomp and richness of Castelvechio's interiors. The Tomb in particular has a very austere, almost Spartan quality, which underscores the universal nature of the legend. Unlike Castelvechio, these interiors were not meant to intimidate but rather allow the average visitor to experience a sense of intimacy and connection to the two protagonists. The story itself of Romeo and Juliet is often presented as a tale of rivalry between two noble families whose hubris and blindness lead to the death of their children. Overall, the guiding principle of city officials presiding over the restoration projects appears to have been the recasting of Juliet's Tomb and House from elite to mass cultural sites, in order to benefit the city's economic interest and cultural aspirations.

Criticized by preservationists in the 1930s, neglected by city administrators in the immediate post war, the House and Tomb of Juliet were thoroughly restored in the early 1970s, in the aftermath of the critically acclaimed and popularly successful Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*. The movie industry has played an important role in the shaping of the city's urban fabric and identity by providing audiences with lenses through which approach and experience the city and by supplying city administrators with a blueprint for their restoration projects. It has also shielded the city from close critical inquiry.

Although local historians have begun to assess the work of Antonio Avena and Ferdinando Forlati during the Fascist *ventennio*, these studies do not fully address the collaborative relationship between Verona's socio-political elites and central state authority and fail to recognize the unique role played by the movie industry in the refashioning of Verona's urban space and identity. Limited in number and perspective, these works show that a fair assessment of the legacy of Verona's Fascist past is yet to come. Historians, especially non-

Italian ones, have attributed the scarcity of critical inquires to the anxiety Italians allegedly fear in dealing with their recent Fascist past. Unwilling to acknowledge their collaborative relationships with Mussolini's dictatorship, they have supposedly engaged in a process of "historical forgetting."

I have argued, however, that the case of Verona is unique within Italy's landscape. Indeed, the Hollywood movie industry has impressed in the popular imaginary a vision of Verona as picturesque and romantic town, which has helped to elevate the city to the status of a ready-made fantasy for audiences across the world. Insulated in a timeless space, the city's urban fabric has been spared critical scholarly inquiry and analysis. The key role played by the Hollywood movie industry in the reshaping of Verona's urban fabric and identity and in the suspension of the memory of its Fascist past, clearly shows the role foreign narratives were allowed to play in Fascist Italy, highlights the culturally constructed nature of urban space, and suggests that, to a certain extent, form follows fiction.

APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGY

March 17, 1861	Kingdom of Italy proclaimed
October 12, 1866	The daily <i>L'Arena</i> founded in Verona
October 21, 1866	Verona incorporated into the Italian Kingdom
1881-1887	Camuzzoni industrial canal built in Verona
1882	Great flood of the Adige River; embankment works are begun along the river
March 1898	The first <i>Fiera Internazionale Cavalli e dell'Agricoltura</i> (Verona Fair) held in Verona
1913	Giuseppe Verdi's <i>Aida</i> inaugurates first season of Verona's Opera Festival
August 1-2, 1914	World War I begins: Italy declares neutrality
November 1914	Mussolini founds Il Popolo d'Italia
May 24, 1915	Italy enters the war
November 11, 1918	Armistice signed
November 16, 1919	Socialist and Popular Party win the political elections
May 15, 1921	Mussolini and 35 fascists elected to the Parliament
November 7-11, 1921	National Fascist Party formed

October 27-29, 1922	March on Rome
June 10, 1924	Socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti is murdered; anti-fascist opposition develops
April 25, 1926	King Victor Emanuel III inaugurates the Museum of Castelvecchio
February 11, 1929	Lateran Pact signed with the Catholic Church; state of the Vatican City created and Roman Catholicism affirmed as Italy's official religion
October 3, 1935	Italy invades Ethiopia; the League of Nations begins economic sanctions in retaliation
May 9, 1936	Mussolini proclaims victory in Ethiopia and the Italian Empire
October 26, 1936	Rome-Berlin Axis formed
September 26, 1938	Mussolini visits Verona
September 29, 1938	Munich Conference
April 6, 1939	Italy invades Albania
September 1939	Germany invades Poland; France and Britain declare war on Germany
June 10, 1940	Italy enters World War II on Germany's side
July 24-25, 1943	The Fascist Grand Council repudiates Mussolini's leadership and names Marshal Pietro Badoglio as Prime Minister
July 28, 1943	Fascist Party dissolved
January 8, 1944	The trial of Count Ciano and 18 other Fascists responsible for Mussolini's downfall opens at Castelvecchio, in Verona
June 1944	Rome liberated by Allied forces
1944-1945	Verona repeatedly bombed by German forces
April 28, 1945	Mussolini captured by Italian partisans and executed

June 2, 1946

Referendum votes for republic to replace monarchy

APPENDIX B

ABBREVIATIONS

ASBAPVr : Archivio Soprintendenza Beni Architettonici e Paesaggio, Verona

ASVr: Archivio di Stato, Verona

AMCVr: Archivio Musei Civici, Verona

ACS: Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Roma

A.A.B.B.A.A. Belle Arti

b. busta

f. fascicolo

sf. sottofascicolo

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